

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
WILLIAM W. ROBERTSON**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for William W. Robertson, professor emeritus, physics, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM
WILLIAM W. ROBERTSON**

Dr. William Woodrow Robertson, age 84, passed away Friday, September 6, 2002. He is survived by his loving wife, Margaret M. Robertson; daughter, Catherine Aicklen, and husband, Ken; sons, Jimmy Robertson and wife, Michelle, Mike Robertson and wife, Becky; and grandchildren, Lauren, Beth, and Matthew Aicklen, and Patrick, Jennifer, Julia, Andrew, and Jana Robertson.

Bill Robertson was born on December 17, 1917, in Beckville, Texas. The freshman from Uvalde, Texas, went to The University of Texas to study physics in 1935. He received his B.A. degree in 1941, M.A. degree in 1949, and Ph.D. in 1955 from The University of Texas at Austin and became an instructor (1944), assistant professor (1955), associate professor (1959), and professor of physics (1964) at the same institution. During the war years, he taught physics to certain Navy personnel. He continued long past retirement (1983) on a part-time appointment in the physics department for many more years; he kept his office in the physics department and improved substantially with great love and enthusiasm the teaching labs for premedical students. Upon complete retirement (2001), he was named a professor emeritus. His association with The University of Texas spanned a remarkable sixty-seven years.

Professor Robertson had received many professional honors—among the first was induction into the Phi Lambda Upsilon Society as an outstanding junior-level chemistry major. He initiated sponsorship of the weekly colloquium in physics as a Sigma Pi Sigma member, and he was a member of Sigma Xi and several professional and honor societies. He was an Elected Fellow of the American Physical Society.

During his years at UT, Professor Robertson served with distinction in numerous University and departmental committees—in his later years, looking back, he occasionally remarked to some of his colleagues that he did “. . . everything and anything but chairman . . .” for the physics department. He initiated the formation of the departmental Budget Council Advisory Committee and served for years as member and chairman of that committee. He actively chaired the Physics Department Apparatus and Equipment Committee. He took a lively interest in developing lecture demonstration experiments and in equipping and upgrading the teaching laboratories in physics to synchronize them with the introductory physics courses for premedical students, which he advanced to what these remarkable two-semester courses and the wonderful laboratories are today—a monumental project which made him indispensable in the physics department for years after his official retirement. He was a member of the Premedical Students Advisory Committee (prior to adoption of peer advising).

Bill organized an undergraduate scholarship program in the physics department. He chaired the University Parking and Traffic Committee. He was a member of the University Council and served on various committees, including the ones which revised the UT presidential selection process and reorganized the College of Arts and Sciences into separate colleges. For many years, he was graduate adviser and was asked repeatedly to be acting chair of the physics department. He supervised twenty students in their work leading to the Ph.D. degree. Many of these graduates became university professors and outstanding scientists in their own right.

Professor Robertson was an outstanding scientist and an experimental physicist par excellence. His work was widely known and appreciated in various scientific communities, e.g., atomic and molecular spectroscopists,

researchers concerned with the spectra of dense matter (highly compressed gases, liquids and solids), in the gaseous electronics and combustion communities, and among chemical physicists and physical chemists in general. He had strong scientific collaborations with several of his colleagues at UT, especially with theorists such as Professors F.A. Matsen and E.E. Ferguson and also with experimentalists such as D.S. Hughes. His creativity, dedication, and drive are evidenced in well over seventy original research papers and chapters in books which he authored or co-authored.

Bill Robertson was an outstanding teacher and friend to many of his colleagues. His generosity in mentoring many of his colleagues early in their careers at UT is remembered with gratitude and affection. His colleagues often sought and received his counsel which was always thoughtful, kind, and wise. He was admired for his sterling character and his example as an educator and scientist. He is missed by everyone who knew him.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Lothar Frommhold (chair), Austin M. Gleeson, and Melvin E. L. Oakes.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on June 14, 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/>.