



IN MEMORIAM

Wayne Harsh
Professor Emeritus of English and Linguistics
UC Davis
1924 – 2009

Wayne Harsh was born on November 13, 1924 in Wakeeney, Kansas to Douglas David Harsh and Ozia Della Yarborough Harsh. Professor Harsh died on January 7, 2009. Wayne was a professor of English and Linguistics at University of California, Davis from 1964 to his retirement in 1987. He served for many years as chair of the Interdepartmental Program in Linguistics and thus can be considered one of the fathers of an academic structure that more recently has morphed into a full- fledged program with a Ph. D. As teacher of courses on language and linguistics (many of which required of all credential students with an emphasis in English), as well as, co- author of entire series of textbooks on the teaching of English grammar and syntax, he was involved in the formation of hundreds of Californian teachers. His life- time project was to bridge the gap between traditional (mainly prescriptive) grammar and modern linguistics, first structural, then generative- transformational. It was a monumental task, and as one of the first to integrate modern linguistics into the teaching of English, ground- breaking. Unquestionably he was a teacher with a personal touch: undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members alike remember fondly how he hosted them generously in his beautiful home for end- of- course sessions, inter- departmental gatherings, and committee meetings. Although UC Davis then was significantly smaller than it is now, such generosity was quite unusual even then.

After his military service in WW II, Wayne graduated from Colorado State College in 1950 and received his MA at Denver University in 1953. He then taught high school in Bakersfield for a couple of years before earning his Ph. D. at University of California, Berkeley in 1963. He spent a year abroad with a Fulbright scholarship in the Netherlands and another in Greece and two years as Education Abroad Program director at the University of Hong Kong. He had a gift of making lifelong friends when teaching abroad. His sharp sense of humor, generosity of spirit, and cultural sensitivity endeared him to his many friends all over the world. He was one of those rare human beings who go out of their way to understand a different culture and live fully in it.

Best known among his other scholarly publications is a book on the subjunctive in English. It would seem that his experience of teaching high school had a formative influence on him. A letter of one of his former department chairs reports that Wayne's "capacity for inspiring high school students is illustrated by a curious coincidence. Two young women came to Davis, graduated and are now successfully teaching, one in Fairfield and the other with the Armed Forces Schools in Germany. Both told me that Mr. Harsh was the best teacher they had in high school and inspired them to become English teachers."

Winfried Schleiner
Aliko Dragona
Peter Hays