

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
CHARLES ELY LANKFORD**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Charles Ely Lankford, professor emeritus, microbiology, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary  
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM  
CHARLES ELY LANKFORD**

Dr. Charles E. Lankford, professor emeritus of microbiology at The University of Texas at Austin, died on August 10, 1989. He had been retired since 1978. A highly respected scientist and dedicated teacher, Dr. Lankford influenced the lives and careers of his many students and associates.

Born in DeValls Bluffs, Arkansas, he received his high school education in Cisco, Texas, and a BA degree in bacteriology from The University of Texas at Austin in 1935. After a year with the Texas State Department of Health, he began graduate studies. Between 1936 and 1948, he conducted research at The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and at UT Austin, working in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology and of Bacteriology. During those years he taught bacteriology and held the ranks of teaching assistant, assistant professor, and associate professor. He received an MA degree in 1943, and a PhD in 1948, both under the supervision of Dr. O. B. Williams of UT Austin.

In 1942, Charles married Mary E. Baker Darnell. In 1949 he accepted an invitation to join the UT Austin faculty as associate professor of bacteriology. This provided an opportunity for him to do research with Professor V. T. Schuhardt and Dr. L. J. Rode in the Brucellosis Research Laboratory. In 1952, Charles became interested in the bacterium which causes cholera, *Vibrio cholerae*. He did research on cholera in Calcutta in 1953 with Professor William Burrows of the University of Chicago. He was promoted to professor at UT Austin in 1955. Dr. and Mrs. Lankford returned to the Far East in 1957 and stayed until 1959. Dr. Lankford taught at Chulalongkorn University Medical School in Bangkok, Thailand. His research work during a cholera epidemic received international recognition.

During his 42 years of service to UT, Dr. Lankford authored more than 40 scientific publications dealing with microbiological problems ranging from gonorrhea to brucellosis and cholera, fields in which he was internationally famous. He was interested also in microbial metabolism, specifically focusing on the roles of iron. He was coauthor of three microbiology laboratory manuals. Teaching both graduate and undergraduate students (courses in general microbiology, public health microbiology, and medical microbiology) absorbed much of his time and interest. He attracted excellent students to his laboratory and supervised 44 master's theses and 21 doctoral dissertations. Areas of special interest to him were the competition between the invading organism and the host for the essential nutrient iron, the mechanism by which the cholera organism causes disease, the mechanism by which the gonorrhea organism evades the human defense mechanisms, and the bacterial requirement for the nutrient iron.

A charter member of the Texas Branch of the Society of American Bacteriologists (now American Society for Microbiology), Dr. Lankford served in all its offices and was given its Distinguished Service Award in 1975. Dr. Lankford was a member of numerous professional societies and organizations and a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology. Dedicated to public service and education about infectious diseases, Dr. Lankford served from 1955 to 1967 on the Travis County Tuberculosis Association board of directors.

A memorial service was attended by some of Dr. Lankford's students, his students' students, and even third generation students. Among the tributes at the service, Dr. James R. Walker, chairman of the UT microbiology

department and one of Dr. Lankford's former doctoral students, listed Lankford's educational background and his contributions to research and said that "all these remarkable accomplishments were done in a quiet, unassuming, modest way. He was also a wise man and a gentle man."

Dr. L. Lee Lankford, an orthopedic surgeon in Dallas and brother of Dr. Charles Lankford, described with affection Charlie's role as husband, father, and brother.

Dr. Richard A. Finkelstein, chairman of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, said of his mentor:

"Charlie was more than just an outstanding scientist. He was a gentle man in the finest sense. I have never known a person who was more at one with himself. He was a considerate, dedicated, patient and inspiring teacher, a role model who has influenced, positively, the many students who had the privilege of being his graduate students and the many more at the undergraduate level in whom he had an equal interest. As a scientist, Charlie had a gift for creativity. Most of us are happy to have one bright conception in our careers. Charles had many which opened the doors to new fields of investigation. Coupled with this gift of intuition, he was a keen observer; an avid and retentive reader; he was careful and meticulous in his design of experiments; he was a scholar who did science for its own sake, not to impress others; and, in his modest way, he communicated these attributes to his students."

Dr. B. Roe Byers, former doctoral student of Dr. Lankford and currently professor of microbiology at the University of Mississippi Medical School, described some of his most significant scientific contributions:

"About 25 to 30 years ago, Professor Charles Lankford was a pioneer in research on the process of microbial iron acquisition and the critical participation of certain small iron-binding microbially-produced substances, called siderophores, in the process (although at the time the substances were not called siderophores—he assigned the name later). He may have been *the* pioneer. Regardless, at that time he was one of the two or three persons in the world who clearly understood the importance of siderophores and the role of iron in the outcome of many biological interactions, especially the host-parasite competition that can cause human and animal diseases."

Dr. Riley D. Housewright, past president of the American Society for Microbiology, sent the following personal insights about his longtime friend:

"Charlie was a quiet and private person. His modest demeanor did not adequately reflect his powerful scientific knowledge. Still, he was easily approachable by those who asked and received his thoughtful advice. He was an excellent reader and a creative scientist. His impact on bacteriology is well known here, but it extended well beyond The University of Texas campus. He made substantial contributions through the national and Texas branches of the American Society for Microbiology, and internationally by his work in Bangkok, Thailand, and India."

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James R. Walker (chair) and Charles F. Earhart.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on November 3, 2000. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>.