

Miles D. McCarthy  
1914 - 1995  
COORDINATOR OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY,  
EMERITUS

B.S., West Chester State College; Ph.D., Zoology, University of Pennsylvania,  
February 6, 1943  
California State University, Fullerton From July 1, 1959 To January 4, 1989  
Birth: October 12, 1914; Death: September 20, 1995

I first met Miles McCarthy in the spring of 1963 when he invited me to be among the first three faculty members in the chemistry department of what was then Orange County State College. At that time, he was Chairman of both the Division of Science, Mathematics & Engineering and the biology department. In 1959, founding President William B. Langsdorf had recruited Miles as one of the first five faculty members of the College and gave him the lead administrative responsibility to develop the faculty, programs and facilities for the sciences. Dr. Langsdorf embraced and enthusiastically supported Miles' vision of a university-level science program which would emphasize excellence in teaching complimented by scholarly activity and research - scholarly activity and research which would stress personalized partnerships and mentor relationships between faculty members and undergraduate students. This dynamic and synergistic relationship between teaching and research to produce an exciting and rich learning environment was a new and enlightened vision for a California State College campus in the 1960s. It was this vision as articulated by an enthusiastic Miles McCarthy that brought so many of us to the Fullerton campus as early members of the science faculty.

For me, 1963 began what would become, outside of my immediate family members, the closest personal and professional friendship of my life. For thirty-two years, Miles was my very special mentor and friend. Over that time, I cannot recall any major personal or professional decision for which I did not seek his wise, intelligent and caring counsel. As with so many others, he was always generous with his genuine interest and his time.

Words cannot adequately communicate the significance and impact of Miles McCarthy's multi-faceted and multi-dimensional contributions to the development of California State University, Fullerton and the people of this institution - its students, faculty, staff and administration. During his thirty-six year relationship with the University he excelled as a master teacher, a recognized research scholar, a perceptive and visionary academic and administrative planner and leader, a highly-valued and revered mentor and counselor to students, faculty, administration and staff colleagues, and finally, a personally sensitive and truly exceptional human being - all of this with a self-effacing personal style, good sense of humor and that great grin.

Miles' academic preparation included undergraduate work at West Chester State University in Pennsylvania, where Professor John C. Johnson became his

mentor and encouraged him to do undergraduate research work in the summer of 1934 at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory. It was here for the first time that Miles became excited and enthusiastic about his academic work. He went on to receive a doctorate in zoology with an emphasis in genetics from the University of Pennsylvania. His dissertation work was done with Professor G.L. McClung, whom Miles called, "the grand old man of genetics." He also was greatly influenced by his association with Jonathan Rhodes, the eminent Professor of Surgery at Penn's Harrison Department of Surgical Research. Later, while on the faculty at Penn, Miles developed what would become a career-long interest in hematological studies of burns and autoimmunity that would result in a number of federal research contracts, thirty-five peer-reviewed publications, a special citation relating to the excellence of his research from the Office of the Surgeon General, and an invitation to be a delegate to the International Congress at the Second International Congress for Research and Burns which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1965.

The legendary W. Conway Pierce, Chairman of the Department of Chemistry at Pomona College, convinced Miles to leave his native Pennsylvania and join the zoology department faculty at Pomona in 1946. Pierce reported to Pomona president, E. Wilson Lyon, "I have a winner!" For the next thirteen years, Miles taught a wide range of zoology and health professions related courses at Pomona and continued his burn research activities, involving a number of undergraduate students as research co-partners. Miles advanced through the professorial ranks at Pomona, and served as chair of the zoology department from 1956 through 1959. In the early 1950s, with Lyon's support and encouragement he led a benefactor cultivation effort to acquire funding, plan and build a major new Seaver Laboratory for Zoology and Geology facility, which opened in 1959. That activity prepared him well for his later science facilities development responsibilities at Fullerton. It was not coincidental that over Miles' thirteen years at Pomona College, the institution developed a reputation as having one of the exceptional quality science programs among the most prestigious private liberal arts colleges in the country. With his medical school training, teaching and research background, Miles was a natural to lead the development of Pomona College's first Faculty Pre-Medical Professions Committee in 1949. Very soon afterward, the success-rate of Pomona's health professions school applicants skyrocketed and the excellence of its Pre-Med academic and advising programs became nationally recognized.

Bill Langsdorf was knowledgeable about Miles' teaching, research and administrative leadership at Pomona College as he considered the members of the team which he wished to bring together to mold and to lead the development of a "new and different type" of state college campus in Fullerton in 1959. Miles said later of his decision to accept Langsdorf's invitation to come to Orange County State College, "The small group of faculty who came initially came because we were interested in putting together a low-cost educational institution of high quality. You didn't get a chance to start a new college every day from scratch." He added, "Some of my colleagues at Pomona thought I had lost my marbles!"

So, in 1959, bringing his federal burn research contracts with him, and enlisting his wife Martha as a co-investigator, Miles came to temporary quarters in an old abandoned house on campus property called the "Rat House" (now known as

the Titan House and home of the Titan Athletic Foundation) - so dubbed not just for the laboratory rats kept in cages on the back porch, but also for the noisy rats that lived in the rafters which kept Miles, Martha and other early college science faculty members and their research colleagues company. The McCarthys had initially cleaned out and scrubbed up the place, hauling away five tons of newspapers and trash while readying it to be a makeshift laboratory. By 1962 funded faculty research activities in the "Rat House," all including early students, totaled approximately \$1 million, a truly remarkable beginning for the teaching/student-faculty research emphasis which continues today in the sciences at Cal State Fullerton.

From 1959 to 1965 Miles had three titles, Professor of Biology, Chair, Division of Science, Mathematics and Engineering and Chair, Department of Biology. His early responsibilities included teaching, recruiting the first science faculty, shaping the science curriculum, planning the first permanent campus building (the Letters & Science Building) and, of course, continuing his research activities. Later, Miles' other key administrative roles would include serving as Dean, School of Letters, Arts and Sciences (1965-1970), Vice President, Academic Affairs (1970-1974) and Acting President (1981-1982).

When I became CSUF president in 1970, I asked Miles to be our vice president for academic affairs. When his health precluded him from continuing that role in 1974, he agreed to become Fullerton's first Coordinator of Health Professions. Characteristic of his dedicated focus to complete what he laid out for himself, over the next fifteen years Miles led the development of Fullerton's health professions program to become the premier performer in the state university system in terms of the admission of students into professional schools and colleges - often securing placement for over 90% of the graduating class, an unprecedented achievement for a comprehensive state university. When I accepted a new position in the fall of 1980, California State University Chancellor Glenn Dumke appointed Miles as acting president. It was a very popular and well-received appointment. Throughout the tenure of all of his administrative roles, with the one exception of acting president, Miles continued his primary professional passions - teaching and advising students.

Over Miles McCarthy's thirty-six years of dedicated and exemplary service to the University he was always recognized by students, faculty, administrative colleagues, staff and the community to represent the very best of what the University should be about - clearly one of the most capable, caring and nurturing persons in its history. His University awards and honors included: Outstanding Professor Award for the Fullerton campus (1965); Outstanding Professor Award from the Board of Trustees of the California State University System (1965); and, rededication of the Letters & Science Building as Miles D. McCarthy Hall (1984). Indicative of the high regard for Miles in broader academic circles, he served as a member of the Admissions Committee for the Medical School of the University of California, Irvine (1977-1990) and also was a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Southern California College of Optometry (1973-1990). In 1985 he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from his alma mater, West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

Miles' personal values, class and style reflected his early family experiences and influences. He grew up on his maternal grandparents working farm which was

located in a Quaker farming community not far from Philadelphia. This is where Miles first experienced the joy of planting and gardening vegetables. The Walton farm included a tunnel to an adjacent farm which was part of "the underground railroad" during the Civil War. His father, Walter, a dynamic and personable man, died at age thirty-eight when Miles was ten years old. His most vivid and lasting memory was his father's observation that he could accept dying because he could say that he had no enemies and indeed enjoyed the good will and friends of all his acquaintances. He counseled young Miles that nothing higher could be said about the accomplishments of life.

After his father died, Miles continued to attend Quaker meeting and was raised by his mother, Elizabeth, grandmother, Ellen Walton Duffield, and three aunts, all of whom nurtured him and placed a great deal of emphasis on his education and personal development. Even with all of this support, Miles was marching to his own drummer - tinkering with cars, working in the family feed store, visiting with friends and enjoying himself. His grandmother would ask his mother, "Does thee have to spank him so much?" Throughout his life, when encouraging struggling students, he would point out that he too had been an academic "late bloomer," not really excelling until his senior year of college.

Upon reflecting on Miles' early and later development into the revered and respected man he became, he personified a combination of high expectations for educational and life achievement with the wonderful qualities of Quaker grace and true empathy with others. Also, reflecting the influences of his mother, grandmother and aunts, he was always a gentleman. With Miles there was no place for cynicism. Throughout his lifetime he positively set out to achieve his dreams and goals and he was dedicated to them. Miles saw himself as a nurturer of people and institutions. There was nothing as exciting to him as discovering someone with the potential to achieve excellence and then helping them along their journey to do it.

Over the years one of Miles' most relaxing and invigorating activities was tending his plants in his vegetable gardens in Fullerton and Carlsbad. As he shared his harvests with many of his friends, his look of achievement and beaming grin were a delight to us all. Miles McCarthy grew and built things. He was a gardener of people and institutions. The accomplishments of California State University, Fullerton, its students, faculty, administration, staff and alumni will always be part of the continuing legacy evolved from the seeds he planted and nurtured in such very special ways.

Submitted by

L. Donald Shields

Second President and Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Emeritus

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