IN MEMORIAM

NORRIS G. DAVIS

Norris Garland Davis was born February 15, 1916, in Bartlett, Texas, and died April 15, 1981. He had been a major force in journalism education, in Texas and the United States, for much of his 35-year academic career.

Davis graduated from his hometown high school in Bartlett in 1933 and attended John Tarleton Junior College for two years. He served as editor of the school paper in 1934-35, while providing for his junior college expenses by working as night fireman in the Tarleton steam plant. With these demands on his time and energy, he was valedictorian of his Tarleton graduating class.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Texas, Davis continued to excel academically while keeping a busy extracurricular schedule and earning money to cover his expenses. In 1935-36 he was employed in the business office of Student Publications, Inc., doing typing and general clerical work. He was an assistant on the night staff of The Daily Texan and was floor manager in Little Campus Dormitory in 1936-37. His graduation with the B.J. degree in 1937 was with highest honors; in 1938 he was the sole Master of Journalism graduate at The University of Texas.

The Davis career in professional journalism began later in 1938 at the Corpus Christi Caller Times, where he started as a fifteen-dollars-per-week cub reporter. During the Depression a job, with salary, could represent security. So Davis celebrated by buying a ring and proposing marriage to Edith Pennington, who had earned the master's degree in botany at The University of Texas the previous year and was teaching science in an Austin public school. They married the following year, and Davis rose in rank to Assistant Regional Editor and then to Telegraph Editor before starting his move to an academic career in 1940, while continuing his journalistic career. Later he was to be, for almost 20 years, a contributing editor to Texas Co-op Power, a newspaper for rural electric cooperative members.
THE PRODUCTIVE YEARS

While he was working for the Corpus Christi Caller Times, Davis received a telegram from Texas A&M asking him to come teach journalism. He accepted the one-year appointment filling in for a professor on a year's leave of absence. At the end of that year, he had to decide whether to go back to newspaper work or pursue a Ph.D. so he could continue teaching. He chose the latter, and enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in 1941. Three semesters later, he was drafted by the Army.

During his stay at the University of Wisconsin, Davis became interested in the law of mass communication and also began to write for scholarly journals. He published articles in Journalism Quarterly and The Quill dealing with libel and with legal aspects of photojournalism.

After being discharged from the Army, Davis returned to Texas A&M. But he was soon presented with the opportunity to come to The University of Texas. He joined the faculty of what was then the School of Journalism in February, 1947. He was given the primary responsibility of coordinating the school's program in news gathering and reporting. In this capacity, he supervised the work of five teachers and one laboratory instructor.

Davis remained at The University of Texas for the rest of his career, except for the period of 1949-1951, when he went to the University of Minnesota to work on his doctorate. At Minnesota, Davis continued his interest in law, writing a Ph.D. dissertation titled "Freedom of the Press in Texas: A Comparative Study of Legal Controls on Mass News Media," which was completed in 1954.

After finishing his doctorate, Dr. Davis returned to The University of Texas and began a busy period of teaching, writing and advising. His book The Press and the Law in Texas, which was based on his dissertation, was published by The University of Texas Press in 1956. An expert in communication law at another university described Davis's book as "a thorough and meticulous study of the situation in a single state—a model for other researchers in other states." Another professor at a different university said Davis's book "is sound and it achieved acclaim throughout the United States. Without doubt he is regarded as one of the authorities in this
country on the subject of press law." In 1956, Davis was selected to find and annotate articles in press law in legal journals for the "Selected, Annotated Bibliography of Articles on Mass Communication" section of Journalism Quarterly, a job he did for 10 or more years. In this period, Davis published articles on legal aspects of journalism in Journalism Quarterly, The Texas Press Messenger and Theta Significance. He published articles on other aspects of journalism in Texas Libraries, Southern Advertising and Publishing, Editor and Publisher, Public Affairs Comment and the Texas Journal of Pharmacy. He was also publishing feature articles in such magazines as National Rural Electrification Magazine and Texas Co-op Power. Davis was also the author, with others, of the book Modern Journalism, published in 1962 by Pitman.

During this time, Davis received several awards for his teaching and advising work. He was given the outstanding adviser award by National Theta Sigma Phi in 1960. In 1961, the Students' Association presented him its Teaching Excellence Award. And in 1963 he was designated a Piper Professor, an award given by the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation "for outstanding scholarly and academic achievement."

Fred Argir, a successful singer and recording artist who is a former journalism student at the University, once credited Davis and C. Richard King, another University journalism professor, with helping him in his songwriting. "Dr. King and Norris Davis really helped me develop discipline and just sheer craft," he said.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE YEARS

Norris Davis became chairman of the Department of Journalism when the School of Communication was created in September, 1965. The department grew rapidly during his eleven years as chairman: the number of graduates grew six-fold, the faculty doubled in size, and the annual operating budget more than tripled. A three-building communications complex was designed, constructed and occupied, and new teaching equipment was acquired as journalism technology changed from Linotype machines and melted lead to computers and video display terminals. He responded vigorously when the chairman of the Board of Regents spoke of "weaknesses" in his faculty, finding solid sup-
port in the Texas newspaper industry. His final three years as an admini-
strator (Associate Dean of the School of Communication, 1976-1979) were a
period in which he was accorded several significant honors as national and
Texas organizations recognized his leadership in and his contributions to
journalism and education. As one of his colleagues said later, Norris
Davis was "one of the builders of journalism education in Texas."

Evidence of growth in the Department of Journalism during the Davis
years is clear when one notes the statistics. The number of journalism grad-
uates in 1965, as Davis became chairman, was 50; in 1976, as he moved on to
his next administrative assignment, there were 311 journalism graduates. The
latter number was achieved after Davis had seen a significant percentage of
his students move to the Department of Advertising, which was separated from
the Department of Journalism in 1973. In the eleven-year period Davis served
as journalism chairman, the faculty grew from twelve to twenty-two and the
Departmental budget grew from $155,327 to $573,727. Davis increased the
dollar total through vigorous development effort in the mass communications
industry, adding approximately $50,000 per year to the funds made available
for scholarships and other supportive projects for students.

The Department of Journalism moved into a three-building communications
complex just before the start of the 1973-74 academic year. The total cost
of the new teaching and operating facility was close to $13,000,000.
Included in the equipment about which Davis made significant decisions were a
Department of Journalism/Texas Student Publications computer system, a Goss
newspaper printing press, a Broadcast News Laboratory and excellent photo-
journalism facilities. A result of these decisions was that the Department
moved into position as best-equipped among journalism departments nationwide.
Another colleague was later to react:

"Norris led us into the computer age in the newspaper
sequence and gave us a viable broadcast sequence at a
time when others were only starting to recognize the
potentials of computers in newspapers and of television
as a news medium. He had special skills: he could see
the future and he would act to be ready for it."
A crisis loomed for the Department of Journalism late in the Davis tenure, but he was able to head it off by direct and forceful action and with the help of his long-established friends in the Texas newspaper industry. The chairman of the board of Regents, former governor Allan Shivers, criticized the department for "weaknesses" but declined to be specific in response to questions from a Daily Texas reporter: "All I will say is that the greatest need is in improving the faculty. People in practicing professions outside the school tell me it should be much stronger."

Davis responded to the reporter with force and specificity: "We have a sound, hard-working faculty which represents a good balance of professors with professional experience in working with the media as well as professors more inclined toward research interests." Then he went to work to rally the support of the department's friends at Texas newspapers. He visited the offices of 45 newspapermen on the staffs of 21 newspapers in 20 cities. "I was received warmly and hospitably by all I contacted," he reported to Dean Wayne Danielson.

Other evidence of the strength of his relationship with newspapermen of Texas is seen in an award Davis received only months after the Shivers episode. In 1976, its 96th year, the Texas Press Association honored him as a "Friend of Texas Press Association." It was only the seventeenth time the award had been given, and the first time for a journalism educator to be so honored. The plaque recognized his "service and friendship to the weekly and daily newspapers of Texas" and his "outstanding assistance to the spirit of freedom for our nation's Fourth Estate."

That same year, Norris Davis was elected national president of Kappa Tau Alpha, the honor society dedicated to recognition and promotion of scholarship in journalism education. He served two years as national president; his membership had started with election to the society in 1950 at the University of Minnesota.

Other honors accorded Norris Davis in his last years as academic administrator were equally fitting and indicative of the stature he had achieved in his field. In 1977-78 he served as president of the Texas Journalism Education Council, the organization of the major college and university jour-
nalism programs in Texas. In early 1977, the Texas Daily Newspaper Association honored him with a resolution recognizing him as "a good and respected friend to the newspapers of Texas" who had "instilled in the students who have been privileged to study under him the highest principles of the journalism profession."

As another colleague commented later, Norris Davis "understood the importance of professional ties while pushing a strong academic program." When those strong professional ties were needed to help him protect the Department of Journalism from a possible threat, Norris Davis had the ties and they were strong. Newspaper professionals of Texas supported Davis and his department when their support was needed.

NORRIS DAVIS: 1916-1981

Early in his academic career, a colleague reported that Davis had entered the teaching profession "because of his desire to be of service to his fellow man." As we looked back upon that life while preparing this resolution, we found evidence again and again that it was a life of outstanding service that was broad in scope. Students knew he would help solve their academic and personal problems. Newspaper association leaders knew he would help explain at their meetings the complexities of communications law. His colleagues knew he would help when needed, whether that need be academic or personal. Administrators knew they could count on him to handle, quickly, efficiently and fairly, each academic challenge. Even now, as we fondly recall the rumble of his voice, we know the final assessment was: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."
This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors H. Al Anderson (Chairman), Ernest A. Sharpe, and James W. Tankard.
APPENDIX I

Selected Bibliography, NORRIS GARLAND DAVIS


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