

IN MEMORIAM

RENKE GUSTAV LUBBEN

Renke Gustav Lubben was born on March 7, 1898, at Utica, Nebraska, to Christian and Amelia Lena Lubben. He was one of a family of seven children (there being two brothers and four sisters). He died on June 30, 1980, after several years of ill health, and having been further weakened by a stroke about six weeks prior to his death.

Early in the century the family moved to Jackson County, Texas and here Lubben completed 12 units of credit at the Francitas High School in 1916. When he entered The University of Texas at Austin that fall, he had a two-unit deficiency which he made up with credits in French. He graduated from the University in June, 1921, with the B.A. degree, and also he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He stayed on at The University of Texas and received a doctorate in Pure Mathematics in 1925. He wrote his dissertation under the supervision of Professor Robert Lee Moore. Here at Texas he was Moore's second doctoral student and the third to receive that degree in mathematics from the University.

For the scholastic year 1926-1927, Dr. Lubben received a post-doctoral fellowship award from the Rockefeller Foundation and he spent fifteen months at Goettingen, Germany, with sightseeing trips in Italy and in Switzerland and to family cousins in Germany. He was to go again to Europe for the

International Congress of Mathematics, meeting in Zurich, Switzerland in the summer of 1932. After the mathematical congress, he vacationed some in Spain and in France. Partly as a result of his travels he developed and maintained a strong interest in the mathematical articles originating from western Europe.

As a teacher at The University of Texas, Lubben served as an instructor, adjunct professor (an older title later replaced by assistant professor) and associate professor. He retired from teaching with the rank of Emeritus Professor in 1968.

In his teaching Professor Lubben preferred to teach advanced geometry classes (both Euclidean and non-Euclidean types). During this time advanced geometry was in a period of decline, and in many years the minimum class sizes did not always materialize, and so Dr. Lubben frequently taught advanced algebra, analytic geometry, and trigonometry courses.

In his research work, Professor Lubben turned out a series of six important papers on the foundations of geometry and point-set theory. At one time he was interested in preparing an advanced geometry treatise and/or textbook and he had made some progress when an illness in 1959 caused him to shelve this project. This illness was a severe case of viral pneumonia with later complications which forced him to take a short leave of absence for recuperation.

Friends and associates of his in the thirties and forties will remember him as a good companion on walking and hiking trips (or on photographic expeditions) with a stop at a beer garden when the hike or walk was over. He

was usually shy and reserved, but quite happy to be in good company.

Friends and associates of his in the sixties will remember him as an extremely shy and bashful man who did not "mix well". It is quite possible that the 1959 illness accentuated his shyness and tended to isolate him. At any rate, two quite different descriptions would be furnished by these two different groups.

All friends, associates and acquaintances agree that he was unfailingly polite.

Professor Lubben was somewhat of a perfectionist. He did not wish to rush into publication just for the sake of publishing. All of the results of his mathematical papers were presented to the American Mathematical Society's meetings. Indeed, two of his longer papers were presented in three sections, often stretched over a period of a year. This presenting a paper procedure, often followed by mathematicians, allows the writer or discoverer to get credit for his discovery by presenting a paper to the Society and the scholar then has more time to write up a creditable exposition of his work. In Professor Lubben's case the scholar seems to have been interested in definitive and nearly complete monographs instead of fragmented notes and notices.

After retirement he continued his researches in geometry, his photographic hobby, and he further developed his reading skills in Italian and French. There had been a number of important papers in advanced geometry published in Italy around the turn of the century and in the early part of this century. Professor Lubben was the recognized local "translator" for

mathematical articles written in Italian. His readings in French were mostly for personal enjoyment. In 1975 he gave over a hundred books on French history or French novels and short stories to the newly created Department of French and Italian Literature of the University.

For many years Professor Lubben had written down a large number of what may be described as random notes and isolated proofs. As indicated earlier, he was considering bringing out a geometry compendium. But due to illness, he saw he would not be able to complete such a project. In the opinion of this committee sometime between 1968 and 1974, Professor Lubben examined many of these notes, found none that he wanted to publish, and destroyed them all. This committee knows of many mathematicians who, anxious to add to their publication record, would have submitted many of these minor research items to the lesser mathematical journals or to the editors of the "problems" section. This destruction was probably done about 1972 when the offices of mathematics department were moved from Benedict Hall to the new Robert Lee Moore Hall.

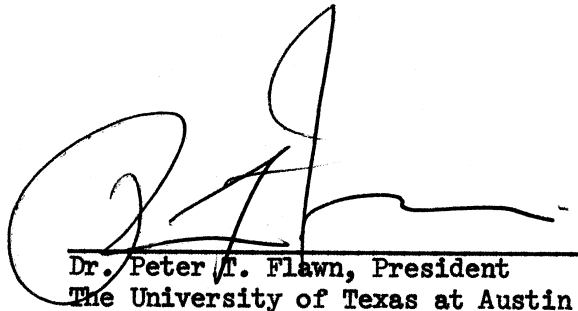
For a time Lubben developed his own photographic negatives and used his own enlarging equipment. But with the advent of color photography he was content to let others do that work. A lover of good classical music he gave to the Humanities Research Center a collection of classical records along with his mathematical books.

After retirement in 1968, he remained in his Austin home until 1974. He maintained his office, first in Benedict Hall until the summer of 1972 and

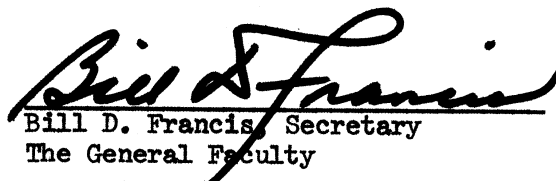
then in the new Robert Lee Moore Hall (as it is now known). But his visits to his new office became infrequent. In late 1974 his sister, niece and nephew from San Antonio, found him in a very run down physical condition and somewhat lacking in the skills to cope in a competitive society. They moved him to a San Antonio hospital and succeeded in building him up physically and mentally. He then moved to Friendship Villa North Nursing home in San Antonio where he spent a relatively happy five years. Austin visitors were welcomed there, and he was able to spend many happy hours with old friends and with his family.

Relatively late in his life, some oil wells were drilled on his South Texas property near Francitas in Jackson County. Though the wells were not very productive, Dr. Lubben did receive royalty payments for several years.

He is survived by three sisters: Mrs. Sophie Martin of Goliad, Mrs. Elsie Foote of Van Nuys, California, and Mrs. Edna Ponders of San Antonio, a nephew, Ross Ponders of Carrollton, and a niece, Miss Gail Ponders of San Antonio. Miss Gail Ponders was his legally appointed guardian in the last years of his life.



Dr. Peter T. Flawn, President  
The University of Texas at Austin



Bill D. Francis, Secretary  
The General Faculty

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2. "Concerning Limiting Sets in Abstract Spaces", *Transactions of the American Mathematical Society*, vol. 30, 1928, pp. 668-685.
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5. "Separabilities of Arbitrary Orders and Related Properties", *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, vol. 46(1940), pp. 913-919.
6. "Concerning the Decomposition and Amalgamation of Points, Upper Semi-Continuous Collections, and Topological Extensions", *Transactions of the American Mathematical Society*, vol. 49(1941), pp. 410-466.

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Robert E. Greenwood (Chairman), R. H. Bing, and Roger C. Osborn.