

## Joseph Frazier Wall

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# In Memoriam

## JOSEPH FRAZIER WALL

DR. JOSEPH FRAZIER WALL, a friend and mentor to a generation of Iowa students and historians, died in Grinnell on October 9. He was an Iowan most of his life, from his boyhood in Fort Dodge to his four decades as professor and administrator at Grinnell College. At the time of his death, he was working on a sesquicentennial history of the college, and whoever will be chosen to conclude a project that so engaged both Wall's intellect and heart has indeed big shoes to fill.

It was for his biographies that Wall received his highest honors. His biography of Andrew Carnegie won the coveted Bancroft Prize, and his study of Alfred Du Pont was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 1991. His first book, *Henry Watterson: Reconstructed Rebel*, was a finalist for the 1956 John H. Donning Prize from the American Historical Association. Most Iowans, however, will remember Wall as the author of the history of the state that he wrote on the occasion of the nation's bicentennial. Unlike most histories that move through their material chronologically, Wall's essays on Iowa develop topics that have been important to the state—the land, the arts, wars, government, economics. And through each, Wall wrote in a prose style that is elegant in its clarity and simplicity.

As distinguished as his professional career was, however, he remained Joe to his friends. His essential civility expressed itself in dignified but cordial relations with colleagues and associates and in an authentic respect for students. It was also expressed through decades of involvement in causes that promoted justice and dignity for the individual. In 1956 Joe was honored with the Iowa Civil Liberties Union Award, and in 1967 it was Joe Wall who presented Dr. Martin Luther King with an honorary degree from Grinnell when the civil rights leader spoke on the campus. After his retirement, Wall became the first director of the Rosenfield Program in Public Affairs, International Relations and Human Rights, a position from which he encouraged students to consider their roles and responsibilities as world citizens.

Joe Wall was a tribute to his family, his college, his profession, and his state. With his intellect and his gracious manner, he enriched our lives. We will miss him.

—Tom Morain, Administrator, State Historical Society of Iowa

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