DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
KATE GARTNER FROST

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Kate Gartner Frost, associate professor emeritus, English, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger
Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
KATE GARTNER FROST

Kate Gartner Frost, professor emerita of English at The University of Texas at Austin, died on Sunday, July 25, 2010, in Austin, after a long battle with cancer. A scholar of the English and European Renaissance and past president of the John Donne Society, Frost arrived at UT Austin in 1974 and taught there until her retirement in 2008.

Kate Frost was born on March 25, 1939, in Pontiac, Michigan. Following an early exploration of religious life, Kate completed her B.A. at Barry University in Miami in 1964. She received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship in 1965 and became a scholarly editor at the Smithsonian Institution with a special competence in the history of technology. She worked for the Smithsonian until 1969, when she began her graduate education. Kate received her M.A. and Ph.D. at Princeton University, studying under D.W. Robertson and Thomas P. Roche Jr. In 1974, she submitted her dissertation on John Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, which was directed by Earl Miner and Wilbur S. Howell. Shortly thereafter, Kate joined the faculty of the Department of English at The University of Texas at Austin and was promoted to associate professor in 1980.

In the classroom, Professor Frost was renowned for her dynamic intellect and irreverent wit as well as her commitment to her students. Yet, she was known to be an especially tough teacher, demanding the most from her students, especially in writing classes. To the end of her life, she was tirelessly committed to mentoring graduate students. As an undergraduate instructor, she taught everything from Donne, Shakespeare, and Milton to Advanced Expository Writing and a course on food writing. Not surprisingly, Professor Frost received five awards for her teaching, including The University of Texas President’s Associates Teaching Excellence Award (1983) and the Texas Students’ Association Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award (1990). When she addressed the student group on April 5, 1990, she explained her philosophy of teaching as follows:

Educated children rock boats. And that is what I think education is: boat rocking. You start by rocking your own, now and through the rest of your life. Your teachers here, your good teachers, give you the tools and the heart to rock that boat: they teach you to take charge of your own intellectual life and destiny. That’s what it is to be educated: you give yourself the power to learn, grow, and change, and your professors help and witness.

Professor Frost touched the lives not only of countless University of Texas students, but also the lives of the scholars she met at professional meetings, who loved her generosity of spirit. Long-time friend and colleague Raymond-Jean Frontain recalls that “no matter how large the gathering, one could always sense when Kate had entered the room, for the energy level became noticeably higher and a Rabelaisian jote de vivre filled the air.” Professor Frost received acclaim for her academic research, where her publications focused chiefly on the works of John Donne. She is best known for her first book, Holy Delight: Typology, Numerology, and Autobiography in Donne’s Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions (1990), which Thomas P. Roche Jr. of Princeton University describes as “groundbreaking.” An active member of the South-Central Renaissance Conference for decades, she was also fascinated by the history of esoteric philosophies and their intersections with the poetic and religious traditions of the West. At her death, Professor Frost was completing editorial work on the John Donne Variorum, Volume 6: Songs and Sonnets.
Professor Frost's continuing work on Donne's *Devotions*, a series of reflections on Donne's near-fatal bout with typhus of 1623, became deeply personal in later life, as she struggled with her own catastrophic illness. As she wrote in her 2009 John Donne Society presidential address, the *Devotions* gave her

a discursive invitation to contemplate our flawed nature struck by disease as well as structural warning that time is short in which to seek the key to health which lies in the Communion of Saints. To recognize that sacramental purgation readies the melded body/soul for a return to wholeness. And perhaps to receive the gift of a renewed, albeit precariously so, life.

Kate's interests were diverse and wide-ranging. She was an enthusiastic gardener, birder, singer, animal lover, gourmet cook, and devotee of the Shakespeare at Winedale program. An avid patron of the arts, she organized an opera group among colleagues and friends who attended seasonal performances sponsored by the Austin Lyric Opera. She fully appreciated opera as a poetic language that unites the libretto as text with requisite components of performance aesthetics. For years, before coordinating the group, Kate would purchase two tickets and would give the second one to an appreciative colleague, thus spreading the wealth—and the word—about the enrichment of a favored art form. She was never more in her element than when gesticulating about the potent delivery of a signature aria or when commenting upon the merits of a particularly inspiring performance. Kate showed through deed what is seldom adequately expressed in words: that the arts remain indispensable to the heart, soul, and vibrancy of the human condition.

Professor Frost is survived by her sister, Rita Joan Monti of British Columbia; brother, Thomas Frost of Phoenix, Arizona; and two nieces and two nephews.

"One short sleep past, we woke eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die."

--John Donne, from "Holy Sonnet X"

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Hannah C. Wojciechowski (chair), John Ruszkiewicz, and Helena Woodard; Professor Frost's former graduate student, Dr. Arlen Nydam, also contributed to this memorial resolution.

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