REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR 
FRANK EMMETT GERTH III

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Frank Emmett Gerth III, professor, mathematics, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
FRANK EMMETT GERTH III

When asked to reflect on the life and career of Frank Gerth, one of his long-time colleagues in the Department of Mathematics at The University of Texas said, “He offered more to the world than he asked of it.” This simple statement says a great deal about Frank Gerth and the 32 years he spent as a faculty colleague and friend, as a distinguished teacher and scholar, and as a benefactor whose generosity will continue to strengthen our department in the future.

Frank Emmett Gerth III was born in San Antonio on October 8, 1945. As one of the early “baby boomers,” he was destined to become interested in science and mathematics and to become part of the vast expansion in the 1960s and 1970s that followed the launching of Sputnik and carried through man’s conquest of outer space.

From 1963-67 Frank was an undergraduate at Rice University where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and where he earned his Bachelor of Arts Summa Cum Laude. During his last year, he also worked for Esso Production Research Company in the Houston area. After completing his degree, he balanced two years on the Apollo Space Program for TRW Systems with entrance into the graduate mathematics program at Princeton University. At Princeton, he concentrated his work in number theory while benefiting from the support of a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Fellowship. He completed a Master of Arts in 1971 and a Ph.D. in 1972.

Upon the completion of his doctorate, Frank was offered an instructorship at the University of Pennsylvania. It was there he began his highly successful career as a mathematician and teacher that would make him a valued member of our department. In the fall of 1974, he was appointed assistant professor in the Department of Mathematics at The University of Texas. His strong balance of teaching and research led to his promotion to associate professor in 1980 and to professor in 1987.

During Frank’s many years of service in the Department of Mathematics, he taught 16 different courses, some undergraduate, some graduate, including a new course he designed himself, Math 350: Applied Linear Algebra. His teaching evaluations by students were consistently strong, and these were reflected in his selection to hold the President’s Associates Centennial Teaching Fellowship in 1986-87 and in his recognition as a recipient of the Mathematics Department Teaching Excellence Award in 1995. It is evident that students appreciated his well-organized and clearly presented lectures.

At Princeton, Frank wrote his dissertation in number theory under the supervision of Kenkichi Iwasawa. This is a particularly challenging area of mathematics in which the theorems are deep and the problems are difficult. It requires a great deal of sophisticated development and technique before one can even hope for success. Frank’s research brought him recognition from across the mathematical community; this included invitations to speak at university colloquia, at special sessions of the American Mathematical Society, at various number theory conferences, and at the International Congress of Mathematicians. Over the years his research received grant support from the NSF, the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, and our own University Research Institute.
Another aspect of Frank’s career that was deeply appreciated by his colleagues was his extensive service to the department, the University, and the mathematical community at large. His interest in graduate students led to a term as graduate advisor and efforts to improve TA/AI-faculty relations. He also served on the undergraduate curriculum committee and helped students prepare for the Putnam Exam. As a member of the visitor committee, he helped select and recruit distinguished mathematicians to spend time on our campus. As a referee for publications in his area of expertise, he contributed to the expansion of knowledge in the broader community.

A very tangible measure of Frank’s devotion to mathematics and to students and faculty colleagues is given by the significant donations he made to our department and to Rice University and Princeton University. These donations and the very substantial bequest he made will ensure that the unselfish generosity Frank represented lives on in perpetuity and that these programs of support and recognition for students and faculty will keep his name alive in the culture of our department.

On a personal level, Frank was a warm and dependable friend and colleague. He had a wry sense of humor and an engaging smile. He enjoyed talking about sports or politics or current events. We will miss him very much.

Frank Gerth died in Austin on May 23, 2006.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James W. Vick (chair) and Jeffrey D. Vaaler.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on September 5, 2007. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, WMB 2.102, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.