

Merrill C. Gaines

Merrill C. Gaines, of San Luis Obispo, died peacefully Wednesday, March 15, 2006. He bravely lived with a rare degenerative brain disease for more than nine years. Merrill was born in Milwaukee, Wis., on Oct. 20, 1941. He was raised in the suburb of Wauwatosa, attending local schools and graduating from Tosa East High School in 1960. While in high school, he met and fell in love with his future wife, Lois A. Patzke.

Merrill attended University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and graduated with a bachelor of business administration with a minor in fine arts. He then entered the field of advertising and graphic design.

In 1966, Merrill graduated from the U.S. Air Force Officer Training School at Lackland AFB, Texas. He completed five years in the Air Force Ready Reserves as a first lieutenant, and was honorably discharged in 1971.

After Merrill and Lois married in 1967, he continued to work in advertising and, along with a partner, started AdPac Communications in Milwaukee.

Merrill finally gave into his love of the built environment and returned to UW-M to study architecture, receiving a master's degree in architecture and urban design in 1973. His work experience included a stint at the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in Chicago, Ill. While at UW-M, Merrill found great satisfaction in his role as a teaching assistant.

In 1976, he decided to give up the nine-to-five routine and apply for a teaching position in the architecture department at Cal Poly, for which he was accepted and where he remained until his early retirement in 2002. In 1989, Merrill's fifth year studio entered the "Women in Military Service for America Memorial" national design competition. The site of the Memorial is the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. His proudest moment in teaching occurred when his students' entry received

an honorable mention out of 130 entries. It was the first national professional design competition in which Cal Poly students received an award.

He devoted many hours to design competitions. Eventually he hit the jackpot when his design for the fountain at the entrance to Stearns Wharf in Santa Barbara was selected as the first place entry. It was a bittersweet success as his design became embroiled in controversy and was replaced with the present dolphin fountain.

One of Merrill's favorite avocations was photography. His keen eye led to the publishing of many of his photos. He and Lois traveled extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Greece, the Bahamas, Hawaii and South America. They both shared a passion for food, which became, after photography and architecture, the focus of their journeys. Merrill's greatest outdoor love was jogging at Morro Strand Beach, which he did for most of his years in San Luis Obispo.

Merrill is survived by his devoted wife Lois. He also leaves behind many friends and colleagues throughout the country who enjoyed his quick wit and dry humor. Merrill's wish was to donate his brain to UCLA, where it will be studied in conjunction with their research into this very devastating disease. At Merrill's request, no services will be held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to Hospice Partners, 277 South St., Suite R, San Luis Obispo, 93401, or to the Merrill C. Gaines Endowment Fund c/o the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Cal Poly State University, One Grand Ave., Bldg. 5, San Luis Obispo, 93407.

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