



Ralph R. Read, III

PhD, Germanic Languages
University of California at Berkeley

Ralph Read wrote this *Vita* around 1976:

I was born on 20 August 1939 in the Midwestern industrial town of Racine, Wisconsin. My parents encouraged my interests in literature and music, but when I enrolled in Antioch College as a National Merit scholar, I still had settled upon no definite vocational goal. Initially, I majored in drama. When I was 19, I found my first teaching job at the École d'Humanité in Switzerland by lying about my age. I taught English and German, enjoyed it so much that I returned to the United States after a year at the University of Tübingen a German major. My students have claimed that I am still a drama major -- but now, as a teacher, with a captive audience. I was graduated from Antioch as valedictorian in 1961 and began my graduate work at Berkeley that fall on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

Berkeley in the early '60s was at its most exciting and I, in my early 20s, at my most excitable. It was a time of euphoric idealism; it seemed certain that our generation was going to change the world. Well, we didn't -- but somehow the world has managed to survive without our rescuing it. In 1965 I returned to Germany to write my dissertation on modern historical drama in Munich, the Bier und Wurst capital of Germany. I then spent one more year in Berkeley and came to Austin in the fall of 1967 as an Instructor; my degree was awarded in 1968. I have become a partisan of, some might say a fanatic about, UT Austin; it is hard for me to conceive of teaching at another university.

Several things stand out as most important for me in my 16 semesters here: in the summer of 1968 I helped Dr. Stanley Werbow initiate our intensive German program; I have been running it ever since, and feel that intensive language learning could be expanded profitably to help many more students. In 1971 I was surprised and very proud to win a Cactus Teaching Award. I have also been given the opportunity to teach a variety of upper division literature courses, which is an advantage of being a member of a large department.

My main scholarly activity so far has been as a translator, although my secondary subject, medieval German literature, has taken up more and more time recently. I also intend to write a really good, popular book about diabetes (and how to live with it), a

subject which has necessarily concerned me for 21 years. I have greatly enjoyed my years at Austin and hope I can contribute to our department remaining one of the very best in the country.

Students. colleagues remember professor

by P. J. Shuey

The Daily Texan, Wednesday, 23 January 1985: 6

The flag at the Main Building flew at half-staff Tuesday in honor of Ralph Read, assistant [associate] professor of Germanic languages and accomplished translator, who died Sunday.

There will be no funeral, in accordance with Read's wishes, but friends will gather at the home of Tom O'Hare, associate professor of Germanic languages, at 7. p.m. Jan. 30. . . .

Read had been a member of the UT faculty since 1967. He specialized in modern German literature and taught intensive German, modern German literature and a German poetry survey course.

Read was born in Racine, Wis., in 1939. He received a bachelor's degree from Antioch College in 1961, and a master's and doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley.

He had received numerous awards for teaching excellence.

"Both the students and faculty would agree that this department has never had a finer teacher," said Walter Wetzels, chairman of the Department of Germanic Languages.

Students also were dedicated to Read. The Germanic Languages Department has received several dozen letters from students praising and recommending him for awards and honors.

For the past 30 years Read had diabetes, which blinded him in 1974. Because of a kidney ailment, Read required a kidney transplant several years ago.

Once, when Read was in the hospital for a week recovering from a broken hip, students maintained a constant vigil outside his room and were there to assist him 24 hours a day.

Though blind, Read still wrote and continued to teach and translate German literature. In 1984, he translated more than a dozen books from German to English, wrote numerous articles and maintained his loyal student following.

Leslie Willson, professor of Germanic languages, said that although Read was afflicted with serious illness almost all his life, he complained only once. He complained to a student about the food he ate, because he couldn't see well enough to cook. The student challenged him to do something about it. Read did, writing *When the Cook Can't Look: A Cookbook for the Blind and Visually Handicapped* in 1981.

Read's will establishes the Ralph R. Read Endowed Scholarship for undergraduate students, which will be administered by the office of financial aid, and will be awarded for academic achievement and financial need.

**The Ralph R. Read Endowed Scholarship
for Undergraduate Studies at UT Austin**

In 1985, the University of Texas System Board of Regents voted to establish the Ralph R. Read Endowed Scholarship for Undergraduate Studies at UT Austin after accepting a bequest in excess of \$100,000 from the late Dr. Read,s estate.

Income earned from the Endowment will be used to grant undergraduate scholarships to students demonstrating financial need and academic achievement. Priority in the selection of the recipients will be given to students in the UT Austin Department of Germanic Languages, and then to students in the College of Liberal Arts.

*Applicants for this scholarship should meet the following criteria:

- 1) Have applied for financial aid through the Office of Student Financial Aid at The University of Texas at Austin and have documented financial need.
- 2) Be undergraduate students and have at least a 3.25 average on a minimum of 30 hours completed at the University of Texas at Austin.
- 3) All majors will be considered; special encouragement is offered to whose majoring in Germanic Languages.

Official UT Memorial Resolution:

**IN MEMORIAM
RALPH READ**

Ralph Read, associate professor of Germanic languages, died on January 20, 1985.

Professor Read was born on August 20, 1939, in Racine, Wisconsin. He earned a bachelor's degree from Antioch College in 1961, and master's and PhD degrees from the University of California at Berkeley in 1963 and 1968, respectively.

He joined the faculty of The University of Texas at Austin in 1967. He specialized in modern German literature. A prolific translator, he translated many of the works of Horst Bienek. In 1981 he was awarded a fellowship in translation from the National Endowment for the Arts to support his work.

Professor Read was also recognized for his outstanding teaching. In 1971 he received the Cactus Teaching Excellence Award. In 1976 he was honored with the Harry R. Ransom Award for Teaching Excellence. In 1982 he received the President's Associates Award for Teaching Excellence.

Professor Read began losing his eyesight in 1974, due to diabetes. This led to his 1981 publication of a cookbook, *When the Cook Can't Look: A Cookbook for the Blind and Visually Handicapped*.

<signed>

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

Biographical sketch prepared by
Teresa Palomo Acosta and posted on the
Faculty Council web site on December 20, 2000.
Additional biographical sources can be found in the Barker
Texas History Center and the UT Office of Public Affairs.

In Memoriam, Ralph Read

by Ken Fontenot, 1-22-85

O lover of good words, when I think of you,
I think of Milton whose only brother was darkness.
Darkness. Even the squirrels smiled at you.
Darkness. Even the wind sang your songs.
Whenever I entered your room --
your eyes staring straight ahead
as is the fate of a man
whose eyes were lost like childhood --
just my voice was enough
to let you say: "Ken! Hi Ken!"
A man who knew work was love,
you rested easy in your chairs,
secure that patience was mother to knowledge.
You sang gentle songs. You hummed.
You whistled. You said grace.
Giver of life, where have you gone?
Elegy is all I can give you;
elegy is what you would have given me.
O Ralph, when I lost you as a friend
I had to beg the clouds
to watch over me all night like a father.
