DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
JOHN J. BERTIN

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for John J. Bertin, professor, aerospace engineering, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
JOHN J. BERTIN

John J. Bertin passed away October 11, 2008, in Houston, Texas, at the age of 69. He was born October 13, 1938, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Andrew and Yolanda Bertin. He is survived by his four children, Thomas, Randolph, Elizabeth, and Michael Bertin; four grandchildren, Audrey and Andrew Bertin and Emma and Honore Nelson; as well as two sisters, Gloria Langley and Rosemary Rosensprung. He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth. John spent his formative years in Houston, Texas, graduating from Stephen F. Austin High School and entering Rice Institute in 1956. He went on to earn three degrees from Rice: a bachelor of science, master of science, and a Ph.D. in mechanical and aerospace engineering. After earning his master’s degree, he worked on the Gemini and Apollo programs at newly formed NASA, beginning a close working relationship with the agency that would continue throughout his life.

Upon completing his Ph.D. degree at Rice University, he accepted a faculty position at The University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Aerospace Engineering and Engineering Mechanics where, for almost two decades, he enthusiastically taught undergraduate and graduate students and was engaged in research, including projects related to the space shuttle program. He was rewarded for his effective teaching and research programs by receiving the Bettie Margaret Smith chaired professorship. One of his proudest achievements was being recognized with an Excellence in Teaching Award in the 1978-79 academic year, an honor voted on by engineering students. His teaching effectiveness was most likely the result of his early practical experience gained at NASA, during the start-up period of the space program that provided him with a well-balanced teaching approach between theory and practice for the students. During his tenure at UT, he also worked in departmental administrative activities as graduate advisor, assistant chairman, and sponsor of many student organizations, such as the AIAA and Sigma Gamma Tau. In addition to his academic pursuits, he helped to raise a family in central Texas and was an active parent, whether serving as president of the Parents’ Club at St. Austin’s Catholic School, coaching little league teams, hiking with his children to Barton Creek, or taking his family to watch college football games.

After approximately two decades of extensive activity at The University of Texas at Austin, John spent a number of years at the Sandia National Labs in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He then returned to teaching at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO., and was awarded the Exemplary Civilian Award in 1996 and in 2004. He was named professor emeritus and received the Outstanding Civilian Service Award at the Academy. One of the greatest honors he received during this time was being included as an aerothermodynamic consultant on the Columbia Space Shuttle Accident Investigation Board.

John continued to maintain an active personal life after retiring to Houston. He consulted for various NASA projects and taught as an adjunct faculty member at his alma mater, Rice University. He was also recognized by Rice for his noteworthy career achievements when he was selected for a Distinguished Alumni Award in 2005. Throughout his career, John wrote or coauthored a number of textbooks in the field of aerodynamics and fluid mechanics and was a leading authority in the field of hypersonics and aerothermodynamics. As an educator, John was dedicated to the continual development of the professional lives of his students and maintained lifelong relationships with many of the people he taught. He was not only a teacher, but he was a friend and companion. His professional dedication was matched by his devotion to Rice sports teams, and he followed the exploits of the Owls throughout his life, often traveling long distances to take in a game with one or more of his
children or fellow alumni. He was a truly dedicated professional, an indomitable optimist, and known for his lively and mischievous sense of humor. John will be truly missed by his friends, family, and professional colleagues.

The memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Ronald Stearman (chair), Byron Tapley, and Joseph Malina.

Distributed to the dean of the Cockrell School of Engineering, the executive vice president and provost, and the president June 9, 2009. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.