

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
FRED P. ELLISON**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Fred P. Ellison, professor emeritus, Spanish and Portuguese, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.



Hillary Hart, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

**IN MEMORIAM
FRED P. ELLISON**

Professor Fred P. Ellison was born in 1922 in Denton, Texas. He served in the U.S. Navy during the Second World War. His first post after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1952 was at the University of Illinois. In 1962, he moved to The University of Texas at Austin, from which he retired in 1991. Professor Ellison rose to prominence as a pioneer in academic research into Brazilian literature, which at the outset of his career was little taught or studied at U.S. universities, as well as the more general dissemination of Brazilian writing among English-language readers. He was best known for his 1954 study *Brazil's New Novel: Four Northeastern Masters: José Lins do Rego, Jorge Amado, Rachel de Queiroz, Graciliano Ramos*. A later scholarly monograph was published in Mexico in 2000 as *Alfonso Reyes y el Brasil (un mexicano entre cariocas)* and two years later appeared translated into Portuguese in Brazil. He directed the Modern Language Association (MLA) project that produced the groundbreaking textbook *Modern Portuguese* (1970). As a literary translator, Professor Ellison created the English versions of significant and innovative Brazilian novels. In 1963, he published an English-language version of Raquel de Queirós's 1939 *The Three Marias*, and he was the co-translator of the 1983 *Woman between Mirrors* by Helena Parente Cunha (English version published 1989). In 2008--well into a very active retirement--he brought out a bilingual edition of poetry by Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna, *A Man and His Shadow/ Homem e sua sombra*.

Former students who share thoughts of what it was like to study under Professor Ellison's mentorship use terms such as "thoughtful, respectful, calm, kind, generous, warm, enthusiastic, genuine, gracious, charming, friendly, good-natured." These expressions embody what all saw in his teaching style. He was the consummate gentleman, one who treated his students and colleagues as co-equal partners and caused everyone to feel at ease in class. Professor Ellison often recruited students, (actually proselytized would be a more accurate term), from Spanish programs and from other departments and colleges. As the semester progressed, little by little he would encourage students to try to speak Portuguese. Many of his former students continue to have distinguished academic careers. One of these, Professor Randal Johnson of University of California, Los Angeles, edited a volume of essays by former students and colleagues in honor of Professor Ellison, the 1992 *Tropical Paths: Essays on Modern Brazilian Literature*.

Professor Ellison's teaching was a masterful blend of intellectual depth, sophistication and appreciation of Brazilian culture, mixed with an engaging and passionate style. Indeed, without minimizing the deserved recognition for his academic production and honors, to many students he was known more for class sessions where everyone sang along with classic Dorival Caymmi and Antônio Carlos Jobim bossa nova songs.

Professor Ellison's pioneering efforts to promote the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture in the United States were recognized by many awards in both the United States and Brazil. In 1983, he was elected Corresponding Member (Sócio Correspondente) of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (Academia Brasileira de Letras), one of only eight Americans to receive the honor since the Academia was founded in 1897. In 1997, he was the first recipient of the Robert G. Mead, Jr. Leadership Award given by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. Probably the greatest honor he received occurred in 2001 when he was named a Commander of the Order of Rio Branco. The ceremony took place at the Brazilian Embassy in

Washington, D.C., on September 7, 2001. In his remarks, Ambassador Antônio Barbosa explained the special place the Order of Rio Branco holds among Brazilian honors:

It is, in the pantheon of official commendations, the one that most directly reflects not only the way Brazil inserts itself in the world but also the form the Brazilian diplomatic service has found to pay tribute to foreigners who have distinguished themselves in the affirmation and the promotion of the presence of Brazil in the world.” Barbosa went on to say, “Indeed, we Brazilians are in your debt for your constant work as interpreter, translator and disseminator of Brazilian language and culture in the United States, a responsibility that you have discharged masterfully since the late 1940s and early 1950s.”

During his many years as an active faculty member, Professor Ellison also took on important service to the department, to the University and to the profession. A trusted colleague, he was elected many times to the departmental executive committee and served in many other capacities in the department ranging from graduate adviser to chair of the Library Committee. He was a member of the Graduate Studies Committee in Spanish and Portuguese and also in Latin American Studies, and served as director of the then Language and Area Center for Latin American Studies in 1962. At the University level, he served on what were then the Faculty Senate and the University Council and also on University committees such as the Public Lecture Committee. He took a one-semester leave in 1962 to work as a consultant at the U.S. Office of Education in Washington, D.C. At this point in time, he was directing a pilot program in intensive Portuguese for Postdoctoral Fellows, which was supported by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) through the Office of Education. He also served on a joint committee of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).

Professor Ellison died on October 4, 2015 in Austin.

This memorial was prepared by a special committee consisting of Naomi Lindstrom (chair), Orlando R. Kelm, and Madeline C. Sutherland-Meier.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Fine Arts on February 2, 2016, and posted under “Memorials” at <http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/>.