The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Gibbs Milliken, professor, art and art history, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
GIBBS MILLIKEN

Gibbs Milliken, a professor in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin, passed away on November 20, 2007. He died following a long bout with cancer. He was 71.

As an artist and as a professor, Gibbs Milliken spent his share of time in the studio, working on and teaching painting, drawing, and photography. He logged more than four decades in the classrooms at UT.

The artist’s early years were spent in Houston, but he grew up in Kerrville, where he graduated from the Schreiner Institute. He obtained his bachelor’s degree from Trinity University in San Antonio and his master’s from Michigan’s Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1965. Upon returning to Texas, one of his first jobs was with the Texas Game and Fish Commission, forerunner of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. One summer during the mid 1950s, he worked for legendary wildlife biologist Rob Ramsey, assisting with deer surveys. It was during this time that Gibbs met Marie Splittgeber in San Antonio, Texas, and they were married within less than a year.

Gibbs was perhaps most at home in the great outdoors, and his love of nature took him far a field of his native Texas to the rainforest of the Amazon and the jungles of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands. He studied the rock and cave art of Amazon tribes in Venezuela and the pre-Columbian survival traits of Latin American Indians. This love of adventure and a wide range of other interests informed his art and teaching. He was a wealth of information and stories on art, Voodoo practices of the Caribbean, and Amazon plants and their medical uses. While these trips were for education and research, he often went to the wilds of the Venezuelan Amazon region on the Oronoco River for humanitarian reasons as well, taking medical supplies on these trips to dispense to the river tribes. He knew the tribal chiefs well and initiated many meetings with the various tribes. An avid collector, among the many artifacts he collected was a long blowgun and darts from the Indians, which after a time allowed him to become a serious darts competitor.

Another of his passions was fly-fishing; he became a walking encyclopedia of outdoors/fishing and fly tying, often writing reviews and articles on the subject. He often fished on the dock at the Lower Colorado River Authority. He easily brought attention to himself with his distinctive safari clothing, a trademark of his life. He would fish at that dock for hours and would use his secret bait, French fries! After each catch, he would then weigh the fish and throw it back. Still at the time, he held a record for the largest fish caught in those waters. Gibbs’ interest in art, photography, and nature led to a position as curator of natural science and exhibitions at the Witte Museum in San Antonio. He painted in the evenings after the museum closed, and collectors began to take notice and purchase his work.

In 1965, Gibbs accepted a position at The University of Texas at Austin and remained there until his retirement in 2006. In addition to his work at the university, Milliken worked as an artist with the NASA Apollo Space Program and the NASA Tektite II Under Seas Project. He had a long association with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, serving as a field photographer and outdoor-products field tester.

Gibbs Milliken’s passion for art and life served as an inspiration to many of the students of The University of Texas. One of his students summed up Milliken’s academic uniqueness this way, “He was an avid outdoorsman
who doubled as an arts educator: Not a stodgy, tweed-covered professor, but rather he was the kind of guy that was attired in the most khaki he could don.”

Gibbs and Marie had two daughters, Tamara and Adana, both of whom have grown up to follow their own individual creative paths. He was a great friend and traveling companion—a man who loved life and embraced it with great enthusiasm. His broad knowledge of nature and art yielded an interest in many subjects. He was an avid fisherman and explorer and shared those loves with a wealth of friends.

Gibbs Milliken lost his battle with cancer on November 20, 2007. He leaves behind a legacy of compassion, adventure, and memories of a charismatic man who influenced the lives of all who came in contact with him.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Don Heron (chair), Lee Chesney, and Lawrence McFarland.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Fine Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on March 26, 2009. 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/.