

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
FRANK E. DONAHUE**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Frank E. Donahue, professor, Germanic studies, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.



Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

**IN MEMORIAM
FRANK E. DONAHUE**

Frank Donahue, born June 27, 1947, in New York City, died on November 23, 2010, in Houston, Texas, after a long and courageous struggle against congestive heart failure. Frank served as a deeply respected professor in the Department of Germanic Studies at The University of Texas at Austin for thirty-two years. He served the Department of Germanic Languages (later, Germanic Studies) and the University with a distinction that was recognized and honored by his University colleagues.

Frank received his B.A. in German from Iona College in 1970. He earned his M.A. in German Literature from Purdue University in 1972, having also pursued German language study at the Deutsche Sommerschule in Middlebury, Vermont. Before beginning work on his doctoral degree, Frank spent a year teaching English, geography, German literature, and American folk music at a high school in Niedersachsen, Germany. During the course of his doctoral work, he served as a graduate teaching fellow in German and as an instructor of German in Penn State's Continuing Education Program. In 1976, he earned his Ph.D. in German Applied Linguistics and Pedagogy from the Pennsylvania State University.

Frank joined the UT Austin faculty in 1976 as assistant professor and was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 1982. This promotion was a special achievement because, at the time, it was assumed within the College of Liberal Arts that pedagogical excellence alone could not justify a promotion to tenure. Both the chair of the German department and the dean of the College of Liberal Arts recognized the importance of Frank's pedagogical achievements and argued successfully for promotion to tenure. This promotion helped to pave the way for other language pedagogy specialists to earn tenure at UT Austin. Subsequently, Frank's promotion to full professor in 1993 went smoothly. Three years earlier, he had published the first of eventually three editions of his widely used textbook, *Deutsch Zusammen: A Communicative Course in German*, written with Johanna Watzinger, which became one of the most successful German-language textbooks of the past generation. The publishers were the major trade houses Macmillan and then Simon & Schuster.

Frank's magnum opus is his *Deutsche Wiederholungsgrammatik: A Morpho-Syntactic Review of German*, published by Yale University Press in 2008. One online commentator praised this book as follows:

I can't say enough great things about this book. As the title says, it is mostly a review of German grammar, not an introduction to it. However, the information is so clearly explained and it is presented in such an amazingly simple manner that I wish I had had access to it when I first began studying German. The book has made me realize that German grammar isn't nearly as complicated as most grammar books seem to make it!

Another, equally enthusiastic, commentator wrote, "This textbook is absolutely amazing, and a German speaker at any level will be able to comprehend and use the grammar taught in the book successfully."

Frank received important teaching awards from The University of Texas at Austin. In 2006, he was one of two finalists (and eventual runner-up) for the Friar Centennial Teaching Award. He won the Dads' Association

Centennial Teaching Fellowship in 1991 and a President's Associates Teaching Award (1985). The written evaluations of his teaching during his career were extraordinary. One seldom sees such consistent ratings toward the top of the scale over so many years. Every academic department should include an "old-fashioned" colleague who is unwilling to adjust his high standards downwards (or sideways) to accommodate new generations of allegedly less disciplined or less ambitious students. It is a part of his success that Frank managed to preserve his exacting standards while winning the loyalty of the many students who wanted to study with him and who thrived on the academic demands he made on them.

Frank served as lower-division program coordinator and TA supervisor for twenty-five years (1976-2001). He became a legendary mentor to this department's graduate students and made a great contribution to the department's stellar record in placing almost all of its Ph.D. students in good tenure-track positions at the beginning of their academic careers. Many of these young professors specialized in German language pedagogy under Frank's guidance, and their success at many colleges and universities across the United States has given the department here at UT Austin an enviable reputation among its peers. Frank "was exceptional in taking the theory and boiling it down to the practical implications for language instruction," a former student wrote. Another elaborated:

My training as a TA at UT remains one of the most valuable parts of my graduate education. Frank taught through example. His approach was humane and practical. He showed us not only how to become excellent teachers, but also good, respectful, and responsible colleagues. He always encouraged us to work together and to learn from each other. Working with other TAs fostered a deep sense of community among graduate students and taught us the value of collaboration and dialogue.

In addition to his absolute reliability and concern about others, Frank was known and respected for his honesty and his concern for the individual. As yet another of his UT protégés put it:

He helped people understand themselves better, as people and as professionals - and to work with their strengths and to hopefully improve their weaknesses - but if not, to work around them. When he paid a compliment, it was never empty. When he offered a criticism, it wasn't empty, either. Regardless of what he might have thought of my performance at a given time, I always knew, he put it all into proper perspective. He never reduced students - or anyone - down to a single performance or single skill.

Finally:

As a teacher, Professor Donahue commands great respect among his students for many reasons: he is exceptionally prepared and knowledgeable, and he forces students to grapple with questions of *whether* and *why*, not simply *what* or *how-to*. At both the undergraduate and the graduate levels, he exudes a sort of graceful and gentle command of the classroom, and this style makes him both accessible and well liked. I have never known any student to be intimidated by Professor Donahue, nor have I known any to question his knowledge and know-how. I, like my peers, have tried to emulate many of his qualities in my own teaching."

It was characteristic of Frank that his insistence on excellence extended beyond his academic career. The ship models he created and displayed in his UT office are works of art that demonstrate the care and patience that are the hallmarks of great craftsmanship. Frank was also a serious musician--a guitarist--who, with his musical friends, performed in public, often for charitable purposes, and recorded CDs of their work. In 2007, before his illness ended his academic career, Frank wrote:

I am putting together an interdisciplinary course on American folk music, The Great Folk Music Revival of the Early 1960s, which will be offered either as an American studies course or a humanities course in the near future. The course will center on historical events and cultural trends that have been reflected in and have influenced American folk music. I have personal experience with this movement, having sung and played in a folk music group for five years during the 1960s and currently playing in one.

Frank's third serious hobby was the model train project that occupied an entire room in his home. All these activities brought him together with friends who shared his interests.

Frank Donahue was both a good and an extraordinary man in his devotion to his family, his profession, and the arts he made a part of his life. He is survived by his wife, Genevieve; his son, Frank; his daughter, Erin; and many members of his extended family. His enduring academic legacy are the graduate students he taught, mentored, and sent out into the world to educate new generations of students who will benefit from his example.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors John Hoberman (chair), John Weinstock, and Zsuzsanna Abrams.

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