DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
BENJAMIN FRUCHTER

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Benjamin Fruchter, professor emeritus, educational psychology, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
BENJAMIN FRUCHTER

Benjamin Fruchter was born August 31, 1914, in New York City, to Nathan and Fannie (Freilich) Fruchter. He graduated from Townsend-Harris, a high school for academically talented boys in New York City. He attended City College but graduated from Brooklyn College, receiving a B.A. in psychology in 1937. At the beginning of WWII, Ben was in graduate school at UC Berkeley. He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and was assigned to the aviation psychology program in Santa Ana, California, under the leadership of Col. (Dr.) J. P. Guilford. In 1943, he married Dorothy A. (Dee) Sewell, an employee of the program. The unit was subsequently moved to Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in San Antonio, where Ben and Dee’s son, Jonathan, was born in 1945. After the war, the family moved back to California, where Ben earned the M.A. and Ph.D. in psychology at USC, with J. P. Guilford as his major professor. The couple’s daughter, Judith, was born in Los Angeles. The family moved to Austin in 1948, where Ben directed an air force research detachment associated with Lackland AFB but located at The University of Texas at Austin. His younger son, David, was born in Austin.

He joined UT’s Department of Educational Psychology in 1949 and remained there as a professor until his retirement in 1994. Ben was a compassionate and fair but challenging teacher. His graduate classes in quantitative methods were taken by students from many departments. He supervised thirty doctoral students and served on many other students’ doctoral committees during his tenure. His list of publications includes approximately 100 research papers and two widely used textbooks on research methods, including Introduction to Factor Analysis, a text that made a complex statistical method accessible to many researchers in the US and around the world. Ben and his good friend and colleague, Jackson B. Reid, founded a corporation, Psychological Research Service, to manage contracts with government agencies. Later projects for state agencies were handled by a separate company, Educational Development Corporation.

Ben was a fellow of four divisions of the American Psychological Association, a member of the Southwestern Psychological Association (president 1965-66), and a founding member of the Society for Multivariate Behavioral Research. He was editor of the Journal of Multivariate Behavioral Research, one of the premier journals in the field, from 1974-1982. He was a diplomate in Industrial Psychology, a member of AERA, and a fellow of AAAS. His name is listed in American Men and Women of Science and several other such lists. After retirement, he became a member of the Chancellor’s Council of The University of Texas.

Ben was a very caring man who gave a great deal of his time and energy to students and staff in his department and in the wider University community. In 1983, Ben and Dee established the endowed Fruchter Dissertation Research Award to provide annual recognition and a stipend for outstanding research in educational psychology. They also created an endowment to provide funds to the quantitative methods program in educational psychology. Funds from this endowment have helped students acquire important books and statistical software, as well as helped support their doctoral research. He and Dee also funded a scholarship awarded by UT’s Retired Faculty Staff Association.

Ben’s relaxed demeanor and mild temperament endeared him to students and colleagues, earning him the nickname of “Gentle Ben.” His seminal scholarship generated the sobriquet, “Mr. Factor Analysis.” Ben had wide-ranging interests in music, art, drama, travel, and golf that he pursued throughout his retirement, until illness slowed him down. He and Dee traveled extensively throughout the world, visiting more than eighty
countries. He was a consistent supporter of the Austin Symphony, the Austin Lyric Opera, and other Austin cultural organizations.

Ben is survived by his wife of sixty-five years, Dorothy (Dee) A. Fruchter, Ph.D.; his son and daughter-in-law, Jonathan and Cecelia Fruchter, of Richland, Washington; his daughter, Judith Fruchter Lianis, of Austin; and his son and daughter-in-law, David and Camilla Hsieh Fruchter, of Austin; also by his grandchildren, Diane Strother and her husband Ben, of Santa Monica, California, Daniel Fruchter, of Richland, Washington, and Nathaniel Fruchter of Austin. He is also survived by his cousin, Charlotte Rubenstein, and her family in California.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Ed Emmer (chair), Gary Borich, and Barbara Dodd.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Education, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on August 23, 2010. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.