READ HOUSE DEDICATION:
A New Home for General Semantics

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While thousands of coastal residents fled to the Fort Worth-Dallas area seeking temporary shelter from Hurricane Rita, a few dozen members of the Institute came to Fort Worth to dedicate a more permanent home.

Read House dedication activities were held September 23-24 to celebrate the new headquarters for the Institute of General Semantics. The hurricane effects were limited to well east of Fort Worth and did not affect the festivities. Unfortunately, the weather in the Houston area did cause several people to miss the trip due to airline cancellations.

The dedication included a reception on Friday night, attended by several members of the Institute board, IGS members and some TCU students, and Fort Worth friends of the Institute.

On Saturday, the IGS board held its first meeting in the new facility. On that evening, a dinner and dedication ceremony included hopes for the future and remembrances of Allen Walker and Charlotte Read.

Bruce Kodish and Susan Presby-Kodish traced the involvement of the Reads in general semantics and shared anecdotes and remembrances of the late couple, after whom the facility is named. Longtime IGS board member Robert Potter presented a dedication toast: “Let us drink to the knot that ties our moment to theirs.”

Executive Director Steve Stockdale and architect Mark Gunderson also addressed the audience. Gunderson, a Fort Worth based architect, went to great
lengths to match the design of the renovation to the work of general semantics. “Architecture is another form of language in many ways,” Gunderson said. “We tried to achieve simplicity and clarity in the design. The lines of the interior are simple and straightforward. The colors come from the natural colors of the materials themselves. We tried to capture what goes on in this place.”

History was important in restoration of the building — since it sits in a historic district of Fort Worth — but Gunderson also did not want to falsely recreate how the building once might have looked or get trapped by the history.

“This has some of the look of its history,” he said. “We also wanted to capture the contemporary, in what the organization is doing in the present and in the future.”

When you enter Read House, you see a conference table, beautifully appointed with flowers and displaying *Science and Sanity*, the book by Alfred Korzybski that introduced general semantics.

The building is 4,500 square feet, 50 x 90 feet with the narrow sides facing east and west. You enter Read House from the east. Offices flank the main entry on both sides. As you walk further into the building, you find archives rooms on either side. A large room that will be used for seminars — and was the focal point for the dedication meals and celebration — is in the center of the building, with easily accessed rest rooms nearby.

The west end of the building, in the rear, includes a flexible use area that can serve as a storage area, office space, or residential apartment. For the time being, Steve Stockdale will rent the apartment from the Institute and live onsite. The west door opens to a deck and rear lawn area, approximately 70 x 100 feet.

On Saturday morning, IGS board members discussed tentative plans for an outdoor garden and in-ground sculpture, resembling Korzybski’s structural differential.

Laura Bertone, IGS board member from Argentina, may have best summed up reactions to the new Read House: “Now, we have a place, a physical place to point to and say, ‘this is it.’ I believe this is very important. This is a symbol of an organization that is together and trying to do good things around the world. I think that symbolism is very important.”

Bertone and several others stayed in Fort Worth beyond the weekend for other GS activities. Katherine Liepe-Levinson, wife of Martin Levinson, presented a workshop on student alienation to a group of local Fort Worth teachers. Six IGS Trustees and members participated in a special panel discussion with the students in Steve Stockdale’s GS class at Texas Christian University.

Look for a special section on Read House in the next *General Semantics Bulletin*, coming in January 2006.
Above: IGS Trustees: Gregg Hoffmann, Marty Levinson, Susan Kodish, Jackie Rudig, Andrea Johnson, Laura Bertone, and Bob Potter
Below: Jackie Rudig, Frank Gastner, Marianne Gastner