KEITH MACFARLANE
Professor of French
University of California Riverside
May 13, 1934 – May 12, 2005

Keith Macfarlane was born on May 13, 1934, in Hibbing, Minnesota. He graduated from Chiscolm High School in Chisholm, Minnesota, in 1952, received a B.A. degree from Carleton College in 1956, and a Ph.D. in French from Yale in 1965. During the 1959-60 academic year he studied in Paris, France, on a Fulbright Scholarship. He then taught at Smith College from 1960 to 1963, and at Wesleyan University from 1964 to 1968.

In the fall of 1968, Professor Macfarlane came to UCR where he taught until his retirement in 1996. He retired at the age of 62 after 28 years, and he died on May 12, 2005, one day short of his seventy-first birthday.

As a professor of French, he taught courses on 17th century drama, 19th-century Symbolist poetry, French language, and French composition. His book, Tristan Corbière dans Les amours jaunes (Paris: Minard, 1974), was very well received and a review in Le Monde described it as a significant contribution to studies of this incandescent, short-lived young poet. Professor Macfarlane also published a number of important articles on Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud, as well as book reviews on 19th- and 20th-century French poetry.

Professor Macfarlane joined the Department of French and Italian when French studies were thriving, when language courses were numerous and highly enrolled, and when all aspects of French literature and civilization were taught by six full-time professors and two lecturers. Literature courses ranged from the Middle ages to the present.

Professor Macfarlane was a popular teacher and he had a loyal following of students despite exacting standards. He was especially acclaimed by the French majors he taught for his rigorous and also good-humored approach to the intricacies of French grammar and the great variety of writing styles. He was a person of great wit, charm, and intelligence, he had an ear for language, spoke impeccable French, could mime any dialect, and mock many a person.
Before he married his French-born wife, Marie-Claude, he was the proud owner of two exotic cats. But alas, his future bride was allergic to cats and he had to part with his prized felines. Nonetheless, a colleague in Hispanic Studies, Professor Hugo Alcalá, always referred to beautiful women as cats and, by this standard, Professor Macfarlane traded two for one. As a tribute to his loving partnership with Marie-Claude and his scholarly brilliance, we quote a stanza from the poem “Le Chat” (“The Cat”) by Baudelaire, Macfarlane’s favorite poet:

De sa fourrure blonde et brune
Sort un parfum si doux, qu’un soir
J’en fus embaumé, pour l’avoir
Caressée une fois, rien qu’une.

From her blond-brown fur
Wafts a fragrance so soft
That one evening I was charmed
After one caress, and only one.
(Our translation)

Ben Stoltzfus, Chair
Thomas Scanlon
Theda Shapiro