IN MEMORIAM
WILLIAM ORR HUIE

William Orr Huie, Sylvan Lang Professor of Law Emeritus at The University of Texas, died on October 14, 1999, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Professor Huie’s association with the law school as student, assistant dean, and professor spanned almost six and one-half decades. During his career he may well have taught more Texas lawyers than anyone else in the history of the state.

Professor Huie was born on September 15, 1911, in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. He attended Henderson State Teachers College in Arkadelphia, where he graduated summa cum laude in 1932. Shortly after graduation he enrolled at The University of Texas School of Law, where he compiled an impressive record. His many distinctions included chancellors, Order of the Coif, and editor-in-chief of the *Texas Law Review*. He received his LLB with highest honors in 1935.

After graduation, William Huie began practice with the Austin law firm of Greenwood, Moody & Robertson. A year later he returned to law school at UT Austin as an assistant professor. Although virtually all of his subsequent professional career was dedicated to teaching, administrative work, and research at The University of Texas School of Law, there was a series of interruptions in his association with the law school during the next decade. In 1939 he became a research fellow at Harvard Law School, where he commenced work toward a doctorate (SJD). In 1940 he returned to his teaching position at Texas and to complete his doctorate. However, his plans were soon cut short by his country’s need for his services. He served briefly as senior attorney for the Office of Price Administration, and then was drafted by the navy. As a legal officer, he was assigned to Chase Field near Beeville, where his duties ranged from advising cadets on personal legal matters to lecturing on the military justice system.

In 1946, with the conclusion of World War II, William Huie returned to the law school as a full professor and assistant dean. His administrative skills were sorely needed. Returning veterans flocked to the law school. At that time, it was located in Pearce Hall, a small, old building near the center of campus which was barely adequate for the 700 students who had been enrolled during the war years. With the influx of veterans, enrollment skyrocketed to more than 1,200 students. Overcrowding was critical and resources were strained. The library lacked the space and the books to handle all of the new students. Classrooms were packed, and class sizes were enormous. Moreover, many of the veterans were well past college age and married with children. They were eager to get on with their lives, and they were often impatient with the Socratic method and with courses that focused on policy and jurisprudence rather than on how to file a petition at the courthouse. William Huie was the perfect man to deal with the day-to-day crises of this period. He was able to impose order upon a potentially chaotic learning environment; and his calm, deliberate approach often defused problems before they became critical.

Nonetheless, Professor Huie far preferred teaching to administrative work, and after three years as assistant dean he returned to full-time teaching. He also returned to his doctorate, and was finally able to devote a long, uninterrupted period to his research. In 1953, he received his SJD from Harvard Law School. Visiting positions at the University of California at Berkeley and the UCLA Law School followed. In 1961-62, he was back at Harvard Law School as a visiting professor.
The invitation to visit was prompted by Professor Huie’s signal of publishing two books on different subjects in the preceding year. One was *Texas Marital Property Rights*. No one was better grounded in the history, complexities, and problems of the Texas community property system. He was probably the only scholar who could see order in a system that appeared to be a chaotic mixture of state constitutional provisions, uncodified legislation, and confusing and contradictory case law. His book made the system comprehensible and, indeed, went a step further. The Texas community property system was one that purported to be fair to married women. As Professor Huie’s book and other writings made clear, it had not done a very good job of it. He quietly insisted that the law be changed, and he participated in drafting Texas’ Marital Property Rights Act, which in 1968 finally brought fundamental elements of fairness and equal treatment into the system.

Professor Huie’s second book, *Cases on Oil and Gas Law*, was equally noteworthy. It says something about the depth of the scholarship and the quality of thought that went into the book that, four decades after its publication, many practicing oil and gas lawyers and academicians refer to it on a regular basis. Its insights and detailed research remain relevant in an area noteworthy for the speed with which concepts and theories change. Professor Huie prepared the only teaching materials available for the courses on Texas land titles and Texas water law. Of course, Professor Huie’s scholarship was not limited to his books. He was instrumental in urging reforms, and helped draft the Texas Probate Code as well as the Marital Property Rights Act. He authored many articles, including an article that appeared in the *Harvard Law Review* the year after his visiting professorship. It is still as trenchant in its criticism of certain doctrinal inequities as it was when he wrote it.

To two of the members of the memorial resolution committee, Professor Huie’s visiting professorship at Harvard is especially important for personal reasons. Upon his return to the law school in 1962, he was appointed chair of the faculty appointments committee. In that capacity, he offered teaching positions at the law school to two of his former Harvard students. We shall always be in his debt for giving us the opportunity to be a part of this institution for the past 37 years.

Professor Huie’s return to the law school did not, of course, mean retirement. He continued to write and to teach. Dazzling, rapid-fire wit in the classroom was, admittedly, not his strong point. Rather, his strong points were his insistence on careful, accurate analysis from both himself and his students, his gentle humor when dealing with a student who was off base, and his unwavering devotion to teaching and the academic life. His deliberate and articulate speech was much appreciated by his students. One was heard to say, “I was able to write nearly everything Professor Huie said in my notebook, and it was all pure gold!”

In 1965, Professor Huie was appointed the Sylvan Lang Professor of Law. He held this position until his retirement in 1982. Neither his work nor his honors ended at that time, however. He continued teaching part-time as professor emeritus for an additional fourteen years. In 1987, the annual Law Week was dedicated to him in honor of his 50 years of service at the law school. The following year, the William O. Huie Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Law was established by the Board of Regents. Another signal honor was bestowed in 1998, two years after his full retirement from all teaching service. In recognition of his work in helping draft the Texas Marital Property Rights Act, the Women and the Law Section of the State Bar of Texas adopted a resolution honoring him as “one of those very special people who forever changed and improved the lives of married women in Texas.”

Professor Huie had a rich and full family life. He was married in 1935 to Hugh Mae Wolff of Mineral Springs, Arkansas. They had two sons, William Orr Huie, Jr., and Robert Wolff Huie. After the death of Hugh Mae, Professor Huie married Grace Eyres Bishop in 1972. Grace preceded Professor Huie in death by three years.

Professor Huie continued to be active in his church and at his favorite sport for several years after his retirement. He was a member of the University United Methodist Church in Austin, and served on the administrative board and the board of trustees. He played tennis well into his early eighties. One of his favorite pictures appeared in the February 6, 1992, sport section of the *Austin American Statesman*. The picture showed him, at age 80, in a tennis match with one of his favorite former students, Judge Bea Ann Smith of the Austin Court of Appeals.

Professor Huie’s academic work and teaching were truly extraordinary. Above all, however, everyone who knew William O. Huie admired him as a gentleman of unquestioned integrity, of sound judgment, and with a genuine concern for others.
This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Ernest E. Smith (chair), Corwin Johnson, and Stanley M. Johanson.

Distributed to the Dean of the School of Law, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on January 4, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.