IN MEMORIAM
EDMUND LLOYD PINCOFFS

Edmund Pincoffs died in Austin on November 7, 1991, at age 74. He taught in the Philosophy Department at The University of Texas at Austin from 1965 to the time of his retirement in 1989. He had also served as Associate Dean of the Graduate School, 1967-1968, and as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, 1976-1980. In the two short years he held the title of Professor Emeritus he continued to be active both within the University and in the community of scholars internationally. In July 1991 he was honored by the American Philosophical Association, Central Division, by being elected to the office of Vice President. He was to assume the office of President of the Division in 1992.

In an article on "Quandary Ethics" that made a powerful impression when it was published in the English journal *Mind* in 1971, Pincoffs decried the excessive emphasis twentieth-century ethical theory had placed on moral dilemmas. He called instead for a return to the classical conception of virtue, or human excellence, pointing out that the function of morality should be that of nurturing the morally complete person, so that moral "quandaries" can be forestalled as much as possible. He developed this theory further in other articles and ultimately in his major book, *Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductionism in Ethics* (1986). The "reductionism" Pincoffs opposed is the view that moral reasoning is possible only when a master premise (e.g., one drawn from theology or from political dogma) is assumed. Stressing the importance of the community in the articulation of moral values, while also arguing against communitarian relativism, he urged that the appropriate metaphor for ethics is not that of building on a foundation but rather that of weaving and mending a net -- "comparing the joint strength of one set of considerations to the joint strength of alternative sets."
An augmented issue of the journal *Social Theory and Practice*, for summer 1991, was dedicated to Dr. Pincoffs. The issue collected in a single volume ten articles that had been presented at a special UT Austin conference in his honor on the theme "The Nature of Virtue Ethics: Its Political Relevance." Held in March 1990, the conference brought to Austin prominent American ethicists as well as UT Austin graduates who had studied under Dr. Pincoffs.

All whose lives were touched by Edmund Pincoffs give witness that such virtues as courage, tolerance, openness, even-temperedness, modesty, sincerity, loyalty, benevolence -- which are among the sixty-seven distinct types he describes and analyzes in his book on that theme -- were also among the virtues Pincoffs embodied in his character and in his conduct.

Dr. Pincoffs' other area of scholarly distinction was the philosophy of law. His first book was in that field: *The Rationale of Legal Punishment* (1966). And so was his last published book: *Philosophy of Law: A Brief Introduction* (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1991). He was also the editor of a collection of essays on *The Concept of Academic Freedom* (1975), based on a conference he had convened at UT Austin in 1972. In 1988 he delivered the Romanell lecture, a special event annually sponsored by the American Philosophical Association. The topic of Dr. Pincoffs' address was "The Practice of Responsibility-Ascription."

Born in Chicago in 1919, Dr. Pincoffs attended schools in Houston and at Pottstown, Pennsylvania. He received an A.B. degree from the University of North Carolina in 1941. During the Second World War he served as U.S. Coast Guard officer on anti-submarine- and assault-landing-vessels in the Caribbean and the Western Pacific. Returning to civilian life he first pursued a career as a businessman in Houston, but after four years he chose to turn to professional philosophy. He received the Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1957. His academic career started at the University of Houston, where he rose quickly through the ranks, serving as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy from 1959 to 1965.
At UT Austin, Dr. Pincoffs taught a wide variety of courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level, including courses in philosophical analysis, political and social philosophy, ethics, the philosophy of law, the philosophy of education, and the history of philosophy.

He held visiting appointments at Princeton University, Oberlin College, and Cambridge University. In 1981-82 he held a National Endowment for the Humanities Senior Fellowship as well as a Fellowship at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. His many other honors include the presidency of the Southwestern Philosophical Society, the presidency of the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy (American Section), and election (in 1988) to The Philosophical Society of Texas.

Concerned to bring philosophy into a public arena where it could affect people's lives, Dr. Pincoffs pursued this goal not only in his teaching and in his writing but also through public service. He served terms as Chairman of the Texas Committee for the Humanities, as Vice Chairman of the Texas Humanities Resource Center, and as President of the English-Speaking Union. The congregation of the Unitarian Church of Austin remembers him with great affection and respect as a frequent lay speaker. Deeply committed to the safeguarding of human and academic rights, he served terms as Board Member of the Central Texas Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, as President of the Texas Conference and of the University of Texas Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, and as Member of the national Council of the A.A.U.P.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Elizabeth Zimmerman Pincoffs, two daughters, Mary Elizabeth Pincoffs Wilson of Austin and Ruth Posey Pincoffs Boicourt of Trappe, Maryland, and a son, Edmund Peter Pincoffs of Austin.

The Pincoffs Estate has donated the professional papers of Edmund Pincoffs to UT Austin's Center for American History and has donated the books from his study to the Brogan Reading Room at the Department of Philosophy.
The Edmund L. Pincoffs Faculty Fellowship in Philosophy, made possible by a major gift by the family and from contributions received in Dr. Pincoffs' memory, will from time to time provide a semester's research leave for a junior member of the Philosophy faculty.

[Signature]
Robert M. Berdahl, President
The University of Texas at Austin

[Signature]
H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Alexander P.D. Mourelatos (Chair), Thomas K. Seung, and Paul B. Woodruff.