REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
LYMON C. REESE

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Lymon C. Reese, professor emeritus, civil, environmental, and architectural engineering, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
LYMON C. REESE

Lymon C. Reese, Ph.D., P.E., father, grandfather, great-grandfather, scholar, entrepreneur, golfer, and lover of learning and teaching, passed away on September 14, 2009, at the age of ninety-two. Considering his humble beginnings and struggles as a young adult trying to find opportunity despite the hardships of the Great Depression, Dr. Reese leveraged his positive attitude and sense of hope to create an amazing future for himself, his family, his university students, and his business.

Dr. Reese moved with his family from Arkansas to Abilene, Texas, when he was in high school. After high school, the hardships of the Great Depression prevented him from attending college as he so desired, and instead, he worked various jobs to help support his family. Dr. Reese’s first exposure to the marvels of engineering came when he landed a job with the civil service as a land surveyor. He was sent to the Rio Grande Valley to set the surveying stakes for building levees. From there he transferred to a position in Alabama working on the construction of an ordinance plant. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dr. Reese moved with his mother for similar work in Oklahoma, where he volunteered for the U.S. Navy Construction Battalions (affectionately known as the “Sea Bees”). He served as chief petty officer in the Aleutians and Okinawa, Japan.

Upon discharge from the military, like many soldiers who at that time could not afford a college education, Dr. Reese utilized the G.I. Bill to pursue his university studies. He was accepted to Rice University as a freshman at age twenty-nine. He earned twenty-two semester hours in a fast-track semester and lettered on the golf team. He then transferred to The University of Texas where a more flexible degree plan was offered. While at UT Austin, he married fellow-student Eva Lee Jett and their first child, Sally, was born in 1949. After receiving his master’s degree in 1950, Dr. Reese accepted a position as assistant professor of civil engineering at Mississippi State College. After a year there, he took a one-year leave from Mississippi State and moved his family, which now included two children (Sally and John), to the University of California at Berkeley for his Ph.D. studies. This phase of his college education was funded by the G.I. Bill, a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, and a competitive fellowship from the National Science Foundation.

Dr. Reese and Eva Lee’s third child, Nancy, arrived in Starkville, Mississippi, in 1955, as the family was preparing for the move from Mississippi State back to Austin where Dr. Reese had accepted a position as assistant professor of civil engineering at The University of Texas. He spent the remainder of his academic career at UT Austin. Dr. Reese was the Nasser I. Al-Rashid Chair and Professor of Civil Engineering, and he was chairman of the department from 1965 until 1972. He was associate dean of research for the college from 1972 until 1979. He maintained a close relationship with the University and taught courses even after his retirement in 1984.

In 1985, Dr. Reese founded Ensoft, Inc. and its consulting subsidiary, Lymon C. Reese & Associates. To this date, Ensoft, Inc. remains strong and continues with the original ideas and mission on which Dr. Reese founded the company—to provide valuable practical software tools and expertise for the engineering community.

In addition to his years of teaching and professional engineering services to the public and private sector, Dr. Reese completed extensive research over the course of his career in the field of geotechnical engineering,
principally concerning the behavior of deep foundations. He pioneered in the performance of field studies of instrumented piles and developed analytical methods now widely used in the design of major structures. He authored or co-authored more than 160 papers in refereed journals and 282 technical reports. He was the senior author of two recent books on foundation engineering. He presented over 450 invited lectures in the United States and abroad.

Dr. Reese received the Terzaghi Award in 1983 and was selected by the American Society of Civil Engineers as the Terzaghi Lecturer in 1986. He was chosen by his peers to receive the Joe J. King Professional Achievement Award from the College of Engineering, The University of Texas at Austin, in February, 1977. He was invited by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section of the American Society of Engineers (ASCE) to present the 2004 Arthur Casagrande Memorial Lecture in Boston.

He was an active member of ASCE for many years and was elected honorary member in 1984. He held various offices in the Texas section, including president in 1968 to 1969. For several years, he served as a member of the executive committee, Geotechnical Engineering Division, and was chairman in 1986 to 1987.

Significant honors received by Dr. Reese include the Distinguished Graduate Award of the College of Engineering, The University of Texas, in 1985 and the Offshore Technology Conference Distinguished Achievement Award for Individuals in 1985. He was elected to membership in the National Academy of Engineering in 1975. He received an honorary doctorate from the Civil Engineering Institute of Bucharest, Romania, in 1994.

During his thirty-three years at The University of Texas, Dr. Reese supervised seventy-one graduate students who received an M.S. or a Ph.D. degree in civil engineering. Eva Lee frequently worked with the spouses and children of many of these students, making them welcome in the United States and assisting them with housing, shopping, and local resources. Twelve of the students became professors at universities worldwide, and at least eight established businesses that have hundreds of employees.

In his ninety-two years of life, Lymon brought extraordinary joy, kindness, care, knowledge, and wisdom to all the people who knew him.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Robert B. Gilbert (chair), Clyde E. Lee, Roy E. Olson, and Kenneth H. Stokoe.

Distributed to the dean of the Cockrell School of Engineering, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on June 4, 2010. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.