REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR ROGER C. OSBORN

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Roger C. Osborn, professor emeritus, mathematics, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

IN MEMORIAM
ROGER C. OSBORN

In the world of higher education, particularly in mathematics, it is rare for someone to spend virtually an entire career, from undergraduate student to professor emeritus, at the same institution. It was to the lasting benefit of students and colleagues at The University of Texas at Austin that this describes the life of Roger Osborn.

Roger Cook Osborn was born March 14, 1920, and entered the University in 1938 after graduating with an Associate of Arts degree from Lon Morris Junior College. He completed his Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics in 1940 and taught math and science at Rio Grande City High School while earning his Master of Arts degree from UT Austin in 1942. For the next fifteen years (1942-57), he served as an instructor in the mathematics department. During this period, he also spent two years (1944-46) in the Naval Reserve and continued his graduate studies, completing his Ph.D. in 1954.

His dissertation advisor in our department, Edward Titt, was a student of Tracy Thomas at Princeton University. And Thomas, in turn, was a student of Oswald Veblen, a very prominent mathematician in the first half of the twentieth century and one of two advisors (the other being E. H. Moore) credited with supervising the dissertation of R. L. Moore, for whom our building is named. After completing his Ph.D., Dr. Osborn chose to remain at the University, where he advanced through the professorial ranks from assistant professor (1957-62) to associate professor (1962-67) and professor (from 1967 until his retirement in 1985).

The subject of his dissertation was hyperbolic partial differential equations, but his interests and the courses he taught spanned a wide range of mathematics, from graduate courses in algebra and number theory to undergraduate courses in calculus and the mathematics of investment to early programming courses that would eventually become computer science. His publications reflect this broad range of interests along with a deep commitment to teaching and to the preparation of teachers. In addition to his publications, he was active as a speaker in venues from high school math clubs to regional or national meetings of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) or the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM).

Dr. Osborn’s service to the University community was extensive. On a broad scale, he refereed papers for mathematical journals and reviewed manuscripts of potential textbooks. On the campus, he served on the Faculty Council and an array of important University committees. But his most significant contributions were within the department. From the time he was appointed to the graduate faculty in 1962, he supervised twenty-six master’s degree students, served on another forty M.A. committees and more than fifty Ph.D. committees.

It was very appropriate that, as he was nearing retirement, Dr. Osborn was presented the 1983 President’s Associates Award for teaching excellence. Students in his classes described him as “very responsive and patient,” “one of the best teachers I have had at UT,” “clear,” and “stimulating.” One noted that he “was really concerned about the students,” and “he made it a point to know all of the students by name, and this made for a more pleasant, personal type atmosphere.” Another student added, “He was able to present difficult material in an understandable manner,” and concluded that “the only students who did poorly in the course were the ones who did not keep up with the class assignments.”
From his arrival on our campus in 1938 until his retirement in 1985, Roger Osborn left an indelible mark on his students and on the growing University. His legacy continues in the productive lives of our graduates and the stature of the department he served so well.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James W. Vick (chair) and John Dollard.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences on September 24, 2012, and posted under “Memorials” at http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.