The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Richard J. Lagow, professor emeritus, chemistry and biochemistry, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
RICHARD J. LAGOW

Professor Richard J. (Dick) Lagow, Ph.D., passed away on April 26, 2010, after a long battle with Alzheimer’s Disease, with his beloved wife Roxann Parker-Lagow at his side. Dr. Lagow was preceded in death by his parents, Faye and Ruthe Lagow and brother, Bill Lagow. He is survived by his wife, Roxann Parker-Lagow; mother-in-law, Lucille Parker; and numerous nieces and nephews. He is also survived by daughters Micale Crawford (husband Neal); Kristen Bettis (husband Craig); and son Robert D. Lagow (wife Carrie); grandchildren McKenna, Caelan, and William Crawford, Skylee Lagow; and the mother of his children, Bobbie D. Lagow.

Richard James Lagow was born on August 16, 1945, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He graduated with honors from Bryan Adams High School in Dallas, Texas, in 1963 and received a football and chemistry scholarship to Rice University where he was also a three-year letterman in football. He graduated from Rice with a B.A. in chemistry in 1967 and earned his Ph.D. at the same institution in 1969. Dick’s distinguished academic career began as an instructor in the Department of Chemistry at Rice University. Following this, Dick was appointed as an assistant professor and then associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1969-1976). He joined the faculty at The University of Texas at Austin in 1976 as an associate professor and was promoted to full professor in 1980. At the time of his early retirement due to illness, he was the L.N. Vauquelin Regents Professor of Chemistry in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The University of Texas at Austin.

Dick’s approach to chemistry was extremely original, and his research programs were multifaceted and involved an unusually wide range of interests. He was truly an innovative thinker and fearless in his approach to experimental chemistry. He was an internationally recognized inorganic chemist who made particularly important contributions in the following areas: organometallic chemistry, poly lithium organic compounds, organic and inorganic fluorine chemistry, high temperature chemistry, plasma chemistry, fluorocarbon and inorganic polymer chemistry, high pressure chemistry, and synthetic bone. One of Dick’s most important discoveries was to devise a method of converting hydrocarbons to fluorocarbons using elemental fluorine (direct fluorination). The novel materials produced by this process proved to be of great interest to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the United States Air Force for use as specialty space lubricants, non-flammable hydraulic fluids, and specialty coatings.

In 1984, he founded the Exfluor Research Corporation, along with several of his former students, in order to develop a commercially viable process for direct fluorination. Today, products made at Exfluor are found in numerous high-tech applications ranging from satellites to televisions. Dick supervised the research work of numerous Ph.D. and M.A. candidates, published 212 original research articles and was also the author of eighty-one U.S. patents in various fields of chemistry. Among the many awards that recognized Dick’s outstanding contributions to science were the Industrial Research (IR-100) award, an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, an Alexander von Humboldt Award, and the American Chemical Society Award for Creative Work in Fluorine Chemistry. He was also elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
Dick Lagow had a larger than life character and was a truly unique individual. He was passionate about good food and wine, enjoyed international travel, and had a terrific sense of humor. He had little time for bureaucratic red tape and could be relied on to openly and honestly speak his mind on a variety of topics. He also loved practical jokes. Dick was a caring son, a loving husband, a dedicated and affectionate father, a brilliant professor, and a loyal friend. He will be deeply missed by all whose lives he touched.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Richard Jones (chair), Alan Cowley, and Bradley Holliday.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on February 18, 2011. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at:
http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.