The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for John William Guerin, professor emeritus, art and art history, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
JOHN WILLIAM GUERIN

John William Guerin was born in Houghton, Michigan, in 1920. He passed away December 5, 2006, at the Summit at Westlake in Austin, Texas.

John served in the US Army Air Corps (Air Force) from 1942–45. He studied art at the American Academy of Art in Chicago, the Art Students League in New York, the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center, and at Escuela Bellas Artes in San Miguel, Mexico.

John was a painter and an educator. He began his teaching career at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts where he taught fine arts from 1950 to 1952. He then began teaching painting, drawing, design, and composition at The University of Texas in 1953, a position he held until he retired as a professor emeritus in 1980.

John Guerin was considered to be a master of his craft. From the work that he was doing at the time he was hired, it was obvious to all that John was a consummate painter. He had just completed a cover for Fortune 500 magazine that was more creative than illustrative when compared to anything done up to that time. He also had received a commission from The University of Texas to paint a portrait of past President Logan Wilson, which is located in the Main Building.

Portrait painting in one of the most difficult skills to master because it requires the artist to have the ability to focus on the essence of the subject in addition to recognizable subject matter. John had the ability to accept the preconditions that portraiture demands and was still able to capture both the likeness of the subject as well as his spirit.

John was an artist’s artist in that he was able to master the grandeur of the landscape. He painted with true feelings in such a way that the sensitive man understands and recognizes it. During his frequent trips to Greece, he experienced a unique sense of light and landscape, which was to influence his work throughout his life. Light created the mood in his paintings throughout his life. On numerous occasions John could be overheard talking with his colleagues, also familiar with the Greek landscape, about how the light phenomenon influenced the tonal atmospheric conditions of the times and of his paintings.

In a 1978 faculty exhibition catalogue, John stated the following:

At present I am involved in a series of paintings which evoke the Texas landscape with particular emphasis on the spatial effects achieved through light and color.” Professor Emeritus Peter Paul Hatgil used to tease John at times by remarking that “his work was akin to the 18th century English painter Joseph William Turner and the 20th century French painter Claude Monet because both reveled in the pure romantic landscape. However, my good friend and colleague accepted my jesting in his usual jovial manner. In more than fifty years of our friendship, I never heard John speak ill of anyone. He was a gentleman, scholar, a great artist, and a faithful counselor for all those who were fortunate to enroll in his classes.
One of John’s students wrote:

Professor John Guerin was an optimist and encouraged his students to work with their assets. I remember the spring semester before I would graduate with my B.F.A. in 1977, my child-support payments suddenly stopped (undemocratically). As a result, my educational goals were in direct conflict with my financial priorities. I was troubled and ready to withdraw from the university and get a job somewhere. Professor Guerin told me not to give up; don’t withdraw from your studies, just take time off for a month, resolve the problem with private loans perhaps, then come back, finish your work and complete your degree. You can do it. You don’t have to withdraw now. All your professors will understand and (will) give you the extra time. I took his advice and savored his encouragement. I completed my B.F.A. degree that summer.

John Guerin was a courtly man in the best sense of the word. He was patient and understanding. He never spoke a harsh word to anyone and always had a sense of fairness about him that seemed to defuse tempers wherever they would erupt. He was the epitome of a gentleman.

He is sorely missed by all whose lives he touched.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Vincent Mariani (chair), Lawrence McFarland, and Lee Chesney.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Fine Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on March 25, 2009. 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/.