The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Emmettee Redford, professor, public affairs, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
EMMETTE REDFORD

Dr. Redford has made a unique contribution to teaching and research over many years at the University. He has displayed a keen understanding of the broad role and mission of the University in society and his dedication and commitment have been exemplary. With understanding and wisdom, Dr. Redford has touched the lives of generations of students and the institution is better in innumerable ways because of his distinguished service.

— Chancellor William R. Cunningham, 1994

When Emmette Redford died in Austin on January 30, 1998, The University of Texas—and the field of public policy—lost a towering figure. Emmette’s life, which nearly spanned the twentieth century, was devoted to the study and practice of public affairs. Through his teaching, research, publications, and government service, he left his imprint on many generations of students and on the disciplines of political science and public administration in which he labored so effectively and for so long.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, of pioneer stock on September 23, 1904, Emmette and his two younger brothers were raised by their mother Clara after the lingering illness and death from tuberculosis of their father, Samuel. Clara Redford, having secured a postmastership in Johnson City, Texas, ran both her business and her household of lively sons in the same small frame house. Emmette, as the eldest, took his responsibilities seriously. He later recalled an occasion when a teenage friend of one of his brothers behaved so inappropriately that Emmette was forced to turn the young Lyndon Johnson over his knees and spank him. (The former president, when Emmette reminded him in the 1970s of this encounter, did not appear to find the story particularly amusing.)

Johnson City, in the early twentieth century, was an isolated rural community. The Redford boys worked as janitors at the court house where Emmette also typed deeds, witnessed trials, and became absorbed in the processes of government. After completing eleven grades, Emmette went on to Midland College and to Southwest Texas State Teachers College, finally arriving at The University of Texas at Austin in 1922.

The city of Austin then became Emmette’s home. He left on several occasions subsequently—but each time briefly. His first departure came when his undergraduate career was interrupted by two years of public school teaching, a task undertaken to assist in his brothers’ education. Returning to UT in 1925, he pursued his master’s degree while tutoring full time in the government department.

Emmette’s exceptional promise then led to an opportunity to enroll as a doctoral student at Harvard. He headed East for Cambridge in 1929, just as the Great Depression was getting underway. Emmette’s Harvard years were productive: he received a PhD in government in 1933, as well as appointments as a tutor and as a full-time instructor. In addition, he was forging many associations and friendships which were to last throughout his life.

However, in Massachusetts Emmette lost neither his Texas accent nor his conviction that he was, above all, a Texan (and a Democrat). Newly married to Claire Ballard, he therefore resigned his Harvard post and returned to Austin as an assistant professor. The year was 1933, when the New Deal was beginning and when the field of government appeared particularly exciting to a young scholar.
The trajectory of Emmette Redford’s teaching career from that time on was anchored in Austin. Moving rapidly through the UT ranks, he became a full professor in 1939 and the Ashbel Smith Professor of Government in 1963. When the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs was founded, he moved across campus, becoming the Ashbel Smith Professor of Government and Public Affairs in 1970. His teaching career lasted until 1995—an unequalled 70-year record. When The University of Texas celebrated its Centennial in 1983, Redford spoke for the faculty at the major convocation in front of the Tower.

Many were the universities that tried unsuccessfully to lure Emmette Redford away from Texas; he did accept visiting professorships at Duke, Columbia, Chicago, and Syracuse, among others. Both away from Texas and within Austin, his specialties ranged from public administration and public policy to government and the economy. At least 31 completed doctoral dissertations were supervised by Emmette over the years, as well as a lengthy list of masters’ theses. A biography was being prepared by one of his former doctoral students as this tribute was being written.

If Emmette Redford was a distinguished professor, equally impressive were his public service activities. During World War II he worked for four years at the Office of Price Administration, dealing, after 1944, with the delicate task of rationing and creating policy guidelines in a highly-charged political area. Later, he produced studies for a variety of government organizations on subjects such as executive organization, selective service, personnel, the humanities, and (in the 1970s) recombinant DNA. Memberships on committees dotted his career in such diverse fields as executive development, economic stabilization, price, rent and rationing controls, and manpower. In short, the name of Emmette Redford appeared on the top list of usual suspects for key appointments in any of the subsets of the discipline of public administration.

In addition to these activities, Emmette was a devoted and valued participant in professional associations. As president of the American Political Science Association (1960-61) and member of the council of that body (1950s), as book review editor of the American Political Science Review (1953-56), as participant in the American Society for Public Administration, the Southern Political Science Association, the Southwestern Political Science Association, the International Political Science Association and, in his later years, as a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration to which he was elected in 1968, Emmette was a familiar figure both at the podium and on the panels that so often punctuate professional meetings. If there was a general session, Emmette was apt to address it. If there was a board that needed his participation, he was on it. If there were young colleagues who needed advice, he was there to offer it.

Within UT, he was equally involved, serving on the Faculty Council and many cross-disciplinary committees. The common theme to all these efforts was his conviction of the importance of public service itself and the need to train young people to be effective public servants. Within the LBJ School, his last professional base, he continued to stress the importance of preparation for leadership roles that could improve the conduct of the public’s business. His energy was outstanding: his concern with students, exceptional; and his impact on their minds and careers, lasting.

The Redford publications list is long, stretching from 1947 into the 1980s and including eleven books, sixteen monographs and contributed chapters, and many articles. Aside from nationally known texts such as Democracy in the Administrative State (Brownlow Book Award, 1969-70) and American Government and the Economy, he wrote on, among other things, oil and gas, banking, regulatory policies, and executive branch organization.

The honors that came to him were numerous, as were the tributes given at the various ceremonies honoring his retirement. Already named a distinguished alumnus, he was awarded a presidential citation from the University in 1994, the highest honor a UT president can bestow upon an individual for outstanding merit. Emmette’s loyalty to the University, his faithful attendance at football games, his pleasure when the Tower turned orange or when a student of his was awarded a doctorate—all were elements in his total commitment to the Forty Acres.

When he was well past the age of normal retirement, Emmette undertook the major task of editing a thirteen-volume Administrative History of the Johnson Presidency. As editor of the series, he was a demanding but scrupulous critic, whose impact could often be detected in the final text. An unfinished manuscript for the series’ final volume was on his desk when illness finally overtook him.

A busy and extraordinarily productive life? Emphatically. But simply to list Emmette Redford’s professional
achievements would miss a large part of the man. Devoted to his family, he never entirely recovered from the early death of his promising son Sam, but rejoiced in the household of his daughter, Lady Claire. At the end of their long and mutually supportive marriage, Emmette gave tender, unstinting care to his wife as she dwindled into Alzheimer’s haze before her death in 1992. Moving subsequently to a retirement home was a painful transition but one that Emmette made with customary dignity.

At a time when opposition to the role of government is widespread, the life of Emmette Redford stands as a firm rebuttal. His belief in democracy, not as a perfect system, but perfectible, survived the events of this turbulent century. One tribute to him in 1994 suggested that he shared Woodrow Wilson’s belief that “[o]ur duty is to supply the best possible life to a federal organization, to systems within systems; to make town, city, county, state and federal government live with a like strength and equally assured healthfulness, keeping each unquestionably its own master and yet making all interdependent and cooperative....The task is great and important enough to attract the best minds.”

To that task Emmette Redford dedicated his remarkable life, his outstanding career.

This tribute by Elspeth Rostow appeared in slightly different form in the “1998 Eulogies” of the National Academy of Public Administration.

Distributed to the Dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on September 1, 2000. 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/