

IN MEMORIAM

IRWIN SPEAR

Irwin Spear died at his home in Austin on March 21, 2002. He is survived by his wife, Helen, four children, Scott Spear, Laura Smith, Sona Nast, and Jodie Goldberg, six grandchildren, five step grandchildren and sons-in-law Jerome Nast, Michael Goldberg, and David Bartone. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Robin Bartone. Dr. Spear was a member of The University of Texas at Austin faculty from September 1953 until January 1994. He remained an active participant in University, community, and scholarly affairs until his death.

Dr. Spear was born on January 4, 1924, in New York City. During World War II, he served with the U.S. Army Air Corps from January 1943 until February 1946. While in the army, Dr. Spear and his colleagues were in the first crew to monitor the development and movement of a hurricane on radar. Using this medium, they also discovered the existence of the strong upper level winds that later became known as the *jet stream*.

Dr. Spear received a B.S. in botany from Cornell University in 1947. He enrolled as a graduate student at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in September 1947, and completed a Ph.D. in biology in 1953. While a graduate student, he held a Traveling Fellowship from Harvard University to the Atkins Garden in Cienfuegos, Cuba during the summer of 1949 to study the eradication of an introduced weed that had escaped and overrun more than a million acres of range lands and sugar fields. He also held a Traveling Fellowship to conduct research with Professor F. G. Gregory at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, England from August 1950 until January 1952.

Dr. Spear spent his entire faculty life at The University of Texas at Austin, from September 1953 until his retirement in January 1994. At the University, Professor Spear was very active in teaching and won nine teaching awards during his years of service. His influence went far beyond the teaching of undergraduates. He was a member of the College Board and Educational Testing Service National Committee on Biology Advanced Placement for four years. He was a dedicated educator for summer science training programs and received 25 National Science Foundation grants to run these outstanding programs. He also edited many biology textbooks of the day. One publisher commented upon receiving an extensively edited version that it was too much work to adhere to his suggestions. Dr. Spear then wrote back and asked him to remove his name from the published list of editors for the series!

As he was known to be a strict reviewer of scientific information, Dr. Spear also was known to be a very demanding taskmaster of students, but he also gave them generous encouragement to reach their academic and intellectual potential. Over the years, he promoted the advancement of hundreds of bright young students, many of whom had the greatest respect and admiration for him. He often singled out students who had difficulties in the first exam of the semester and invited them to his home for informal discussions so that he could help them gain insight and encouragement to do their very best. Following are excerpts from typical thank you letters:

I want to thank you for being such a fine teacher, one of the best that I have had. In addition to expanding my useful knowledge, your course made me more aware of the life around me and in me.

What you provided to me, and I didn't even realize it at the time, was a sincere belief that I can be the one to affect the future within my sphere of influence. You forced me to defend by beliefs, and I needed the practice. Thank you for

being a part of my life and teaching me some very important lessons. I have not [forgotten] and will not forget you.

Somehow I felt the need to check in after a few decades. I always wanted to tell you (but never took the time) that I appreciate everything you did for me. You also made me learn to learn. No one ever before or since demanded so much from me.

There are a few memorable experiences at The University of Texas that continue to shine on my life and career. The most outstanding was my exposure as a student to Dr. Irwin Spear, my freshman Plan II biology professor, and later, my biology advisor within Plan II. I mastered the art of taking Dr. Spear's notorious exams and chose to take all of his offered botany courses that are part of my science requirement. Dr. Spear embodies the best qualities of teaching. As an alumnus, I have continued my support to UT both professionally and financially and serve actively as a Plan II pre-med mentor as well as the ophthalmologist for the UT Women's Athletic Department. With this perspective, I consider Dr. Spear a real treasure within the UT system.

Dr. Spear was very active in the development of innovative Plan II tutorial courses covering biological problems affecting the future of man, and human sexuality, as well as a summer workshop for high school teachers of advance placement biology courses. One of his later courses, Botany for Gardeners, was a unique blend of sophisticated plant physiology concepts intermingled with hands-on experiences in using these concepts to produce outstanding vegetable gardens each year. Frequently, the students took their produce home for the dinner table along with the knowledge of how it was synthesized!

Dr. Spear also was very active holding many important university committee assignments. He was a member of the Faculty Senate and the University Council in the 1960s and 1970s. He successfully promoted the acceptance of biology advanced placement testing at the University and helped to formulate the biology and botany honors programs at their inception in the early 1960s. One of his greatest interests centered around the University's Plan II program.

He was an active member of the Plan II Committee as well as the Plan II Advising Committee for many years. Dr. Spear also was named a Plan II Scholar.

Outside of the academic community, Dr. Spear was very active in civic affairs. He was a proud member of the American Civil Liberties Union and served until his death on the boards of the West Austin Neighborhood Group and the Cornell Club of Austin.

Above all, Professor Spear was a loving and caring husband and father. He will be sorely missed by his many friends, family, colleagues, and former students.

Larry R. Faulkner, President
The University of Texas at Austin

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors R. Malcolm Brown, Jr. (chair), Ira Iscoe, and Stan Roux.