Professor of Creative Writing, nationally-renowned author, and former Chair of the Department of Creative Writing, Stephen Minot died on December 1, 2010 in Riverside, California. He was 83. His seminal textbook on writing, “Three Genres: The Writing of Literary Prose, Poems and Plays,” may be his best-known book, as it has been in print for forty-five years, has been used to teach writing in all fifty states of America, and remains a classic text used to provide creative writers with a solid foundation for their own artistic endeavors. The First Edition was published in 1965; The Ninth Edition, written with Diane Thiel, will be released in Spring 2011.

Professor Minot is survived by his wife of fifty-five years, Virginia S. Minot, a Riverside printmaker, painter and fine artist whose works sometimes were used on his covers. He is also survived by three sons—Stephen Reid, Nicholas William and Christopher Bailey – as well as their wives, and six grandchildren.

Professor Minot taught literature and creative writing in Bowdoin College, Trinity College in Hartford for almost 30 years. Drawn to the west coast, he was hired to be the first chair of the newly-formed Department of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, from which he retired in 1995.

In addition to “Three Genres,” Professor Minot also published another textbook, “Literary Nonfiction: The Fourth Genre,” in 2002. But Professor Minot was also a well-known novelist and short story writer. He published three novels and two story collections. His novel “Chill of Dusk” was published by Doubleday, “Ghost Images” was published by Harper & Row, and “Surviving the Flood” was published by Atheneum Press. In a front page review in the Los Angeles Times, Joan Reardon wrote about “Ghost Images” that in the novel, “Doubts about the reality of the recorded events, definitions of power and privilege, and anguish over .. survival surface from the depths.” In The New Republic of “Ghost Images,” John Domini wrote, “What most sets Minot apart is the skill and the intelligence with which he works political and historical material into his plot.”

Professor Minot’s short stories appeared in a wide range of periodicals, including The Atlantic, Harpers, Playboy, North American Review, and Paris Review, which are the premier magazines in the country for short fiction. George Core, editor of The Sewanee Review, described Minot as "one of the finest short story writers of his generation." Minot’s stories were published in two collections, “Crossings,” published by The University of Illinois Press, and “Bending Time,” published by The Permanent Press. In addition, Minot received two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts – rarely are writers awarded multiple fellowships from this organization.
Born in Boston, Minot served with the Air Rescue Service of the Army Air Corps from 1945 to 1956. He graduated from Harvard in 1951 and received a Master of Fine Arts from the Writing Seminars program at the Johns Hopkins University in 1955. In 1964, Minot ran a grassroots third-party campaign for the U.S. Congress in Connecticut’s 6th District, opposing the two major-party candidates who supported the war in Vietnam. He was a subject of a short film, “One Man Can Make a Difference.” During the same period, he counseled students in applying for conscientious-objector status.

During his long tenure as Chair of Creative Writing, Professor Minot mentored junior faculty, as he was the sole senior faculty member at the inauguration of the department. Professor Susan Straight remembers, “Because of Steve Minot, and his tenacity and willingness to promote Creative Writing as a serious discipline, UCR has the only undergraduate major in Creative Writing in the entire UC system. He was the most gracious chair, always thoughtful with our students and faculty, and always a pleasure to speak with about even the most obscure authors and poets with which I could test him. He and his wife Ginny, a talented painter, remained close friends in the department even after his retirement. I will always remember his kind attention to everyone, as if each person he spoke to was just as important as the last.”

Dr. Judith Kronenfeld, noted poet and lecturer, said of Professor Minot, “An extraordinary chair – the most democratic I've ever encountered anywhere, totally committed to making the department a community of valued members, not just as assemblage of people.”

The current chair of Creative Writing, Tom Lutz, said, “Steve Minot was an important national voice in making creative nonfiction a part of what we do. He was central to the department until he retired and remained a close friend.”

Professor Minot and his wife lived in Riverside, and were even after his retirement enthusiastic supporters of the Creative Writing Department, and the university, attending author events such as Writers Week, as well as student readings. Professor Minot secured funds for an annual scholarship for a student writing humorous poetry, and annually, he attended the reading and presentation of that award.

Professor Minot and his wife spent summers in Harpswell, Maine, in an 1800 saltwater farmhouse which developed a character of its own in his fiction as well as the paintings and poems of others. His memorial was held on December 27, 2010, at the Culver Center for the Arts in Riverside, California.

Professor Susan C. Straight (Chair), Professor Andrew M. Winer, Professor Emeritus Dwight Yates