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UCSB Distinguished Professor Steven Chaffee Dies Unexpectedly

Steven H. Chaffee, a distinguished professor of communication at the University of California, Santa Barbara and an internationally recognized authority on mass communication and its effects on society, died unexpectedly Tuesday (May 15) after a short hospitalization for a heart ailment. He was 65 and lived in Santa Barbara.

Chaffee came to UCSB from Stanford University in 1999, when he was appointed to the Arthur N. Rupe Chair in the Social Effects of Mass Communication. His appointment also included an affiliation with the Department of Political Science. At Stanford, where he taught from 1981 to 1999, he was the Janet M. Peck Professor of International Communication and for seven years served as chair of the Department of Communication. Earlier, he was a professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for 16 years, and was director of the school in 1980-81.

He was among the most influential scholars in his field, and widely considered to be one of the most important historians and methodologists in the discipline of communication. His research focused on a wide range of issues dealing with the effects of media, with particular emphasis on political communication and the impact of the news. He wrote extensively on the impact of presidential debates on voter behavior and the role of mass media in political campaigns.

During his distinguished career, Chaffee produced 13 books or monographs and more than 100 journal articles and book chapters. He was co-editor of "Handbook of Communication Science," one of the most widely used texts in graduate studies in the field, as well as co-editor of "Television and Human Behavior" and editor of "Political Communication: Issues and Strategies for Research."

He also was a contributor to the landmark 1972 U.S. Surgeon General's report on children and television violence. He was for many years an editor of "Communication Research," a leading scholarly journal in the field, and served as president of the International Communication Association. He also was a leader of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

"Steve's untimely death is a tremendous loss that this campus will feel in so very many ways," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "His service to the institution and to his department and discipline was simply extraordinary. He was an outstanding scholar and prolific author as well as a beloved teacher. We were delighted when he accepted an appointment to the Rupe Chair at UCSB just two years ago, and in that short time he impressed his colleagues and his students with his incredible energy and dedication. He gave of his time and his knowledge so generously, heading major committees and organizing important conferences. He will be greatly missed. Our hearts go out to his wife, their son, and all his family members and friends."

At the time of his death, Chaffee was handling preparations for a scholarly conference that will be held at UCSB June 2 called "Campaign Studies 2000: Lessons Learned." He had recruited nine leading communication scholars from across the country to speak at the symposium.

The chair of the Department of Communication at UCSB, David R. Seibold, said Chaffee "was a giant with few peers who could match his stature in the several disciplines in which he worked.

As a friend and colleague, he was generous and sensitive, insightful and inspirational. His loss is immense. We all will miss him dearly."

Many of Chaffee's works were published by Sage Publications, a leading social science publisher. Sara Miller McCune, the publisher and chairman of Sage Publications and a trustee of The UCSB Foundation, said Chaffee was a dear and longtime friend whose "insight, care, fine judgement, dry wit, and greatness of mind, soul, and spirit all will be missed. To have had that treasure for three decades is a

priceless gift, and one for which I will always be grateful."

A native of Compton, Calif., Chaffee earned a bachelor's degree in history at the University of Redlands, a master's degree in journalism at UCLA, and a Ph.D. in communication at Stanford.

Chaffee is survived by his wife, Debra Lieberman, a researcher at the Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research at UCSB, and their 9-year-old son, Eliot Chaffee. He also is survived by three adult children from his previous marriage to Sheila Chaffee of Madison, Wisconsin: Laura Friedrichs, Adam Chaffee, and Amy Chaffee. His grandchildren are Calvin Chaffee, Colin Friedrichs, and Harper Friedrichs. He also is survived by his sister, Elaine Kern Brooks, and his brother, Henry Paul Kinghorn.

A memorial service will be held Friday, May 18, at 10 a.m. at Congregation B'nai Brith, 1000 San Antonio Creek Road, Santa Barbara. The ceremony will be followed by a graveside service at Goleta Cemetery, 44 South San Antonio Road.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made to the Yosemite Association, P.O. Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318.

The Department of Communication at UCSB is planning a memorial service to be held on the campus at a later date.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.