IN MEMORIAM
CLIFTON M. GRUBBS

Clifton Madison Grubbs, Sue Killam Professor Emeritus in the Foundations of Economics, died at his home in Austin on May 1, 1995. Although retired since 1988 and in declining health, he remained intellectually active and was working on the manuscript of a projected book at the time of his death. He was survived by his former wife, Ann (Brooks) Grubbs, and his daughter, Lisa Grubbs.

As the speakers in his memorial service—family members, former colleagues, students and friends—most clearly revealed, Cliff Grubbs was a many-faceted man who made an indelible mark on the memory of everyone who encountered him. In what follows we shall go beyond the usual account of positions held, honors and publications, and try to convey some of the idealism, spirit, and style of the man in several different aspects of his professional life.

A Brief Biographical Sketch.

Cliff Grubbs was born on July 4, 1925, in Fort Worth, Texas, the son of Esther Lee (Gillentine) and Clifton M. Grubbs, Sr., who owned and operated a food products business in that city. He grew up there and graduated from Paschal High School in January 1943. After only one semester as an undergraduate at the University of Oklahoma, he was called to active duty in the US Marine Corps in July 1943 and assigned to the Navy’s V-12 unit at Louisiana Polytechnic Institute in Ruston. There he was able to continue his college education for four trimesters while undergoing basic military training. He was ultimately commissioned in 1945 and, soon after the termination of World War II, was released to inactive duty in the Marine Corps Reserve with the rank of Second Lieutenant. He then entered the University of Texas to complete his undergraduate education, taking the Bachelor of Business Administration degree in May 1948.

Cliff’s apparently intended career in the family business in Fort Worth was cut short by the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. He was recalled to active duty as a Marine officer and served with distinction in that war from August 1950 to June 1952, receiving the Medal of Commendation and rising to the rank of Major.

In August 1952, Cliff was married to Barbara Ann Brooks of Fairmont, Minnesota. They were to have two children, Cynthia Suzanne, born May 10, 1955, and Lisa Brooks, born June 19, 1956. Suzanne studied two years at UT Austin, was appointed to the Naval Academy in 1976 (the
year in which the first women were appointed), became a naval aviator upon graduation, and died tragically in an unexplained accident while on a mission over the Mediterranean in 1983. Lisa took the B.B.A. degree at UT Austin in 1981 and served as a commissioned officer in the US Navy, 1982-85.

To return to Cliff's career, he began graduate work in economics at UT Austin in September 1953 and took the M.A. degree in June 1955. He then was accepted for further graduate work in economics at Harvard, where he took the M.A. degree in 1958 and the Ph.D. degree in 1963. His supervising professor, Wassily Leontief, a future Nobel Laureate, thought enough of his dissertation, on the theory of cost allocation in highway financing, to recommend it for the Wells Prize, which, if it had won, would have been published by the Harvard Press. In the actual event, it resulted in the publication of several influential articles and conference papers at a time when their insights and recommendations were of particular practical relevance. (See the appended list of his papers and publications.)

While Cliff was completing his requirements for the Ph.D. degree at Harvard, he took full-time positions, first, as Assistant Professor at the University of Massachusetts, 1958-60, and second, with the same rank, at the University of Colorado, 1960-65. In 1965 he was brought to UT Austin as Associate Professor of Economics and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the department. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 1971 and named the first holder of the Sue Killam Professorship in the Foundations of Economics in 1980. He retired in May 1988.

In the sections to follow, we examine in some depth several aspects of Cliff's life and work that help account for his extraordinary contributions to this University and its students.

The Marine.

Like many young men of his generation, Cliff responded to the call to duty at the time of World War II. He joined the Marines at age 17 in January 1943 in the V-12 Officers' Program but was not called to active duty until July, when he was sent to Louisiana Polytechnic Institute. After this college phase of his training, he attended boot camp at Parris Island in the Fall of 1944 and then moved on to Quantico in March 1945 to the Platoon Commanders' School. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant on his twentieth birthday, July 4. He reported to the Marine Replacement and Training Command at Camp Pendleton, where he remained until released from duty in December. He was called back to active duty on August 8, 1950, only slightly over a month after the outbreak of the Korean War.
By then a First Lieutenant, he was assigned to the Second Reconnaissance Company of the Second Marine Division, later becoming its Executive Officer. As it turned out in later life in almost everything he did, he must have made a splendid impression, because when the Company Commander received reassignment, First Lieutenant Grubbs was made Company Commander, an unusual assignment for a billet that called for the rank of Major. He used to revel in telling a story about how he had once used improperly gained intelligence to completely surprise and defeat the “aggressor forces” in a night raid training exercise conducted by his company. One would have thought this feat was equal to that of Wolfe at Quebec in 1759.

He was sent to Korea in the Fall of 1951. He joined A Company, First Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division and, at some point, became its Company Commander while still a First Lieutenant, although the normal rank of a marine infantry commander was Captain. (Fate had treated him well, because in later years, he would be able to claim that he had served as the first of the first of the first of the first. Of course, he was always first!) He served with distinction, receiving a letter of commendation for his work. However, his war stories from his Korean days were always more sad than not. That might be expected of someone in his position, who took every loss of one of his 230 men as a personal failure.

He was released from active duty in 1952, remained for a time in the inactive reserve, and eventually was promoted to Major. Later, Major Grubbs resigned his commission, although he remained a Marine in spirit the rest of his life.

The Teacher.

Cliff Grubbs once characterized teaching as an exchange of energy from the teacher to the student. The scores of students who hung around him after class were so excited that they did not want to let him go, and when he was finally free to return to his office he was utterly exhausted. If he had not experienced fatigue after class, he felt that he had not done his job well. At another time he made a distinction between teaching and instruction. “To me instruction is a matter of breaking wholes into parts and showing how the parts work. Teaching is the reverse. Teaching is rather the table of the heart, a matter of putting things together, of fostering vision, of giving hope and unity of the spirit.”

Once, in responding to a question on the purpose of his teaching, he said, “Critically in this year, it is to ridicule the doctrines of social despair, Western decay, and all that sophisticated rot in
this area which is so appealing to academic types. Affirmatively, it is to foster personal guts, toughness of mind and scholarship, courage, and the will to get on with it.” The citation he received upon being awarded the Danforth Prize (Harbison Award) as one of the outstanding teachers in the United States begins, “You are a volcanic man, a peak on your university landscape, boiling beneath with concern for students.” This was the theme that the famous social interviewer, Bill Moyers, stressed in his interview with Professor Grubbs on April 10, 1980, on his national television program, “Bill Moyers' Journal.” No wonder he received almost every significant teaching award for which he was recommended.

Teaching awards were not new to him when he received his first one here at the University of Texas. In relatively short stays at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) and the University of Colorado, he had been cited as a distinguished teacher. His teaching awards include:

University of Massachusetts, Outstanding Teacher Award, 1960
University of Colorado, All University Outstanding Teacher Award, 1964
University of Colorado, The Master Teacher Award, 1964
University of Texas, Jean Holloway Award for Teaching Excellence, 1970
University of Texas, Student Body Award for Teaching (Cactus Award), 1970
University of Texas, Phi Eta Sigma Freshman Honor Society Award for Teaching, 1970
University of Texas, Phi Eta Sigma Freshman Honor Society Award for Teaching, 1974
University of Texas, Nominee for William Blunk Professorship, 1979
University of Texas, Harry Ransom Award, 1988
Danforth Foundation National Teaching Award (Harbison Award), 1972
Nominee for Piper Professorship, 1970 (National Award)
Nominee for Piper Professorship, 1980 (National Award)

In nominating Professor Grubbs for the Piper Professorship in 1970, Dean John Silber stated that Grubbs' teaching evaluations clearly ranked in the top one percent and, possibly, that his teaching evaluations were “the most favorable ever recorded in this college (College of Arts and Sciences).” Chancellor Harry Ransom considered Grubbs to be one of five or six members of the faculty in the Chancellor’s long experience at the University of Texas whom he would consider to be a “complete teacher.” Another Holloway Award winner, Professor Vernon Briggs, now at Cornell University, commented on Grubbs’ unique ability to handle huge classes of 500 students as follows: “Somehow he is able to individualize his instruction so that each student believes that he or she is important to him. I cannot explain how he does it, only that he does.” It had even
been suggested at one time that Grubbs be urged to conduct his classes in freshman economics in Memorial Stadium! He would have loved to give it a try.

We close this section with some words spoken by Tom Sheffield, one of Grubbs’ Plan II students, at his memorial service. “The lessons given in Cliff’s classroom always took on the aspect of something terrible, grave, and important. He had his way of delivering the message. There were big ideas. There were big stories. There was love in their telling, and there was blessedness in their delivery. The message beyond the classroom: Do not suffer foolishness. Do not allow tragedy to go unnoticed, and when it can be helped, do not let it go without bringing everything to bear on it you can to alleviate someone’s pain, someone’s suffering.”

The Campus Adviser.

Cliff Grubbs took great pride in his service to the University. It was his alma mater. He loved it and knew he had come home when he arrived back in Austin, now as Professor Grubbs, in the mid-sixties. Grubbs had a clear vision of what the University should be. It should not follow the road being taken by several key universities in the tumultuous sixties and seventies. But UT was also deficient, and its faculty and student body were restive. The faculty, felt Grubbs, lacked any influence whatever regarding the crucial issues. In fact, they lacked even a forum in which to debate freely without domination by the deans and administrators. Grubbs did not hesitate. He seized the leadership among his peers and co-authored the legislation which created the Faculty Senate. He served as its president pro tem, from which position he spoke with influence.

Because this new faculty influence was indirect and dutiable, Grubbs went directly to the men with power. In the sixties these men were the Chairman of the Board of Regents, Frank Erwin, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, John Silber, and the President of the University, Norman Hackerman. At a later time, he took up with Robert King, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. To each of these persons with power, Grubbs regularly fired off letters and handwritten notes from his office. He called by telephone and promptly held long discussions, and he visited with them at length in their offices. Always sure that he was right, Cliff presented his arguments with high drama, always as if he were on stage. Of course, many of his ideas were dropped in File 13 and, probably, properly so. However, each of the power people listened intently, for, to each, Grubbs was the image of the model teacher who simultaneously
represented both faculty and students. His vision for the University shone through, and they felt that they, too, shared it.

Grubbs was the Administration’s Voice of the Students. Many on campus knew that he “mixed it” with the hundreds of students in his classes, and concerned faculty members overheard what Professor Grubbs had recently been counseling in his classes. Less well known across the campus was the fact that Grubbs’ office door was always open to students—and they were always there (to the chagrin of some of his colleagues). He consistently had students to his home, talking to them into the night. Perhaps uniquely among the faculty, he sought out students where they lived or where they hung out. He was Faculty Fellow at the gargantuan Jester Dormitory. He was Faculty Fellow at College House, heavily dominated by the “radicals” sometimes known as the “long hairs.” He often spoke at the student union, churches, and fraternity houses. One frequently saw him in the Chuck Wagon of the Texas Union, where the debates sounded like Hyde Park. Grubbs was a close adviser to the leaders of the University Y, perhaps the leading forum of deliberation and student activism of the period.

Relatively few professors “over thirty” during this period held high student respect. Although Grubbs fit comfortably in the age group of disrespect, he was highly respected by students. They thought he was with them. They could trust him. At the same time, he spoke for authority, preservation of existing institutions, patriotism, and nonviolence. Grubbs’ words of leadership which one best recalls were, “No, I wouldn’t do that.” He presented convincing arguments for his points of view, drew a line in the sand, and not a lot of students crossed it. Quietly, the power people and administrators understood this relationship (in fact, they received regular reports on it). They fed him advice, and he was very useful to them; but he was not their man. As always, he was his own man, trusted by both sides. That was fortunate, because during the potentially explosive decade between 1965 and 1975, the campus at UT was relatively calm. (See last section of this memorial resolution.)

Professor Grubbs performed other valuable services for the University. During the period of Robert King’s deanship, he served as a trusted adviser on many issues. Dean King commented that “[Grubbs] was an ‘idea man’ for the things I should be doing as Dean of Liberal Arts. He helped me with my speeches, he was my confidant [and] sometimes my most scathing critic.” What seems to have held these two fiercely independent men together was that, “we felt that things are best seen in black and white, hardly ever gray, and never in disgusting pastels.” The Dean
even took Professor Grubbs on fund raising trips, an activity that seemed most uncharacteristic to his friends. But then, he was a good citizen.

Cliff's advisory services to the University were most intense during the troubled years of the sixties and seventies. His concerns never left him, but his activities of this sort understandably waned following the death of his daughter Suzanne in 1983, and as his health deteriorated.

The Economist.

As noted above, Cliff was well trained in economic theory and method, and his doctoral dissertation at Harvard represented a major exercise in standard microeconomic analysis. It was also a piece of work addressed to a real-world problem and yielding results of practical usefulness. While the dissertation per se was not published, its major parts did find publication in several conference papers and a refereed journal article.

What Cliff set out to do was to develop a way to derive the marginal costs of supplying highway services and a procedure for allocating those costs among highway user vehicles, particularly between passenger automobiles and trucks of various weights and designs. The problem arises from two considerations. (1) Socially efficient production of a good or service requires that the price paid by users be equal to marginal cost. (2) A highway, once constructed, has a key characteristic of a "public good," so long as it is not congested or suffering physical damage. Additional vehicles add nothing to the total cost of providing its services, so that marginal cost equals zero. It therefore tends to maximize social welfare (given the investment outlay) to allow additional vehicle use at a price of zero until one or both of the above conditions begin to occur. With free use, however, one or both will eventually occur. At that point marginal cost becomes positive.

In his analysis, Cliff concentrates on the case of positive and growing physical damage. Aside from directly observable annual costs of maintenance (repairing damage), his data come from highway engineering studies of the stress imposed on concrete slabs of given thickness by the wheels of vehicles passing over them repetitively, compounded by the stress imposed by warping due to differences in temperature between the top and bottom of slabs. From these data he is able to construct a table of number of repetitions to slab failure as a function of wheel load. As one would expect, the function is exponential. Thus, he finds that the physical index of marginal cost for an eight-inch slab rises from a base of 1.0 for a wheel load of 5,000 pounds to 9.4 for a wheel load of 8,000 pounds. The ratio of 9.4, weighted by miles traveled, would tell us how to
allocate observed highway maintenance costs between the two wheel-load classes, if there are only the two, and among the vehicles in each class. (If there are many wheel-load classes, there would be an equal number of index ratios and the same allocative principle would apply.) The allocation to each vehicle would then be the maintenance cost attributable to its degree of usage on the highway, a sensible measure of marginal cost. Each user would then have an incentive only to use the highway up to the point where marginal benefit equals the positive marginal cost, rather than where it equals zero.

It is readily apparent that marginal cost pricing of highways is, in principle, superior to relying on motor fuel taxes or ton-mile fees, which need have little relationship to the contribution of each highway user to additional maintenance costs imposed. In his 1963 article in the National Tax Journal, Cliff demolished the theory of the latter. The question of motor fuel taxes is more problematic if one considers the social costs of air pollution associated with the intensity of highway use. Cliff considered neither these nor those arising from congestion per se (e.g., time lost, increased accidents). Inclusion of congestion costs in the analysis could only have strengthened his case. On the other hand, considerations of administrative cost, also not discussed, might have weakened it.

These comments do not diminish the contribution that he did make in pointing the way to a possibly feasible and economically efficient scheme of pricing highway usage. What he accomplished from about 1958 to 1965 clearly demonstrates his creativity and powers of economic analysis. It also provides an example of his preference for attacking practical problems as opposed to purely theoretical ones, a preference that helps explain his increasingly critical view, after 1965, of contemporary trends in the discipline of economics.

The Critic.

Cliff’s proposed book on The Baroque Economics contains one chapter called “The Glass Bead Game.” It is an attack on the extended developments of microeconomic theory. There is much of use in developed microeconomic theory. Current developments, however, seemed to him unrelated to anything of importance in the real world. Much of this manuscript was written as satire on what passes as scientific research in academic economics, intended for a general audience. But it has a serious side, too, as illustrated in some of the following passages.

“... it is the hallmark of any viable science that as the system undergoes elaboration, its grip on reality, understanding and enrichment, is both extended and more secure. And, yet, the inverse
is true in economics. As the number of theoretical refinements has grown in number, the grip on reality has been weakened and, at the limit, has slipped, leaving theoretical ceremonies. This book is about those ceremonies.”

He thinks that there is very little in modern microeconomic theorizing, “nothing that could make a difference to human life. Nonetheless, this abuse of reason continues to enlarge its ceremonial jurisdiction under the property of graduate scholarship.” He gets the impression from this work that “the world must be a very safe and kind place in which to live, that it has no troubles, no perils, no fears worthy of first-rate minds.” Graduate schools turn out Ph.D.’s “so intrinsically narrow that they can effectively administer only to each other.” He gives an example of what he is talking about: “If one expert can conceive a function constraining the number of consumers who can balance themselves in a matrix, another friendly expert will always discuss the properties of the function, and another, the properties of the properties; and great logical wars can be waged for years over nothing of substance whatever. Moreover, the greater the implied contempt for man and his pitiful undertakings, the further the matter is removed from what makes life worth living, the higher the rank of implied scholarship.”

He compares this undertaking in economics to that in the physical sciences where “hubris in the absolute sense of the term is never found because of the dangerous exposure which resides in the relation between theorems and experimental observation...the matter must be taken back to the world, and this step involves a step into the outside world that is not itself a creation of the particular theoretical statement under examination.” Many theorems in economics have no empirical content, many variables are nonoperational abstractions, and there is no standard for verification other than the researcher’s making no mistake in his algebra. The game in economics is a “comfortable, circular, logical setup.” The serious side of Grubbs’ complaint about modern economic theorizing is that much of it is not governed by the rules of scientific inquiry, especially the criterion of verifiability. This concern was a natural one to a man who, as a graduate student at the University of Texas, was deeply interested in the works of C. S. Peirce and John Dewey.

“The marginal product of the glass bead game in economics is recessive, pretentious, tedious, ornate, dull. We need a name for this new scholasticism. I have called it the ‘baroque economics’.” And his main criticism is that “the baroque economics produces no experimental theorems of any consequence, and always leads back to itself.”
One problem with modern economic theory, he thought, is the emphasis placed on precision. He closes this chapter by quoting Maurice Dobb. "Precision may be a most desirable, even essential, ingredient of the process of thought, as is sharpness of steel in cutting. But when sharpness of the tool and its product are confused, when precision is sanctified as the end of thought and made the touchstone of truth, thought is rendered flat and sterile and ideas become husks lacking the substance of life."

The Scholar.

We have seen Professor Grubbs, the economist, turn to Grubbs, the critic of modern economics. Neither the work of the economist nor the critic of economics seems to have been his focus for sustained periods. At some point, while still engaged in economic criticism, he turned his tremendous intellectual energy to thinking about major social issues, a more creative cerebral activity.

During the period of social unrest that followed several years of the Viet Nam war, he wrote an essay called, "The American Solution Mystique—and the End of an Era." Those of us who knew him well will always recall the excitement he brought to bear on its central theme. One version of the essay begins, "The American Solution Mystique—the conviction that all problems can be solved—is one of the basic features of the American personality and historic type." How did this come about? What have been its consequences? What will the future bring? To answer these questions, Grubbs devoted the last third of his life to a study of this mystique and why destiny chose to deposit the seed in a fertile womb called the United States. What follows is the barest outline of his thinking.

Tracing the origins of an idea led to a regressive kind of inquiry. Every development he was able to identify had its origin in some previous development. It was a never-ending search. He finally settled on Will Durant’s passage that,

The continuity of science and philosophy from Egypt, India, and Babylon through Greece and Byzantium to Eastern and Spanish Islam to northern Europe and America, is one of the brightest threads in the skein of history.

Characteristically picking "one of the brightest threads," Grubbs set out to trace the origin of the US back to ancient Sumer. He wrote a chapter entitled "Sumerian Dawn," and much of the material was presented in his Plan II course. Subsequently, however, he decided that it would be
sufficient to go back to Greece, and the first chapter in his last manuscript was called “The Greek Legacy.”

What was the Greek legacy? It was the legacy of Greek mathematics, philosophy, and the idea of God as a rational being. The two central figures in his narrative were Pythagoras and Plato. The Pythagorean Plato had a major influence on the thinking of Galileo. In *Timaeus*, Plato argues “the daring idea” that the nature of the universe is mathematical. Then, according to Grubbs, “every Western scientist from Copernicus to Newton read *Timaeus*”—the name of a Pythagorean astronomer who relates to a hushed Socrates how the world began. But this is getting a little ahead of the story. Before the Greek learning could influence seventeenth century thought, much water would pass under the bridge.

The protectors and promoters of Christianity during the Western Dark Ages were the Franks. While the Carolingian kings were not able to drive the Muslims from Spain, they were able to check their advance. Pepin the Short was anointed “King by grace of God,” by the Pope. In return, he agreed to rescue the Church from the Lombards and followed through by capturing much of their territory in central Italy, which he turned over to the Roman church—much to the consternation of Constantinople from which the lands had been seized earlier. The greatest of all Franks, Charlemagne, and obviously one of Professor Grubbs’ most intriguing historical figures, “brought” Christianity to the pagans of Western Europe and received the title of Emperor of the Christian West in a brief ceremony at St. Peter’s on Christmas day in the year 800. After his death, the Christian West fell upon relatively poor times until the close of the Western Dark Ages around 1000. As Henri Perine has written,

...the Empire of Charlemagne was the scaffolding of the Middle Ages. The state upon which it was founded was extremely weak and would presently crumble. But the Empire would survive as the higher unity of Western Christendom.

This assured that Christianity would play a major role in everything that was to follow in the Western World.

As to technological advancement during the Dark Ages, Grubbs cites two significant tools in use at the beginning of the 11th century, the moldboard plow and the shoulder collar, which prevented a horse from choking under heavy strain. What about the advancement of learning? Grubbs returns to his central theme.
So far as known, there was not a single copy of the Alexandrian mathematical and scientific manuscripts in existence in all of western Christendom at the opening of the 11th century. There was not even a copy of Euclid's *Elements*, let alone the texts of Archimedes, Apollonius, Ptolemy, or Diophantus. The Western Europeans had even no conception of what the Greeks had done at Alexandria. Surely some of these Alexandrian papyrus rolls (or fragments) must have reached Rome before the fury of the Dark Ages, together with the eternal enemies of mildew, rot, rash, and neglect, had left no trace of them by 1000, either in Rome or anywhere else in the western frontier. In the year A.D. 1000 the Western Europeans understood less about algebra than had the Babylonians c. 1800 B.C.

Things were quite different in the East. By the year 900, Baghdad had long been the "center of learning in the world." Islamic scholars had digested the best from two disparate cultures. From India they took the Hindu number system (so-called Arabic numbers), some understanding of algebra, and the techniques of making paper and printing which the Indians had learned from the Chinese. From the Greeks they had "encountered the full challenge of Greek reason and ideas." The Arabs had translated into Arabic virtually all of the Greek classics. Baghdad and Damascus were cities of intellectual ferment that had no counterparts in the West.

In a chapter entitled "Islam and the West," Grubbs details how the Graeco-Arabic legacy managed to reach the Christian frontier. The Berber invasion of Spain in 711-712 was quickly usurped by Arab aristocracy, relegating the Berbers to a form of "Muslim proletariat." Rioting broke out periodically and reached a crescendo in 1013, when the Berbers overran the city of Cordova. Many books at the famous library there, as well as its scholars, were dispersed to Seville, Barcelona, and Toledo. During the following century some of the world's "most advanced knowledge began to enter the post-Roman frontier in Western Christian Europe." Thus, Greek learning, the Hindu number system, Arab algebra and medicine, and important Chinese inventions reached the West through Islam.

And what was the "larger issue" of this confluence on the West?

In the larger issue the amalgamation of Greek ideas with the resources of Christendom placed the frontier west on the medieval path towards the rise of Western science. The institutions, practices, and resources of Christianity formed the social order out of which the scientific movement sprang, while the belief in the
rational Jehovah of the Old Testament helped sustain the scientific conviction that the physical universe was rationally comprehensible. In western cosmology God would become the rational Jehovah endowed with the mind of a Greek mathematician. But the Christian Church with its human bonds was the great mother of the western world.

That not all was well within the Church and between the Church and the nonbelievers in the ensuing centuries is documented in “Toward the Seventeenth Century.” The major force for progress in this period was the establishment of many famous universities. These universities became the “first home” of the ancient Greeks and the “arena” for intellectual conflicts that struck at the essence of religion and certain practices of the Church. As Grubbs puts it, “While the Dominicans inside the universities were debating Aristotle, the Dominicans on the outside were administering the Inquisition.”

While many Church intellectuals were fascinated with the teachings of Aristotle, some of his teachings were intolerable to the Church. The problem was that some of his teachings undermined the authority of the Old Testament; those views were officially banned in 1270 by Church authorities. One of Grubbs’ fascinations was the difference between Plato, the teacher, and Aristotle, the student, regarding the nature of God and the fate of the soul. To Plato, God was Pythagorean, and a corrupt soul encased in a corrupt body migrated to some other corrupt body after death. To Aristotle, all of this was nonsense. The manuscript abruptly ends before we learn how Professor Grubbs settles this issue. But one thing is certain in his mind. In the end, Plato wins out, as he states in another place that Newton conceived God “as the rational Jehovah endowed with the mind of a Greek mathematician.”

The rest of the story moves rapidly because there is only conversation to recall, and a scant manuscript of a foreword to “Religion, Science and Capitalism and The First United States.” The seventeenth century was one of the great “hinges” of history, as Grubbs once characterized it to Bill Moyers. In the manuscript we get a glimpse of his thinking. Major events of the seventeenth century were the development of mathematics and science due to the central figure, Isaac Newton, the rise of capitalism as an organizing method of production, the beginning of the industrial revolution symbolized by the invention of the steam engine, and the settlement of the new world, later to become, in part, the United States.

According to Grubbs, the United States was,
Born in the right place, at the right time and with the right tools, both physical and conceptual; heir to both the scientific and industrial revolutions together with the philosophical and economic legacy of Europe; eventually protected by two oceans on a virtual continent bulging with natural resources in the middle latitudes of the world’s climate zones, the First United States seemed marked out by the course of history to solve any problem that rose in its way.

This fortunate location and timing “contributed to a new world outlook.” That outlook was one of extreme optimism that “the human troubles of the ages could be overcome through technological and scientific power, or converted into scientific and technological problems and ‘solved’.” This outlook he called the American Solution Mystique.

There occurred a rude awakening in the 1960s. We called upon our “best and brightest”: our best scientists, engineers, military people, social philosophers, and problem solvers in many areas. We found that we could not stop the pesky North Vietnamese with our billion dollar technological barrier, nor could we solve the “problems” of race and poverty with Great Society programs; Grubbs declared the Great Society a failure, not unlike the failure of the Roman Empire. More importantly, though, he sensed that something had changed in the U.S. The outlook that no obstacle could impede material progress for more than a moment seemed to have disappeared. Maybe our major “problems” had no solutions. With this realization we had come to the end of an era, and this spelled the end of the First United States. Our technicians and new social engineers had failed us badly, something new in our experience, and we entered a period of self-doubt.

What will the Second United States be like? Clifton Grubbs thought deeply about this question but had not quite settled on an answer at the time of his death. Of only one thing we are sure. It would have been stated succinctly, convincingly (“never in disgusting pastels”), eloquently, and in such a way as to provoke controversy.

The Man.

We have seen Grubbs the teacher, the economist, the critic and the scholar, but what kind of man was he? In describing Grubbs the man, we encounter expressions such as compassionate, honorable, fair, flair for the dramatic, honest, faithful, true to his word, reasonable, iconoclastic, eccentric, and visionary. All of these are accurate descriptions but do not necessarily get to the essence of the man. The essential character of Professor Grubbs is better understood by considering the way he conducted himself in a period of adversity, beginning about the time he
retired from teaching, and at an earlier time during the tumultuous period of student activism on campus following the tragedy at Kent State University.

For most of his retirement Professor Grubbs was in poor health and living alone. He underwent a serious operation for prostate cancer and was stricken with emphysema due to his incessant smoking. These illnesses, however, were minor in comparison to the terrible cluster headaches that constantly threatened his nights. Yet, he never dwelled on his misfortune, preferring to think of it as something that just happens. To him adversity was to be coped with, not to complain about. Instead, he spent most of his time reading for, and writing the book he never finished. In fact, it was often difficult to disengage one’s self in conversation with him, because his enthusiasm in what he was doing and its intellectual appeal were so great.

Perhaps no statement conveys the essence of the man as well as that expressed by one of his students, who wrote of Grubbs’ presence at a potentially dangerous confrontation between angry students and law enforcers following the US. invasion of Cambodia. Through the eyes of John Zammito we see the man.

From the first time the campus stirred with unrest, this man’s name stood out as a voice of reason—soothing yet sympathetic, cognizant but not rash, critical but sane. I did not participate in these disturbances at first; I was pursuing academic ghosts. But the time came when I, too, became angry and prowled the malls, bitter and cynical. And Grubbs would come and speak sense, and I would see the reason and calm down.

Then came Kent State. This time we were very mad. Mad—not just angry—and almost insane. There were lots of us—more than ever before—and the administration, already hostile, grew more so. The State Government, insistent upon order, had summoned from throughout the surrounding areas members of the Department of Public Safety. The students made one dash out into the streets in a spontaneous demonstration; there was small violence. The next day, the protest grew more organized. In the city, the police were preparing. It was rumored, and I believe, that weapons with live ammunition were passed out to these officers. On campus, the fury mounted as biased reports from the previous demonstration were voiced on the local radio. The killings in Mississippi added to the flames. Thousands gathered and determined to march. Just off campus a ring of armed
policemen stood waiting. The President of the University realized the awful potential for violence and called upon Clifton Grubbs to come and speak to us. We had hooted away any who came to pacify us. As Grubbs came to the microphone, all our sympathy for him was at stake, and he knew it. He came quickly, spoke, and retired from the microphone. He knew the anger. Had he spoken in a conciliatory tone he would have been shouted down. I would have shouted him down. But he was straightforward and tight—Don’t let any more blood be shed, not your blood, not now. And he was gone. I will not say he turned us around. John Kenneth Galbraith, on campus giving an address, came before us as well, and he, too, calmed the crowds. But the students did not march out that day; and when we did march, it was under a court injunction against the city, and we went in peace. No other professor from this campus could have stood in that midday sun, in that blazing anger, and spoken to us. Even Galbraith spoke hours later. Other professors in the interim received only scorn.”

The above account has a sequel. Not all the students were convinced that the “time was not now.” A relatively small number of more militant students assembled in little clusters at the Littlefield fountain and met to formulate their own plans to march. So what if the “militia” had real bullets? Such a thought emboldened them more. What better result could be expected than a real confrontation with authority? Looking in the direction of the fountain, Cliff probably recognized some of these students and instinctively was attracted to them. He moved in and out of these clusters, convincing members that it was not in their best interest to produce the photo opportunity that some thought would be useful.

As a company commander in Korea, First Lieutenant Grubbs had developed a nose for trouble. He learned that dangerous situations were best handled calmly and intelligently, but firmly and quickly. He was the right man, at the right time, and the University will always be indebted for his presence that day in the midday sun facing an angry crowd. Indeed, this may have been his finest hour at the University.
Robert M. Berdahl, President
The University of Texas at Austin

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Stephen L. McDonald (Chair), Douglas C. Dacy, and Daniel C. Morgan.