IN MEMORIAM

THOMAS ANDREW ROUSSE

Thomas A. Rousse, Professor of Speech and Chairman of the Department of Speech at The University of Texas, suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage on February 7, 1961, and died two days later, on February 9, without having regained consciousness. He was 59 years old. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Mary Shackleford Rousse.

Born, November 15, 1901 in Krandion, Greece, Professor Rousse came to this country as a child, and grew up in Mobile, Alabama, and Fort Worth, Texas. He attended The University of Texas, where he earned three degrees: Bachelor of Laws, 1927; Bachelor of Business Administration, 1928; and Masters of Arts, 1934.

Professor Rousse was listed in Who's Who in America and Who's Who in Education. He was a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, national honorary government fraternity; Delta Sigma Rho, national honorary forensic fraternity; Acacia social fraternity; and numerous professional organizations.

In 1927, Rousse joined the faculty of the department in which he was to spend the remainder of his academic life except for short periods as visiting faculty member at Texas Woman's University, City College of New York, and The University of Michigan.

From 1942-1945 he served, with the rank of major, as director of
the Army Air Corps' Ground Training Technical Advisory Department. For his accomplishments in this post, he received the Legion of Merit. The citation accompanying this award reads in part:

As Director, Ground Training Advisory Department, Major Rousse was responsible for the compilation, publication and distribution of sixty-nine comprehensive types of instructor handbooks and student workbooks. Major Rousse contributed to the achievement of ground training standardization in pilot schools and his exemplary service reflects great credit upon himself and the Army Air Force.

In 1945, at the end of his military service, Professor Rousse returned to The University of Texas to become chairman of his department. Under his leadership it changed from a Department of Public Speaking to a Department of Speech, developed a graduate program, and added courses of study in speech pathology and audiology, radio and television, and the teaching of English as a second language.

From 1945 to 1947, Professor Rousse was Director of the University Veterans Advisory program. Much of the credit for finding effective solutions for the enormous advising problems at The University of Texas, because of the large numbers of veterans returning to resume their college studies, was the result of the patience, wisdom, and inexhaustible goodwill Professor Rousse exercised in discharging this responsibility.

Professor Rousse was deeply convinced of the practical benefits to intellectual discipline and oral skill gained from strenuous forensic competition. As varsity debate coach from
1927 to 1941, he developed a generation of debaters, declaimers, extempore speakers, and orators who achieved national and international recognition. He was largely responsible for setting up an extensive program in intramural forensics at The University of Texas, which each year involves several hundred students in a wide variety of speech competition.

The University Interscholastic League, with headquarters at The University of Texas at Austin, provides competition for the high schools of the state in forensic, athletic, and literary events. Professor Rousse was closely connected with the League’s program, and especially with its speech activities, throughout his academic life. He coached contestants, conducted workshops, wrote columns and handbooks, organized and presided at state executive committee meetings of the University Interscholastic League. He was known to hundreds of speech teachers and literally thousands of student contestants from high schools in every part of the state.

In the professional associations of teachers of speech, at the state and regional level, Professor Rousse was a hard worker and constructive leader. A favorite boast of his was that he had served as President of the Texas Speech Association longer than any other incumbent, and he would then point out that he was president when the United States entered World War II, that he held that post for four years while the association neither met nor held elections, and that he was elected to a fifth year when the association resumed meetings in 1946. At the national level, Professor Rousse was a long-time member and active participant in the affairs of the Speech Association
of America, the national professional and scholarly organization for teachers of speech. He served on many of its most important committees, and in 1955, served a term as its president. It was perhaps the single academic distinction, next to his chairmanship of the Department of Speech, in which he took the greatest pride; and it was richly deserved.

Professor Rousse believed deeply in the value of an organization capable of representing all specializations in the field of speech. He was a key figure in the long and tedious planning that resulted in the interest groups and the legislative assembly of the Speech Association of America. He saw the rightness and the necessity for separate professional organizations, for speech pathologists and audiologists, for those concerned with drama and the theater, for teachers of radio and television; but he was also convinced that these areas derived their main strength and nourishment from the same basic concerns with oral communication that united rhetoricians, teachers of public speaking, debate, discussion, and interpretation, and those concerned with the history and criticism of public address. He believed it was possible to create, and he consistently worked for, a structuring of the SAA that would permit all areas of speech to join forces in working for the good of all.

Professor Rousse enjoyed an argument, particularly if it involved sound evidence and cogent reasoning, but he saw no reason for disliking his opponents. He liked to teach, and was cited by his university for excellence in his craft. He took pride in being able to see more than one side in controversial questions. He
enjoyed good conversation, good stories, and good friends. On the merits of these, he said, he and Socrates were in complete agreement.

The stroke that suddenly and unexpectedly ended Professor Rousse's active and valuable career came at the end of a typically busy day of teaching, departmental planning, and committee duties. The coma from which he never regained consciousness came in the late afternoon, in the final moments of a meeting of the University Interscholastic League's state executive committee, of which he has been a member for so long.

Tom's many friends in the academic community will probably agree that, while the loss was great, the time and place of its occurrence were not inappropriate.

Respectfully submitted

Mody C. Boatright
John Alton Burdine
Jesse J. Villarreal, Chairman