

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

September 23, 2002

Bill Schlotter

UCSB'S CAPPS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE TO BE INAUGURATED WITH TALK BY PULITZER-WINNER GARRY WILLS

Garry Wills, a distinguished historian, critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, will discuss "Citizen Believers" in a University of California, Santa Barbara-sponsored appearance at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 6 in Santa Barbara's Victoria Hall (33 W. Victoria Street).

Wills's lecture will be the inaugural event of UCSB's Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Religion and Public Life.

The event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited. Tickets will be available one hour before the lecture at the Victoria Hall box office.

Currently an adjunct professor of history at Northwestern University, Wills is a celebrated and often decorated reviewer of life and culture in the United States.

"He is nationally known as a commentator on American public life, on the democratic process and the role of values and beliefs in that process," said Wade Clark Roof, chair of UCSB's Department of Religious Studies. "His Pulitzer award-winning book, 'Lincoln at Gettysburg,' established him as an authority on democracy

and religion."

Wills's other books include "Politics and Catholic Freedom," "Jack Ruby," "The Second Civil War," "Inventing America," "Explaining America," "Confessions of a Conservative," "Reagan's America," "Under God," and "Why I am a Catholic."

Other awards include two National Book Critics Circle Awards, the Presidential Medal of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Merle Curti Award of the Organization of American Historians and the Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcasting. He has honorary degrees from 14 colleges and universities.

Wills's lecture will focus on democracy and religion and his ideas for resolving conflicts between religious belief and democratically determined community decisions.

The event is the first for the center, which was established to honor Walter Capps, a popular professor of religious studies for 33 years at UCSB. Capps was elected to the House of Representatives from California's 22nd Congressional District in 1996. His term was cut short when he suffered a fatal heart attack in October of 1997. He was succeeded in Congress by his widow, Lois, who continues to represent California's 22nd Congressional District.

In April 2001, a group of 52 members of the House of Representatives wrote to Congressional leaders seeking support for a request that funds be included in the U.S. Department of Education budget to help establish the Capps Center. In December 2001, Congress approved the appropriation of \$500,000 for that purpose.

Capps was an advocate of ardent but polite discourse and showed an uncommon commitment to civility and duty.

The center exists to advocate those qualities.

"The Center seeks to honor and further the legacy of Walter Capps," Roof said. "It will hold conferences, sponsor lectures, send interns to Sacramento and Washington to learn about the democratic process, provide research funds for Ph.D. students, and bring a distinguished visiting professor to the campus for a quarter each year.

"The guiding philosophy of the Capps Center is to bridge the worlds of the university and the community and to engage the community in dialogue on major issues of our time where values and ethics come into play. The Center encourages civic

participation in a non-partisan, non-sectarian manner."

Attention editors: A black and white headshot of Garry Wills is available in jpg format on request.

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.