

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
CHARLES WELDON YORK**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Charles Weldon York, professor emeritus, human ecology and interior design, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary  
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM  
CHARLES WELDON YORK**

Dr. Charles Weldon York, professor emeritus in human ecology at The University of Texas at Austin, died March 3, 2004, from the effects of colon cancer. Born July 26, 1924, in Panhandle, Texas, he was the youngest of nine children of Dr. Orphus and Mrs. Bertha Richardson. In September 1941, Charles entered UT Austin, but his studies were interrupted two years later, in November 1943, when he joined the United States Navy. After serving aboard several ships in the amphibious forces in the Pacific Ocean, he was honorably discharged from military service in April 1946.

Upon reentering UT Austin in September 1946, Dr. York majored in interior design and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in May 1949. Charles was the first male student to receive a degree in interior design and home economics at UT Austin. He was a member of the Rho Chapter of Theta Xi social fraternity, Omicron Nu Home Economics Honor Society, and the UT Longhorn Band.

Charles enrolled in New York University in September 1949 and received a master's degree in retailing in June 1950. He returned to Texas and accepted a position with Neiman Marcus in Dallas in the Decorative Gallery and Gift Shop. In 1952, Charles accepted a position as a faculty member in the Interior Design Division in the Department of Home Economics at UT Austin. He was the first male to hold a faculty position in that department. He was a member of the American Institute of Interior Designers and the National Society of Interior Designers. During his tenure as a faculty member he began working toward a Ph.D. in housing at Cornell University in New York. Ultimately, he received his Ph.D. from Florida State University in June 1967.

Dr. York was promoted through the ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor at UT Austin. Following Dr. Anna Brightman's retirement from the position as head of the Interior Design Division in May 1981, Charles assumed the role as head of the division for two years. Upon his retirement in 1985, he had served on the faculty of UT Austin for a total of thirty-three years.

His first trip to London was prior to his attending the National Trust School for Preservation at Attingham England in 1972. He spent several days walking in London so he would be quite familiar with the city. He fell in love with London and was always delighted to share his knowledge of London with potential travelers. Dr. York loved to travel and toured most of Europe; the Scandinavian countries; St. Petersburg, Russia; Turkey; Cairo, Egypt; Australia; New Zealand; China; Thailand; Chili; and Argentina. In addition, he visited forty-nine of the fifty states and went on several ocean cruises.

Charles enjoyed music, museums, theater, opera, cooking, gardening, and his dogs. He collected cloisonné, Wedgwood china, Georgian silver, oriental art, glass paperweights, and other artwork. Across the University campus, he was considered an *objet d'art* expert and consulted with the curators at the Humanities Research Center and the Winedale Center for American History. He also generously shared his expertise with organizations and individuals within the broader Austin community. Known as a collector and expert regarding fine accessories, Charles designed for Florence Vickers a *Texas—The Lonestar State* plate. Florence owned a

gift shop on Guadalupe and held exclusive rights to market the plate. Later, she also allowed the plate to be marketed at a gift shop in Salado, Texas. The plate was produced by the Fondeville china factory.

For approximately three decades from the mid-1950s through the 1970s, Charles was considered chief curator of the special historic rooms within the Mary E. Gearing building on campus. When the building was originally designed by Paul Cret and Miss Mary E. Gearing, the first chairperson of the Department of Home Economics (now the Department of Human Ecology), Miss Gearing specified special historic rooms to be designed within the building. These rooms were to depict early Texans' homes during pioneer settlement and the Texas Republic eras. Today, a two-room Republic of Texas Suite is what remains of these original spaces in Mary E. Gearing Hall.

In 1960, utilizing his expertise as an interior designer, Charles worked closely with President Harry H. Ransom and his wife redesigning the interior of the president's residence. Charles had a warm association with Mrs. Ransom—they got along splendidly. His design expertise was appreciated by the Ransoms as they continued their administrative appointment onto the Chancellorship of the UT system in 1961. Charles worked with Mrs. Ransom in redesigning the various rooms of Bauer house while the family resided there.

Dr. York's interest in genealogy allowed him to trace his family back to 15<sup>th</sup> century England. He is survived by a sister, Bertha Sybil Harrell (Mrs. Glynn D. Harrell) of Amarillo, Texas, and many nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, and great-great nieces and nephews. He was survived by his significant companion of forty-eight years, Wayne E. Richards of Austin, Texas. After the Division of Interior Design was moved to the School of Architecture (SOA) in 1997, the SOA established the Brightman-York Endowed Lecture Series in Interior Design in August 1999. Since that time the lecture series has been able to bring renowned interior design speakers, such as Aubrey Clodagh and Petra Blaisse, to campus.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Beth Gillham (chair), Nancy P. Kwallek, and Ardis M. Rewerts.

Distributed to the deans of the College of Natural Sciences and the School of Architecture, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on August 17, 2005. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, WMB 2.102, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>.