

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
James Huff Justus
April 22, 1929 - February 12, 2019

James Justus, distinguished professor, of the Department of English, known to all as Jim, devoted his scholarly career to the literature of the American South, where he was raised, in a place where his family had settled in the eighteenth century, eastern Tennessee. That is where he took his undergraduate training, receiving his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1950, followed in 1952 by an M.A. Before completing his graduate education he served a tour of duty in the U. S. Army, being stationed in Japan, where he worked as a reporter for *Stars and Stripes*. Upon returning to the U.S.A., he enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Washington, where he received his Ph.D. in 1961. In the fall of that year he joined the faculty of Indiana University in Bloomington, where he remained until his retirement in 1993.

Even before his retirement, Jim published more than sixty single-authored articles and reviews in major journals, and he continued to write afterward. His first book, published in 1981, was *The Achievement of Robert Penn Warren*, which was honored with the Jules and Frances Landry Award for the most outstanding achievement in the field of Southern studies. The book remains the standard treatment of Warren, a towering figure of twentieth-century letters: a novelist, a poet, and a seminal figure in the literary-critical movement that dominated the middle years of the century, the New Criticism. More than one reviewer of Jim's book referred to it as "monumental."

A particular interest of Jim's was Southern humor. Preparatory to his major work in this area, he edited the book *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches*, by Joseph G. Baldwin. This is a collection of twenty-six satirical vignettes, first published in 1853, depicting the life of an attorney on the lawless western frontier of the Deep South in the 1830s and '40s. Then in 2004, after his retirement, Jim published his *magnum opus* on Southern humor, *Fetching the Old Southwest: Humorous Writing from Longstreet to Twain*, published to warm acclaim. A reviewer in *The Journal of American History*, for example, called it "easily the most important book-length interpretation of its subject since the publication of Kenneth Lynn's *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor* (1959)," a book to which it responds and whose findings it significantly revises. By the use of deft historical research, including biographies, archival material, and travelers' accounts, he showed that Southern humorists were not the condescending, aloof observers of common men and women's lives they have been portrayed as, but involved participants in their subjects' lives, even if they were, in fact, an elite.

Given his acute literary sensibilities, his easy humor, and his mannerly way, it is hardly surprising that he was a popular teacher, his courses regularly overenrolling at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. Even before his retirement he had chaired nearly forty doctoral theses, and he had served on perhaps twice that number of other dissertation committees. He took his undergraduate teaching as seriously as his graduate, and in fact it was a large undergraduate lecture course, Introduction to Fiction, that he insisted he liked best.

He was as good a citizen of the academic community as he was a teacher, serving his colleagues, his department, the College, and the University with quiet dedication. He served on some of the most time-consuming committees in the University, including tenure, promotion, and search committees, demanding careful study of countless dossiers. Within the department he served on all the most important committees, including recruitment, composition, and curriculum, and he was repeatedly elected to the salary and advisory committees.

All who knew Jim remember his warmth, his ready intelligence, his gentlemanly manner, and his sly, kindly wit, a man as ready to provoke laughter as to appreciate others' sense of humor. With his partner Wallace Williams he made his rambling home in the woods off Arlington Road—a house passed on to them by a departing member of the English faculty, Rowland Collins—a nurturing place for young and old alike, and especially for the Bloomington lesbian and gay community. He would no doubt have objected firmly to the characterization, but by his generosity and his example he was undeniably a champion of that community. He is loved by all who remember him, and revered by all who have benefited by his teaching, his scholarship, and his friendship.

Professor Justus was preceded in death by his partner, Professor Wallace Williams of the Department of English, also of fond memory, who died in 1990.

This resolution will be presented in and become part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council.

Robert D. Fulk

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(with assistance from notes earlier compiled by Professor Don L. Cook of the Department of English)