

Resolution On The Retirement Of

George S. Mumford

Adopted By The Faculty Of Arts And Sciences

Tufts University

May 12, 1997

The members of the Department of Physics and Astronomy and the faculty of Liberal Arts and Jackson College of Tufts University, hereby record our warm appreciation for our retiring colleague, Professor George S. Mumford. Tufts University has benefited from George's loyal contributions throughout the past 42 years, an exceptional span of academic, advising, research and administrative contributions to our university community.

George received his undergraduate education at Harvard University, where he graduated with an A.B. in astronomy in 1950. He received an MA in astronomy from Indiana University in 1952 and a Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Virginia in 1955. He began his Tufts career as a teacher in the Department of Mathematics, becoming an Instructor in 1955, an Assistant Professor in 1956, an Associate Professor in 1962 and a full Professor in 1968. During this time George continued his work as an observational astronomer, which he pursues to this day, and to contribute stimulating articles to **Sky and Telescope**, showing an ability to sustain his research interests and commitment through a number of years of full-

time administrative service to the Tufts community from the late 60s through the mid 80s and into the early 90s, when he was the Acting Director of the Dudley Wright Program.

George has always been a strong believer in the importance of educating young people in the classical tradition. In his earlier years, he was single-handedly responsible for the University's astronomy program and to this day continues to share those duties with Professor Lang. During the student unrest of the late sixties, he is remembered in academic gown, leading a small graduation procession in a grim, purposeful and determined manner. He extends his interest in education to a number of professional organizations, where he has inevitably served on the organization's education committee.

Unfortunately for the Department, but fortunately for the University as a whole, George's administrative talents were recognized and he was asked, first, to be Dean of the College of Liberal Arts from 1968 to 1978, Dean of Research and Planning from 1977 to 1978, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences from 1978 to 1984, Dean of Research and Interinstitutional Programs from 1978 to 1984 and Dean of the College of Special Studies from 1980 to 1983. It is said by some that, back then George routinely performed by himself tasks now done by several people. His colleagues in the Dean's office describe George as living a life of quiet fulfillment, sharing occasional products of his weekend fishing and his annual tree maintenance. They remember him as a man of great charm and a vast knowledge of the physical world. They also note that George is prone to pass off outrageous fiction as if it were fact, using a deadpan

delivery which is extremely difficult to pick up as a joke. Thus, when he reported one Monday that, while fishing that weekend he had rescued someone in his boat, the first reaction by his listeners was one of incredulity. But it was, in fact, true, he had saved someone from drowning. Just as his humor is characteristic of George, so is his tendency to reduce true life and death drama to a low key recital of two or three sentences and, with genuine modesty, to minimize the heroism of his own part in the drama.

Fred Nelson particularly recalls George's years as Dean of the Graduate School and his active support of the College of Engineering's efforts to develop graduate education worthy of the standards set by George and his colleagues in Physics and Astronomy. Fred hopes that George will always look back on those years with pride because, with his help, the College has achieved much. Fred also particularly remembers a gathering with a number of faculty at George's home to discuss some long forgotten issue of graduate education. It was an opportunity to be with George while the sun slowly settled into the meadow surrounding his home and to enjoy his knowledge of the sky as the stars came out and all gathered around his telescope.

To the extent that an institution reflects the qualities of its leaders, Tufts is fortunate that George has helped shape its identity and determine its values.

In addition to astronomy research and teaching and academic administration, George has always sought to apply his talents to the wider academic and professional community with membership and high office in many organizations including the

American Astronomical Society, the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, the American Physical Society, the American Association of Variable Star Observers, the American Association of Physics Teachers, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, where he is a fellow, the Royal Astronomical Society, where he is a fellow and Sigma Xi, where he has served as secretary treasurer.

Be it resolved that this resolution be spread on the minutes of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and that a copy be handed to Professor Mumford.

For the faculty,

COMMITTEE

Bobbie Knable
Ken Lang
Fred Nelson
David Weaver



Annie Geoghegan
Secretary of the Faculty