



IN MEMORIAM

John G. Kennedy
Professor Emeritus of Anthropology
UC Los Angeles
1927 - 2011

John G. Kennedy, 84, died in Pasadena, CA on February 2, 2011 of a stroke after suffering from Parkinson's disease for many years. John's many academic achievements include being one of the founding editors of the journal *Ethos*. He did pioneering work in cultural psychiatry and psychological anthropology. In addition to the many anthropology students he trained, he taught many young psychiatrists the elements of cultural anthropology in the NIMH- sponsored Fellowship in Social and Community Psychiatry. His ethnographic research interests included studies of Qat use in Yemen, Zar ceremonies in Nubia, and shamanism and sorcery among the Tarahumara Indians of northern Mexico. He wrote several books, including *Struggle for Change in a Nubian Community: An Individual in Society and History* (1977), *Tarahumara of the Sierra Madre: Survivors on the Canyon's Edge* (1978), and *The Flower of Paradise: The Institutionalized Use of the Drug Qat in North Yemen* (1987). A colleague describes him as "a brilliant scholar and discerning methodological critic." But even more significant than his scholarly work was the impact that he had on both his students and colleagues.

Former students describe him as a true mentor who was "encouraging, supportive, and accessible. He treated me as a peer long before I had begun to earn that place." A former graduate student credits him with giving her the gift of his belief in her ability to make a difference through her work. A colleague described him as "a wonderful man — a gentle, caring soul who was great to be around whether for stimulating dialogues or simply to experience his beautiful spirit. He was a true friend and a joy to work with — someone with whom you looked forward to sharing insights because, together, you knew your collaboration would always lead to new and interesting discoveries." Kennedy had a keen curiosity and was interested in everything. A former student described how he (the student) would "bring up some weirdness, and John would laugh with that warm slow smile of his, and actually be genuinely interested in whatever it was."

After World War II, Kennedy drove a cement truck. One day in the break room, he read a magazine article on anthropology and decided to explore it further. After earning his doctorate, he taught at Chico State and SUNY before beginning his career at UCLA in 1962. He was married three times. His second wife, Sylvia, is the mother of his two children, Janua and Sian. He married his third wife, Wendy Utsuki, in 1981. John was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1988, right around the time of his retirement from UCLA. Wendy cared for him until her death in 2009.

Kennedy will be remembered as a traveler, carpenter, chess player, athlete, music lover, book reader, minor poet, and trickster, as well as an anthropologist. And, as one colleague put it, "the one thing I will remember is his ineffable laugh and his soothing smile — a smile that radiated from his heart and never failed to touch yours."

By Geri- Ann Galanti, with the assistance of several former students and colleagues.