

John L. Stewart, 90, Dies; Founding Provost of Muir College and UC San Diego Legend

September 7, 2007

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John Lincoln Stewart [Click here to download printable version of photo.](#)

John Lincoln Stewart, founding provost of John Muir College at the University of California, San Diego and champion of preserving the environment, died Aug. 31 in Oakland, Ca., after a long illness. He was 90.

Stewart came to UC San Diego from Dartmouth College in 1964 to take the lead in establishing arts departments on the budding campus. In 1965 he was appointed Provost of Second College, which was soon named for famed environmentalist, nature writer and Sierra Club founder John Muir. He took a leading role in planning Muir campus as an ensemble of buildings, courtyards and open spaces that fosters the sense of close community for which the college is known.

For years Dr. Stewart taught what became a signature course of the college, "The Wilderness and Human Values," which culminated in a week-long hike led by Stewart in John Muir's beloved Sierra Nevada mountains. During the 21 years he served as Provost he also founded a faculty jazz group, "The Moldy Figs," in which he played both slide trombone and flugel horn. As a talented amateur musician he also played the piano, trumpet, string bass, oboe and English horn.

Susan Smith, current Provost of Muir College, noted that "John was a charismatic man whose vision profoundly shaped Muir College's core values: the belief that students are best served when they exercise individual choice and responsibility in crafting their own general education programs; the importance of the college as a close-knit, supportive community, and the preservation of the environment as a guiding theme."

Richard C. Atkinson, president emeritus of the University of California, said that "John's vision and commitment played a key role in the development of a great university. He was committed to the well-being of students and ensuring that they have a quality education. Students and faculty, past and future, will always be indebted to his remarkable contributions."

Cecil Lytle, a longtime friend and co-director of CREATE at UCSD, said "as one of the founding leaders on campus in the early years, John shaped the vision of UC San Diego. John was instrumental in the founding of the college system as well as the arts departments that now have earned international distinction. He was not just an academic, but a wise sage who knew how to cultivate talent, provide good counsel and encourage young faculty to be the best that they could be."

Stuart Brody, UC San Diego biology professor and acting Muir College provost, said that "Muir College was primarily the work of John Stewart and in this sense, Muir College was the lengthened shadow of John Stewart. I was glad to have stood in his shadow for the 20 years that he was the Provost and for the 20 years since then."

Stewart was born Jan. 24, 1917 in Alton, Ill., and grew up in Granville, O., and Dwight, Ontario. He graduated from Dennison College with a double major in English and music and received his doctorate in English literature

at Ohio State University. He served in World War II in the Army Signal Corps. He taught English at UCLA and Dartmouth before joining UCSD.

He was a supporter of many environmental, educational and arts program and was most proud of his long membership in the National Organization for Women.

He is survived by his children, Leslie Chalmers of Walnut Creek, Ca.; Ann Nutt of Albany, Ca.; Geoff Quinn of San Raphael, Ca., and Andrew Quinn of Stockton, Ca., and four grandchildren.

A commemorative event celebrating Stewart's life and work will be held in early 2008 at UC San Diego. Donations in his memory may be made to the John and Ruth Stewart Memorial Scholarship for Muir College undergraduates. Contact Student Affairs Development, 858 534-0263.

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