



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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El Camino College Art Professor Passes Away

Longtime El Camino College art professor Terry O'Donnell passed away Jan. 9. He was 67.

O'Donnell joined the fine arts faculty at El Camino College in 1972 as a part-time instructor, teaching sculpture, art fundamentals and drawing. He was well-known on campus as a dedicated faculty member who also had a great sense of humor.

"He was a wonderful teacher, friend, and family man, and was incredibly funny as well," said Susanna Meiers, El Camino College Art Gallery curator. "One of his main characteristics was his sense of humor. He was quiet person, but also outrageously funny. When he was around, you could always count on something to come out of left field."

O'Donnell was an enthusiastic teacher, and enjoyed working with students as they developed their own artistic identity and style.

"Everybody liked Terry and we are certainly going to miss him," said James Schwartz, interim dean of the El Camino College Fine Arts Division. "He was dedicated to his profession and classroom teaching and enriched many student lives with his knowledge."

A longtime South Bay resident and an avid surfer, O'Donnell created the now-landmark sculpture on the Redondo Beach pier in 1977. The sculpture is a memorial to George Freeth, the pioneering surfer who introduced the sport to the area more than 100 years ago.

Before the commission piece for Redondo Beach, O'Donnell was already making a name for himself in the art world, showing his work in juried shows throughout Southern California.

He was also a guest instructor in a ceramics and sculpture program sponsored by the City of Torrance – demonstrating his commitment to art education.

“Terry was extremely dedicated to his work – people knew that – he was well-liked and respected by students and faculty alike,” said Leslie Back, an El Camino College music professor.

An alumnus of El Camino College, he graduated in 1967 with an associate degree in fine arts. He transferred to California State University, Long Beach, where he earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree in fine arts. O’Donnell also served honorably in the US Navy Reserve for 12 years.

O’Donnell is survived by his wife Cathy; two daughters, and four grandchildren.

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