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**Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin–Madison  
On the Death of Professor Emeritus Richard Newman Ringler**

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Richard Newman “Dick” Ringler was born January 21, 1934, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and died peacefully at his home in Madison, Wisconsin, on Friday, February 23, 2024, at the age of 90.

Professor Richard Ringler, an eminent scholar of Old English, Old Norse, and modern Icelandic was known to colleagues, students, and friends as, simply, Dick. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Dick received a B.A. from Harvard University in 1955, an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1956, and a Ph.D. in English Literature from Harvard in 1961. That same year of 1961, Dick began his tenure-track appointment in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin. He used to relate that on the day after getting tenure, Helen C. White called and asked what his next project was to be. Through teaching *Beowulf*, he became interested in Old Norse literature. In the 1960s, he took the family to Iceland, where he learned modern Icelandic. His expertise in things Old Norse/Icelandic resulted in a split appointment between English and Scandinavian Studies. He served as chair of Scandinavian Studies three times: 1968-71, 1980-83, 1999-2000. He retired as professor emeritus in 2002.

Dick’s academic career and research spanned Shakespeare and Old English, *Beowulf* and Old Norse and Icelandic literature and language, including topics as wide-ranging as the Vikings and Zen Buddhism, Robert Louis Stevenson and JS Bach, Peace Studies and Perspectives on Nuclear War. He published numerous books and is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on Icelandic literature. In 2004 he was awarded the Order of the Falcon by the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, for his service to Icelandic culture. In the same year, he received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Iceland for his work promoting the Icelandic language through an online portal, Icelandic On-Line! as well as his translation of the work of Iceland’s national poet, Jónas Hallgrímsson, in *Bard of Iceland*. Dick was himself a talented poet and his translation of Jónas Hallgrímsson’s poetry is a stunning artistic feat.

Dick was a famously committed and charismatic teacher both of graduate and undergraduate students. His lectures were typically illustrated with his carefully curated collection of 35mm slides while he spoke at breakneck speed from a small deck of 3x5” cards, with so many unexpected twists and turns in his presentations that students felt like they were witnessing a brilliantly creative mind thinking out loud. Because so many of the medieval texts he wanted students to read were not readily available, he often translated them himself and then typed them up on mimeographed handouts that sometimes ran to hundreds of pages by the end of the semester. Many of his former students remember his courses as being among the most riveting and influential of their entire school careers.

Dick was a passionate promoter of peace and global cooperation through education. In 1983, he founded Wisconsin Educators for Social Responsibility and in 1985, he founded and led the Wisconsin Institute: Consortium for the Study of War, Peace, and Global Cooperation. Dick was an accomplished public speaker and employed these skills impactfully in the cause of war and peace studies, through Wisconsin Public Radio and various public lectures. His presentation on the bombing of Dresden was a memorable tour de force. He had the perfect voice for radio, and a colleague claimed that he could read the phone book and make it sound good.

Dick and Karin, his beloved wife and partner of 65 years, were tremendous hosts. Their annual Oktoberfest celebration at their house in Shorewood was an event looked forward to by many. Dick was a much beloved teacher by graduate and undergraduate students alike.

Dick is survived by his wife, Karin Ringler; son, Thor Ringler; daughter, Tamsie Ringler; and grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Frieda Ringler; and sister, Betsy Ringler.

**Memorial Committee**

Susan Brantly

Lisa Cooper

Christa Olson

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