IN MEMORIAM

VERNON TRUETT SCHUHARDT

Vernon Truett Schuhardt was born on March 4, 1901 in San Antonio, Texas. He was educated in the public schools there, and in 1919 he began as a freshman student his long, happy and fruitful association with The University of Texas. At the time of his death on August 15, 1980, as a result of a massive coronary occlusion, he was in his fifth year as Emeritus Professor. He was one of those fortunate men whose talents and zest for life were well-fitted to the place and the time-frame he occupied.

Vernon T. Schuhardt took his B.A. degree at The University of Texas in 1925, where he distinguished himself not only as a student but as a star on The University of Texas basketball team; in 1924 he was on the all-Southwest Conference team. For three years after his graduation he served as science teacher and coach of athletics at Del Rio High School, then at Schreiner Institute at Kerrville. But his scientific and scholarly interests took him to graduate school at Rice Institute, where he received his M.A. degree in parasitology and bacteriology in 1930. In 1931 he postponed further predoctorate studies at Rice to become Assistant Director of the Texas State Health Department Laboratory, partly because of the exigencies of the Great Depression, but also to marry a fellow student, Savannah C. Girardey.

His four years at the "State Lab" were very fruitful ones for Texas' public health services: he organized and directed the Biologics Division, which began mass production and statewide distribution of phenolized rabies vaccine, typhoid vaccine, diptheria toxoid and Schick test toxin; also, he played a major role developing and expanding diagnostic services in parasitology, bacteriology and serology with personnel which he helped train.

In 1935, V. T. Schuhardt joined the faculty of the Department of Botany and Bacteriology at U.T. as Assistant Professor. Although he had managed sufficient time and facilities at the "State Lab" to publish three research papers, he found the teaching load at U.T. to be full-time --- plus, one which would have caused apoplectic dismay to many new Assistant Professors of the present era. Moreover, there was virtually no money available for research. Only by working many nights, weekends, holidays and vacations was he able to continue research with leftover supplies and materials from the undergraduate laboratories, and the few extras (syringes, a few laboratory animals, etc.) which he paid for from his pocket from the poverty-level salary which prevailed at U.T. during those years. Nevertheless, he completed his Ph.D. at Rice in 1940. He continued studies of the relapse phenomenon in relapsing fever, initiated at the "State Lab," and started collaborative work on brucellosis (a common disease of cattle and humans in that day) with Dr. Royal Calder of San Antonio, whose work was supported by Mr. Benjamin Clayton. In 1940, Mr. Clayton supplied funds for brucellosis research at U.T., and Professor Schuhardt became Director of the Brucellosis Research Project of the Clayton Foundation. Soon, a well-equipped laboratory was built among the trees at Speedway and 24th Street, where the Experimental Science Building now stands.

During this period, Dr. Schuhardt rapidly climbed the academic ladder: to Associate Professor in 1937, and to Professor in 1941. Meanwhile his work on Borrelia recurrentis var. turicatae, and his work on the nature and causes of the relapse phenomenon received world-wide recognition. By initiating infections in rats with single spirochetes he demonstrated that repeated relapses were a consequence of a sequence of antigenic mutations which permitted the few mutant survivors to escape the lethal effects of antibody to the preceding antigenic type, and to proliferate; this greatly prolonged the time span within which the parasite could be transmitted to a new host by its specific vector, a rather unusual survival mechanism. Revenge for revealing their secret life style was exacted on him by the spirochetes in the form of a very severe and prolonged case of laboratory-acquired relapsing fever. As public health measures reduced the importance of brucellosis, the project was

phased out gradually. He continued some work on brucellosis and an earlier interest, the diphtheria toxin (toxoid)-antitoxin reaction, but his interests in the early 1960's focused on an unusual enzyme, named lysostaphin, produced by a micrococcus, which specifically lysed Staphylococcus aureus. Lysostaphin was found to be a useful taxonomic tool, and, more importantly, it is a valuable molecular probe for elucidating structure of the microbial cell.

Professor Schuhardt is best remembered for his course in immunology and serology, widely recognized as one of high quality, and for his "Bacterial, Rickettsial and Viral Diseases of Man," one of the most popular courses in the Department. After his retirement in 1975, he devoted his time to organizing his class notes and new materials into a text, "Pathogenic Microbiology." This text not only is instructive and interesting, but is spiced with anecdotes from his wide experience with infectious diseases. He served with distinction on many University committees, as well as committees of the American Society of Microbiology, where he had a major role in organizing the Texas branch. He was President of that branch (1946-1947) and helped it to grow to be the most active branch in the nation; he was the first recipient of its Distinguished Service Award (1972). He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, of the American Academy of Microbiology, the AAAS and the Texas Academy of Science. He also was a member of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, New York Academy of Science, Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine and Sigma Xi (President of Texas Chapter, 1940-1941).

Professor Schuhardt never lost his love of sports: he served on the University Intercollegiate Athletic Council from 1946 to 1952 and was its Chairman for the last four years. In the early 1940's he led in organizing Sigma Alpha Phi (for Society of Applied Piscatology; or, simply, SAPs), which has thrived and grown. Their major annual meeting at Lake Buchanan has attracted devotees from as far away as the microbiology laboratories of Wisconsin, California and Montana. The meeting was climaxed by a fish barbecue for members, spouses and friends. A more con-

genial fishing companion or one who better knew the hangouts of the lake bass would be hard to find. He also enjoyed coastal fishing and hunting deer and wild turkeys.

Professor Schuhardt often sacrificed his time or his own interests for others and for what he considered to be the best interests of the Department, the students or his colleagues. In faculty and committee meetings he could be counted on for calm reasoning and sound judgement and to defuse a tense disagreement with his quiet humor. He could find time for difficult and time-consuming departmental tasks when others could not. Just three days before his fatal coronary attack, very characteristically, he hosted a retirement party for the Department's Administrative Assistant. He brought the ingredients, mixed and served the punch, then gave a gracious speech for the honoree. He leaves a host of long-time friends and admiring former students who will miss him very much.

Dr. Schuhardt is survived by his wife, Savannah, a daughter, Mrs. Allan P. Bloxsom, Jr., and two grandchildren.

William H. Cunningham, President
The University of Texas at Austin

H. Paul Kelley, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Orville Wyss (chairman), C. E. Lankford, and L. Joe Berry.