

In a message dated 03/19/2004 11:21:43 AM Pacific Standard Time, kfeld@CITRUS.UCR.EDU writes:

Subj: **Fwd: Obituary Dr Robert E MacLaury**
Date: 03/19/2004 11:21:43 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: kfeld@CITRUS.UCR.EDU
To: ANTHRO-SCIENCES@JISCMail.AC.UK
Sent from the Internet

Friends,
I just received the following from the Cogling listserv. I have had no other communication on this, but wanted to pass it on to you.

I personally want to second the warm and heartfelt appraisal of the authors. Rob was smart, alive, and intensely interested in his work; he was at the same time a warm and supportive colleague, and an active contributor to anthropology, to SAS/SASci, and to cognitive approaches with linguistics and anthropology. His academic contributions are impressive, but I will miss, even more, his contribution to our fellowship.

David Kronenfeld

Dr Robert E. MacLaury 1944-2004

We are deeply sorry to announce the death, on February 18 2004, of Dr. Robert E. MacLaury. Rob MacLaury was a scientist and scholar of huge stature, enormous originality and breathtaking productivity. He began his academic life as an anthropologist, doing fieldwork in Oaxaca State, Mexico, where he carried out an exhaustive study of phonology, grammar and semantics of Zapotec languages. Amongst the many publications resulting from this work was his seminal 1989 paper on the semantics of Zapotec body part locative terms. He gained his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in 1986.

Rob became involved in the World Color Survey, based in Berkeley, and was himself responsible for the Meso-American Color Survey, culminating in his book "Color and Cognition in Mesoamerica: Constructing Categories as Vantages", published in 1997. Rob's involvement in research in color perception and language was not confined to Central America, encompassing also work in Africa, Canada, New Zealand and American North and Southwest. It was his color research that provided the spur for the theoretical work that occupied the last few years of his life. Rob MacLaury's name will always be associated with Vantage Theory, an approach to categorization that significantly extended prototype theory by incorporating, as its name suggests, speaker vantage point, entrenched in the semantics of particular languages, into the process of human categorical perception.

It is for his kindness and humanity that we shall most remember Rob. We, and many others, benefited from the unstinting generosity with which he shared his time and his encyclopaedic knowledge with colleagues and students. Rob was not one of those who viewed scientific knowledge as primarily a vehicle for professional advancement, and we often felt that he did not receive the kind of recognition that his work deserved. During the last years of his life, Rob was immensely productive. Perhaps he sensed that he had only a little time in which to complete his life's work. Now Rob is no longer with us, but it is our profound hope that others, besides ourselves, will read his publications, be inspired, and develop the rich inheritance he has left behind him.

Rob lives on, like all great intellectuals, in his work; but we also celebrate him through our memories of a very special and dear person. One of the privileges of knowing Rob was to have the opportunity to meet his wife, Maria. To see Rob and Maria together was to see two people who rejoiced in each other's presence, and their happiness was infectious. We extend our profound condolences to Maria and to the other members of Rob's family. Rob was a native Californian, and it is fitting that he died in Los Angeles. We shall miss him very much.

Terri McKeigan, University of Edinburgh
Chris Sinha, University of Portsmouth

_____ Society for Anthropological Sciences _____