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James C. Nelson, 91, retired WSU professor

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SPOKANE -- Retired Washington State University professor James C. Nelson died of causes related to age Sunday at the Waterford in Spokane. He was 91 and a longtime Pullman resident.

Nelson was a professor of economics at WSU from 1947 to 1974 and was noted for his study of the United States and world transportation systems.

He was born Oct. 5, 1908, to James Christian and Anna B. Nelson at the Nelson farm near Bickleton, Wash. He was valedictorian of the class of 1926 at Bickleton High School.

He studied history and economics at the University of Washington and graduated from there in 1930. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa honor society. He continued his education at Ohio State University, where he earned a master's degree in economics in 1931. He did postgraduate work at the Brookings Institution and received a doctorate from the University of Virginia in 1934.

Nelson worked for the U.S. government for 10 years, serving as the chief of the Common Carrier Bureau of the Department of Commerce. He then joined the faculty of WSU and authored two books, "Railroad Transportation and Public Policy" in 1957 and "Railway Pricing Under Commercial Freedom: The Canadian Experience" in 1977.

He also published numerous articles in professional journals and a collection of his work, "Regulation and Competition in Transportation," was published in 1983.

During his retirement, he continued to be active in economics professionally, teaching at the University of British Columbia, the University of Wisconsin and Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He was honored by his students with a gala dinner in November 1992 at Spokane.

He was an active member of the American Economics Association and a founding member of the Transport and Public Utilities Group. He also was a charter member of the Transportation Research Forum.

He and his wife, Helen, enjoyed traveling and spending summers at Cottonwood Bay on Lake Coeur

d'Alene. He also was an avid fisherman.

Survivors include two sons, James Christian Nelson of Bedford, Texas, and Richard William Nelson of Orinda, Calif.; two brothers, Elmer R. Nelson of Bickleton and Thomas E. Nelson of Yakima; and four grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife.

Viewing will be from 2 to 6 p.m. today at Kimball Funeral Home in Pullman. A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. Friday at the Community Congregational Church in Pullman.

The family suggests memorials to the Department of Economics at Washington State University to assist students in the study of transportation economics.