

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JOHN CLARKE LAPP (1917 – 1977)

Professor John Lapp was born in Ottawa on December 25, 1917. He received his A.B. and A.M. from Queens University (Ontario) in 1940, and his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1942. During this period he was appointed Instructor in Romance Languages at Cornell.

After teaching French at the University of Illinois for one year, he volunteered for service in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II and served in the Pacific theater.

Returning to civilian life in 1945, Professor Lapp was appointed assistant professor at Bucknell University. In 1947 he went to Oberlin College where he was appointed associate professor in 1949 and professor in 1955.

In 1956 UCLA called on him to chair the French department which he did until 1961. Two years later, in 1963, he came to Stanford as chairman of the department of French and Italian, a position he resigned from five years later to devote himself exclusively to teaching and research. This was interrupted in September 1977 by his sudden death.

Professor Lapp was a Fulbright lecturer in France during 1961-62, a Fulbright resident fellow and Guggenheim fellow in 1966-67, and recipient of another Guggenheim grant during 1973-74. The French government recognized his contributions to French literature by bestowing upon him the Palmes Academiques and by naming him Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, a distinction rarely granted to foreigners. At Stanford University he was chosen to be the first Bonsall Professor of French.

John Lapp was a man of insatiable curiosity. Although his interests ranged over several centuries of literature, he was always superbly competent in whatever he chose to write about.

His work on the Renaissance poet Pontus de Tyard led to *The Universe of Pontus de Tyard* (1950) and to a critical edition of Tyard's *Modeles de Phrases*, followed by an edited collection of his letters, *Modeles de lettres d'amour* (1967).

In the area of 17th century literature, Professor Lapp devoted his attention primarily to Corneille, Racine, and La Fontaine. In 1955 he published an English verse translation of Corneille's *Le Cid*, and at the time of his death, he was working on an article entitled "The Drama of Pierre Corneille." *Aspects of Racinian Tragedy* (1964) offered an original approach which survived a period of intense critical reevaluation of Racine in France. *The Esthetics of Negligence: La Fontaine's Contes* (1971) opened up new fields of study relating not only to La Fontaine, but to much subsequent 18th century French literature as well.

Moving to 19th century literature, Professor Lapp's *Notes and Commentary on Madame Bovary* (1952) ought to be mentioned, but his principal work was on Zola. His seminal book,

Zola before the Rougon-Macquart (1964) had lost none of its originality and influence by 1972 when a revised version appeared under the title *Les Racines du naturalisme: Zola avant les Rougon-Macquart*. An additional book on Zola's novels was to complete this study.

His last work, a model of patient research and immense erudition, has just appeared in the Stanford French and Italian Studies – *The Brazen Tower: Essays on Mythological Imagery in the French Renaissance and Baroque*. This is perhaps the finest book of a great man of letters and a staunch defender of the humanities.

Professor Lapp is survived by his wife and his son Harvey.

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