DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
ARDIS M. REWERTS

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Ardis M. Rewerts, associate professor, human ecology, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger
Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
ARDIS M. REWERTS

Ardis Rewerts—educator, artist, mentor, and friend—dedicated her life to instructing, inspiring, and advising students and colleagues in the discipline of textiles and apparel. Dr. Rewerts was a respected and innovative fiber arts designer. Her unique approach to textile arts produced innovative designs internationally exhibited in one-person shows and juried competitions. Her research interests focused on cultural and historical textiles and apparel. Balenciaga, the Spanish couture designer of the 1950s and 1960s, and Kuba raffia textiles of Zaire were of particular interest to Dr. Rewerts.

Dr. Rewerts was born June 18, 1941, and grew up in a large family on a farm in Illinois. She attended the University of Illinois, completing a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics Education in 1963 and a Master of Science in Textiles and Clothing in 1968. Following her undergraduate graduation, Dr. Rewerts taught high school home economics in Illinois for three years. Upon completion of her M.S. degree, Dr. Rewerts came to The University of Texas at Austin as an assistant professor. She obtained her doctorate in textiles and clothing at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville in 1977. Dr. Rewerts served as an associate professor in the Division of Textiles and Apparel in the Department of Human Ecology for the remainder of her career.

Dr. Rewerts was particularly known for her talents as teacher. She won repeated teaching excellence awards both for the Department of Human Ecology and the College of Natural Sciences. She was listed in Who’s Who of American Teachers in 2002 and was named Outstanding Member of the UT Community by Chi Omega sorority in 2000.

Ardis Rewerts was active in several professional organizations during the course of her career. She was an active member and served as national treasurer of the International Textiles and Apparel Association from 1983 to 1986. She also played a significant role in the Costume Society of America, Texas Designer/Craftsman, Textile Society of America, American Home Economics Association, and Texas Home Economics Association.

The departmental and division leadership and service of Dr. Rewerts were critical to the success of the unit. She served as division head, undergraduate adviser, petitions adviser, and lecture series chair, as well as on the budget council, curriculum committee, scholarship committee, faculty merit committee, space committee, and faculty governance committee. She assumed directorship of the Historical Textiles and Apparel Collection early in her tenure and was instrumental in its growth and development.

The rich and productive lives of graduates are a teacher’s legacy. Dr. Rewerts followed the postgraduate success of her students closely and took great pride in their accomplishments. She encouraged all graduates of the textiles and apparel program to remain in close contact with The University of Texas at Austin and with the departmental and division faculty.

Dr. Rewerts continued to share her wisdom, vision, and encouragement with students until her final illness. She died November 15, 2007, and she is greatly missed by friends, family, students, and colleagues.
Additional comments by colleague and friend, Sue Alexander Greninger:

I first had the pleasure of knowing Ardis back in the mid-1960s when we were graduate students at the University of Illinois. She was part of a group of friends who were all textiles and apparel (TXA) graduate students. I was the odd-woman-out, since I was pursuing my graduate degrees in family and consumption economics. We all became acquainted because the TXA students took courses offered by my major professor.

After Ardis received her M.S. and left Illinois, we lost touch until I came to UT Austin for a job interview about ten years later. As I walked toward the lecture hall for my presentation, I heard a somewhat familiar voice ask, “Why Sue Alexander—what on Earth are you doing here?” It was Ardis, and her warm greeting was very helpful in putting me at ease for the interview and in the transition to the job, which I was offered.

I worked closely with Ardis for almost thirty years at UT Austin, and I am therefore taking the liberty of adding my comments to this wonderful and most fitting tribute prepared by my esteemed colleagues. As the resolution states, Ardis was a truly outstanding mentor and teacher who deeply influenced the professional and personal lives of her students. She was the demanding, yet sensitive and extremely fair professor many of us aspire to be. She motivated and inspired her students by example to study hard, think critically, and seek new challenges, both academically and professionally.

Debbie Roberts, who works with me in the Office of the General Faculty, was both a TXA student and an employee under Ardis’ direction. Debbie said that the exams in Dr. Rewerts’ classes were quite difficult, but students were allowed on multiple-choice questions to explain why they had chosen a particular response. If the student’s explanation had a semblance of correctness or reasonableness, even when the student had incorrectly answered the question, there was an opportunity to earn partial credit. Another former student wrote about the Impact of Ardis’ high standards and expectations in the following tribute posted on the department’s memorial web page:

I took Dr. Rewerts’ portfolio draping class and remember that I specifically chose her because I knew she would be tougher on me. Boy was she tough! Not only as a professor, but as a person. As a female leader, she was number one. She used to tease me about draping in an unorganized manner, but what I learned from her is to not be afraid of criticism. The fashion industry is a tough one, and Dr. Rewerts was just preparing us for it. I knew she wanted us to be at our best, in whatever it was in our lives. I strove to be better and work harder for her because at the same time she was doing the same for us, her students. To get a compliment from Dr. Rewerts was the best feeling in the world, and I know she has been a mentor to so many people such as myself. She was always encouraging when it came to our work and made us proud of our achievements. Thank you, Dr. Rewerts. You will always be remembered every step of my career path.

In addition to her high standards, Ardis had warmth and compassion for her students as well as a good sense of humor. A former student took note of these traits in her memorial statement by saying the following:

First of all, let me say that Dr. Rewerts was such an incredible mentor who really cared about her students. Her office was a place I could go if I needed to sit and talk to someone. She really pushed me to do my best work, and as other students have said, a compliment from her would make your day. My favorite memory is of her sense of humor. During reviews of our draping practicals, if someone was unable to complete the back of the skirt of their garment in the time allotted, when she would critique our work, she would turn the dummy around, point at the area where no skirt had been draped and declare “AIR CONDITIONING!” She kept us interested by being interested in us. I know I am not the only student who will miss her. Those are some big shoes to fill.

Ardis was extremely generous with her time in meeting with her students, listening to their concerns, and encouraging them to set high academic and career goals. She would also diligently watch for opportunities to recommend her top quality students for scholarships, awards, and career openings. Ardis never had to be reminded to write letters for students who needed scholarships. Her letters were always the first to be turned in
because she wanted her deserving majors to receive the help they needed to finish their degrees. This was also true regarding letters nominating alums and others for the awards given annually by the Texas Exes in Human Ecology. Her letters were thorough and well written, with complimentary words about each individual's achievements, capabilities, and aspirations spilling off the pages. Because of her reputation as a demanding teacher with very high standards, members of the review committees knew her recommendations were honest assessments, and they could count on her sage advice.

Ardis also kept up with former students and knew what they were accomplishing in their careers and what was occurring in their personal and family lives. Her bulletin board always had tidbits posted to share the latest news about former students, and this served as an inspiration to current students who read the items. She also kept the bulletin board lively with interesting articles about fashion, design, and apparel economics as well as clever cartoons and jokes.

Ardis' legacy to UT Austin includes a number of programs she helped to grow and hone with rigor, including apparel and fashion design, historic preservation of textiles and apparel, retail merchandising, and textile sciences. She also established a scholarship fund to assist students in their quest for knowledge, understanding, and productive skills. However, Ardis' true legacy, as indicated in the resolution, really does live on in the creativity, excellence, and zest of the many students she educated, motivated, and inspired.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Ann DuPont (chair), Jane Craig, and Nancy Prideaux.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences on August 08, 2011, and posted under "Memorials" at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.