James Robert McLeod Obituary. 1999
by Erika Bourguignon
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JAMES ROBERT McLEOD, 49, associate professor of anthropology at Ohio State U, died suddenly on November 20, 1998, at his home in Mansfield, OH, from internal bleeding due to ulcers. He had just learned of the award of his second Fulbright assignment to Samara State U (Russia) and was looking forward to teaching there in 1999. He was also looking forward to the presidency of the Central States Anthropological Society in the millennial year, having just been elected second Vice-President McLeod was an outstanding, demanding and very popular teacher, whether of undergraduates or Law School students, of Americans, Japanese or Russians. His efforts were recognized by numerous awards, beginning with an Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award (1980), and including the very prestigious Ohio State U Distinguished Alumni Teaching Award (1991) and appointment to the Executive Board of the Ohio State Academy of Teaching, organized to improve undergraduate instruction.

McLeod was born July 21, 1949 in Illinois. When he was 9, the family moved to Japan where his father was stationed in the US Air Force. During their 4 years there, his parents took an active interest in Japanese society and culture, establishing enduring friendships with Japanese families. McLeod's curiosity about cultural differences seems to have had its roots in those years. After Japan, the family settled in California. McLeod attended Foothill Community College, Los Altos, and graduated from U C Berkeley (1972). He began graduate work at Ohio State in 1972, receiving his MA (1974) and PhD (1983). His dissertation, entitled “Politics and Government in East London,” was based on research under the supervision of H S Morris at LSE.

Politics and government in complex societies and their rituals and symbols as expressed in popular culture, were at the forefront of McLeod's interests. He conducted research in the US, Japan and Russia, and dealt with these topics in his numerous publications, teaching and in extensive community outreach activities. In this connection, McLeod organized a series of international conferences in Mansfield (American Identity) and Samara (Political Culture in Contemporary Russia).

McLeod taught at Foothill College, San Jose State U, Ripon College, Franklin U and Denison U. He was named to the Ohio State U Regional Campus in Mansfield (1986). In 1993-94 McLeod taught at Minnesota State U in Akita, Japan and Samara State U, Samara, Russia (1996) on the faculty of Sociology and Politology, under a Fulbright grant. There he was named Distinguished Honored Professor and ex-officio Associate Director of Samara U's Center for International Relations. In the words of Alexey Nechayev: “As a scholar he fought with dangers which threaten modern society, and helped new hopes to grow.”

Co-teaching a highly successful course on Law and Anthropology with Stanley Laughlin of the Ohio State Law School, McLeod challenged the students with a new perspective to their subject and gained their respect.

Kind, generous and funny, McLeod was devoted to his students, who loved him. He is survived by his wife Christine. A James McLeod Scholarship Fund has been established at Mansfield through the OSU Development Fund. (ErikaBourguignon)