DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR CARL LEIDEN

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Carl Leiden, professor emeritus, government and Middle Eastern Studies, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
CARL LEIDEN

Carl Leiden, who passed away on March 26, 2008, was a delightful, extraordinarily knowledgeable, and widely appreciated member of the government department from his arrival from the faculty of the American University at Cairo, Egypt, in 1961 until his retirement in January 1987.

An omnivorous reader and ready raconteur, he came to the University to teach Middle Eastern politics and thereby became generally recognized, as the eventual director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and later recognized as the founder of Middle Eastern studies here.

Carl was born in Boone, Iowa, February 6, 1922. He had an extraordinarily broad training, having majored in math as an undergraduate at Iowa State College, studied public administration at Wayne State University, and received a Ph.D. in political science from Iowa State University in 1949.

He then taught at Marshall University (1949-1959) and the University of California (Berkeley). In addition, he was as a Fulbright lecturer in international law and jurisprudence at Peshawar University (1952-53), Pakistan, as well as the American University at Cairo, where he chaired the Division of Social Science (1959-60) before joining the UT faculty.

Carl was the first Fulbright lecturer at the University of Peshawar on the wild frontier of Pakistan, within a few miles of the Khyber Pass. In the early 1950s, when Carl was there the area had not changed very much from the days when Kipling wrote about the tribal conflict--and, indeed, it may not have changed much in that regard today. Carl loved to tell richly detailed stories of his time there, such as when a student invited him to visit his Pathan (Pashtun) tribal village in the Swat Valley. To secure Leiden Sahib’s safe return, the tribe sent a hostage to be locked away in the Peshawar jail.

He taught in Plan II here and, as a visiting faculty member at the National War College in 1972-73, directing the Middle East and South Asian Studies. The college’s commandant characterized Leiden’s service as “unfailingly friendly and cooperative with students and faculty alike,” and noted, “He enlivened faculty discussions with many thoughtful and perceptive suggestions for improvements of the college program.”

Leiden is remembered by his colleagues at the University for this same sort of constructive and creative participation in teaching and in service (including an astonishing nine years as undergraduate advisor), as well as for his scholarship.

He was a very widely published scholar, authoring or coauthoring an introductory textbook in political science and books on the Middle East and on political instability, such as The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World and The Politics of Assassination. In addition, he wrote 117 articles in the Encyclopedia of Chemical Reactions as well as dozens of articles on Middle Eastern and East Asian affairs that were published in a wide variety of journals and magazines.
These many contributions to the academic world and UT do not really capture what made Carl Leiden such a remarkable colleague. His office door was always open—especially to younger faculty—and he would frequently beckon a passerby in, to regale him or her with his latest discovery, usually a product of his reading, in a field he knew would interest that person. He also organized an informal faculty seminar for newer faculty who wanted to learn the sort of mathematics that was coming to influence the discipline but had not been widely taught at the major institutions from which new faculty had been hired.

Carl read with passion—and more widely and deeply than anyone we have ever known. He kept an annotated reading log that came to total over 10,000 books. The scope of his reading was vast, but he took particular interest in the fields of history, biography, and mathematics. He was prepared to discuss, with critical judgment and an almost photographic memory, virtually any book he had ever read. Conversation on and of books was a mainstay of the Leiden household as well as the Leiden government department office.

Unlike many academics, he was very talented with his hands, doing plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work in his home. He was also an accomplished photographer, an avid quilter (he made more than 40), and a lifelong stamp collector, specializing in Swedish and Egyptian philately.

He was also an inveterate correspondent—something he continued after his retirement. He wrote, usually with high commendation, to his colleagues, and, often with strong but constructive criticism, to administrators and others in the broader community. Among his extra-university correspondents was a Swedish scientist of world renown, the writer Jesse Stewart (1906-1984), who published an essay, “Old Carl,” about his friend. He also maintained correspondence with many former students, one of whom (now in the United States) had been in his classes at the University of Peshawar in the early 1950s.

In sum, he was a Renaissance man of the sort that has virtually disappeared from the contemporary university scene. He was a committed teacher and scholar. And even more, he was a warm and extremely generous human being, much appreciated and fondly remembered by those colleagues who knew him.

Carl is survived by his loving wife of 63 years, Mary; his children, Derek and Lisa; and his grandsons, Andrew and Eric.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors David V. Edwards (chair), Robert L. Hardgrave, and Lawrence S. Graham.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on June 9, 2009. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at:
http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.