

DOCUMENTS AND MINUTES OF THE GENERAL FACULTY  
REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
JOE B. FRANTZ

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a Memorial Resolution for Joe B. Frantz, Professor Emeritus, Department of History, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary  
 The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM

JOE BERTRAM FRANTZ

"I am in love with the whole human comedy, its conceits, its deceits, its occasional triumphs, and its more frequent failures."

Joe B. Frantz, 1979

Professor Joe Bertram Frantz stated his creed in a letter to the President of The University of Texas in 1979, but the same theme runs through the sizable body of writing and teaching that he did during a career at The University of Texas that began when he entered the University as a student in 1936 and ended a half century later upon his retirement in 1986. During those fifty years, Joe Frantz touched the history of this University in many constructive ways in and out of the classroom. For several generations of students and faculty, Joe Frantz embodied the study of Texas and Western American history on the Austin campus.

Joe Frantz was born on January 16, 1917, and grew up in Weatherford, Texas, the adopted son of E.A. Frantz and Mary Buckley Frantz. He recalled later that he grew up "a sort of blithe spirit" who was known locally as "Little Joe." When he was six years old, the Frantz family moved to Fort Worth. Joe was educated there until his junior year in high school. He returned to Weatherford, and graduated as valedictorian of his class at Weatherford High. He spent two years at Weatherford College before enrolling in the fall of 1936 at The University of Texas. Two years later, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism.

Joe worked briefly for the Temple *Daily Telegram*, and then pursued an M.A. degree in History from The University, which he received in 1940. He served as acting director and archivist of the San Jacinto Museum of History at the San Jacinto Battleground until he entered the United States Navy during World War II. His military service included tours on Navy destroyers and duty as liaison officer with the British Navy in the Pacific. He won eight battle stars.

Following the end of the war, Joe returned to The University of Texas to study for his Ph.D. with Professor Walter Prescott Webb. He received the doctorate degree in 1948. His dissertation on Gail Borden was published in 1951 as *Gail Borden: Dairyman to a Nation* by the University of Oklahoma

Press. The Texas Institute of Letters honored it with its award for the Best Book of 1951. After a post-doctoral year at Harvard University in 1948-1949, Joe joined the History Department at The University of Texas in 1949 as an assistant professor. He was promoted to associate professor in 1953, and became a full professor six years later. During his thirty-seven-year career in the History Department, he served as its Chair from 1959 to 1965. His administrative style was relaxed and friendly. In 1977 he was named the first Walter Prescott Webb Professor of History and Ideas in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (now the College of Liberal Arts). He retired from the University as Professor Emeritus in 1986.

Joe's administrative contributions to The University and the historical profession were extensive. He was director of the Texas State Historical Association from 1966 to 1977. He was elected president of Phi Alpha Theta (1962-1964), The Southern Historical Association (1977-1978), and the Western History Association (1978-1979). He also served on a number of federal panels and commissions, including the Historical Advisory Commission for the National Park Service (1964-1984) and the Texas State Endowment for the Humanities. He followed the fortunes of University athletic teams avidly and served on the Men's Athletic Council.

During the 1960's Joe became the director of the Lyndon B. Johnson Oral History Project. Under his leadership, an extensive effort was made to interview participants and observers of the life and times of President Johnson. The twelve hundred interviews that resulted provided a rich documentation on which scholars of the Johnson era have been drawing ever since. Joe was himself an effective and probing interviewer. The oral history collection, now housed at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, represents one of his major achievements as a scholar.

Joe's reputation and friendships within the historical profession brought him frequent opportunities to teach at other campuses as a visiting professor. He went to the University of Chicago, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Colorado at various times. He also lectured and consulted in Latin America and taught in Eastern Europe and Italy as a Fulbright Scholar.

Throughout this busy career, Joe Frantz was a publishing historian with many popular and influential books to his credit. *The American Cowboy: The Myth and the Reality* (1955), written with Julian E. Choate, explored the background and impact of a national legend. He wrote *Texas: A Bicentennial History* (1976) in the widely praised series of state histories from W.W. Norton. He and Mike Cox published *Lure of the Land: Texas County Maps and the History of Settlement* in 1988. The book received the award from the Texas Historical Commission for the Best Book in 1987 and an award from the Sons of the Republic of Texas. Frantz's most controversial volume was his personal and irreverent examination of the history of The University of Texas at Austin, *The Forty-Acre Follies* (1983). Few of his books better captured Joe's outlook on the world and his own sense of what The University had meant to his life and career. Joe's many other publications reflected his deep commitment to the history of his native state, his energy as a researcher and writer, and the tradition of Eugene C. Barker and Walter P. Webb to which he belonged.

Joe was a teacher who evoked admiration and affection from his many students. He was awarded the Lemuel Scarbrough Foundation Faculty Award for Teaching in 1957. After his death, his former students wrote of the respect that he commanded from them as teacher and mentor. His doctoral student, David G. McComb, said of him that "he was a person who preferred to grin rather than scowl, banter rather than pontificate, and tell a story rather than complain." They knew him, and his colleagues did too, as "Joe B." who could always be depended upon for a wry anecdote or a sage piece of advice based on his deep knowledge of The University and its lore.

Following his retirement, Joe became the Turnbull Professor of History at Corpus Christi State University (now Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi). He taught there for seven years until his retirement during the summer of 1993. He delivered the commencement address at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi in August 1993, his last public appearance. The effects of diabetes and heart disease led to his death on November 13, 1993, in Houston. At the time of his death, he had finished a manuscript on

*Felix Longoria's Wake*, written with his colleague, Professor Pat Carroll. His widow was Betsy Chadderon, whom he married in 1990. His survivors included two daughters from an earlier marriage, one stepdaughter, and four grandchildren. His death ended an era in the study of Texas history in the state, but his vibrant personality remains a strong memory among his students, colleagues, and friends across Texas and within the profession of history.

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Lewis Gould (Chair), Ricardo Romo, and Norman Brown.

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