DOCUMENTS AND MINUTES OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR

HUGH LYON McMATH

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a Memorial Resolution for Hugh Lyon McMATH, Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM

HUGH LYON McMATH

Hugh Lyon McMATH was born May 9, 1904, in Watertown, South Dakota, the son of Walter J. and Miriam Lyon McMATH. He graduated from Central High School in Fargo, North Dakota. He was the second Eagle Scout in North Dakota. In 1927 he received a B.S. in Architecture degree from North Dakota Agricultural College, where he was a member of Tau Sigma Delta, an honorary fraternity in architecture, and a member of Sigma Chi, a social fraternity. In 1934 he received an M.S. in Architecture degree from The University of Texas, and in 1936 he received an M.S. degree from M.I.T.

Professor McMATH began his teaching career at North Dakota State College in 1927-28. In 1928-29 he was instructor in architecture at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois. In 1930 he came to The University of Texas as an instructor in the then Department of Architecture in the College of Engineering. Although teaching was his life work, he gained experience in the profession of architecture in the office of Frederic J. Klein in Peoria, Illinois, in 1928-29, as an associate of Walter T. Rolfe in Austin, Texas, in the 1930’s, and with Driscoll and Groos in Austin in 1938.

The three highlights of Hugh McMATH's career in which he took greatest pride were: his guidance of the School of Architecture during the trying period of its transition from a department in the College of Engineering to a fully autonomous School of Architecture; his service in the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II; and his role in promoting an interest in the art and architecture of Mexico and in bringing closer ties between the School of Architecture and the culture of Mexico.

Goldwin Goldsmith became the Chairman of the Department of Architecture in 1928, and he brought with him to The University of Texas Walter T. Rolfe, who had been the Chairman of the Department of Architecture at North Dakota State College. It was Rolfe who in turn brought Hugh McMATH to Texas in 1930. McMATH had been one of Rolfe's students at N.D.S.C. The chairmanship of the department passed from Goldsmith to Rolfe in 1935, and after much deliberation the Department of Architecture became a School of Architecture in the College of Engineering in 1947. At this time Walter Rolfe resigned from the University to go into private practice, and Hugh McMATH was appointed Director of the School of Architecture. In 1950, again after much deliberation, the School of Architecture became autonomous as a School of Architecture with a Director as the head. It was only later that the title of Dean was given to the head of the school. McMATH was named Acting Director during the interval until 1951.
In 1942 Hugh McMath took a leave of absence from The University and volunteered in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was commissioned a First Lieutenant AAF, and began as an instructor and moved up the ladder to become director of the ground school at Moore Field Army Air Corps Base in Mission, Texas. He retired from active duty in 1946 with the rank of Major. He continued his association with the military in the Air Reserve, where he headed the educational guidance staff of the Austin Air Reserve Group. He retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1964.

During his years at The University, his activities reflected a deep interest in the art and architecture of Mexico. He originated courses in the Pre-Hispanic and Colonial architecture of Mexico, and organized and led “Arctours,” which were one-week tours of Mexico during spring break. These “Arctours” to Mexico in the years 1968, 1969, and 1970, which were organized to inspire interest in historic Mexican architecture by touring important sites, attracted students and faculty from all areas of The University. Hugh said he intended for those tours “to bring Americans face to face with the cultural achievements of the past in Mexico.” Even more important, perhaps, was his promotion of close ties between The University of Texas and the Instituto Tecnologico of Monterrey, Mexico. From 1950 until 1960, Hugh organized summer architecture workshops at the Instituto Tecnologico of Monterrey, this being the first time U.S. architecture students were taken into Mexico to study. Students from all over the U.S. were involved. His sponsorship aided the admission of the architecture school at the Instituto Tecnologico into the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Hugh’s involvement with Mexico is reflected in his collections of artifacts and works of art from Mexico, including wood carvings, paintings, clay figurines, and vitrales—glass mosaics similar to stained glass panels. In recognition of his contribution to the appreciation of the culture of Mexico, Hugh was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (Great Britain). In 1974, forty-four years after first coming to The University of Texas, Hugh McMath retired and was named Professor Emeritus.

Hugh McMath married Frances Marion Little on July 16, 1937. They had one daughter, Frances Little McMath, in whom Hugh was justifiably proud. Hugh McMath died on November 16, 1992. The faculty sends condolences to the family by which he is survived—his daughter Frances, whose accomplishments gave him great pleasure in his later years.

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors D. Blake Alexander (Chairman), Richard P. Swallow, and Roxanne K. Williamson.

Distributed to Voting and Emeritus Members of the faculty and the Dean of the School, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on August 27, 1993.