

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

January 20, 1999

Lillian Kurosaka

_x000B_UCSB ENGLISH PROFESSOR FRANK MCCONNELL DIES

UC Santa Barbara Professor of English Frank McConnell, known for his renegade lifestyle and his love for teaching, died Sunday in Santa Barbara. He was 56.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 21, at the Santa Barbara Mission, and a campus service is in the planning stages.

"Frank McConnell was the funniest man I have ever met," said Mark Rose, chair of the English department. "And the students loved him. Certainly he was the most popular professor in the English department---he taught more students than 10 other professors combined."

Quick to fire off a caustic letter to the editor or write an opinion piece, McConnell wrote book reviews and other articles that were just as ubiquitous---appearing in everything from campus newspapers to *The Wilson Quarterly*. The subjects were equally diverse, ranging from music (Eric Clapton to Dizzy Gillespie) to television shows (*NYPD Blues* to *Northern Exposure*) to reviews of authors (William Burroughs to Michael Crichton).

The unstoppable McConnell would frequently continue his observations to book length, as well as turn his inventive mind to writing novels. Among his nonfiction books of note are: "The Confessional Imagination: A Reading of Wordsworth Prelude" (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1974); "The Spoken Seen: Film and the Romantic

Imagination" (Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1975); "Four Postwar American Novelists: Bellow, Mailer, Barth, and Pynchon" (U. of Chicago Press, 1977); "Storytelling and Mythmaking: Images from Film and Literature" (Oxford U. Press, 1979); "The Science Fiction of H.G. Wells" (Oxford U. Press, 1981); and "The Bible and the Narrative Tradition" (Oxford U. Press, 1986). His fiction works include: "Blood Lake" (Walker and Co., 1987); "The Frog King" (Walker and Co., 1990); and "Liar's Poker" (Walker and Co., 1993).

McConnell's honors included a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fulbright professorship in Germany, and chair of the Pulitzer Prize fiction jury. He was awarded the UCSB Mortar Board Professor of the Year five times.

In a 1994 Washington Post Labor Day article about Walter Mitty and dream jobs, McConnell was quoted as saying, "The buck stops here. Tell Mr. Rafferty (the New Yorker film critic who fantasized about returning to a university in the same article) that he's absolutely right. I've got the best gig in the world, and tell him he can't have it because it's mine."

McConnell joined the UCSB Department of English in 1982 from Northwestern University, where he had taught since 1971. Prior to Northwestern, he taught at Cornell University from 1967 to 1971. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1964 and his doctorate from Yale in 1968.

McConnell was born May 20, 1942. He died Jan. 17, 1999. Donations in his honor may be made to the Lompoc Library, 501 E. North Ave., Lompoc, CA 93436; VIVA (Volunteers for Inter-Valley Animals, a Lompoc organization that rescues cats and dogs and provides foster placement) P.O. Box 896, Lompoc, CA 93438; or to the University of Notre Dame Memorial Bourse (in honor of Frank McConnell), Notre Dame, IN 46556.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the

edge of the Pacific Ocean.