IN MEMORIAM

FRANK HALLAM LYELL

Dr. Frank Hallam Lyell, a retired professor of English at The University of Texas, died on July 19, 1977, in Jackson, Mississippi. Funeral services were held for him at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, of which he for many years had been a member. He is survived by a brother, Louis James Lyell of Jackson, three nephews and two nieces.

Dr. Lyell was born August 11, 1911, to the late Clarea (Hallam) Lyell and Judge G. Garland Lyell. Educated in the Jackson secondary schools, he first attended Millsaps College in Jackson, then the University of Virginia, from which in 1930 he was graduated with an A.B. degree. He received an A.M. from Columbia University in 1931, and a Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1938. He was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity and of Phi Beta Kappa.

Between 1932 and 1942, Dr. Lyell taught at North Carolina State College at Raleigh, and after serving four years with the United States Army, he came to The University of Texas at Austin, where he taught continuously in the Department of English until his retirement in 1976.

Dr. Lyell's primary subjects of literary concern were Shakespeare, the English novel and modern drama, all of which he taught at one time or the other while at the University of Texas. In 1942, the Princeton University Press
published his scholarly study of the novels of John Galt, a prolific, versatile, nineteenth-century Scottish editor and writer of poetry, drama, sketches, and essays, but known especially for his fiction and for his biographies of Lord Byron and Thomas Carlyle.

As a native Mississippian, Dr. Lyell grew up in the traditions of an older South. In consequence, he became closely associated with many writers who, over the past decades, have played such an important role in Southern letters. These associations gave Dr. Lyell an enviable insight into what generally has been called "the Southern literary Renaissance." Among his close personal friends were the late Hubert Creekmore, Reynolds Price, Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon and Eudora Welty, the last named a lifetime friend with whom Dr. Lyell carried on an extensive correspondence. In testimony of her regard for Dr. Lyell as a friend, a scholar, a teacher and a critic, Miss Welty recently has written:

I loved and honored his fidelity to what was good, what was great, in English literature. That fidelity was unceasing, unswerving. Frank gave to literature the best of himself, all his responding mind, his responding heart. And that response was an original one, capable -- in its fine enthusiasm, in its austerity too -- of arousing others to discoveries of their own. What a teacher this must have made him! He and I went to college as contemporaries but I
always felt he was the very kind of creative teacher from whom I could have learned the most. I did learn as his lifelong friend. In my own work his gift of criticism provided me with a touchstone. His capacious understanding gave me lasting help and encouragement; I counted on it for forty years. Like his laughter, his affection, like his friendship itself, it is irreplaceable to me.

Dr. Lyell's circle of literary friends, however, was by no means confined to America but included such British authors as W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Christopher Isherwood, Pamela Travers, and John Lehmann.

National recognition of Dr. Lyell's skill in judging literary values is manifest in the fact that, within scarcely more than a decade, he contributed almost thirty reviews to the book section of the New York Times. Apart from the critical acumen which informed his reviews, conscientious scholarship also reinforced them. Invited to review James Branch Cabell's autobiographical Quiet, Please, for example, Dr. Lyell reread all of Cabell's works by way of preparing himself to offer authoritative comments. One of Cabell's remarks so delighted him that he shared it with friends: Cabell thanked God that he had grown old with a still flourishing appetite plus an unimpaired liver.

Dr. Lyell often declared that one of his principal interests was to cultivate his taste, by which he meant that he sought to augment his knowledge and discrimination in a very broad cultural realm in addition to the literary. As a
result he made himself a connoisseur in many departments of fine arts -- music, ballet, drama, painting, sculpture, and architecture. He missed very few of the operatic or dramatic productions, concerts, art exhibits, ballets, and important public lectures that took place within reach of Austin. Shortly before his death he set out on a European journey, the last of many, during which he toured Germany, Switzerland and Italy with the express intention of studying the art and architecture of those lands, while in the meantime availing himself of convenient opportunities to further his appreciation, as a gourmet, of the fine art of haute cuisine.

A dedicated teacher, who demanded both discipline and high academic standards, Dr. Lyell encouraged and spent much time with those of his students who wished to learn, but he was never willing to pamper those with no such interest or who merely feigned interest. One of his students was Willie Morris, later a Rhodes scholar, who, while at the University was editor of the Daily Texan and who afterward served as editor of the Texas Observer and then moved on to become editor of Harper's Magazine. Appraising Dr. Lyell as a teacher, Morris, in his autobiographical, award-winning North Toward Home, says that, while a student in one of Dr. Lyell's freshman classes, he sometimes was angered by the poor grades he received on his "outrageous themes" because, being a fellow Mississippian, he felt that he, "as something of a birthright," deserved better treatment. But he graciously admitted that Lyell's adherence
to "high values" made him realize that the "editorial texture" which he had given to his high school newspaper "would hardly serve in a world where English was master tongue." Moreover, he added, it had made him aware of the fact that "loose, insensitive, and poorly formed language" betrays the same quality of mind.

Dr. Lyell's influence was widely felt and appreciated and he will be missed by many of his former students and colleagues as well as by numerous friends he had acquired in Austin and elsewhere. It is with the same appreciation and with respect that this committee wishes to acknowledge his long services and to pay tribute to his memory.

Dr. Lorene L. Rogers, President of
The University of Texas at Austin

Bill D. Francis, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of John G. Varner (chairman), Thomas M. Cranfill, and Gerald Langford.