

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
THOMAS NOLAN CAMPBELL**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Thomas Nolan Campbell, professor emeritus, anthropology, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary  
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM  
THOMAS NOLAN CAMPBELL**

Thomas Nolan Campbell, professor emeritus of anthropology, died on October 15, 2003, at the age of 95. He served on the faculty of The University of Texas at Austin from 1947 to 1978. However, he had also served as a teaching assistant in 1934-36, as an instructor from 1938-1941, and as an assistant professor on leave for military service, 1941-46. Altogether, his record of service to UT spanned more than forty years. Though he had been retired for twenty-five years, Dr. Campbell continued to do research and to work with, and encourage, graduate students until his final illness.

In his prolific writing and in other scientific settings, he was known as T. N. Campbell, and to his friends and colleagues as Tom. However, to the senior author having served as his undergraduate assistant in the 1960s, and working with him continually for the next four decades, it always seemed presumptuous to address him as Tom. This was not because Tom Campbell was intimidating or severe, but rather the anthropological community in Texas and beyond regarded him so highly. He was a gentleman in the truest sense and a scholar who was precise, inquisitive, and yet witty and self-effacing. In fact, he was a legend for his prodigious memory (which seemed to all of us to have photographic qualities), his devotion to puns, and his booming laughter.

Born in Munday, Texas, on July 3, 1908, Campbell was valedictorian at the local high school in 1925, attended McMurry College from 1925-27, came to Austin and received a B.A. in 1930, an M.A. in 1936 (a second M.A. at Harvard University in 1940), and after service during World War II, a Ph.D. in 1947 from Harvard. During World War II, Lt. (later, Capt.) Campbell served in various capacities at the Army Air Force Pilot Ground School at Ellington Field (Houston) and at the AAF Training Command at Randolph Field, San Antonio.

His full-time and continuous teaching career at UT began in 1947 as associate professor of anthropology, and he was promoted to professor in 1952. The faculty in the Department of Anthropology in those years was very small, and so Dr. Campbell taught a wide range of courses in anthropology and archaeology. The senior author was generously awarded a *B* in "Introduction to Anthropology" but later managed an *A* in "The Archaeology of Texas and Adjacent Areas"! Dr. Campbell taught courses on the Indians of Texas, the Southwest, and the Southeast, and archaeology courses focusing on Texas, North America, and the technology of material culture ("Primitive Arts and Crafts"). In my own teaching, I often taught a similar course called "Primitive Technology." I asked Dr. Campbell one time about borrowing his notes from his version of the course, as I knew I could extract some gems to use in my own lectures. He chuckled and said, "I threw them all out when I retired!" His courses were exceedingly detailed, and those details were certainly required to answer the essays that comprised his exams. Those of us who later went on to teach courses that were copiously illustrated with slides, and for some, PowerPoint, remember that Dr. Campbell would hold up a piece of yellow paper with a sketch of an artifact – which meant you had to go back to your assigned readings and focus on the illustrative material there. He was not one for theoretical dalliances or for stretching the interpretation of archaeological data. Indeed, as he told his classes, "Archaeologists always conclude their reports with a statement that 'with more research, these questions will be answered.' Yet if they were truthful, the statement would read 'with more research, we will be even more confused!'"

His intellectual generosity is related by Professor Mariah Wade. She worked with Dr. Campbell for many years and relied heavily on him for her dissertation (and the book that followed through The University of Texas

Press) on the Indians of the Edwards Plateau and their interactions with the Spanish and other native groups. I will always remember a view that I had of Mariah talking at top speed, with Tom sitting in his chair and backed into a corner, his eyes like a deer caught in the headlights, hashing out the fine points of Edwards Plateau ethnohistory. Professor Campbell would always ask, “How does Mariah know so much?” Of course, Mariah would always counter that she had gotten the facts or the ideas from him! Dr. Wade was his last student and, in many ways, his closest intellectual heir.

The same generosity and humility carried over into his prodigious scholarship. To be sure, he was keenly curious from an intellectual standpoint and rigorous intellectually in his research. But, he saw the end product as a building block in the study of human culture, and he could not have cared less about the outlet in which it was published. Scholarly research for Professor Campbell was integral to the pursuit of knowledge, and it was fun – not driven by academic ambition. His scholarship ranged from pioneering fieldwork in Big Bend to ethnohistoric studies of Southeastern Indians and the preparation of archaeological excavation reports on the Texas coast. A lot of the fieldwork done on the coast and in other parts of Texas by the WPA in the 1930s had languished unpublished, and Tom set about organizing the data from these sites and getting it into print. He was a skillful editor and, on the national scene, he was editor of *American Antiquity* in the 1960s. He edited the *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* from 1958-1961 (two issues of that journal were dedicated to him, in 1985 and 2005) and the *Texas Journal of Science* (1953-56).

His “true love” from a scholarly standpoint were his inquiries into the myriad hunting and gathering Indian groups of south Texas and northeastern Mexico. Campbell’s research was marked by tenacity in ferreting out the details of the lifeways and locations of hundreds of these groups (his contributions to the *Handbook of Texas* and the *New Handbook of Texas* [558 entries] far outdistance other contributors). He heavily utilized original sources, which for the Texas Indians largely meant 17th and 18th century Spanish documents. He mined the materials for every tidbit of information, searched for snippets on daily activities and material culture, and worked diligently to get these Indians in their right geographic locations! This was very difficult since early in the Spanish era Native American groups from northeastern Mexico had already been pushed into south Texas, even into central Texas – and it was hard to sort out the local peoples from those caught up in the Spanish whirlwind. His studies of the Indians in south Texas, which also included a meticulous account of the route of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, syntheses of the groups at the Spanish missions of San Antonio, and later, the groups at the Guerrero missions in Coahuila, contain so much information that one can hardly conceive it was done by one scholar, and with very limited research funds. He gave much of the credit to his daughter, T.J., saying that “she can read the archaic Spanish,” and “she does the real work....” They were a remarkable team. In recognition of his ethnohistoric work and to honor his eightieth birthday, the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (in association with other University entities) published a volume entitled *The Indians of Southern Texas and Northeastern Mexico, Selected Writings of Thomas Nolan Campbell* (Austin, 1988).

When we worked on some joint south Texas-northeast Mexico projects, Tom always had insights on archaeology and ethnohistory, and he would rattle off the accounts of expeditions, Indian groups encountered, the day the encounter took place, all the while looking at you as if were already fully aware of these details. All you could do was nod knowingly, afraid your gaze would somehow expose your abject ignorance of these new facts! My favorite memory includes the many times when he was asked a question, he would jump up and pull a book from his library shelves, saying that, “I think this is all covered on page 378,” and flipping to the page as if he needed verification of that remarkable memory!

Tom grew old gracefully, though not without aches and pains, and he devoted much of his time to caring for his beloved wife, Lorene, who passed away in 1994. In some of his letters, he did express some wistful thoughts of being younger again. When he was in his seventies, and I was in my early thirties, he would write “oh, to be 50 again.” Now I know what he meant!

Bibliography

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2000 In Their Own Words: Stories from Some Pioneer Texas Archeologists. *Bulletin of the Texas Archeological Society* 71: 1-146 [see pp. 59-63].

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Thomas R. Hester (chair), Samuel Wilson, and Mariah Wade.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on August 15, 2006. 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/>.