The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for James R. Roach, professor emeritus, government, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
JAMES R. ROACH

James Robert Roach was born in Rock Rapids, Iowa, on August 25, 1922, and died in Austin, Texas, on August 5, 2010, just three weeks short of his 88th birthday. He was the elder of two sons born to Paul R. and Doris A. Roach. His mother’s family had migrated from Canada into Minnesota and then to Iowa. His father came from an affluent family in northwest Iowa, his grandfather a lawyer and landowner, and his father a graduate of the University of Wisconsin. The family fell upon hard times during the Great Depression, but had begun to recover by the late 1930s. For spending money, both Jim and his younger brother, Fred, mowed lawns and delivered the Des Moines Sunday Register to customers in Rock Rapids. Fred reported that, while the Roach family was not deeply religious, Jim became very interested in the Congregational youth group, called the Pilgrim Fellowship. On Sundays, he would visit neighboring towns with the local minister for regional fellowship meetings, and he became editor of LOG, the Iowa Pilgrim Fellowship journal, which had a statewide circulation.

Jim attended public school in Rock Rapids, graduating from Rock Rapids High School in 1940. In childhood, he read widely, was highly social and generous to friends and family, and felt negative, but not hostile, toward sports and athletics. He threw himself into a variety of extra-curricular activities in high school, including the student council, the dramatic society, and the mixed chorus, where he sang “Tenor I.” He was particularly interested in reporting and editing materials on student activities.

Jim enrolled in the University of Iowa in the fall of 1940. He majored in journalism, probably owing to his satisfying experiences in reporting and editing in high school and in the Pilgrim Fellowship. He wrote for the Daily Iowan, the morning newspaper for Iowa City, as well as for the university newspaper. His favorite journalism activity, however, was editing the campus monthly humor magazine, Frivo!, thought to be rather racy for its time.

When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, Jim enlisted in the Navy V-7 program for officers’ training and graduated with a B.A. in Journalism and History in February 1943. Upon graduation, he was immediately sent to midshipman school in Chicago, commissioned an ensign, and then assigned to the Washington, D.C., area to bomb-disposal school, for which he had volunteered. He practiced this difficult and dangerous craft in Australia, the Philippines, and the Solomon Islands. The most decorated Australian military officer of World War II called Jim Roach the bravest man he ever knew. As the war was winding down, the Navy assigned Jim to construct a kind of encyclopedia of Japanese explosives and ordinance, but the war ended on the very day his work was published by the Government Printing Office. Jim remained in the Department of the Navy in Washington until he was discharged in the summer of 1946.

Jim had applied to Harvard University’s graduate program with the intention of taking an M.A. in international relations and then entering the Foreign Service. Although he passed the Foreign Service entrance exam, he began to have second thoughts about a diplomatic career. The more his studies progressed, the more his thoughts turned to the academic life. He completed his M.A. in Government in 1948 and his Ph.D. in the same field in 1950. At the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in 1949, he received four job offers: Texas, Iowa, Oregon, and the University of Southern California. He accepted the Texas offer and arrived in Austin in the fall of 1949 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Government. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1954 and then to Professor in 1965. For one academic year, in 1978-79, following his return to The University of Texas after four years as Counselor for Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in India, Jim held a joint appointment in Government and the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Although
he retired in 1987, he continued to teach half-time until 1995, at which point he was honored with the title Professor Emeritus.

In his personal life, James Roach was generous to a fault. He spent hours counseling students and remained always alert to articles and books that might be of use or interest to his colleagues. He was a voracious reader and subscribed to a wide variety of publications; he long resisted television and acquired his first TV set only a few years before he died. Jim could be quite social, but entertained infrequently and only reluctantly accepted invitations to social functions. He disliked gatherings of large groups; small intimate affairs were his preference. At the same time, he relished good food, a tumbler or two of bourbon (with ice and a little water), a glass of wine, and occasionally an aperitif. He dressed well, but conservatively. He ate sparingly, and though he never dieted as such, he always remained fit. He was no sports aficionado, but he exercised regularly. He played handball in college and took it up again in the 1960s for several years. Jim loved swimming and, for many years, was a regular at Barton Springs pool. In later life, his primary activity was walking, doing at least five miles most mornings. He tried to walk some even in his last illness. His idea of a splendid vacation was to hide himself away in the small Swiss village of Sils-Maria in a family-owned inn and walk the mountain trails each day for about two weeks—alone.

Jim Roach, for all his wide contacts with friends and acquaintances, nationally and internationally, remained essentially a loner. He spoke little about his early life, his philosophy, or his inner thoughts. He would discuss India at great length, expound on U.S. foreign policy, and talk about the state of the nation. Only toward the end of his life did he begin to open up about his life and beliefs—and that to only a few close friends. In the summer of 2005, he suffered several severe injuries in a fall on campus. He never totally recovered and, from that point on, experienced a slow decline. Always a private person, Jim became even more withdrawn, to the point of discouraging visits, even from family. But, though he valued his privacy, Jim had a vast number of friends, especially among his many former students who will be forever grateful for having known him.

Jim Roach had a distinguished career at The University of Texas as a teacher and administrator, and the College of Liberal Arts recognized his achievements with its highest honor in 1993, the Pro Bene Meritis Award.

In 46 years of teaching at UT Austin, from 1949 until his retirement in 1995, Jim offered courses in two major areas of political science—international relations and comparative politics, with a focus on South and Southeast Asia. His courses were legendary: International Relations, in which “political realist” Hans Morgenthau’s Politics Among Nations was long the core text; American Foreign Policy; and Government and Politics of South Asia. He supervised undergraduate government and Plan II honors theses, and, at the graduate level, he guided many students through their master’s theses and Ph.D. dissertations with exacting standards and high expectations.

Outside the classroom, in his book-filled office, Jim served as adviser and mentor to dozens of students, and his impact on their lives and careers was truly remarkable. With his encouragement and support, many of his students went into the U.S. Foreign Service, serving throughout the world; others went into public service in national and international organizations; and a few followed Jim’s path into an academic career, specializing in international politics or South Asia. A phenomenal number of those students became lifelong friends with whom Jim maintained regular correspondence. Indeed, in later years, Jim remarked that one of the “satisfactions of maturity” for him was the number of students who still “keep in touch.”

At the memorial service for Jim, held on campus in October 2010, perhaps half of those assembled had been his students. They included a past mayor of Austin, retired Foreign Service officers, a leader long involved in South Asian development organizations, and professors who had years before been in his classroom—and some had come hundreds of miles to pay their respects to the man who had so deeply influenced their lives. In memorial tribute, following Jim’s death, many former students wrote of the impact Jim had had on their lives. One former student from the 1960s wrote, “Jim Roach stood out as one of the finest teachers I have ever known. His kind and gentle interest in students outside the classroom set an example for many. His lectures were thoughtful, well organized, and always fascinating. He exemplified what a great university and The University is all about.”

In addition to teaching, Jim made a major contribution to The University of Texas in the numerous administrative positions he held. He first began his administrative work as chairman of the International Studies Program in 1956, a position he held until 1967, and then again from 1978 to 1986. He was actively involved in the establishment of the Center for Asian Studies at UT Austin and long served on its executive committee. He also served as the director of Special Programs and of the interdisciplinary honors Plan II degree program from 1965 to 1969, as vice provost and dean of Interdisciplinary Studies Programs in 1971-72, and as dean of the Division of General and Comparative Studies from 1972 to 1974. As such, he was in charge of all the regional
and area studies programs on the UT Austin campus. In all his administrative roles, he had a reputation for fairness and judiciousness, and, while shouldering these responsibilities, he continued to inspire students as a teacher in the classroom.

India was central to Jim’s life in his teaching and in his public service. He came to India by way of Australia and a series of chance connections. During his service in the Navy during World War II, he had a brief time in Australia, but it was enough to kindle the interest that developed into his doctoral dissertation on Australian foreign relations at Harvard. After coming to The University of Texas, in teaching courses on international relations, Jim decided to continue his work on Australia and was awarded a Fulbright grant for study there in 1951-52. Upon his return to Texas, the chair of the Department of Government, Emmette Redford, proposed that Jim develop a new course. At that time, the department offered no courses on Asian politics, and Redford saw Jim’s Australia connection as sufficient to qualify him to teach a class on Asia. At Harvard, Jim had held seminars dealing with imperialism and nationalism, both with an Asia focus; and Asia had figured significantly in his work on the evolution of Australian foreign policy. Jim took on the assignment and developed what became one of his signature courses, Government and Politics of South Asia. The course embraced a sweep of nations from Pakistan and India across Southeast Asia to the Philippines.

India soon emerged as a central focus of the course, and Jim went to India for the first time on a Ford Foundation Foreign Area Fellowship in 1956-57. His project was financial federalism in India, and, from his base in New Delhi, he traveled around the country for interviews with government officials and politicians—and he had the good fortune of being there at the time of India’s second parliamentary elections. India captivated him, and he returned in 1961-62, this time as a Fulbright Scholar to teach at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, where he established residence in the annex to the Rambagh Palace, newly transformed by the maharajah into a luxury hotel. Jim developed close friendships in the Indian academic community, and he took full advantage of again being in India at the time of parliamentary elections.

Jim’s ties to the Fulbright program drew official attention, and he was invited in 1965 to become a member of the highly distinguished Board of Foreign Scholarships, established by Congress to oversee the Fulbright Program in its selection of students, scholars, teachers, and others in educational exchange. Jim served on the board until 1974; he was its chairman from 1969 to 1972; and during the full time of his service, he chaired the subcommittee that included India in its portfolio. Jim went again to India for one semester, in 1967, on a grant from the University to observe the elections. It was a period of increasing American interest in India, and the number of American students and scholars going to India was on the rise. But in the 1971 Bangladesh Crisis, the U.S. “tilted” toward Pakistan, and U.S.-India relations came in for rough times. India effectively closed access to American scholars, denying them study and research visas, an ironic and self-defeating move, for American academic specialists on South Asia had been among the most vocal in criticizing the Nixon-Kissinger policy of support for Pakistan.

With the Fulbright program in India in limbo, Jim led a delegation of American scholars to India to address the problem, and the negotiations with Indian officials were watched closely by American Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He was impressed, and when the Counselor for Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi resigned in 1974, Moynihan responded: “Get Roach.” The Cultural Affairs program in India was the biggest in the world at that time, and its responsibilities embraced four American libraries and cultural centers (New Delhi, Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta); the American Studies Research Center in Hyderabad; and a continuous flow of programs that included lectures, as well as dance and other musical performances. Jim’s initial appointment was for two years; however, when the Department of State wanted him for another year, UT Austin reluctantly agreed. The Embassy’s plea for another year required, so the story goes, Lady Bird Johnson’s personal intervention with the Board of Regents to secure the unprecedented fourth year of leave from the University. Clearly, Jim Roach had made his mark in India, and those four years as Counselor for Cultural Affairs, from 1974 to 1978, were among the most rewarding in his life.

In a memorial reflection on Jim’s life, a long-time friend spoke for the many who knew him: “As a teacher, mentor, colleague, observer, and counselor, he was unsurpassed. His generosity and his wry and gentle humor changed the lives of each of us lucky enough to have known him. His was a life well-lived.”

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. (chair), Karl M. Schmitt, and William S. Livingston.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on May 12, 2011. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at:
http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.