

## DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR  
PETER TYRRELL FLAWN**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Peter Tyrrell Flawn, President Emeritus and Professor, Department of Geological Sciences, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary  
General Faculty and Faculty Council  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English and Comparative Literature

**IN MEMORIAM  
PETER TYRRELL FLAWN**

University president, geologist, professor, author, husband, father, and grandfather Peter T. Flawn died on May 7, 2017, at age ninety-one. During his historic career in higher education, Dr. Flawn served twice as president of The University of Texas at Austin (the only person as of this writing to have done so) and as president of The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Peter Tyrrell Flawn was born in Miami, Florida, on February 17, 1926, and grew up in New Jersey, the only child of a London-born architect and a homemaker. Due to the war, he was offered early admission and a full scholarship at age sixteen to Oberlin College, where he earned his bachelor's degree. There in Ohio, he met Priscilla Pond, to whom he would be married for seventy years. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps, then earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in geology from Yale University, finishing in 1951.

After seeing a notice on a Yale bulletin board that the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin was offering financial support to Ph.D. students, he took a job at the bureau, and his first assignment became the subject of his doctoral dissertation. He and Priscilla moved to Austin, living in the Brackenridge Apartments and making forays into West Texas to map the area around Van Horn. Priscilla served as the camp cook for geologists surveying the backcountry.

In 1960, he was made director of the Bureau of Economic Geology. In a sign of things to come, in 1970, he became "professor of geological sciences and public affairs." Inspiring confidence and exuding authority, he rose steadily through the ranks of academia.

That year, he was appointed the university's vice president for academic affairs and in 1972 rose to executive vice president before being tapped to become the second president of The University of Texas at San Antonio. During his five-year tenure there, Flawn presided over many milestones for the young university, including its first commencement and the opening of its main campus in 1975, where he is remembered as a "hands-on" leader and a "familiar figure on the construction site of the new campus." He established a new core curriculum, raised admission standards, and — foreshadowing another legacy — oversaw a dramatic increase in the number of endowed faculty positions.

In 1979, he returned to The University of Texas at Austin as its president and served six years that spanned the university's centennial in 1983. Flawn used the milestone to launch an ambitious capital campaign during which he famously declared a "war on mediocrity," pushing the institution to pursue greater academic rigor and excellence. The Centennial Campaign raised the number of faculty endowments from 112 to 851. Sponsored research awards grew to \$100 million and five new research buildings were built. Upon his retirement in 1985, when he was named president emeritus, the Academic Center next to UT's Tower was renamed the Peter T. Flawn Academic Center.

Throughout his career, he continued to collect honors for his work in geology, including election to the National Academy of Engineering (1974), the Condecoración de la Orden del Sol del Peru (1984), the Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal from Yale University (1985), and the Ben H. Parker Memorial Medal from the American Institute of Professional Geologists (1989).

He served as president of both the Geological Society of America (1978) and the American Geological Institute (1988). The American Association of Petroleum Geologists elected him an honorary member in 1983. The American Geological Institute awarded him the Ian Campbell Medal in 1993. Oberlin College awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Science in 1995. Flawn served on the National Science Board from 1980 to 1986. In 1987 to 1988 he was chairman of the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission. He was reappointed to the Texas National Research Laboratory Commission in 1991. He was an organizing member and director of the National Math and Science Initiative from 2006 to 2008. He served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Southwest Research Institute from 1997 to 1999. The UT System Board of Regents presented him with the Santa Rita Award in 2000. The Association of Texas Colleges and Universities awarded him the Mirabeau B. Lamar Medal in 2001.

In 1997, at age seventy-one, Flawn agreed to serve as president ad interim while UT Austin searched for a new leader. He resigned from the many corporate and non-profit boards on which he was then serving and accepted a salary of \$1.00. During those ten months, Flawn refused to be a caretaker and instead launched another capital campaign, this time with an unprecedented goal of raising \$1 billion. He also actively dealt with the fallout from the *Hopwood v. Texas* decision banning racial consideration in admissions.

The following year, Flawn received the first Distinguished Service Award from UT Austin's alumni association, its highest award for a non-alumnus. At that time, longtime friend and alumnus leader Larry Temple described Flawn as a quintessential academic who had the management savvy to lead any corporation in America. To that, alumni executive director Jim Boon added, "He doesn't beat around the bush. He gets to the point. He gets to the heart of an issue... He can be stern and intimidating, but through all that comes a genuine caring for the university."

Flawn was inseparable from the UT Austin campus he so loved. Long after his second retirement he often was among the first to arrive at meetings of various advisory boards. Days before his death he was mingling at a meeting of the University Development Board. Daughter Tyrrell Flawn says, "Dad and Mom both loved the university more than anything. It was their lives' commitment — to let the world know what a wonderful institution it is and what a vital asset it is to the state of Texas. Best was never good enough for him. He inspired people to do better than their best, and that went for the whole university too."

He is survived by his daughter Tyrrell E. Flawn, of Washington, D.C., and her husband, John P. Howe III, M.D.; his grandsons, John Graham Hill of Santa Monica, Calif., Peter Charles Hill of Irvine, Calif., Thomas Flawn-Chopp of Crested Butte, Colo.; his granddaughter Priscilla Flawn-Chopp of Austin; and nine great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by the love of his life, Priscilla Pond Flawn (1926-2016), and his daughter Laura B. Flawn, M.D.

A memorial service was held May 13, 2017, on the UT Austin campus at the LBJ Presidential Library, in the Lady Bird Johnson Auditorium.

In lieu of flowers, the Flawn family has asked that gifts in memory of Dr. Flawn be made to support the Priscilla Pond Flawn Child and Family Laboratory Endowment at UT Austin. Gifts can be made online at: <https://txsci.net/DrPeterFlawn> or checks can be made payable to UT Austin and mailed to Marie Cloutier, The University of Texas at Austin, 120 Inner Campus Drive G2500, Austin, TX 78712. Questions may be directed to Marie Cloutier at 512-475-9229.

This memorial resolution was prepared by Avrel Seale, Office of University Communications.

Distributed to the dean of Jackson School of Geological Sciences on May 30, 2017, and posted under "Memorial Resolutions" at <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/facultycouncil/Wiki+Home>.