REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR 
VERNE GRANT

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Verne Grant, professor emeritus, integrative biology, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
VERNE GRANT

Verne Grant died May 29, 2007, in Austin, Texas, following a brief illness. He was professor of botany at The University of Texas at Austin from 1970-1987 and professor emeritus from 1987 until his recent death.

Dr. Grant was born in San Francisco on October 17, 1917, to Edwin Grant and Bessie Swallow Grant. His early years were largely spent in the San Francisco Bay area. While in high school, he read Darwin’s Origin of Species, which spurred a deep interest in the natural world. In 1940 he received his B.A. in botany from the University of California at Berkeley. Later that year, he left California on a motorcycle to begin his five-year journey to South America as a traveling naturalist, and later on, as a translator with the U.S. War Department in Panama during World War II.

In 1949, Dr. Grant received his Ph.D. in botany and genetics from Berkeley. In the ensuing years, he worked as a visiting investigator at the Carnegie Institution of Washington at Stanford University, CA; as a geneticist and experimental taxonomist at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA; as a professor of biology at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX; and, as director of the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum and as a professor of biological sciences at the University of Arizona, Superior, AZ.

While at The University of Texas at Austin (1970-2007), Dr. Grant continued teaching, conducting research, and writing in the specialist fields of species biology, pollination ecology, plant genetics, and evolutionary theory.

Dr. Grant was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a recipient of the Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science (1964) for his book, The Origin of Adaptations. He received a Certificate of Merit (1971) and a Centennial Award (2006) from the Botanical Society of America.

During his career, Dr. Grant wrote ten scientific books, two of which, Flower Pollination in the Phlox Family and Hummingbirds and their Flowers, were co-authored with Karen A. Grant. Several of his books have been translated into German, Spanish, Russian, and/or Chinese. He authored 146 papers in his field.

At various times, Dr. Grant served on the editorial boards of the Encyclopedia Americana, Brittonia, Evolution, American Naturalist, and Biologisches Zentralblatt. His membership in professional societies included: American Society of Naturalists, Society for the Study of Evolution (vice president, 1966; president, 1968), Botanical Society of America, International Society of Plant Taxonomists, Society of Systematic Zoology, and Southwestern Association of Naturalists.

Dr. Grant enjoyed hiking, botanical fieldwork in the western United States, watching trains, baseball, reading, liberal political commentary, and listening to Bach before breakfast. He greatly enjoyed and greatly missed his beloved dogs, Butch, Rusty, and Sandy. In the 1990s, Verne pursued an interest in genealogy that resulted in a 1997 book, The Edward Grant Family and Related Families.
He is survived by his beloved wife of 46 years, Karen A. Grant (Austin, Texas); son, Brian Grant and wife Kay (Boise, Idaho); daughter, Brenda Grant (Cedar Rapids, Iowa); daughter, Joyce Troy (Anchorage, Alaska); four grandsons; one great grandson; and former wife, Alva Day (Boise, Idaho).

In his professional pursuits, he demonstrated the following traits: stick with the task at hand; avoid side tracks, however inviting; make clean clear adversarial incisions; keep written expressions terse; and explore particular academic strengths. Likewise in his experimental work in evolutionary biology, his approach was to define the problem and plan his attack and then make his points as directly as possible. He served as a model researcher for many students of botany and evolutionary biology in general. Few people have been able to emulate his success.

Dr. Grant was meticulous in his attention to detail and time. One could set his watch by his trips down the hall, be it mail, restroom, or quitting times. Likewise his office was an immaculate obsession. Behind the façade of certitude and clarity, there lurked in Dr. Grant a very sweet, giving, good human being. This was extolled by his son (a minister) and his professional colleagues at his graveside services in Austin, Texas. The man loved railroads almost like a child, maintaining a very expensive train set in his home. Additionally, he knew most of the railroad engineers who passed along MoPac through the city of Austin, often listening in on their cab conversations, and knowing many of them by name, and they also knew his. He also loved animals; he loved people as well—at least those who had the temerity to knock on his closed door. These people came to know an exceedingly interesting conversationalist who enjoyed his moment on the pedestrian podium and would provide boundless help and information if asked.

To his close colleagues, he was the very epitome of living his life as he wished. To steal a modified line or two from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “This above all to your own genome be true, and it follows as night the day that thou canst then be as happy as any other.”

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee of Professors Billie L. Turner (chair), Beryl B. Simpson, and Donald Levin.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on September 26, 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.