OBITUARY

David Martell Vigness (1922–1979)

DONALD C. CUTTER*

David M. Vigness, Latin Americanist and specialist in history of the Borderlands, died of a heart attack in Lubbock, Texas in July. He was born at La Feria in Cameron County, Texas, and received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Texas where he studied both prior to and following his military service as a naval officer during World War II in the Pacific Ocean area. While in graduate school he married a fellow student, Winifred Woods, who shared the deceased’s life and interests.

Upon receipt of his doctorate Vigness taught briefly at Schreiner College before joining the faculty of Texas Tech University as assistant professor in 1955. By 1961 he had ascended to the position of professor and head of the department of history, holding the latter post until 1978. His notable teaching career was thus spent almost exclusively on the Lubbock campus except for a Fulbright lectureship to Chile in 1957–1958 and a recently concluded visiting professorship at the University of New Mexico for the spring semester of 1979.

As author of The Revolutionary Decades (1965), as co-editor with Ernest Wallace of Documents of Texas History (1963), and as frequent contributor to regional historical journals, Vigness established a solid reputation as a scholar. His written productivity was overshadowed by his guidance of M.A. and Ph.D. candidates who attained academic stature under his leadership. As a professor, he was enthusiastic about his subjects; as chairman, he was accessible and fair; as mentor of dozens of undergraduate and graduate students, Vigness was inspirational and demanding; and as a person, he was open and friendly.

Though apt expression to describe a departed friend is impossible, the eternal accolade that this was “a Christian gentleman and a scholar” is nowhere more properly applied than to David Vigness.

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