IN MEMORIAM
WILLIAM T. GUY Jr.

William T. (Bill) Guy Jr. was a popular and award-winning teacher at The University of Texas at Austin for sixty years. After receiving a Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology, he joined the UT Austin faculty as assistant professor in 1952. He was promoted to associate professor in 1956 and to professor in 1959. For almost ten years, from 1958 to 1967, Professor Guy served as chair of the Department of Mathematics. During that time, he was a formative influence on the development of many programs within the University aside from setting the direction for the transition to the modern mathematics department. These efforts included providing (1) leadership and support in emphasizing the importance of mathematics education; (2) consultative advice, guidance, and support for the creation of the Departments of Astronomy, Computer Science, and Curriculum and Instruction in Education, as well as the Relativity Group in Physics; and (3) wholehearted support and wise counsel for efforts to strengthen both applied mathematics and statistics. He played an important role in writing the successful grant proposals for a physics-mathematics-astronomy building, which would become the present-day Robert Lee Moore building, better known as just RLM. His main passions, while at UT Austin, focused on the importance of strong mathematical instruction and emphasized teacher preparation programs—both in Texas and nationally—and the mathematics department. At different times, he held courtesy appointments in both the College of Education and the College of Engineering and served on departmental committees in geology, electrical engineering, and petroleum engineering. He completed his service as a faculty member at UT Austin in 2009 after teaching half-time in phased retirement for the previous three years.

Bill consistently received recognition and awards for his teaching. He was one of the twelve original members of the University’s Academy of Distinguished Teachers. Other prestigious teaching awards he received include the Texas Exes Excellence Award, the Texas Section of the Mathematical Association of America Award for Distinguished Teaching, the Minnie Stevens Piper Professorship, and the Students’ Association Award for Teaching Excellence. He was well known for making required mathematics courses for students in engineering and science true gateways to successful careers in these fields. The College of Engineering consistently requested that Bill teach the engineering honors sections of calculus, vector calculus, and differential equations. Recently, the American Association for Engineering Education (the premier professional society in this field) recognized the impact Bill Guy had by renaming one of their principle awards in the mathematics division the “William T. Guy, Jr. Distinguished Educator and Service Award.” Bill was himself recognized with this award in 2000. With support from many former students, the College of Natural Sciences created the “William T. (Bill) Guy, Jr. Excellence Endowment in Mathematics” to honor Bill’s service to the University.

Bill supervised seventeen or more Ph.D. students, eight during his ten-year term as department chair, and served as a member on more than one hundred M.A. or Ph.D. committees. Bill was generous with his time in working with both colleagues and graduate students on research problems. He published ten papers, two pedagogical and eight research-related. Of the research-related papers, two, each with a co-author, were reviewed in Mathematical Reviews.

Bill was involved at UT Austin in many ways outside his department. Examples include membership on the University Council, the Graduate Assembly, and the Athletics Council. He frequently volunteered for service at events and programs such as the Center for Teaching Effectiveness and honors colloquia. Bill was instrumental
in supporting many honor societies at UT Austin, especially the establishment of a chapter of the scientific research society Sigma Xi and the engineering honor society Tau Beta Pi. In addition to his service for the University, Bill was strongly involved in multiple professional societies, including the Mathematical Association of America where he served on the Regional Board of Governors, the Committee on the Undergraduate Program in Mathematics, and as a visiting lecturer; the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; and the American Association for Engineering Education. In addition, he served on national committees to organize National Science Foundation summer institutes for teacher training in science and mathematics.

Bill was born in Abilene, Texas, on December 11, 1919, the son of Dr. William T. and Viola Guy. He graduated from Brady High School at age sixteen in 1936 and earned a B.S. degree in 1940 from the Agriculture and Mechanical College of Texas, now better known as Texas A&M University. A year later, he married his high school sweetheart, Valaree Commander. After working for Westinghouse in Pennsylvania as a mechanical engineer and serving as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for four years (1942-46) during World War II at Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri (rising in rank from second lieutenant to major), Bill resumed his education, earning his M.A. from The University of Texas at Austin in 1948 and his Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology in 1951.

Outside the University, Bill was also generous with his time. He served on the Board of the University Federal Credit Union for thirty-one years, twenty as treasurer. Bill and Valaree were long-time members of the Hyde Park Baptist Church, where Bill served as a deacon.

Bill died in Austin on May 22, 2011. His wife of sixty-nine years, Valaree, and their three sons survived him: Paul Guy and wife, Heidi, of Chico, California; Gary Guy of Austin; and Greg Guy and his wife, Cynthia, also of Austin. In addition, survivors include his four grandchildren, Joel Guy, Heather Troth, Kevin Guy, and David Guy; six great grandchildren; sister, Monnajene Guy Knight and her family; and three cousins.

Bill gave many years to his students, to the Department of Mathematics, and to The University of Texas at Austin. Many current and past students and faculty will remember him with fondness and gratitude.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James W. Vick (chair) and Gary C. Hamrick, with the assistance of William Beckner.

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