

Joseph M. Gilde
1922 - 1991
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, EMERITUS

B.A., Syracuse University; M.A., Ph.D., English Language and Literature, University
of Chicago, August, 1964
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1965 To August 23, 1991
Birth: August 11, 1922; Death: August 23, 1991

Joe Gilde came to Cal State Fullerton in the fall of 1965 when the campus was undergoing great architectural and curricular transition. There were only two permanent buildings; the graduate program was miserably incomplete; upper and lower division courses had been offered for only two years; the meager library was in the basement of what is now called McCarthy Hall, and the English department was quartered in the science building and in the uncompleted gym. At best, it was a campus in search of a future. A good deal of progress has been achieved since then and Joe Gilde played a significant role in that progress. He became actively involved in the structuring of the infantile English department. He was instrumental in creating the department's constitution, and subsequently served on all major departmental committees. He was elected vice-chair and chair of the department, and he was a member of the faculty senate. When he died in the summer of 1991 much of the same turmoil of transitional struggle was still taking place on campus. But in the midst of the many changes during those twenty-six years, one thing that did not change was Joe's beautiful ability to detect comic irony. One could always count on his keen sense of satire and irony. No one appreciated *Gulliver's Travels* or *Tristram Shandy* more than Joe Gilde. Unlike aesthetes or pedants who are more given to enthusiasm over a beautiful verse or an obscure allusion than they are capable of a real emotion over injustice, he was first and last interested in human values. Capable of thinking deeply, he was devoted to the pursuit of the truth but was humble in claiming he had found it. He valued the historical content of literature but would never insist that *Huckleberry Finn* be read on a raft. He was a scholar not left helpless by the burden of his scholarship. It was great fun spending a few years on this planet with Joe Gilde.

Submitted by
Don Austin
Professor of English, Emeritus

Joe Gilde earned his B.A. at Syracuse University in 1950, where he was magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. He then went to the University of Chicago for his M.A. and Ph.D. He arrived at Fullerton in 1965 after teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Ohio Wesleyan, and Whitman College. Joe loved to teach Renaissance poetry, including Milton, and the Restoration dramatists. (His

dissertation was "Rakes and Fools: a Study of the Libertine-Satiric Tradition in the Restoration Comedy") Starting as an assistant Professor he ended his career as a full professor. He also served as Vice-Chair and Chair of the English Department, the latter from 1976-1979. Because of his wide and deep learning some students found him an intimidating instructor, but most admired him as a challenging, exciting, and demanding teacher, "brilliant, witty, and a master of his subject matter" as one student said. One of his most important legacies concerns faculty governance. He was one of the primary authors of the English Department's Constitution, a document that has served as a model for numerous other departments on campus. He also made a major contribution to the University's Program Performance Review document and served on numerous University-wide committees.

Submitted by
Joseph Sawicki
Professor of English