REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
RUSSELL LEWIS COLLINS

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Russell Lewis Collins, associate professor (retired), physics, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
RUSSELL LEWIS COLLINS

Russell Lewis Collins was born in Coffeyville, Kansas, on September 21, 1928. He passed away on Monday, October 11, 2010, at the age of eighty-two. Russ Collins earned his B.S. degree in engineering physics at the University of Tulsa in 1948. Subsequently, he attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, for graduate study in physics and earned his master’s degree in 1950 and his Ph.D. in 1953. His dissertation, supervised by J. Rud Nielsen, was entitled, “The Vibrational Spectra of Methyltrifluorosilane.” After graduation, Dr. Collins worked as a physicist at Phillips Petroleum Company. He left Phillips to join the physics department at The University of Texas at Austin in 1962, where he was a professor until retirement in 1984.

Russ Collins was an outstanding experimental physicist and an expert on Mössbauer spectroscopy, the use of recoil-free gamma ray emission and absorption for precision analysis. He was a demanding and rigorous mentor, engaging his students in weekly seminars, where each was required to present a relevant topic. He liked to say that he knew graduate students were ready for a Ph.D. when they could show their teacher had made a mistake in a statement or proof. He was the author of more than fifty refereed papers in research journals, and he co-authored many papers with his graduate students.

Dr. Collins held a number of patents concerning nuclear magnetic resonance and well logging. He started his company, Austin Science Associates, while at UT Austin, and retired from the University to pursue further development of the company. Austin Science Associates was a leading manufacturer of Mössbauer instrumentation for many years and received many research grants from the United States Army and Navy for practical applications of the Mössbauer effect. The company also worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to pioneer green methods of weed and pest control.

Professor Collins was well known around campus as “that prof with the amphibian car.” He drove a German-made Amphicar—a rarity, with only 3,878 built in the 1960s—which was documented as capable of successfully crossing the English Channel. The vehicle had twin propellers protruding from under the rear that allowed Russ to drive to Lake Austin and motor across to his home on the other side.

Russ Collins was always attempting to develop new interpretations of basic physics phenomena. He was deeply disturbed by the accepted presentations of relativity, both the special and general theories, and would argue strongly for his positions.

Dr. Collins was preceded in death by his parents; son, James Vann Collins; brother, Glen Samuel Collins Jr.; and sister, Clara Isabel Collins. He is survived by his wife, Aura Renee Collins; son, David Russell Collins; and stepdaughters, Edith, Ingra, and Saskia.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Austin Gleeson (chair), Peter Riley, and Melvin Oakes.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences on June 20, 2011, and posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.