Minutes of the Faculty  
College of Arts & Science  
February 24, 2009

Dean Carolyn Dever called the meeting to order at 4:11 p.m. in Wilson Hall 103.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Faculty Meeting of January 27, 2009.

There were no comments or questions, and the Minutes were approved.


There were no comments or questions.

3. Executive Motion Calendar.

From the Committee on Educational Programs (CEP): Proposed revision of the French minor. There were no comments or questions, and the faculty approved the revision of the French minor.

4. Memorial Resolution for William O. Thweatt, Professor of Economics, Emeritus.

Andrea Maneschi, Professor of Economics, presented a Memorial Resolution in honor of William O. Thweatt, Professor of Economics, Emeritus. The faculty paid their respects and signified their assent to the resolution by standing for a moment of silence. The Memorial Resolution is appended to these Minutes.

5. Original Motion Calendar.

No issues were raised.

6. Good of the College.

No issues were raised.

7. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marshall C. Eakin,  
Secretary of the Faculty
MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR WILLIAM OLIVER THWEATT
PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ECONOMICS

William Oliver Thweatt, Professor Emeritus of Economics, known to his colleagues as “Bill”,
died on February 28, 2008, at the age of 86 after being ill for about a year. He was preceded in
death by his first wife of many years, Coralie Thweatt, and is survived by his second wife
Saungai Anna Thweatt, his two daughters Randa McEachron and Kristen Thweatt, five
grandchildren, and a great-grandchild. I am grateful to his daughter Kristen for sending me some
extensive personal recollections of her father, and I was also greatly helped by an article on Bill
written by Grace Zibart in the Vanderbilt Alumni magazine many years ago.

Bill was born in Brooklyn, New York, on June 4, 1921. He spent a difficult childhood since his
father died in a car accident when he was six, and when he was ten, his mother died of
tuberculosis. By then the Great Depression had started. Bill was shuttled among the households
of relatives from New York to Alabama until he was 18, attending four high schools in three
states. When World War Two broke out, Bill enlisted in the Navy’s V-12 program and was
assigned to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Through the Officers’ Training Program, he
began studying at Berea College, Kentucky, and the University of North Carolina. Thanks to the
G.I. Bill, he completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Management in 1946 at
UCLA, and stayed there to earn the M. A. degree in Economics in 1948. While a Teaching
Assistant at UCLA, he met and tutored Coralie, who was then a student and a year later became
his wife. After a year at George Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, Bill began the first of four
lengthy assignments that brought him overseas, first as a graduate student, then as teacher and
administrator in three different continents. The ease with which he adapted to these varied
assignments abroad may well be due to his successful response to the dislocations that marked
his early life.

Bill was first invited to teach at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, from 1950 to 1953.
He seemed to acquire a taste for living overseas, and in 1953 he won a Ford Foundation
Overseas Scholarship to study at the Institute of Colonial Studies at Nuffield College, Oxford,
with Professor Sir John Hicks, a noted economist who later received the Nobel Prize in
Economics. Bill received the B. Phil. degree in Economics at Oxford in 1955. After a year at
Montana State University, he began his long association with Vanderbilt when he taught as
Assistant Professor of Economic Development from 1956 to 1958. The opportunity then arose
for Bill Thweatt to become a Program Economist and Economic Advisor to the Government of
Nepal from 1958 to 1960 with USAID, and Ford Foundation Tax and Fiscal Consultant to the
National Planning Council and the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the Nepalese Government
from 1960 to 1963. Being stationed in Katmandu, and Nepal being a small country, Bill became
an economic advisor to the King, and got to know the royal family socially. In fact he and his
wife were at times requested to host foreign dignitaries on their behalf. In the absence of
television, Bill and other foreign visitors to Nepal were even asked to provide entertainment in
the form of theatrical productions, for which they spent months making props and costumes for
each show, followed by several performances. The King and Queen of Nepal had special seats
for these in the upper balcony of the theater.

Bill then returned to Vanderbilt and became Associate Professor of Economics and Assistant
Director of the Graduate Program in Economic Development. The many years that Bill spent in Lebanon, Oxford and Nepal made him a natural candidate to lead a group of Vanderbilt faculty members who were asked to set up a Master of Arts Program in Economics at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Bill was appointed as Chief of Party of the Vanderbilt University Contract Group to the University of São Paulo from 1966 to 1969, and the U.S. State Department recognized Bill’s effectiveness in administering what became one of Vanderbilt’s best-known foreign programs – which continues to thrive as a domestic Brazilian program and now also offers the Ph.D. degree. When he returned to Vanderbilt from Brazil in 1969, Bill was promoted Professor of Economics and continued until 1973 as Campus Coordinator of the USAID/Brazil program in Graduate Economics and Training Coordinator for the Brazil Program in Science and Technology of the Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt. He served as Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Economics from 1978 to 1980.

Bill’s early academic work was in the area of economic development. His sojourn in England as a graduate student, and his interaction with John Hicks and other British academics, made Bill aware of the British roots of the classical school of economics of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, T. Robert Malthus and John Stuart Mill. His initial attraction to the field of economic development was then displaced by a passionate interest in the history of economic thought. Bill Thweatt acquired a reputation in that area in the economics profession, being appointed Vice President of the History of Economics Society in 1978-79, and member of the Board of Editors of a couple of journals in the history of economic thought. He was well published in that area, and played a leading role among historians of economic thought. I am personally indebted to Bill for raising my professional interest in the history of economic thought, and becoming my co-author on a couple of occasions.

In our Department, Bill Thweatt was known for his gregarious outgoing nature, his wry sense of humor, friendliness toward colleagues and students, and his excellent teaching. In 1977 he was awarded the Madison Sarratt Prize for best undergraduate teacher. In 1985 he went on to win the Chancellor’s Cup for the greatest contribution outside the classroom to student-faculty relationships. He encouraged students to ask for his help whenever they needed it. A former student of Bill described his teaching aptitude in a way that explains his reputation as one of the most popular professors on campus. This student wrote about Bill: “It is not altogether his energy that makes such an impact, although you have to see him in action – talking, moving about, never giving you a chance to waver in your attention. It is his complete involvement in his subject, he is as interested in his subject as he wants you to be. He has a characteristic way of putting things, often witty or ironic. He brings a sense of discovery to what could be the cut and dried tenets of introductory economics. Best of all, he seems to be talking to you personally, quite a feat when there are 300 students in the class.”

The energy that this student commented on regarding Bill’s teaching was mirrored in other aspects of his life. Bill was a very keen and competitive tennis player, playing several times a week with students and colleagues. He and his wife often invited students and colleagues to swim in their pool and stay afterwards for snacks and refreshments. One of Bill’s endearing personal quirks was his tendency to clap his hands together, rubbing them briskly back and forth, smiling, as a commemoration of a job well done, or perhaps to stir up energy for the next task. In
addition to playing sports and watching them on television, Bill loved listening to music using the latest stereophonic “gadgets” as he liked to call them, and with the volume turned up loud. His musical tastes were catholic, ranging all the way from Beethoven and other classical composers to Frank Sinatra, Brazilian popular music, Tommy Dorsey and Barbara Streisand. He was a voracious reader, always carrying a book around with him and reading in spare moments that presented themselves. Bill and his family loved and became very attached to their dogs, a succession of them – including, as I recall, a rather fierce looking German shepherd. In Nepal the Thweatats also became art collectors, and accumulated an impressive collection of Tibetan and Hindu bronze and brass statuettes of Buddha and other religious artifacts, many of which they bought to help out Tibetans escaping from their homeland.

Bill Thweatt retired from Vanderbilt in 1991 and became Professor Emeritus. Even after he fell ill in his last year, Bill retained an invariably positive attitude, a contagious enthusiasm for life, and a marked sense of humor. Toward the end, when his two daughters came to Nashville and phoned him to let him know they would be in his hospital room within fifteen minutes, he replied, “Oh, thank you for the warning, it will give me time to get the Dancing Girls out of here!” Bill was a fun-loving, generous and kind person, an affectionate family man, and he is missed by the colleagues who knew him.

Madam Dean, I ask that a copy of this Memorial Resolution be entered into the minutes and that copies be sent to his wife and daughters.

Respectfully,

Andrea Maneschi
Professor of Economics