



Department of Philosophy
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September 17, 2013

Professor Avrum Stroll (1921-2013)

The Department of Philosophy is sad to announce the loss of one of its founding members, Emeritus Research Professor Avrum Stroll, who died on September 12, 2013 in La Jolla. Professor Stroll was a beloved colleague, teacher, administrator and researcher for half a century. He will be sorely missed.

Born in 1921, Avrum received his Ph.D. from UC, Berkeley. With Richard Popkin and Jason Saunders, he founded the Department of Philosophy in 1963, chairing it in 1966-7 and 1969-72. In 1964 he organized a conference that brought Herbert Marcuse to UCSD for a campus-wide lecture, which led to the hiring of Marcuse that same year. Throughout his time here he was instrumental in shaping the Department into an internationally recognized leader in various fields. He also served UCSD more generally, acting as Faculty Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, among other positions.

Professor Stroll was an expert in philosophy of language, epistemology, and metaphysics. He was also instrumental in establishing the history of 20th century analytic philosophy as a field. For much of his career, Stroll expanded upon and adapted the methods of Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin to deal with a broad array of topics, including explaining the conditions under which people can be certain and justified. His warm enthusiasm for Wittgenstein was as genuine and infectious as were his battles with the epistemological skeptic. His philosophical method involved careful and insightful attention to individual situations, “the method of cases,” – what his former student Professor Al Martinich describes as “the philosophical analog of Marcel Proust’s descriptions of things and events.” Professor Stroll’s publishing career spanned over fifty years. Throughout he was an extremely prolific philosopher, authoring or co-authoring twenty books and approximately one hundred and fifty articles.

Personally, Professor Stroll lived life to the fullest. Passionate about opera, golf, good food and wine, he enjoyed lively conversation about politics, sports and language. His friends and colleagues will miss his delightful cackle, his sharpness of thought but also

his kindness.

No discussion of Professor Stroll can omit his boundless energy for philosophy. Retirement only increased his ability to engage in the subject. Fittingly, in 1995-1996 Stroll was awarded the Constantine Panunzio Distinguished Emeriti Award by the University of California. Upon his retirement from full time teaching, he was appointed a research professor, and continued to co-teach a seminar with the distinguished biologist, S. J. Singer, and publish. Throughout his life he was dedicated to sharing his passion for the field. His four introductory books with Popkin helped shape the teaching canon in the field. Their first book, *Philosophy Made Simple* (Doubleday) is still in print, more than five decades and a million copies after its 1956 publication. We in the Department are heartened by the fact that this vigorous champion of philosophy will still be attracting students to the field after his passing.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Stroll, a medieval historian, four children, Robin Stroll, Susie Stroll, Noelle Melese, Ted Stroll, son in law Patrick Melese, and grandson Andrew Melese.

We plan to remember and celebrate Professor Stroll in the Atkinson Pavilion at the UCSD Faculty Club between 4-6pm on October 26, 2013. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Susanne Degher at sdegher@ucsd.edu.