

OBITUARIES AND

Fraser B. Drew, 100, professor emeritus of English, Irish literature at Buff State

June 23, 1913 - June 24, 2013



Fraser B. Drew, Ph.D., professor emeritus of English and Irish literature at Buffalo State College, where he taught for 38 years, died Monday in Hospice Buffalo, Cheektowaga, hours after his 100th birthday.

He was a professor who met and corresponded with several of the most prominent authors of the 20th century. They included novelist Ernest Hemingway, with whom he spent a day in Cuba, and poet Robert Frost, with whom he spent an afternoon.

Most recently of Williams-ville, he was known as "Bob" to close friends and remained mentally astute to the end.

He earned a doctorate in English from the University of Buffalo.

He was one of the first educators in the state to be named a Distinguished Teaching Professor and was known for his unconventional teaching style. He remained in touch with many of his students long after they graduated.

Hank Nuwer, who studied under him in the 1960s, wrote a remembrance of his mentor in 1995, saying, "I never missed class because I never knew what treasure Dr. Drew might bring in next - a signed letter sent to him by (John) Masefield or Robinson (Jeffers), the rare books and magazines he collected, or a personal photograph taken of authors that they themselves had given him."

Nuwer described Dr. Drew as "trim, lithe and commanding in the classroom," and "half Irish, the English and Scot in him splitting the

difference."

As an English professor, his fascination with literature didn't end with the printed page. He was as interested in the authors as he was in their work. In his 1953 meeting with Frost, Frost told him that when teaching college students, "don't teach them a lesson, show them a lesson."

During his 1955 visit with Hemingway, Hemingway said he hoped he didn't bore Dr. Drew, telling him, "Writers are always a disappointment when you meet them."

Dr. Drew shared those cherished meetings with countless Buffalo State students, rewarding the best of them with signed first editions by famous writers, among them playwright Thornton Wilder and poet Louise Townsend Nicholl, with whom Dr. Drew maintained a long letter-writing friendship.

Born and raised in Randolph, Vt., Fraser Bragg Drew was a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Vermont, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year. He earned a master's in Greek and Latin from Duke University, in addition to his doctorate from UB.

The title of his doctorate dissertation was "John Masefield: Interpreter of England and Englishman." Dr. Drew also corresponded with Masefield, did a bibliography of his work and had one of the most complete Masefield collections in the world. In 1973, his critical study, "John Masefield's England," was published by Associated University Presses.

Dr. Drew taught at Green Mountain College in Vermont and at Syracuse University before being coaxed by then-Buffalo State College President Harry Rockwell to join the

faculty in 1945. He retired in 1983.

Dr. Drew was made an assistant professor in 1947 and full professor in 1952. From 1957 to 1963, he was head of the English department. He was made a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in 1973 in recognition of his "consistent demonstration of the mastery of teaching."

In the 1960s, he took the first of many trips to Ireland, in time becoming chairman of the Buffalo-based St. Patrick Scholarship Fund, which sent Buffalo students to Eire to study starting in 1960. For a number of years, he corresponded with the late Irish president Eamon DeValera. He initiated independent study courses in Irish literature at Buffalo State and was elected Irishman of Year by the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.

In 1968, he received the University of Vermont's Distinguished Alumnus Award. In 1974, he was named an Outstanding Educator of America.

Dr. Drew wrote more than 150 his articles and poems in British, Irish and North American publications. At age 70, the year he retired, he was asked to lecture by the Irish Federation at St. Brendan's College, an Irish American institution in Buenos Aires.

During retirement, he returned to Ireland several times, paddled a canoe on Lake Erie and continued to read, write and correspond with friends and former students.

He was active in the United Irish Societies of Buffalo and Erie County, which named him Irishman of the Year in 1970.

He is survived by his companion of 57 years, James Brophy.

Services will be private.