DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
ROBERT E. DAVIS

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Robert E. Davis, professor emeritus, radio-television-film, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
ROBERT E. DAVIS

Robert E. (Bob) Davis, the John T. Jones, Jr., Professor Emeritus in Communication and former chairman of the Department of Radio-Television-Film, died on April 14, 2010.

Bob Davis was born in Newton, Kansas, on April 2, 1931, and was raised in Burlington, Iowa. He received his B.A. from the University of Northern Iowa and completed his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Iowa. Prior to his arrival at The University of Texas, Professor Davis taught at Hunter College in New York City, the University of Michigan, and Southern Illinois University, where he also served as chairman of the Department of Cinema and Photography.

In 1974, Bob Davis was appointed as professor and chairman of the Department of Radio-Television-Film (RTF) at The University of Texas at Austin, a position he held until 1987, when he stepped down as chair and took a leave of absence to travel and conduct research; that leave eventually led to his retirement. Bob Davis was among the first generation of communication scholars to complete a Ph.D. in media studies, focusing on the social history of film and television. His dissertation on “responses to innovation” in media technology, later published as a book, was an important contribution to the emerging field, particularly in its melding of humanistic and social-scientific approaches to the study of what was then termed mass communication. He also had extensive experience in radio, television, and film production, creating and contributing to hundreds of public service programs as well as award-winning documentary films. In many ways The University of Texas RTF department reflected Bob Davis’s own wide-ranging background and eclectic interests, which spanned—and often combined—theory and practice. During his tenure as chair, he led the department as it experienced extraordinary growth in size and stature, becoming one of the leading programs in both media studies and in film and television production in the United States.

Under Bob Davis, the RTF graduate program in film, television, and mass media studies came to reflect the same multi-disciplinary breadth as his own scholarship and experience, developing into one of the few Ph.D. programs with national prominence in both critical-cultural and social-scientific research. This recognition was matched in the graduate program in film and television production, and by the mid-1980s, the RTF department was regarded as the top “film school” in Texas and the Southwest. The undergraduate program grew steadily as well, as RTF became one of the most sought-after majors at UT. As a true visionary, an effective leader, and a precise and deeply engaged administrator, Bob Davis was heavily responsible for the program’s steady rise in stature. By the early 1980s, his successes were widely recognized, and much of his own research and professional service came to focus on both the organization and the administration of media programs in higher education. These contributions are marked by his ongoing activities with the University Film Association, the Speech Communication Association, the Broadcast Education Association, and the Association for Communication Administration.

In recognition for this work, for his accomplishments as a professor and scholar and for his role as chief architect of the RTF department, Bob Davis was named in 1983 to the (now endowed) John T. Jones Centennial Professorship in Communication. In July 1987, he stepped down as chairman of Radio-Television-
Film, taking a leave after eighteen consecutive years of departmental administration. After extensive travel, research, and writing (including a foray into writing fiction), Bob Davis opted to retire from his faculty position and, in 1989, was awarded the title of professor emeritus.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Thomas Schatz (chair), Horace Newcomb, and Robert Brooks.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Communication, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on December 13, 2010. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.