John Marcellus Steadman III was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on November 25, 1918. He took undergraduate and graduate degrees from Emory University, and, in 1949, a Ph.D. from Princeton. In World War II, serving as Captain in the U.S. Army Air Force, he was charged with interrogating prisoners of war; and in the Korean War, he served as Captain in the U.S. Army. During the latter conflict, he developed an interest in Asian philosophy, which led to one of his many books, *The Myth of Asia: A Refutation of Stereotypes of Asian Religion, Philosophy, Art and Politics* (1969), which receives favorable commentary to this day. As David Warren, Executive Vice Chancellor at UCR wrote, with this book Professor Steadman became “and remains, a visionary and pioneer in the area of multicultural studies.”

After teaching at Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of North Carolina, Professor Steadman, whose reputation as a Milton scholar had by then drawn international attention, joined the research staff as Senior Research Fellow at the Henry E. Huntington Library, a post which he held with distinction for many decades. In 1966, he joined the Department of English at UCR, where, along with noted Spenserian Kathleen Williams and distinguished Shakespearean William Elton, his notable work on Milton put Renaissance studies at UCR on the map. Dividing his time between UCR and the Huntington Library, Professor Steadman enjoyed very productive years, producing many dozens of scholarly articles and an admirable array of books on Renaissance topics, including John Milton. His accomplishments as a scholar gained many honors, including honorary degrees from St. Bonaventure University and Emory University, visiting distinguished professorship at City University of New York, a Senior Fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation, and (the highest honor that the UCR Academic Senate can award) Faculty Research Lecturer. He also found time to write and publish several volumes of poetry.

Professor Steadman had many distinguished friends, including Hallett Smith, James Thorpe, Allan Nevins, and A.L. Rowse. He will be remembered not only for his splendid scholarship, but for the wit that he displayed on those storied walks after lunch at the Huntington Library. His spirited political exchanges with the inimitable Tory from All Soul's College, A.L. Rowse (whom Professor Steadman affectionately called “Leslie,” and who, in turn, called his Miltonic opponent “Marcellus”), have become part of the history of the Huntington Library. Professor Steadman brought the bowls from England for the lawn-bowling matches that often followed the walks at the Huntington; the game, at which Professor Steadman excelled, was played on a pitch where the hallway to the new Munger Research Center now stands. Professor Steadman was among
the greatest Milton scholars of his time. He published too many books and essays on Milton and the Renaissance to summarize here, but his first book, Milton and the Renaissance Hero, is, after three decades, elucidated how completely Milton turned the epic into a new form with aims entirely different from his ancient models. This monumental achievement was shortly followed by Milton’s Epic Characters: Image and Idol. Even outside of Renaissance studies, his influence is still felt. His early book Disembodied Laughter remains the starting point for studies of the structure of Chaucer’s masterpiece, Troilus and Criseyde. As Professor Emeritus Paul Sellin (UCLA) writes, Professor Steadman’s notes, which are now housed in the Henry E. Huntington Library, have had a major influence on the Milton Variorum. Professor John Ganim, Chair of the Department of English, observed in 2000, “Although steeped in classical references and arcane allusions, the precision and clarity of his articles and books have rendered them an important resource for a younger generation of scholars whose own work would be impossible without Professor Steadman’s groundbreaking."

Without doubt, Professor John Marcellus Steadman will be numbered among the great Renaissance scholars of his time, ranking with such monumental figures as William Riley Parker and Merritt Hughes (whose work he, in fact, helped to preserve). But he will be remembered, too, as a teacher and a gentleman of extraordinary graciousness and generosity. He was kind to his students, guiding them not only in their studies at UCR, but afterwards as well. One student, now a professor at Pepperdine University, claims that his entire academic career, which focuses largely on science fiction, has developed along lines suggested by Professor Steadman’s seminars on Milton and Renaissance literature.

Professor Steadman’s work on Renaissance literature, Milton in particular, helped shape an entire generation of scholars. He wrote on epic structure and theory, on biblical and classical imagery, on poetics, on stylistics, and many other topics of importance to an understanding of the Renaissance.

Submitted by Professors Stanley Stewart and John Ganim of the UCR English Department.