

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**IN MEMORIAM
THOMAS L. PHILPOTT**

Thomas Lee Philpott—associate professor of history, fiery Catholic moralist and polemical leftist, and charismatic and much-honored teacher—ended his life on October 9, 1991, in Austin, Texas, after a yearlong illness. He was 49.

Professor Philpott was born on January 21, 1942, in Chicago, Illinois, and attended St. Leo High School there. He received a bachelor's degree in European history from Loyola University in 1963 and master's and doctoral degrees in American history from the University of Chicago in 1963 and 1973.

Professor Philpott's principal research interest was urban history. He knew the neighborhoods of his native Chicago well, first as a newsboy, then as a bus driver. When he joined the UT Austin faculty as an instructor in 1969, he wrote this on his biographical data sheet: "Bus driver, Chicago Transit Authority, summers of 1963 and 1964, experience that was vivid and informative to the student of the city."

During his years in graduate school he was a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, National Institute of Mental Health Fellow, and Ford Foundation Fellow. His revised PhD dissertation was published in 1978 by Oxford University Press as *The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930*.

Colleagues said that from the time he joined the faculty, he "immediately established a reputation he never lost as a dynamic, controversial teacher, whose determination to inject himself and his commitments into the shape and substance of his courses won him a yearly following of—often adoring—undergraduate students." Between 1974 and 1980 he received the Amoco Foundation Outstanding Teaching Award, College of Social and Behavioral Science Golden Apple Teaching Excellence Award, and Presidential Teaching Excellence Award.

He consistently championed civil rights and spoke against situations and conditions as diverse as the firing of a university president, the arrest of student protesters, pederasty, and mindless patriotism.

When he realized in the spring of 1991 that he might never teach again, Professor Philpott, who had served in the U.S. Army, wrote his students a letter that said in part, referring to the Gulf War, "I pray that you students, joined eventually and finally by the faculty, will stop this war, make peace, and become the beloved community."

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

Biographical sketch prepared by Nancy Richey and posted on the Faculty Council web site on December 4, 2000. Additional biographical sources can be found in the UT Office of Public Affairs, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, and Barker Texas History Center; Standish Meacham and Brian Levack, "Tom Philpott Remembered," *Texas Observer*, December 13, 1991, pp. 21–22, and in the same issue, Scott Henson, "Thomas the Believer," pp. 22–23.