



William L. Sawrey, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychology, Passed Away October 20, 2013

William L. Sawrey, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Psychology, passed away October 20, 2013. He began his career at CSU, Hayward (East Bay) in September of 1960, retired in 1990, and participated in the Faculty Early Retirement Program until 1994.

The following has been provided by his family and colleagues:

William L. Sawrey
February 4, 1927 - October 20, 2013
Resident of El Granada

Dr. William L. Sawrey died at his home in El Granada on October 20 at the age of 86. He was a lover of life and a remarkable man. Bill grew up in rural North Dakota, the youngest of five boys. In 1949, after serving in the Navy, he earned his undergraduate degree at Indiana University where he became a lifelong basketball fan and met the love of his life, Betty. The young couple soon moved to Lincoln, Nebraska where Bill earned his Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska in experimental psychology in 1952. After graduate school, a period of intense research activity at the University of Colorado School of Medicine followed. In 1959 Bill moved his family to the San Francisco Bay Area where he spent a year as an NSF Senior Postdoctoral Fellow in the UC Berkeley statistics department. In 1960, California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), then Alameda County State College, hired Bill with a joint appointment in Psychology and Statistics as the founding member of both departments. In psychology his interests were wide-ranging but centered on animal learning and behavior. The related science of ethology was developing rapidly in the 1960s, especially in Europe, and this led Bill to submit sabbatical proposals to work with the two most influential ethologists of the century. So in 1967, as a U.S.P.H.S. Special Research Fellow, he moved his family to Oxford (UK) and then on to the Max Planck Institute in Seewiesen, Germany. This 18-month sojourn to Europe was a magical and transformative time for Bill and Betty (and their three children) that shaped many elements of their later lives. Soon after returning to the U.S., the family moved to El Granada where Bill and Betty remained except for the occasional European vacation and a Fulbright grant that took them to Yugoslavia for a year in 1986-1987. At CSUEB there was a second stint as chair of the Department of Psychology before Bill's retirement in 1990. Bill was renowned as a teacher and mentor by several generations of students. He was always in high demand as an advisor and always seemed to find time for any student who knocked on his door. He won the "Best Lecturer" award at the university in 1981 and the William Sawrey Outstanding Student in Psychology Award was named in his honor. Life in retirement was rich and involved time with family, travel, gardening, and forming special bonds with his three grandchildren. Bill also enjoyed a good political discussion where he always took the side of the underprivileged, the under-served, and the underrepresented. Bill was a wonderful husband and father and his parting leaves a huge void in a great many lives. He is survived by his wife, Betty of 65 years, three children, D. Kim Sawrey, Lisa Sawrey-Kubicek, W. Mark Sawrey and three grandchildren, Danielle Sawrey-Kubicek, Justin Sawrey-Kubicek, and Patrick Sawrey. Donations can be sent to California State University, East Bay for the William L. Sawrey Outstanding Student in Psychology Award.