

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
LEONARD JOHN RODE, JR.**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Leonard John Rode, Jr., associate professor, microbiology, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary  
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM  
LEONARD JOHN RODE, JR.**

Dr. Leonard John Rode, Jr., former associate professor of microbiology at The University of Texas at Austin, died on July 15, 2004, in Houston, Texas. Born January 6, 1917, in Miles, Texas, the son of a Methodist minister, L.J. received his high school education in Seguin, Texas, graduating in 1935. He completed two years of undergraduate study during 1935-37 at Westmoreland College in San Antonio, Texas. Westmoreland College was a Methodist College at that time and a predecessor of the current Trinity University. L.J. then transferred to UT and completed his B.A. degree in bacteriology in 1939. He then enrolled in the UT bacteriology graduate program and received the M.A. degree in 1941. During those early years at UT, L.J. met his future wife, Lydia Anne Siptak of Caldwell, Texas, and they were married in 1942.

After completing the M.A. degree, L.J. worked for five years as an immunologist in the Texas State Health Department, Austin, Texas, during which time his group worked on brucellosis, a very common bacterial disease of cattle, sheep, goats, and swine, caused by *Brucella* species, including *B. abortus*, *B. ovis* and *B. suis*. These organisms were important not only in animals, but they also were spread to people, mostly by contaminated animal products, including unpasteurized milk that caused undulant fever. L.J.'s interest in brucellosis continued for another decade from 1945-1955, during which time he was appointed a research scientist to work on the Brucellosis Research Project in the Clayton Foundation for Research at UT. That project involved defining media for culture and diagnosis of the brucellae. Those early studies by Dr. Rode and other workers, including Charles E. Lankford, Jr., Vernon T. Schuhardt, and E. Statten Wynne, led to effective control programs, and brucellosis is now rare in the U.S. – only three new herd infections occurred in this country in 2001.

Dr. Rode returned to fulltime graduate study in microbiology in 1955 at UT, supported that year by a prestigious National Institutes of Health Predoctoral Fellowship. He worked under the direction of the highly respected Jackson W. Foster and completed the Ph.D. in 1956. He and Foster began studies on sporulation and germination of bacteria of the *Bacillus* genus. Dr. Rode continued research with Dr. Foster long after completing his graduate studies and worked as a research associate with him until 1966. During those years, they began early work on the structure and biochemistry of bacterial spores and identified specific agents which triggered germination of the dormant spores into vegetative growth. Their work demonstrated the importance of bacterial sporulation and germination as microbial developmental processes and provided the foundation for current investigations into these phenomena.

Dr. Rode was appointed to the microbiology faculty at UT as an associate professor in 1966 and then developed an independent research group studying spore structure and biochemistry in the anaerobic genus *Clostridium* and the taxonomy of those organisms. One member of his group, Dr. Leodocia Pope, later became a senior lecturer at the UT microbiology department. Some of the species studied by the Rode group were isolated within the U.S.S.R. but brought to Texas by the reputation of the UT sporulation group. Especially interesting were some species which produced spores with remarkable protruding appendages. Rode's early work on those organisms is continuing at UT and other schools. His independent work and that with Professor Foster was important because spore-forming bacteria have been and will continue to be extremely important in food processing, human and veterinary medicine, industry, pest control, biotechnology, and bioterrorism.

Dr. Rode actively participated in microbiological and other science organizations, including the American Society for Microbiology, serving as the president of the Texas branch of that society. He published almost forty original research papers, presented talks at scientific meetings, and was invited to write review articles. His research in the microbiology department at UT was supported by research grants from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. He was recognized by inclusion in American Men and Women of Science. Dr. Rode retired in 1978 for health reasons. Dr. Rode was an expert in his field who communicated with students the value of technique and dedication in research. He set high standards for himself and others. A serious-minded individual, he was a role model for integrity and commitment in science.

On the personal level, L.J. and his wife enjoyed family and friends as well as gardening, entertaining, sports, furniture building and refinishing, fishing, art, and travel. He and Lydia traveled rather extensively in Europe including the eastern European countries during the years of communism. They made contact with Lydia's relatives in (what was then) Czechoslovakia and visited them several times. L.J. was active in intramural sports while a student at U.T. He later enjoyed fishing and the camaraderie of the Society of Applied Piscatology, a group organized by UT faculty and staff personnel to sponsor an annual fishing expedition. The society was very successful for at least fifty years, celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1990. He was proud of their daughter, Janet Lynn, who became a public school teacher and her husband, Steve Schaeffer, of Houston, Texas; their grandson, Michael Schaeffer, and his wife Teresa Schaeffer, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and his brother, R. Lee Rode, M.D., and his wife, Ann Rode, of Abilene, Texas. Dr. Rode was genuinely liked and respected by his many friends and professional colleagues.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James R. Walker (chair), Charles F. Earhart, and Paul J. Szaniszlo.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on May 2, 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/>.

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