The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Edward Mott Davis, professor emeritus, anthropology, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
EDWARD MOTT DAVIS

Edward Mott Davis, known to students, friends, and colleagues simply as Mott, died on December 23, 1998, at the age of 80. Mott came to The University of Texas in 1956 and soon became a major influence in the development of Texas archaeology. His teaching inspired untold numbers of students; he helped develop the University’s research programs in archaeology, and he was revered by hundreds of avocational (“amateur”) archaeologists across the state. He retired as professor emeritus in 1989.

Mott was born in Shirley, Massachusetts, on November 24, 1918, and came from a family of scholars and social activists. His grandfather was a well-known geologist and his great-great grandmother, Lucretia Mott, led the fight for abolition. The hallmarks of Mott’s academic career were his BA in anthropology (magna cum laude) at Harvard in 1940, and his PhD in 1954. Work on his doctorate was delayed by World War II, during which he first served in the Air Transport Command. Upon the death of his father in 1943, he ran Davis Orchards, the family apple farm in Shirley, Massachusetts. In 1948, he returned to Harvard and soon took a position at the University of Nebraska. While there, he completed a dissertation that dealt with his excavations at the Lime Creek and Red Smoke sites in Nebraska; it was subsequently published as a monograph of the Nebraska State Museum.

Archaeology and the sciences permeated the Davis family. Mott’s sister, Hester, also received a degree in archaeology. She helped organize the archaeological infrastructure of Arkansas, where she served for many years as state archaeologist. Another sister, Penrose, married Eugene C. Worman, a Harvard-trained archaeologist who specialized in Near Eastern archaeology. Mott married Beth Ogden in 1943. She joined him in expeditions to the American Southwest, and became a well-respected technical editor, especially in archaeology. Mott and Beth had two sons. Jonathan, a geomorphologist with the Desert Research Institute of the University of Nevada, was killed by a drunk driver in 1990; Hugh became a DVM, with a veterinary practice in New Hampshire.

Mott’s abilities as a teacher went well beyond academics. He was deeply involved in the Texas Archeological Society, a statewide organization of avocational and professional archeologists. He edited its newsletter, its annual bulletin, served as president and in many other offices, and began the Society’s tradition of summer field schools held each June in various parts of the state. Through these activities, he was the mentor of literally hundreds of avocational archaeologists, whose skills at fieldwork, analysis, and publication — learned from Mott — are the envy of such societies around the country. He was a tireless recruiter of members for the Society and offered encouragement to anyone interested in archaeology. The latter group contained a number of individuals who became professional archaeologists, including one of this resolution’s authors (Hester) when he was a 16-year old high school student in south Texas. Mott was a central figure at the Society’s field school campfires, playing his guitar and singing the “Sinking of the Titanic,” with words adapted to archaeological themes. Another of Mott’s accomplishments is seen in his work with the Society to lobby the legislature for the establishment of the Office of State Archeologist in 1969.

As a scholar, Mott pursued research among the ancient Caddo sites of east Texas, directed the University’s Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory for many years, worked with data on early human occupation of the Plains derived from his stay at the University of Nebraska, was part of the research team at the Roman-age site of
Stobi (Macedonia) from 1970-1975, and directed a variety of excavations in many locales in Texas. Given his
gregarious nature, he interacted well with relic-collectors; those whom he could not convert to more scientific
pursuits, he persuaded to share information.

For many years, Mott promoted the research of others, in his position as Director of Research in Anthropology.
Before the creation of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL), Mott organized the scattered
records, files, and maps from earlier archaeological projects at the University and systematized the site
numbering process still in use today. He was always involved in TARL’s activities and kept an office at its
Pickle Research Campus location. On his 80th birthday, November 24, 1998, TARL honored him with the
publication of chapters in the History of Texas Archeology, Selected Papers by E. Mott Davis. This volume
reflected his deep interest in the evolution of anthropology and archaeology in Texas by reprinting several of his
key papers on the topic.

Indeed, a major chapter in the history of both Texas and North American archaeology were the six 16-mm
films, Spadework for History, on the archaeology of North America that he made in conjunction with the
fledgling film unit of the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University. With a grant from the
National Science Foundation, and in collaboration with UT cinematographers, the films were completed in
1962. Mott loved to recall that the studio work was done in Welch Hall, and that the recording of his narration
of the films had to be done between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m., the only times it was quiet within, and outside, that
building.

Mott was an accomplished teacher of anthropology, and especially loved introductory courses and the field
techniques course. He received University teaching awards, including the "Cactus Award" (1970) and the
President’s Associates Teaching Excellence Award (1987). He was very active in the Society for American
Archaeology, serving as its secretary in the early 1960s. He maintained an incredible correspondence with
colleagues, students, avocational archaeologists, collectors and just about anyone who contacted the department
regarding archaeological matters. This correspondence and his other files are archived at TARL. Mott
maintained a fierce interest in politics, local and national, he navigated a Whistler sailboat on area lakes, and he
worked with the preservation of history of the old settlement of Sayersville in Bastrop County.

Mott Davis was many things. He was devoted to his family and provided wisdom and sage counsel to
colleagues and friends. He was an icon of Texas archaeology, the congenial and gregarious professor loved by
his students, and a scholar who help set the standards for Texas archaeology among both avocational and
professionals. He maintained his well known sense of humor through his final illness. Mott’s life and career
were exceedingly well done.

After his death, Mott’s library was donated to several institutions, including the Texas Archeological Research
Laboratory (UT Austin), the Desert Research Institute, the Nebraska State Museum, and the University of

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Thomas R. Hester
provided information used in its preparation.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the
President on May 16, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22,
F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/