

## Joseph Brandon Ford 1917 – 2009

Founder of California State University Northridge  
Anthropology & Sociology Departments

Joseph Brandon Ford, professor emeritus of Cal State University Northridge has died. He was 92 years old and the last of his generation of 10 Glendale children born 20 January 1917 to Cecily Chambers Ford, Lahinch, Ireland, and W. Joseph Ford, Assistant District Attorney for Los Angeles and founding Dean of Loyola Law School, famous for prosecuting the MacNamara brothers of the 1911 bombing of the Los Angeles Times and exposing the corruption of defense attorney Clarence Darrow.

After a life linked to Los Angeles, Ford died Monday, 12 October, at Villa Alamar in Santa Barbara of complications related to pneumonia. Ford's life was that of a consummate academician, a brilliant student attending Beverly Hills High School excelling in languages, he went on to get his BA at UCLA in three years. Starting his graduate career with an MA at USC and continuing on at Harvard with Pitirim Sorokin, Ford's studies were interrupted by WWII. Enlisting in the Navy as an officer and trained in Japanese, he served in Naval Intelligence as an interpreter in the Pacific Theater. After the war he obtained a real estate license, married Marjorie Henshaw, and completed his PhD at UC Berkeley in 1950.

Ford began his professorial life at Cal State LA and in 1956 to become part of a young team of founding scholars for San Fernando Valley State College that later became Cal State University Northridge. Based on interests in urban planning, in 1961, Ford served on the Los Angeles Planning Commission under newly elected Mayor Yorty. Through the course of his 30 years of teaching and research, he accepted Fulbright postings in Europe and the Middle East. Teaching in Rome, Vienna, Madrid, and Beirut with his family in tow, he expanded his vistas and honed his language skills.

After his retirement in 1987, Ford maintained his life-long interest in languages and reading that facilitated his travels in the 50s and 60s, including German, Italian, French, Spanish, Japanese, and Latin. His passion for the historical processes of civilization continued and in 1996 he co-edited the publication *Sorokin & Civilization: A Centennial Assessment*.



Ford was a complex character. His political involvements at the University and in learned societies are legendary. His vast knowledge disadvantaged his adversaries and charmed his supporters. In his last years of declining health, his language ability and his encyclopedic intellect served him well. A forceful, powerful, personality, he was mentally active and enjoyed lively discussions. He engendered warmth and commitment from those who helped him.

His dedication to the academy transferred to his three surviving children. Anabel Ford, Director of ISBER/MesoAmerican Research Center at U California Santa Barbara, is an archaeologist working on the Maya of Central America; Cecilia Ford, professor of Sociology and English Departments at U Wisconsin, is a linguist focused on conversational analysis, and Stephen Ford, Associate Dean of Apprenticeship Programs for the San Diego Community College District that promotes career technical education. Ford is also survived by two grandchildren, Elinore Ford and Tyler Ford, children of Stephen Ford in San Diego.

A remembrance is planned in Santa Barbara on 22 November 2009 at Villa Alamar at 2pm and a lunch memorial is planned at Heritage Square in Los Angeles on 9 January 2010. Please contact Anabel Ford at [brass.ep@gmail.com](mailto:brass.ep@gmail.com) for information.

Memorial donations can be made to *Heritage Square* Museum 3800 Homer Street Los Angeles, California 90031 [www.heritagesquare.org](http://www.heritagesquare.org), *Exploring Solutions Past: The Maya Forest Alliance* P.O. Box 3962 Santa Barbara, CA 93130 [www.espmaya.org](http://www.espmaya.org), National Alliance on Mental Illness [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)