IN MEMORIAM
NORVAL D. GLENN

Norval Glenn passed away on February 15, 2011, after battling Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS) for over two years. He was survived by his wife, Grace Glenn, and his stepson, Erik Schmitt, a brother-in-law, J. Worth Fullingim, of Lubbock, and numerous cousins.

Norval was born on the Glenn Ranch in Lea County, New Mexico, on August 13, 1933. He attended schools in Tatum, New Mexico, and received his B.A. in Social Science from New Mexico State University. After a four-year stint in the U.S. Army, he earned a Ph.D. in Sociology at The University of Texas at Austin. He taught at Miami University (Ohio) and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana before returning to UT Austin in 1963. He was a faculty member in the Department of Sociology for forty-seven years, becoming professor emeritus upon his retirement in January 2011. Norval was the Ashbel Smith Professor of Sociology since 1984 and the Stiles Professor in American Studies since 1991.

In the course of his career, Norval earned numerous awards, including the Distinguished Alumnus Award from New Mexico State University (1988); the Outstanding Graduate Teacher Award, The University of Texas at Austin (1993); the Silver Spurs Centennial Teaching Fellowship (2003); the Texas Council on Family Relations Moore-Bowman Award for outstanding achievement in the field of family relations (2004); and the Warren E. Miller Award for Meritorious Service to the Social Sciences from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (2007). He served as editor of Contemporary Sociology and the Journal of Family Issues. Fittingly, a scholarly award for best graduate student manuscript in the sociology of family has been named and endowed in his memory, as he helped launch the careers of numerous graduate students. Such honors (and others not mentioned here) testify to Norval Glenn’s scholarly importance.

Norval was a soft-spoken, self-effacing person who seldom talked about himself and his many accomplishments. This style served him well within the department in which he played a pivotal role for over four decades. He was deeply committed to enhancing the position of the department locally and nationally. Norval was a keen listener who understood the multiple personal and intellectual differences that come with any large, diverse department. He was particularly skillful in brokering or reframing ongoing debates—both public and private—that occurred therein. His colleagues can attest that he improved the quality of scholarly life for the department and is profoundly missed.

Norval’s career was enhanced by his national and international acclaim, contributing as he did to such domains as survey research, cohort analysis, the family, and even public sociology. First and foremost, Norval was a master analyst of survey research. His technical prowess was often underestimated, and he was complimented both for his talent and for not becoming caught up in shifting fads within statistics. Furthermore, Norval combined his statistical skill set with a broad-ranging knowledge of sociological issues, as well as an ability to pull them all together and creatively express them in writing. All these talents were highlighted in his groundbreaking book on cohort analysis, which was published in two editions.

Later in his career, Norval became a central figure in the “family values” debate that divided social science as well as the larger public in the latter part of the twentieth and early years of the twenty-first centuries. He wrote
both on policy matters—for example, on no-fault divorce—as well as on more human-interest topics, such as marital happiness. This form of public sociology brought together technical survey and demographic data as a standard for evaluating the ongoing debates in the field. His research on families, however, was neither easily compartmentalized nor readily enlisted by any particular policy orientation or interest group. For this reason, scholars, practitioners, and journalists far and wide came to rely on Norval’s work for its rigor, insight, and willingness to challenge “sacred cows” from whatever quarter they arose. Getting at the empirical truth, as best it could be known, was his passion.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Mark Regnerus (chair), Gideon A. Sjoberg and Sheldon Ekland-Olson.

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