Theodore Stenberg was born near Ormsby, Minnesota, on June 17, 1883. After attending the local rural grammar school he entered St. Olaf Academy at Northfield, from which he was graduated in June 1903. He spent his undergraduate years at the University of Minnesota where he took his B.A. in 1906. Though he was active in debate and music during his preparatory and undergraduate years, serving on debate teams, bands, and glee clubs, he began more and more to concentrate on the study of English literature and took his M.A. at Minnesota in 1908.

In 1909 he migrated to the Pacific Coast and settled for a time at Portland, Oregon, dividing his time between high school teaching and the study of law. In 1911 he was awarded the LL.B. by the University of Oregon Law School but evidently decided against abandoning the teaching profession in order to practice law. Having made his decision he soon returned to graduate school, entering Cornell University in 1914 to work on his Ph.D. He remained at Cornell for two years, serving as instructor in rhetoric and public speaking and taking graduate courses. The final awarding of the degree, delayed by his full-time teaching, came in 1926.

Between 1916, when he left Ithaca, and 1920, when he came to the University of Texas, Dr. Stenberg served for brief periods in the English departments of Whitewater, Wisconsin, Normal College; Lombard College, at Galesbury, Illinois;
and Culver Military Academy, Culver, Indiana. In 1920 he came to Austin as an instructor in English, to began a long and useful career at the University. Here he served until his retirement, as Professor of English, in September 1955, just eight months before his death on May 5, 1956.

In addition to his teaching, which ranged from freshman composition and sophomore literature through advanced courses in eighteenth-century prose and the history of criticism up to a graduate course in Dr. Johnson, he served his department faithfully in numerous administrative assignments. He was departmental chairman from 1934 to 1937. Among his many committee assignments may be specified his chairmanship of the departmental course committee, 1935-37, his chairmanship of the University committee on students' use of English, 1943-46, and his chairmanship of the departmental book-order committee, a post he filled for a decade, 1937-46.

Throughout his long academic career Dr. Stenberg maintained an active interest in literary scholarship and, especially in the earlier stages, published in the various fields of his interest, as is shown in the appended bibliography. During his years of graduate study and for a decade and more afterward he was interested chiefly in Ibsen, possibly because of his own Norse ancestry, and, even more, in rhetorical and aesthetic subjects. Several times he presented papers on aesthetic problems before the Modern Language Association and from 1929 to 1931
he was chairman of the MLA Group on Poetic Form and General Aesthetics. Along in the 1930's his interest became more and more focused upon eighteenth-century English literature, particularly upon Samuel Johnson. For a time he entertained the ambition of editing Johnson's works but, when no collaborators came forward to assist in so ambitious a project, he was obliged to abandon it—to the great misfortune of scholars in the field who would have welcomed such an edition wholeheartedly. It would, however, be misleading to leave the implication that Dr. Stenberg's work in Johnson scholarship was of little or no avail, for it was this interest which led eventually to his making a contribution to scholarship for which he will be long and gratefully recalled. Beginning about 1926, when he was first assigned the course in eighteenth-century literature, he started what was to become a distinguished collection of books by and about Dr. Johnson. In spite of the ensuing depression and the need to maintain and educate his family, he steadily added to his list of Johnson books. By 1940, the collection having become decidedly important both quantitatively and qualitatively, he had come to a decision which his colleagues who knew him well would recognize as characteristic: rather than keep all these fine books for his own private use he turned them over to the Rare Books Collection of the University, where they more than doubled the already splendid holdings in Johnson of the Wrenn, Aitken, and Stark collections. By way of public
acknowledgement the officials of the University held a public exhibition in January 1940, and published, in commemoration of the event a brochure entitled Dr. Johnson in Texas: An Exhibition Celebrating an Unusual Gift from Professor and Mrs. Theodore Stenberg.

A final word should be said of Dr. Stenberg in relation to his home and family, for he was, perhaps above all else a devoted husband and father. An early marriage, in 1908, ended tragically, his first wife dying less than two years later, a few months after the birth of a son, Richard, who still survives. In 1912 he married Elizabeth Noble, who still resides in Austin, as do their three children, Marjorie, Beatrice, and Robert.

H.J. Leon
Leo Hughes
Mody C. Boatright
Chairman