

## IN MEMORIAM

### LEE J. MELTON

Professor Emeritus Lee J. Melton died on December 12, 2006, five days short of his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday. Professor Melton served in the Faculty of Economics at Louisiana State University for 32 years, rising through the ranks from Instructor to Professor, a standing he reached in 1961.

Professor Melton was a native of Winnfield, Louisiana, the hometown of the famous politician Huey Long. For a time in his youth his family lived in Venezuela, where his father was employed in the oil industry. He was a graduate of the Winnfield High School and in the late 1930s he attended the then Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, now Louisiana Tech University, in Ruston. Upon graduation in 1942 he entered pilot training with the U. S. Navy. During World War II he flew transports in the Pacific Theater, including flights into China from India over the Himalayan Mountains.

After his discharge from military service he entered Louisiana State University, where in 1948 he received a masters degree in Economics. In 1949 he entered the doctoral program and completed his doctorate in Economics in 1953. His dissertation was in the area of social control of economies and his major professor was his fellow Naval aviator James P. Payne. The interaction between student and professor was often brisk and spirited, since the normal age distance was absent and life experience of both professor and student closely coincided. Some of the interactions became for a time legendary in the Department of Economics, but the two former pilots remained friends for life.

Upon completion of his master's degree he taught for the academic year 1948-1949 at Delta State Teacher's College in Mississippi. During the 1949-1953 period, when he was engaged in doctoral study at Louisiana State University, he served as an Instructor in the Department of Economics. He then taught as an Assistant Professor in the Department for the 1953-1954 academic year.

As Assistant Professor Melton he left Louisiana in 1954 to join the faculty at the University of Florida. After a two-year stay there he was invited to return to Louisiana State University, where he served continuously until his retirement in December of 1983.

Professor Melton was a well-known teacher, very popular among undergraduates, who relished his wit and pungent commentary on economics as well as Louisiana politics. Professor Melton was always ready with a riposte and few could match him in his quickness of response and sense of humor.

Professor Melton's office door was always open and he welcomed students cordially, showing genuine interest in their questions and attempts to gain understanding. At the same time he could be tough and demanding on examinations. Moreover he never cared for failures in conduct, once famously taking two examinations, which contained identical

answers, grading one, stapling both together, and informing the two miscreants that they could divide the grade anyway they wished.

It is fair to say that as time moved on Professor Melton's interests—by his own acknowledgment-- moved away from mainstream economics, which he felt had lapsed into quantum purposelessness, and he increasingly pursued activities outside the confines of the academy, but he did so in a spirit of public service and not for additional remuneration. He became well known in law enforcement circles where his keen knowledge of firearms was often put to good purpose. After his retirement he, for example, served as a firearms instructor for various local law enforcement agencies and was highly regarded by them for the high quality of instruction he provided, as well as envy for his marksmanship. He gave his time generously and freely and was deeply appreciated and fondly remembered for doing so.

Professor Melton was predeceased by his wife, Hortense, and is survived by a daughter, three sons, and numerous grandchildren.

His long period of retirement has diminished the number of his colleagues who are still active in the Department of Economics, but those who do remember him, including those who are retired, recall a lively personality and a mind that was profoundly shaped by the Huey Long period in Louisiana politics, the Great Depression, and World War II.