



John Hammerback, Professor Emeritus, Passed Away May 9, 2012

John Hammerback, surrounded by those closest to him, died on May 9th at Evergreen Hospice Center in Kirkland, Washington. He was 73. John was a beloved and devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, teacher, mentor, colleague and friend.

A Bay Area native, John earned a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State University and a master's degree in Speech from the University of Oklahoma. After receiving his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1968, he began a fulfilling career of 37 years at California State University, Hayward (now CSU East Bay or CSUEB). Upon his death, John was a valued affiliate faculty member and member of the graduate faculty in the Department of Communication at University of Washington as well as professor emeritus in the Department of Communication at CSUEB.

His scholarly legacy includes the first book and set of articles on the rhetoric and public address of Mexican Americans and has recently focused on "reconstitutive rhetoric," communication that changes the character or identity of audiences. Among his contributions are four books: *The Rhetorical Career of Cesar Chavez* (Texas A & M Press, 1998); *The Words of Cesar Chavez* (2002); *A War of Words* (1984); and *Studies in the Indiana Tradition* (1987), all with Richard Jensen. A prolific scholar, he also authored forty articles and essays in books and journals, including *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and *Communication Monographs*, and a CDROM; presented more than fifty papers at academic conventions; and served on thirteen editorial boards of scholarly journals. He lectured to varied audiences, on television and in person, on Cesar Chavez, on Chicano rhetoric, and on discourse that alters how audience members define themselves. He recently curated an NEH-sponsored traveling exhibition on the life and career of Cesar Chavez and often gave speeches at its openings. The exhibition has been housed at universities and other venues, and it will be at Penn State University this fall.

His scholarly work earned a national award for excellence and many favorable book reviews. His teaching and service garnered several awards, including CSUEB's annual award as outstanding lecturer on its faculty. In 2001-2002, CSUEB honored him with the George and Miriam Phillips Outstanding Professor Award; his address upon accepting the honor, "Embodying our Message, Teaching Our Students," appears in *Vital Speeches of the Day*.

John's administrative experience includes chair of the Department of Speech and Drama, associate dean of Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences, assistant vice president for Research and Faculty Affairs, and interim chair of the Mass Communication Department and the newly formed Department of Communication, all at CSUEB, and head of the Department of Communication at North Carolina State University. He was a past president of the Western States Communication Association and former chair of the Public Address Interest Group of the National Communication Association.

No professional accomplishment pleased him more than sending over 40 of his students to doctoral programs. His passion for mentoring is reflected in the achievements of his students. Yet he found still more pride and happiness in the adults his two daughters became. His many friends on campus, the tennis court or golf green warned, often unsuccessfully, against getting him started talking about his girls!

Communication faculty member Valerie Smith states, "John has left an indelible imprint on my life, shaping the person that I have become in profound ways."

He was profoundly grateful for the loving partnership of his wife of 47 years, Jean, and the devotion of his beloved daughters Kristen Hammerback and Karen Sonneborn. He was also survived by Kristen's husband, Mark Smith; Karen's husband, William Sonneborn; five doted-on grandchildren; and his brother and sister-in-law, William and Barbara Hammerback.

A dedicated Christian, he strove for a generosity of spirit in all aspects of his life. Those of us who knew John will miss his keen intellect, quick wit, gentle spirit and loving nature.

In lieu of flowers, donations are welcome to either of two organizations that John admired and supported: United Farmworkers (UFW) or Eastside Academy, a high school in Bellevue, Washington serving at-risk youth.

An obituary with a guest registry to offer memories and condolences appears in the *Seattle Times* on May 13, 2012. Please post your fond memories of John for all of us to read at <http://www.legacy.com/guestbook/seattletimes/guestbook.aspx?n=john-hammerback&pid=157561001&cid=full> (or replace with *San Jose Mercury News* link when it comes out)

A memorial open house will be held on June 10 in the bay area. All who knew and were close to John are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please e-mail his daughter Karen at karen@sonnebornfamily.com to RSVP and for further details.

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