

IN MEMORIAM

THOMAS A. GRIFFY

Thomas “Tom” Alan Griffy was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on December 16, 1936, to Judson Harmon Griffy Jr. and Dicie Johnston Griffy. His siblings included brothers Judson H. S. Griffy III and Theodore “Ted” J. Griffy and sisters Billye Blythe Griffy White (husband Harry) and Betty Jean Griffy Wagner (husband John). Judson, Tom’s father, was a cashier for an Aetna Life Insurance Company for thirty-five years. Tom’s sister Billye was the first woman to serve as Vice President of a bank in Oklahoma.

Tom attended Classen High School in Oklahoma City and graduated in 1955. He was a standout student in science, math, band, and choir. While there, he met Penny Lynn Walker, an accomplished flutist and the daughter of a band director, who would later become his wife. Tom Griffy and Penny Walker were married in 1958 at the Epworth Methodist Church in Oklahoma City.

As one of the top ten students in his 1955 graduating high school class, Tom received a full scholarship to Rice Institute when only 200 students were accepted from around the world. There was only a two-year time span between his completing an undergraduate degree in 1959 and receiving his Master’s in 1960 and his Ph.D. in 1961, all at Rice. He wrote his dissertation, which was entitled, “Nuclear Interference Effects in Coulomb Excitation,” under the supervision of Professor Lawrence “Larry” C. Biedenharn. Tom and Larry became lifelong friends, collaborators, and, later, colleagues.

Following his work at Rice, Tom and Penny moved to Duke University where he was a Postdoctoral Fellow with Biedenharn. While at Duke, Tom published three papers with him in 1962. Tom and Penny's first son, David, was born during their time at Duke.

In 1962, the Griffys moved to California where Tom was invited to work at Stanford University as a research associate with Nobel Prize winner Robert Hofstadter. Hofstadter was using electron-deuteron inelastic scattering to determine form factors. Several important papers on neutron form factors resulted from this collaboration. Tom and Penny's second son, Alan, was born in California.

Tom's time at Stanford was a very prolific period in his research career. More than a dozen papers resulted from his work there, including a collaboration with Leonard I. Schiff on electromagnetic form factors. In 1967, Tom published a "Resource Letter NR1 on Nuclear Reactions" in the *American Journal of Physics*. This article, prepared at the request of the American Association of Physics Teachers Committee on Resource Letters, was one of a series of Resource Letters on different topics that were intended to guide college physicists to some of the literature and other teaching aids that could help them improve course content in particular fields of physics.

In 1965, Tom was offered an Associate Professorship at The University of Texas. The department was interested in adding strength in nuclear theory to the Center for Nuclear Studies. Tom and Penny decided that this position would enable them to be nearer their families, so Tom accepted the offer. He was promoted to full Professor in 1968. Tom and Penny's daughter, Marjorie, was born in Austin.

Tom served as Associate Dean of the Graduate School from 1970 to 1974 and from 1996 to 2000. In 1974, he was selected Chair of the Physics Department and served until 1984, an

especially long tenure. He was a very popular Chair with the department staff. Tom served in important positions at UT Austin, including many years as Chair of the Patent Committee and on the University Co-op Board of Directors. Tom was also selected as a Fellow of the American Physical Society, the leading professional society of physicists. He was also a member of the Acoustical Society of America.

Early in his time at UT Austin, Tom served as Graduate Advisor for the Physics Department. He was instrumental in revising the graduate curriculum and transitioning to a new method of qualifying for Ph.D. candidacy. One of the new requirements was a public seminar by the candidate with follow-up questioning by a faculty committee. When questions arose as to what was required in the seminar, Tom gave an exemplary seminar to the whole department. It clarified for the students what was expected of them.

Tom was an excellent teacher who always gave well-prepared lectures. His required graduate classes in electrodynamics were very popular with graduate students, and he received the College of Natural Sciences Teaching Excellence Award in 1998.

Tom collaborated regularly with the UT Applied Research Laboratory (ARL), supervising graduate students working at the lab. Much of this work was related to underwater acoustics and electromagnetics. Clark Penrod, Executive Director Emeritus of ARL, wrote:

Tom's involvement with ARL began in the 1980s. During that time frame, ARL obtained approval from Department of Defense sponsors to use some funds to support an Independent Research and Development (IR&D) program, as well as a Science and Engineering Apprenticeship program. Dr. Lloyd Hampton was ARL's director at the time, and he reached out to Tom to be the Educational Programs Coordinator, and to be the initial IR&D Program Director. Tom helped establish these two programs, their operating procedures and policies, got them off the ground and ran them very successfully for a number of years in the mid 80s. Those programs are still operating at ARL, and they are still operating much as Tom originally set them up. They often are singled out for praise by ARL sponsors.

Tom also spent a number of years advising a federal agency in the intelligence community on technology. He was asked to provide science-based assessments of various potential national security threats and also of various U.S. countermeasures. For the same agency, he was also quite active in assessing technology used to counter terrorist threats. I was engaged in some of these activities and knew some of the sponsors. I was impressed by the fact that everyone I encountered that had worked with Tom had a very high opinion of him and of his contributions to national security. I share that opinion, and we at ARL were very grateful for Tom's contributions to our programs.

Tom had over thirty publications, not counting those that resulted from his classified work.

John Wheeler and Harry Swinney gave Tom important credit for the negotiations that resulted in their joining The University of Texas at Austin Department of Physics, Wheeler in 1976 and Swinney in 1978. Other important accomplishments that occurred during Tom's tenure as Chair were the addition of Nobel Prize winner Steven Weinberg to the Physics faculty, the creation of the Institute of Fusion Studies, and the hiring of Marshall Rosenbluth as the Institute's Director. Interestingly, it was Rosenbluth's 1950 formula for the electron scattering cross-section that included the form factors that Tom used for interpreting the Hofstadter data.

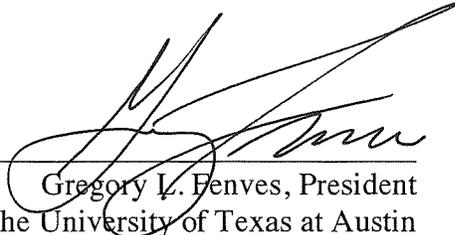
Tom and Penny were active members of St. John's United Methodist Church from 1965 on. A man of faith, Tom created Bible lessons for the Wesley Adult Bible Class every week for over thirty years. He also served as Chaplain for the Greater Austin Council of the U.S. Navy League.

Tom was an active member of the Austin Town and Gown Club, an organization formed in 1902 by a group of Austin men who wanted to establish a club that included both citizens of Austin ("Town" members) and faculty from The University of Texas ("Gown" members). Over thirty years, Tom held many important positions in the club, including President.

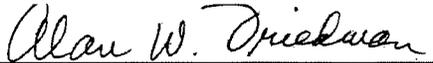
Tom also had several hobbies that he loved, including photography (he developed his pictures in the bathtub), watches, rifles, and his group of friends known as "the hamsters": amateur

“ham” radio operators who stayed in touch over the airwaves. His call letters were WA5YAN. He also learned to fly and acquired his pilot license. Tom retired from the University in 2003 and was awarded emeritus status.

Tom died on May 4, 2019, after a brief but incurable illness. He is survived by his wife of sixty-one years, Penny Walker Griffy; son David and wife Marva, son Alan and wife Tanya, and daughter Marjorie and husband Chris; brother Ted Griffy; granddaughters Shelby and Stella; and great-granddaughter Rory Elizabeth Rieger.



Gregory L. Fennes, President
The University of Texas at Austin



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Melvin Oakes (Chair), Austin Gleeson, and Harry Swinney.