

William Rubinstein

1920 - 1991

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, EMERITUS

B.A., City College of New York; M.A., New York University; Ph.D., English Literature, Yale University, June, 1950
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1966 To August 22, 1983

Birth: June 29, 1920; Death: April 16, 1991

Bill Rubinstein was my colleague for almost a quarter of a century; he was also my fellow New Yorker with similar political views.

In a rare way, Bill combined brilliance with compassion and sound judgment with widely appreciated wit. I don't know of his ever having been unkind to anyone. In fact, as Howard Seller and I were reminiscing about Bill, Howard recalled Bill's saying: "At CSUF you don't just have to be a good teacher; you have to be kind."

Bill was himself a gracious and versatile teacher of composition, creative writing, Shakespeare, Milton, and modern European literature. He conveyed his love of the writing process and of literature to his colleagues as well as his students.

Bill also set a memorable example as a good citizen of our department and of the faculty as a whole. He served many terms on many department committees, notably the Comparative Literature Committee, in which he had a special interest, and the Personnel Committee, on which his colleagues trusted him to serve fairly and conscientiously, as he served on and chaired the all-university Faculty Personnel Committee.

Bill was willing, too, to undertake quiet analytical and editing tasks and to solve unpublicized problems. He, for example, did most of the work more than twenty years ago for a statistical study which demonstrated that no correlation existed between the GRE scores and GPA's of students in our M.A. program; the department then dropped the GRE as an entrance requirement for the graduate program. In the early years of the administration of student opinion questionnaires, furthermore, Bill undertook another study which indicated that asking students to give one overall numerical rating to an instructor resulted in just about the same score as asking for numerical ratings in response to multiple questions and then averaging those ratings. Since then the department student opinion questionnaire has requested just the one number and left space for extensive prose commentary.

On the university level, Bill was often asked to edit significant documents like accreditation reports; his skills in writing clear economical prose and in making cloudy prose clear were much admired. Perhaps Bill's most useful talent, however, was as Howard reminded me, his ability to cut through a murky discussion in a meeting and succinctly articulate the key issue.

Bill was not only dedicated to his vocation but also had a great capacity for enjoyment. John Wagner, when I spoke with him last week, thought of the good times he and Bill had when they went fishing and caught nothing. Then I mentioned the lively conversations Bill, John Wagner, John Greenwood, and I shared when we ate Tuesday dinners together for several semesters during which Bill, John Wagner, and I had 7 o'clock classes. We will all miss Bill; we all remember such occasions.

Submitted by
Joan Greenwood
Professor of English and Comparative Literature
May 5, 1991