The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Peter Oakley Coltman, associate professor emeritus, architecture, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Dean P. Neikirk, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

IN MEMORIAM
PETER OAKLEY COLTMAN

Peter Oakley Coltman was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he completed his Bachelor of Architecture degree and earned a Diploma in Town Planning at the University of Witwatersrand. After working for the National Building Research Institute, as well as for the African Housing Board in Zambia, Peter taught construction at the University of Witwatersrand for several years. In 1961, he moved to Austin as a student in UT’s Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning (MSCRP) Program. In 1962, his wife, Felicity, and son, Peter, followed, while his daughters, Anne and Heather, lived with family in South Africa.

Peter earned his MSCR in 1964, and began to teach at the University of Kansas as an assistant professor in 1966. His daughter Margaret was born there in 1967. In July 1968, he accepted a position as associate professor of community and regional planning at UT’s School of Architecture and the family moved back to Austin. The house on Strass Drive that he bought and creatively modified over the years (he was an architect, after all), was the one in which he and Felicity raised their reunited family, and the one in which he passed away. In 1971, Peter took a one-year leave to teach at Leicester Polytechnic in London; the family accompanied him. He returned to England in 1973 to earn a Certificate in Environmental Planning from the University of Manchester, to register as an architect with the Royal Institute of British Architects, and to become a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. In the 1970s, he also taught at the University of Manitoba and at “Wits,” his alma mater in Johannesburg.

Modest to a fault, world-traveller, nature hiker, gardener, cook, recycler, builder, designer, tinkerer, reader, storyteller, road-tripper, and family camper, Peter Coltman focused his academic work, his professional involvement, and his teaching on the relationship between humans and nature, honoring equally monument and shack, ethical principle and ingenious practicality.

Serving as a member of the National American Institute of Architects Committee on Regional Development and Natural Resources from 1974 to 1986, Peter had already became a one-person force in the environmentalist movement of the early 70s, long before its current popularity under the rubric of “green” or “sustainable” development. A gentle man and a gentleman, his treatment of the myriad of interfaces between humans and the natural environment was quietly effective, not only by virtue of his research and advocacy, but as daily he nudged his students and colleagues to consider the larger picture: the effects of culture and climate on how we design and how we use the earth’s resources. Peter also brought his skills to bear on several civic projects—projects that benefitted local neighborhoods and small communities all around Texas.

Peter Coltman was one of the first faculty members in the School of Architecture to develop an ongoing relationship between the Community and Regional Planning Program and the faculty in the school’s other programs, most of whom were architects. Not only did he teach courses and conduct projects in which both
architecture and planning students participated, but he served devotedly and competently as the graduate adviser for both the planning program (1969-1971) and the growing graduate architecture program (1983-1992).

Today, following in his footsteps, “cross-over” relationships within the school, both academic and administrative, are common: five faculty members from other programs in the school now serve on the CRP Graduate Studies Committee. Several courses cross disciplines, too. Peter not only prepared the groundwork for this, he also prepared the groundwork for the School of Architecture’s reputation today as a national center of excellence in promoting harmonious relationships between human activity, in the form of building construction and planning, and the natural environment.

A celebration and remembrance of Peter Coltman’s achievements was held under the large roof at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum and was attended by the hundreds of people whose lives he affected. His funeral at Eliose Woods Natural Burial Park, some two-and-a-half weeks earlier, was simpler. Surrounded by trees, and attended by family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues, it was a moving tribute to a much-loved man, a man who lived a life that was an example of the principles he taught.

A memorial Mexican Plum tree is planted in his name, just south of Sutton Hall.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Terry D. Kahn (chair) and Michael Benedikt.

Distributed to the dean of the School Architecture on February 19, 2014, and posted under “Memorials” at http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.