IN MEMORIAM
JAMES DORR MCFARLAND, SR.

James Dorr McFarland, Sr. was born in Burnet, Texas, on February 7, 1903, the son of Robert Ray and Mary Debo MacFarland. He grew up in Cleburne, Texas, where he graduated from high school in the spring of 1921. He entered the University of Texas at Austin in September, 1921, to study electrical engineering. During this era as a student, he roomed with Byron Short, a future UT engineering faculty member and the brother of Phyllis Short, who later became Dorr McFarland’s wife.

Upon graduation with a BSEE in June 1926, McFarland took a job with General Electric Company in Schenectady, New York. At that time this job offer was extended only to the top of the graduating class. His job at GE involved testing of large motors and turbines. He returned to Texas in the spring of 1928 to interview in GE’s Dallas office. Fortuitously, on a return visit to his former professors at UT, he was offered a teaching position by Professor C. E. Rowe, who at that time was chairman of the Department of Drawing. He began as an instructor of drawing at UT on April 1, 1928, starting with a salary of $200 per month. McFarland, along with Rowe and W. H. McNiel, were the first three faculty members in the Department of Drawing.

In June 1930, McFarland married Phyllis Short, and they had two sons, James and Sam. McFarland was preceded in death by Sam, in 1989. In 1939, McFarland built a house on East 38 1/2 Street, where he and his wife lived until his death. In the 1930s, McFarland worked during summer months as a draftsman for the Texas Highway Department.

McFarland was co-author, along with C. E. Rowe, of the popular textbook Engineering Descriptive Geometry, which was published by D. Van Nostrand Company in 1939 and again in 1953. At one time, the textbook was used by 85 colleges in the United States and Latin America. During this era, McFarland taught courses in engineering drawing, drafting, and descriptive geometry. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1937, to associate professor in 1943, and to professor in 1950. He became registered as a Professional Engineer and made Who’s Who in Engineering. He also found time to complete his master’s degree in electrical engineering at UT during this time.

McFarland was a trustee of the UT Engineers’ Loan Fund for thirty-two years, and served as chairman for seven years. He took special pride in helping students who were in financial need to continue with their engineering studies. Each student who applied was given serious consideration for a loan through a personal interview, where a full inventory of the student’s needs and accomplishments was assessed. Then, a loan of $200 was considered large.

Dorr was usually a serious professor, but he had a wry sense of humor appreciated by others. Students affectionately gave him the nickname of “Smiling Jack” from the Dick Tracy cartoon series. It is estimated that, during his long tenure at UT, McFarland formally taught over 10,000 students.
In 1951, he became chairman of the Department of Drawing and remained in that position for seventeen years, until his retirement in May 1968. At that time, the engineering drawing department was merged with the mechanical engineering department, and it is now the area of computer graphics and engineering. McFarland achieved the status of professor emeritus in 1969, and he stayed loyal to the University throughout his remaining years.

Dorr McFarland enjoyed hunting and fishing, and befriended many students who would accompany him on his outdoor trips. He took special pride in his house on Lake Travis, where he spent much of his spare time. He was quite proficient in many outdoor activities, and no fisherman could catch white bass as he could, due to his tedious study of their habits. Hunting season brought another source of pleasure, with the deer and turkey in the hill country around Medina, Texas, being a favorite target. At the request of his wife, Dorr encapsulated many of his favorite outdoor hunting and fishing experiences in a booklet titled *Long and Short Tales*, which he self-published in 1983.

McFarland was active in the Wilshire Presbyterian Church for forty-eight years, and achieved a 70-year Certificate from the University Masonic Lodge. At age 95, James Dorr McFarland, Sr. passed away peacefully on Monday, January 16, 1999.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Ronald E. Barr (chair), H. Grady Rylander, Jr., and Archie W. Straiton.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Engineering, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on December 7, 1999. 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/