

Memorial Resolution
John Leonard Modic

Dr. John Leonard Modic, 80, Emeritus Professor in the Department of English and Linguistics, died on May 9, 2000, after a protracted struggle with many serious ailments. He spent his last days at his home in Fort Wayne, where his children gathered from across the country to be with him.

John was a native of Cleveland, Ohio, a city he always remembered with great fondness. He loved to tell stories about growing up there, and many of his experiences found their way into the graceful, humorous fiction he published in *Little Magazines*. He remained such a loyal follower of his Cleveland teams, the Indians and the Browns, that for a long time after he left that city his friends, when they couldn't reach him by telephone on Sunday afternoons, might have found him in his driveway listening to a Brown's game on his car radio, where he got the best reception.

During World War II John served with the U.S. Army Air Force in Italy, France, India, and Africa. Classified as "Writer, Military Subjects," he edited and wrote the *324th Fighter Group News* and contributed to *Stars and Stripes*. After the war, his poetry, fiction and humor were published in magazines that included *Family Circle* and *Golf Digest*.

After the war, John returned to Cleveland College (the "downtown" school, he called it, to emphasize its urban, working-class status). He received his bachelor's degree from "downtown" in 1947 and almost immediately changed neighborhoods, receiving a master's degree from Western Reserve University at the end of the same year. His sensitivity to literature and his perseverance continued to move him along, and in 1970 Case Western Reserve University awarded him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

John's teaching career began at the University of Illinois in Urbana before he achieved the doctorate, and from Urbana he moved to Wayne State University in Detroit and then to the State University of New York at Oswego. In Oswego he met Roy Lichtenstein, several of whose paintings and sketches he owned (as gifts) and thoroughly enjoyed, though he rarely if ever thought to point out their provenance to people who visited his home. From Oswego John moved to Ball State University, where he spent seven years before arriving in Fort Wayne in 1966.

During his 19 years at IPFW John taught a wide variety of literature and writing courses. Indeed, he was something of a polymath, with interests in linguistics, composition, fiction, Restoration drama, and genre courses in satire. His special interest, though, was American ethnic literature, particularly Slavic-American literature, and he worked extensively on Louis Adamic's books about the immigrant experience. Visits to his relatives and to his family home in Slovenia were thus logical as well as emotional highlights of his early retirement years.

When John ended his 32 years of college teaching in 1985, the university lost a fine teacher, but his colleagues continued to see him frequently. He was a big, powerful man who carried himself gently and kindly, raising pumpkins, for example, to give to children at Halloween. His presence

and voice have been missed for years in the academic debates that occupy the passing moment of campus life, but his person and his example are remembered with continuing profit by his friends. We are all the poorer for his passing, but the richer for having known and worked with him.