

Eugene L. McGarry

1930 - 1996

PROFESSOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT,  
EMERITUS

B.A., Cornell College (Iowa); M.A., Northwestern University; Ph.D., Social  
Studies Education, University of Iowa, August 9, 1961  
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1962 To September  
1, 1992

Birth: June 9, 1930; Death: August 7, 1996

In the Fall of 1962 Gene McGarry was among the last group of new faculty joining Orange County State College, then in its third year on the present site. He would meet most any criterion that might be applied towards membership in a founding faculty for CSUF. With some ninety faculty members and about 1200 students housed in what is now the physical plant, those early days in "the barracks" were busy but comfortable times when everyone - faculty and students - enjoyed the camaraderie of being pioneers in a new endeavor. In the Fall of 1963 the first permanent building (now named McCarthy Hall) was completed, and the entire College moved in. Shortly thereafter the institution's name became Orange State College.

Those who served in the early years will fondly recall the warmth and collegiality of daily interactions among faculty, administrators and staff in the temporary quarters. When Jim Cusick moved on to more spacious surroundings, Gene took his desk in a gang office shared with Hazel Jones, Donald Bridgman, Myrtle Imhoff, and Ida (Hill) Coppolino. He particularly recalled the warmth on hot Santa-Ana-wind-days, commenting that it was frequently so warm as well as so crowded that they had to take turns perspiring. At that time President Langsdorf had the only air-conditioned room on campus.

Gene was among the youngest of the faculty in a young institution. His was a background of experience and achievement that belied his thirty-two years of age. After graduation from Cornell he served in the Army from 1952 to 1955. He was an artillery mathematics instructor at Fort Sill, Oklahoma for a year and spent the remainder of his hitch in the Intelligence Section, Topographic Engineering Battalion in Tokyo, Japan. In one sense he cut his teeth in instruction during his army career.

Gene and Jetta met while students at Cornell and were married June 11, 1955. While Gene spent time in the service, Jetta taught K-12 vocal and instrumental music for the Lost Nation, Iowa schools. In 1955-56 Gene completed his Master's Degree on a University fellowship of Northwestern while Jetta worked as the Associate Director of Student Finance. During the 1957-58 school year Gene taught social science at Niles Township High School in Skokie, Illinois and Jetta completed her Master's Degree in psychology and counseling (also at Northwestern). Throughout their life together Gene and

Jetta were a devoted and caring couple, sharing common interests, dreams and aspirations, well-tempered by a great sense of humor.

In 1958 Gene was awarded a Fellowship at the University of Iowa (Iowa City). While Jetta worked at the University as Executive Assistant to the Dean of the College Pharmacy, Gene completed his doctoral course work in two years under the direction of John Haefner who, along with our own Ed Carr, was a former President of the National Council for the Social Studies. Dr. McGarry's dissertation, "An Experiment in the Teaching of Reflective Thinking in the Social Studies" was widely acclaimed in social studies education.

The McGarrys moved to Minneapolis in 196 when Gene was appointed Assistant Professor of Social Science in the General College of the University of Minnesota. It is worth noting the uniqueness of the General College since it functioned as a junior college housed on a University campus, carrying with it all the rights, privileges, and prestige of the University. Having left the University of Iowa A.B.D., Gene completed his dissertation during that first year. The Golden Gophers had a winning football team at the time, and Gene became friends with many future Hall-of-Famers who graced his classroom...i.e. Bobby Bell (Kansas City Chiefs). During these years Jetta worked as a counselor in the Robbinsdale school district.

Gene told the writer of an interesting experience he had during the 1960 presidential campaign. A colleague from the University who was a Democratic activist invited him to be present in a Minneapolis hotel room during a confrontational meeting between Senators John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. It is safe to say that, after this meeting, Senator Humphrey's fortunes in the campaign waned and Senator Kennedy gained momentum, going on to win the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries.

Dr. McGarry's career at Cal State Fullerton can be separated in distinct phases directly related to the ways in which growth and development take place as a new institution moves toward maturity. Initially there is the bricks and mortar stage of program and curriculum development; then comes the evolutionary process of adapting curricular, organizational and administrative structures to the changing dynamics of the societal and cultural milieu in which the institution finds itself.

In the beginning Gene served on various ad hoc committees that dealt with subject matter that would emerge in the permanent structure and machinery in the workings of the institution, i.e. academic standards, student affairs - disciplinary appeal, freshman orientation, honors, and the committee on effective teaching. In his third year on campus he was given assigned time by Bernard Hyink, Dean of Instruction, to design and set up a plan for campus-wide academic advisement. Subsequently he was named its first Coordinator. Along with these services to the College, he was actively involved within the then Division of Education and Psychology. Committee work included such topics as reorganization, internship and field experience in the secondary teacher education program. In addition he was engaged in service to our constituent public school districts. He was a co-founder and

director of the Orange county Social Science Association, served as a consultant in Social Sciences to several districts and made frequent presentations to public school groups.

As was typical of many of the founding faculty, Gene contributed heavily in committee work and special assignments while being held in high regard as an effective teacher in and out of the classroom. His preparations were always complete and carried through with superb organization, culminating in effective communication with his students. He was much admired, respected and well-liked by his students over the years. He consistently received top marks in his student evaluations and, though he rarely kept them, it was not uncommon for him to receive many laudatory notes from students at the end of each semester.

The next phase of the McGarry career at Cal State Fullerton was centered in administrative work. He was appointed the first Associate Dean of the newly-formed School of Education in 1966, and served the following year as acting Dean. In 1968 he was promoted to full professor and became the second permanent Dean of the School, maintaining this position until the Fall of 1971. During his tenure, the School achieved accreditation from the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education. At that time the School was housed in the Library building. Gene was instrumental in the design and planning of the future Education building and made a number of trips to Washington acquiring matching funds for its construction. As Dean he served on the President's Cabinet, the Academic Affairs Cabinet, and the General Education Committee.

In 1971 Miles McCarthy, Vice President of Academic Affairs, reorganized the office to include Associate Vice Presidents for Academic Administration and Curriculum. Dr. McGarry served as Associate Vice President for Academic Administration from 1971 to 1978. His responsibilities included working with Directors of Institutional Research, Academic Staffing Services, and the computer Center in coordinating their work with that of Academic Planning, Facility Planning, and Admissions and Records. In the summer of 1973 he was selected to participate in the Institute for Educational Management for College and University Administrators at Harvard University, a unique and intensive six-week program.

McGarry returned to the professorship as the last phase of his CSUF career in 1978. He resumed work in secondary teacher education and joined the Child Development program faculty. He taught the Psychology of Adolescence very effectively in Child Development and developed it as a prerequisite for the secondary teacher credential program. Prentice-Hall, Allyn and Bacon, William E. Brown, and Mayfield publishing companies all utilized his services in the area of Adolescence. He critiqued manuscripts prior to publication, received recognition in print for a number of skillful editing jobs, and reviewed textbooks for industry publications.

His work in the teacher education program centered in educational foundations and the coordination of fieldwork for credential candidates in the Fullerton Union High School District. He also continued to be active as a

consultant in social sciences. As a member of the Division of Education faculty, he served on Division committees on personnel, curriculum, Secondary Teacher Education Programs, and faculty searches. In the School he was a member of the Meritorious Performance and Professional Promise Award (MPPP) committee and on the Board of Directors of the Field Services Center. His administrative skills were useful once again in 1983-84 when he chaired the Division of Teacher Education during an accreditation crisis.

Professor McGarry completed his Cal State career in a heavy load of all-University assignments. His professional and administrative background and skills were called upon by his colleagues in critical areas involving the future of the University. At President Cobb's request, he spent two years as chair of the University Ad Hoc Committee on the Creation of New Schools. This resulted in the formation of the School of Communications and the School of Computer Science and Engineering. He was elected to the Academic Senate and the Senate Executive Committee. While a senator he served on the University Long-range Planning Committee and the University Priorities Sub-committee. At the time of his retirement he was in the midst of a second term on the All-University Personnel Committee.

Not as a postscript, but rather as further evidence of dedication in a professional career, were Gene's memberships in the American Association of University Professors, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Historical Association, California Council on the Education of Teachers, National Council for the Social Studies, National Education Association, Phi Delta Kappa, Who's Who in America, Who's Who in the West, and Who's Who in Education.

Gene and Jetta enjoyed forty-one years working and playing together. She was a counselor at Sunny Hills High School until the birth of their son Michael (Feb. 1964). After that they traveled extensively both at home and abroad during vacation periods, and were active supporters of Michael's schools - academically, musically, and in athletics. The Orange School District lauded their efforts as volunteers and fund-raisers with a plaque during a Recognition Dinner in 1979.

A herniated disk in 1985 curtailed Gene's active lifestyle but not his spirit, and he maintained his positive attitude and infectious good humor throughout the rest of his life. After retirement in 1992 he endured three separate unsuccessful surgeries in an attempt to alleviate severe sciatic nerve pain. In spite of this, he and Jetta managed several trips with friends. Another bit of good fortune occurred when Michael (and his wife Anna) moved to Southern California to complete a graduate degree at Cal Poly Pomona. Gardening and training a pair of new puppies were also special joys to him as his health deteriorated. He died as he had lived - quietly and without complaint but with courage and grace.

The career that is recounted here is but a part of the tribute due to a person with whom many of us have shared so many professional and personal experiences over a period of thirty years. Even though he possessed great skills in organization, communication and interpersonal relations,

Gene was a private person. It is sincerely hoped that this tribute is not an invasion of that privacy, but an epiphany of the contributions of Eugene L. McGarry to his profession and California State University, his family, and his friends.

Submitted by  
James W. Cusick  
Professor of Education, Emeritus  
In collaboration with Jetta McGarry  
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