

## **MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS**

**Ruth E. Deacon**

**Frank R. Mariner**

**Sherrylyn Sue Olsen**

**Jorgen Rasmussen**

**M. Ali Tabatabai**

*Iowa State University Faculty Senate May 7, 2024*



Ruth E. Deacon, age 100, died on February 13th, 2024. She is survived by her sister Helen Swank, plus thirteen nieces and nephews and many other relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her parents, Floyd T. and Madge Deacon, a sister, Doris Hollinger, and two brothers, Raymon Deacon, and Howard Deacon.

Ruth Deacon was born in eastern Ohio and was raised by parents who were firmly committed to education. She was a 4-H Club member, was in the band and orchestra, and was co-valedictorian of her graduating high school class.

She graduated from the Ohio State University with a degree in home economics education. She completed her MS and PhD degrees in home management at Cornell University and served on the Cornell faculty for ten years. She was on the academic faculty of OSU for sixteen years, following which she served as faculty member and college dean for thirteen years at Iowa State University, from which she retired in 1987.

Her interest in international education is evidenced by her consulting work in Egypt, The Netherlands, Brazil, and Costa Rica, and her teaching work in Nova Scotia, Alberta, and the University of Panama.

She was a prolific writer in professional journals and co-authored a college-level text on home management. She received numerous professional awards and recognitions, including being designated a “Legend” by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

## **Frank R. Mariner**

**February 20, 1952 - December 7, 2023**

Frank (Francis) R. Mariner of Ames, Iowa died on December 7, 2023 in Des Moines, Iowa. Mariner was Associate Professor Emeritus of French in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University.

Mariner completed his undergraduate education at Bowdoin College with an AB degree in Romance Languages and History in 1972. He subsequently pursued graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University, where he received the M.A. (1977) and Ph.D. (1982) in Romance Languages. Mariner also received two degrees from the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) in Paris, including the Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (1981) and the Doctorat (1986) in History.

Prior to his appointment to the faculty at Iowa State University, Mariner held positions at Colby College, Waterville, Maine, and Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he co-directed the Toulouse Summer Immersion Program in French.

As a member of the French Faculty in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, Mariner instructed courses in French language, literature, and culture. In addition, he was among the first faculty in the department to develop and teach courses in French Cinema.

Mariner's research focused on Jansenism and Jansenist memoir writing in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France. He also conducted research on Pascal and Port-Royal Studies. He was a regular contributor at conferences organized by the North American Society for 17th-Century French Literature and the European Studies Association.

In addition to service on committees in the French section, Mariner also frequently served on the department's Curriculum Committee, Search Committees, Faculty Evaluation Committee, and Advisory Committee, as well as the Honors Committee and Curriculum Committee in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

During retirement, he enjoyed trips to symphony concerts and opera in Iowa and Minneapolis, practiced meditation, and joined yoga classes. He was an avid stamp collector and enjoyed discussing stamps with his friends. In addition to visiting bookstores in Ames, Des Moines, and Iowa City and walking on trails in Ames, he could frequently be found in one of Ames' coffee shops and cafes, enjoying a snack and a cup of coffee.

No memorial service is planned. He asked that his many friends, scattered around the world, remember him on February 20, his birthday, with a toast, attending a concert or listening to your favorite music, or a stroll through an art museum with your friends.

Donations can be made in his name to:

Norankzendo.org – Rinzai Zen Buddhist Temple of Portland, OR

Stamps.org – American Philatelic Research Library

## **In Memoriam**

### **Dr. Sherrylyn Sue (Coats) Olsen**



On March 25 in 1960, in Richmond, Missouri, our world received a gift by the name of Sherrylyn Sue Coats. All who knew her would agree that from that moment on for the rest of her life, no one could warm up a room better than Sherry. It didn't matter if it was a classroom, a deacon's meeting, or even the back corner of a packing plant cooler room. As one colleague mentioned, "Our conference room is always so full of energy. I love it and that is all because of Sherry!"

Sherry was an undergraduate in Animal Science at the University of Missouri. Her rural Missouri upbringing, her work as a state FFA officer, and her junior leadership in the National Junior Shorthorn Association helped prepare her well for a career in animal agriculture and teaching. Sherry worked for the Drovers Journal, and the American International Charolais Association before she took a job with the American Shorthorn Association.

She met her husband Roger at the American Royal cattle show and they were married for over 38 years. In the fall of 2002, Sherry and Roger decided to sell the family farm in Missouri and come to Iowa State University where she received her master's and Ph.D. degrees in meat science in 2006 and 2012. She joined the Animal Science faculty upon completion of her Ph.D.

Sherry clearly had the true gift of teaching. In fact, a quote that describes the impact of Sherry as a teacher is, "A good education can change anyone. A good teacher can change everything!" Sherry was the best teacher a student could hope for, and she did change everything. Though Sherry received numerous recognitions locally and nationally for her excellent work in teaching, it is best to read what students have said about Sherry and her work; comments not gathered from the sorrow of loss, but instead from what students say in evaluations, letters and emails, and in everyday reflections.

One student shared, "I have encountered many great professors . . . However, I have never known a professor that has the true gift to teach and the ability to light up the classroom with such inspiration. Dr. Olsen a rare find."

"You will be hard pressed to find another teacher in the country that pours more time and passion into her students."

"As a coach she pushes her students to be the best they can be and creates a family that time doesn't break. She pours her heart and soul into her work, and it shows through the success of her students."

"Dr. Olsen pushed me in a way I didn't know I needed to be pushed. She believed in me and was vocal when I made her proud but wasn't afraid to give tough love when I needed it. Dr. Olsen made all of us better humans by showing all she meets kindness and respect by being honest with integrity."

Dr. Olsen passed away at home on Thursday morning, February 22 after just a few week battle with cancer. On the day before Sherry passed, she taught class. It was not easy for her to do it, but for those who knew her best, they know that her Missouri tough attitude, and her constant desire to 'get the job done' would not allow even a thing like cancer to keep her from coming to class.

And then another student comment that really described the heart and soul of Sherry. This student shared that Sherry never missed an opportunity to tell someone good job or that she loved them. She makes all of us members of her teams, her advisees, and the students in her classes feel like family, both to each other and to her. “

So . . . it is this last comment, “*she makes all of us felt like family*”, that is worth expanding upon. Again, her students put it best.

“Many have been on one of Sherry’s teams. You didn’t join one of Sherry’s teams or programs to be in a contest. You joined to be part of her family. She stays up to date with birthdays, marriages, babies, and much more. Her students love and appreciate her for this. Sherry makes unique connections with us that are looking for a place to call home and friends to call family. Sherry has touched the hearts of countless numbers of us who have made their way through her classes at Iowa State.

“As everyone knows her, Aunt Sherry genuinely cared about how you were doing not only in the classroom, but personally as well. She just makes you a family member from the moment you meet her. She gave me advice on anything you could think of- life, courses, roommates, career choices, the list goes on and on. She also would snap you back to reality. If you weren’t doing great in a course or making smart life choices, she didn’t beat around the bush- she would tell you how it is and what you needed to do to fix it-even if you didn’t want to hear it. She didn’t care about just your academics, she cared about YOU.”

“Aunt Sherry truly lights up the room when she walks in. She listens to what we need and she does her best to make it happen. She is so passionate and puts her heart in soul into her teaching and it shows when you look at all her past students’ successes. When you become one of Sherry’s “kids” you are one for the rest of your life.

And finally, another student shares, “Anyone that that passes through her program becomes a member of her family. Sherry and her husband Rodger devote countless hours on evenings and weekends to give to us students, taking the time to understand our needs and concerns in school and our personal lives. Sherry always makes you feel special and as she empowers you to, as she always says, “do your dead level best and be a good person.”

To be sure, we are sad for our loss. We will miss her in class. We will miss her when the animal science ‘family’ gathers for livestock events, for cattlemen’s meetings. We will miss her at livestock shows, sitting in the stands or on her famous lawn chair, carefully taking notes, calling out the next classes at state fair. We will miss her in church and in our community gatherings in Story City.

But to be certain, we are not sad for Sherry – in fact, she would not care for it if we were. Dr. Olsen was a person of deep Christian faith, and with that faith, we know where she is, and with whom. In fact, our comfort and our joy today are taken from the fact that Sherry is in that part of heaven is filled with a very warm bright light just like the day she was born. We have no doubt that Sherry is talking about the last National Western Stock Show, who won state fair, and her husband’s next great ram. She is talking about food safety, charcuterie boards, how judging contests need to be reformed, how nice it would be if students would just come to class and turn in their homework on time. And for this image, we can smile and take some comfort. Sherry will be greatly missed by all and may her memory be a blessing to all as well.



### Jorgen Rasmussen, Distinguished Professor of Political Science

Jorgen Rasmussen was a teacher, scholar, and administrator in the Department of Political Science for over three decades. He was a world-renowned authority on comparative politics generally and British politics in particular. He was one of the founders and long-time executive secretary of the British Politics Group, a leading research organization under the auspices of the American Political Science Association. Jorgen published extensively on British politics and regularly taught courses on that topic and related ones. Indeed, he was the co-author of several editions of a leading text on comparative politics that was widely used. Significantly, too, and as an indicator of his scholarly reputation, Jorgen was named a Distinguished Professor in 1989, the first such appointment for a faculty member in the history of the Department of Political Science. Jorgen also served as chair of the political science department and played an important role in establishing the local chapter of OLLI. Finally, in retirement, Jorgen offered a broad array of courses at the local chapter of OLLI and, shortly before his passing, was recognized by that organization for his long service and commitment to ISU retirees. He was, according to one colleague, “a superlative teacher and one of the top research scholars on Europe.”

Besides political science and teaching, Jorgen also had a number of other interests. He was an avid reader of both nonfiction and fiction (especially science fiction). At his death, his library was quite extensive in size and topics numbering over 10,000 books on a multitude of subjects. He was a huge music enthusiast, particularly favoring big band and jazz (with a preference for Blue Note Records musicians). As a young adult, he even won a radio contest for a special edition of Glenn Miller records. He was a generous and ardent supporter of all the arts and especially of local artists. He also enjoyed entertaining himself making his own works, just for fun. When it came to sports, he was a passionate baseball fan, but hockey was also a large interest. For many years, he served as the faculty advisor for the ISU hockey team. He had a soft spot for pets everywhere in need of a helping hand and himself had several beloved cats over the years. He was an advocated for animals,

preservation of the environment, and voting rights and was generous toward these causes. His final resting place is the Wildflower Scattering Garden at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines





## Memorial Resolution for Dr. M. Ali Tabatabai 1934–2024

Mahdi Al-Kaisi, Professor Emeritus  
April 29, 2024

Dr. M.A. Tabatabai, 90, of Ames, passed away peacefully on Thursday morning, February 15, 2024, at the Israel Family Hospice House surrounded by family.

Ali was born February 25, 1934, in Karbala, Iraq, where he grew up. He then attended the University of Baghdad (College of Agricultural Science) in Baghdad, Iraq from 1954-1958, where he received his B.S. degree in Soil Science. He began his journey to his newly adopted country (USA) in 1958 and attended graduate school at Oklahoma State University where he earned his M.S. degree in Soil Science in 1960. He continued his pursuit of an advanced degree at Iowa State University, where he received his PhD in Soil Chemistry in 1965. During that time, he met and married Louisa, his wife of 61 years in 1963. They are parents to three adult children (Fareed, Layth, and Janine)

Ali began his career at Iowa State University as a Research Associate in 1966 to 1971, and became an Assistant Professor (1972-1974), Associate Professor (1974-1978), and Professor from 1978 to March 8, 2013, when he retired as Professor Emeritus from the Department of Agronomy.

At Iowa State, Professor Tabatabai had developed a very active and robust research program in the area of Soil Biochemistry that made significant contributions to soil science, and science at large. Over a span of approximately 50 years at Iowa State University, his cutting-edge research in analytical methodology led to significant improvements in methods of analysis of soil, plants and water. Another significant contribution to the field of soil enzymology was equally impressive when he became the foremost soil enzymologist in the US. His research discoveries had far reaching effects and became internationally known. Ali used his research platform to develop new courses for graduate students that focused on Laboratory Methods in Soil Chemistry for organic and inorganic chemistry. In addition to graduate teaching, Ali loved to train and mentor his graduate students, postdocs, and technicians in his programs and outside of his programs. Over the span of his career, he mentored over 50 graduate students for M.S and PhD degrees, numerous postdocs, visiting scientists, and undergraduate students.

In addition to his research and teaching programs, Ali was actively involved in professional societies such ASA, SSSA, and national committees by chairing committees, editorial boards,



reviewing papers, chairing symposiums, writing and editing monographs, and books. He provided services to the department, college, and the university by leading and contributing to many committees and task forces that helped advance the mission of this land grant university. His service to the university went beyond Iowa State to other institutions in the US and internationally. The most rewarding service to Ali was his direct work with graduate students, postdocs, visiting scientists, and new faculty who were seeking advancement and new opportunities in their careers. Ali spent many hours helping in writing and editing their CVs, reviewing their presentations, and mentoring. It was very joyful for him to help others. He was a brilliant scientist with numerous recognitions that he deservedly received nationally and internationally for his scientific contributions, in addition to over 300 technical papers in prestigious national and international refereed journals, 31 chapters in scientific monographs, 80 scientific abstracts, and 16 book reviews, just to name a few. Ali was recognized with numerous honors and awards through his career and received the highest awards of professional societies of fellow of the American Society of Agronomy, the Soil Science Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Iowa Academy of Science, and the American Institute of Chemists.

Besides being a consummate faculty member and having a love for the institution, he enjoyed a good laugh and visits with his colleagues and cared about their wellbeing.

Ali was a loving and devoted husband, father and grandfather. I remember his gentle, generous demeanor, and his love of going to Clear Lake to spend time at his home there with his children and grandchildren, of whom he was most proud.