

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
LOUIS H. MACKEY**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Louis H. Mackey, professor, philosophy, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM
LOUIS H. MACKEY**

Louis H. Mackey (September 24, 1926 - March 25, 2004) was for some thirty-five years a beloved professor in the Department of Philosophy at The University of Texas at Austin, and at his death, he was professor emeritus in that department. He was born in Sidney, Ohio, the only child of Louis and Clara Mackey, received his B.A. from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, and pursued graduate studies in philosophy first at Duke University and then at Yale University. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1954 for a dissertation on the Danish existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, "The Nature and the End of the Ethical Life according to Kierkegaard." He became an assistant professor in the philosophy department at Yale, then joined the faculty of Rice University in 1959, and came to The University of Texas at Austin in 1967.

At both Rice and UT, as earlier at Yale, he was known for his challenging, engaging, and excellent teaching. In the course of the longest part of his career as a teacher, at UT, Mackey won several teaching awards, including the prestigious Harry Ransom Award for Teaching Excellence in 1987. Many of his students report that Mackey had been the most profound and profoundly formative professor of their entire careers. One student describes his lectures as "architectural masterpieces"; another observes that Mackey approached each philosopher he taught as if "from the inside."

His books and articles reflected subtle intellect, wit, vision, and passionate engagement. His book, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*, quickly became a classic. Mackey not only clarified and defended that passionate and difficult philosopher but introduced a radically literary approach to philosophical interpretation. Fifteen years later, in a new book on Kierkegaard and under the influence of the new theories of literary interpretation, he published *Points of View*, in which he effectively deconstructed his own earlier views. He also wrote and lectured widely on Saint Augustine and Medieval Philosophy, and he became a recognized literary critic, writing extensively on literary theory and on literature, including, especially, the works of Gilbert Sorrentino and Thomas Pynchon.

Mackey loved music and was an accomplished amateur singer (and sometime director) of madrigal, oratorio, cantata, and liturgical chant, and his artistic talents extended to occasional acting in theater, television, and film. Cinema audiences in Austin know him in particular for his roles in Richard Linklater's films "Slacker" and "Waking Life." He was a faithful member of the Anglican Communion and attended All Saints Episcopal Church in Austin, where he frequently served as lay reader. A week before his death, he was discussing the popular Christian thinker C.S. Lewis with his son Jacob, a Ph.D. student in classics at Princeton. Speaking of himself, the father observed that, unlike C.S. Lewis, he had never felt that he had any easily formulable, final answers. As his son remembers it, Mackey then went on: "I only know one thing: that in the Credo, there is a change in the verb at the end. The creed begins with the verb credo, 'I believe,' proceeds to list the matters of fact, as it were, of faith, but at the very end the verb changes to one of hope. I look with hope for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

Louis is survived by his first wife, Caroll Brandt, and their sons, Stephen and Thomas Mackey, and by his second wife, Linda Mackey, and their children, Jacob and Dr. Eva Mackey.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Robert C. Solomon (chair), Alexander P. D. Mourelatos, and Kathleen M. Higgins.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on March 4, 2005. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>.