The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Winfred P. Lehmann, professor emeritus, Germanic studies and linguistics, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
WINFRED P. LEHMANN

Winfred P. Lehmann (“Win” to friends and colleagues) joined The University of Texas faculty in 1949 as professor of German. When he retired in 1985 as the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor Emeritus in the Humanities, he could look back on a record of public and personal accomplishment in academics that now seems out of reach for any one person. He chaired two departments—Germanic languages and linguistics—into the top five in the ratings of graduate programs in North America, where they remained for some 25 years. He directed the Linguistics Research Center of UT from 1961 until his death in 2007. He was elected president of the two most important and prestigious professional organizations in linguistics and the modern languages, the Linguistic Society of America and the Modern Language Association, probably the only instance in which a single individual has been elected to the presidency of both organizations. All of this he accomplished at little if any cost to his personal scholarship: He published well over three dozen books and hundreds of scholarly articles, participated actively in conferences, maintained his Washington and New York connections, and taught full-time through it all. After his retirement from the faculty in 1985, the only thing different was that he no longer taught; he continued to publish books and articles and to secure funding for the Linguistics Research Center as he had done for so many years before. Lehmann was born June 23, 1916, in Surprise, Nebraska, and died August 1, 2007, in Austin. His father was a Lutheran minister, and the family language was German. In his family, books and reading counted for a great deal. He got his B.A. in Humanities from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1936, and then went on to graduate study in German literature and Germanic linguistics at the University of Wisconsin Madison, where he received M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in 1938 and 1941, respectively. It was in classes at the University of Wisconsin that he met his future wife, Ruth Preston Miller; they were married in 1940 and had two children, Terry and Sandra. Dr. Ruth Lehmann was an internationally recognized scholar of Celtic and Old English; she was a professor in the Department of English at The University of Texas, though not until late in her career because of the nepotism rules in effect at almost all universities until the 1960s. She and Win made a powerful intellectual and scholarly union, besides being loving parents to their two children, one of whom, Terry, tragically preceded his father in death. Lehmann’s daughter, Sandie, cared for him devotedly after his stroke until his death. Ruth Lehmann died in 2000.

Lehmann’s graduate work at Wisconsin ranged widely, from Ancient Greek through Old Church Slavonic and Lithuanian to Winnebago, an American Indian language on which he did fieldwork. There were no linguistics departments as such in those days—the creation of departments of linguistics was a post-World War II development. Those who were interested in linguistics did their work in a language department with excursions into other language departments and English departments, depending on where and what various faculty were teaching. At Wisconsin, Lehmann was in the Department of German, which was highly regarded in the 1930s. There he took courses in phonetics, history of the German language, and Indo-European and Germanic philology. The professors whom he cited most often as having had an influence on him were Roe-Merrill S. Heffner, in phonetics, and W. Freeman Twaddell, in Germanic and linguistic subject matter. Lehmann’s doctoral thesis was on the origins of the “dental preterite” marker of weak verbs in the Germanic languages (the form that has given us the Modern English suffix –ed in past-tense forms of verbs such as work-ed and talk-ed).
He managed to finish his Ph.D. work just about the time World War II broke out, and like many linguists of his generation, Lehmann served during the war in the U.S. Army Signal Corps (where languages needed for the war effort were taught). Linguists have the advantage of grasping languages quickly by making shortcuts, and he attributed much of his success to his capabilities as a linguist scholar of the scientific study of language rather than his knowledge of many different languages. Lehmann became an instructor in Japanese, a language very different in its structure from the Indo-European languages he had previously studied at Wisconsin. Doubtless too, his linguistics background contributed to his later administrative success as the Officer-in-Charge of the Japanese Language School, where he needed to ride herd over an often unruly band of academics sidetracked by the war into activities many of them considered as uncongenial.

When the war ended, he accepted a position at Washington University in St. Louis as an assistant professor in the Department of German (1946-49). The situation was not satisfactory because most of his teaching was in German language courses with very little in the way of linguistics or philology. To get back into linguistics, he made arrangements with one of the leading linguists of that generation, Leonard Bloomfield of Yale University, to spend a summer at Yale acquainting himself with what had transpired in theoretical linguistics since he had completed his graduate work at Wisconsin. Unfortunately, that arrangement never materialized because Bloomfield suffered a debilitating stroke from which he never recovered.

In the meantime, however, developments were getting interesting at Texas. The University of Texas was at that time, as Lehmann once put it, “a robustly genteel southern university with about 12,000 students.” However, the institution had a remarkably strong tradition in philology, the study of written records from a linguistically informed point of view. The UT library was unexpectedly good in most of the major languages. In 1949, Lehmann was recruited to UT as an associate professor of Germanic languages, and he was promoted to full professor in 1951. In 1953, he was named chairman of the German department (later, Department of Germanic Languages, now Department of Germanic Studies) and embarked on a highly successful program of building up first-rate programs in both German and linguistics. The 1950s and 1960s were favorable to such ambitions, especially after Sputnik drew big federal money into languages in general and linguistics in particular through the National Defense Education Act.

Texas proved a surprisingly good venue for Lehmann’s personality and ambitions. The 1955-1965 era at UT belonged to Harry Huntt Ransom, who was named president in 1960. Three years prior to Ransom’s presidency, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the University’s founding, the “Committee of 75” challenged UT to become more than a “robustly genteel southern university” and to aspire to national greatness. Ransom was determined to make the committee’s challenge more than one more meaningless rhetorical flourish of yet another enthusiastic committee report. The stars were aligned: Money was abundant, the Available Fund was UT Austin’s alone, the power structure of the state wanted a university of the first class, and Ransom had the charisma and connections to bring everybody together and to make things happen. Things did happen, and nowhere more impressively than in the languages and linguistics.

Ransom liked Lehmann and became his strong supporter. Lehmann was about 10 years too old to be one of “Harry’s Boys,” as other favored sons such as John Silber and Roger Shattuck were called, but Ransom made sure that Lehmann got what he wanted to realize his dreams. Those dreams included world-class conferences in both linguistics and German literature, a Visiting Writer’s Program, visiting professors in German and linguistics, and first-rate hires. All of these things propelled the Department of German to a rating in the top five of such graduate programs among all universities, public and private, in North America according to the 1965 Carrter Report, the first of the rankings of graduate programs that since have been published about every 10 years.

At the same time as Lehmann was taking the German department into the star class, he headed up the program in linguistics. Doctorate degrees in linguistics were offered through the German department from the late 1950s onward. Win Lehmann was not about to let a little thing like not having a department of linguistics stop him and the faculty he had recruited from directing Ph.D. theses in linguistics. In those years a “Ph.D. in German” from UT could and did include dissertations on Arabic, Telugu, Hindi, Farsi, and purely linguistic topics (such as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis). Almost 10% of the linguistics Ph.D.s awarded in the U.S. during that period came from Texas. Those were glorious days for linguistics at Texas, and all of the success was due to Lehmann.

When the Department of Linguistics was formally created in 1964, Lehmann became its first chairman, a
position he held until 1972. In the 1970 and 1980 ratings of graduate programs, both UT Austin programs in linguistics and Germanic languages were ranked in the top five.

There was much else besides. From 1960 to 1965, he was acting chairman of Slavic Languages. He founded the Linguistics Research Center (LRC) in 1961 and served as its director; the LRC has brought millions of dollars in research grants to UT to study machine translation—computer translation of languages—and, later, historical linguistics. (The LRC is possibly the only organized research unit at UT which, apart from space, never got a nickel from the University.) Other UT centers for which he was at least partly responsible, by virtue of securing their initial funding and nominating their later directors, included the Arabic Center (later the Center for Middle Eastern Studies) and the Hindi-Telugu Center (later the Center for South Asian Studies).

The Departments of Linguistics and Psychology owe much to the National Science Foundation development grant that brought in five million dollars to the University in the late 1960s to support new hires in those departments. Lehmann and Gardner Lindzey, chairman of the Department of Psychology and later Graduate School dean, were co-stewards of this grant, which supported faculty hires in syntax and semantics, experimental phonetics, and in psychology.

All of this empire building impeded his scholarship and publication little if at all. Beginning in 1938, he authored or edited more than 50 books and special issues of journals, his last book being *Pre-Indo-European* in 2002 (when he was 86 years old); in addition, he published over 250 journal articles and more than 140 reviews of scholarly works from 1940-2006. He served on a number of international commissions, committees, and boards. His language expertise encompassed Arabic, Japanese, Turkish, and a host of diverse Indo-European languages in the Celtic, Germanic, Italic, Balto-Slavic, Hellenic, Anatolian, and Indo-Iranian families. He appeared in *Who’s Who in the World, Who’s Who in America*, and at least four other “Who’s Who” publications. He supervised approximately 50 Ph.D. dissertations and mentored hundreds of students and others who worked on research projects in his various centers; a number of these, in their turn, achieved international acclaim.

His awards were numerous. Lehmann received the highest honors given to non-citizens by India, Germany, and Denmark for his contributions to scholarship, as well as a major award given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He held both Fulbright and Guggenheim Fellowships. He was given honorary doctorates from SUNY Binghamton and his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin. In the early 1960s, he was one of the first professors named to be an Ashbel Smith Professor at The University of Texas. In the days before endowed chairs and professorships, to be named an Ashbel Smith Professor meant not only that you were very highly regarded but that you were paid at least $25,000 annually at a time when the average full professor was making barely half that. Later, Dean Robert D. King of liberal arts named Lehmann the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor in the Humanities, the first endowed position Dean King was in a position to fill without departmental restrictions. Win Lehmann got the greatest personal satisfaction when he received the Harry H. Ransom Award for Teaching Excellence in the Liberal Arts in 1983, three years before his retirement. In 1987, he was honored with the College of Liberal Arts Pro Bene Meritis Award.

All this time he led a subdued life devoted to family and scholarship, driving 20 miles to the campus and back from his house on magnificent acreage overlooking Lake Travis. He and Ruth were dedicated environmentalists and donated 160 acres in far northwest Travis County to the Nature Conservancy to create the Ruth Lehmann Memorial Tract. They loved animals and always had rescued birds and other critters, which they enjoyed introducing to their visitors. No party at the Lehmanns’ house was complete without the spot-lighted procession of raccoons, possums, squirrels, and less recognizable hill-country mammals that came to their property to feed after the sun went down, graduate students who house-sat for the Lehmanns were given detailed instructions for the nightly feedings.

Lehmann’s interests were unusually wide. He was devoted to those impenetrable, heavy novels of James Joyce, *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake*. He championed the difficult prose of his friend and UT colleague in philosophy, the Indian writer Raja Rao, and campaigned tirelessly to gain greater recognition for Rao. During the 1980s, he participated regularly in a luncheon group meeting at the Faculty Club where literature mainly, but everything under the sun, was discussed. The physicist, John Wheeler, was his partner in this enterprise.
Win Lehmann was a very private man. Few outside his family could claim to really know him. Virtually none of his colleagues in his later years would have known that he was a skilled pianist, politically engaged, or that he and Ruth spent much of their time walking in the woods. Entertainment for its own sake was an eccentric notion to him. There cannot have been many days when Lehmann did not strike a blow on behalf of a book, an article, a book review, a new course, or a new way to secure funding for the Linguistics Research Center.

Winfred P. Lehmann was a man perfectly described by that now antique phrase “a gentleman and a scholar.” He was decent and courtly, hard-working, encouraging of younger faculty, generous, always willing to yield to deans’ requests to serve on needed committees, and above all unfailingly attentive to his wife and family. What UT has accomplished in linguistics, Germanic Studies, Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, and areas of psychology is Win Lehmann’s legacy to the University where he spent almost 60 of the 90 years of his life.

Win would have appreciated a more literary flourish to end this Memorial Resolution, preferably something from one of those Old Germanic literatures he loved. None would be more fitting than these lines, from the Old Icelandic Hávamál:

- Cattle die. Kin die.
- Thou thyself shalt die.
- One thing I know that never dies:
- Judgment over the dead.

Our judgment of our colleague and mentor Win Lehmann is secure. He lived a good life, a good life for The University of Texas, a good life for scholarship, and a good life for his family and those closest to him.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Esther Raizen (chair), Robert King, Richard Meier, and Hans Boas.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the executive vice president and provost on June 16, 2008. 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/](http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/).