DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
JOHN WILLIAM VELZ

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for John William Velz, professor emeritus, English, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
JOHN WILLIAM VELZ

John William Velz was born in Englewood, New Jersey, August 5, 1930. In 1953, he earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan with high distinction and honors in English and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa; the following year, he received his M.A. from Michigan. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in English and classical tradition in 1963. He taught at the University of Minnesota, the College of St. Thomas (St. Paul), and Rice University before his arrival at The University of Texas at Austin, where he served as professor of English from 1969 until his retirement in 1996.


One might expect so efficient a handbook of this kind to resemble the London Telephone Directory but not *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. One would be wrong. It is plum-full of curiosities. Scholarly conjecture being what it is, the synopses contain a good deal in the way of alluring bypaths off the map, fantastic castles of speculation, enthusiastic, confident, and bizarre.

A collaboration by Velz with his student Frances N. Teague resulted in *One Touch of Shakespeare*, published by the Folger Shakespeare Library in 1986. These edited letters of Joseph Crosby, who built up the third largest Shakespeare library in the United States, illustrate how Crosby, an amateur in the original sense of the word, contributed hundreds of notes to editions by others. The letters give insight into a nineteenth-century American understanding of Shakespeare.

Another student, Bryan Garner, has become the foremost authority on legal prose and usage as well as the American heir to the legendary H.W. Fowler in matters of English usage. Garner’s Plan II senior thesis under John’s direction was truly the equivalent of a distinguished Ph.D. dissertation. Garner readily acknowledges that it provided the foundation for his subsequent prolific writings on the English language, including *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* (Oxford University Press) and other widely used reference works from Oxford and Chicago University Presses. Surveying Garner’s accomplishments, John said, “One student like that is enough to make a career worthwhile.”

John’s career stood on his detailed knowledge as a Shakespeare scholar, teacher, and theater person. While at Rice he directed medieval plays for Rice’s Brown College and played bit parts in *The Winter’s Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing* for the Houston Shakespeare Society. With James Ayers, he founded a play-reading group as soon as he arrived in Austin, and he directed *Julius Caesar* for the UT English and classics departments. In the 1990s, he founded a town-and-gown play-reading group devoted exclusively to Shakespeare. He virtually lived in the world of Renaissance theatre. His last book, *Exit Pursued by a Bear: Encounters with Shakespearean and Shakespeareans*, distills the experience of that life. During his career, he produced six edited collections, sixty articles, and 100 conference presentations. He won fellowships from the National Endowment for the
Humanities, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Fulbright Foundation, and a Kosiuszko Foundation Fellowship in 1993 for a lecture tour in Eastern and Central Europe.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Thomas Cable (chair), John Rumrich, and Elizabeth Cullingford.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on November 23, 2009. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, WMB 2.102, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.