



Henry Joseph Wessels

April 8, 1935 - March 31, 2017

HENRY JOSEPH WESSELS

1935-2017

Born in Illinois in 1935 to Florence (Weydert) and Albert Collins Wessels, Henry Joseph Wessels was the youngest of four brothers (Bert, Tom and Don Wessels), all of whom predeceased him. Henry came to California in the early 1960s, earning his Master of Fine Arts degree from USC. He lived and taught for several years in Southern California, where he married and had his first three daughters, before moving to San Luis Obispo County (first Los Osos, then San Luis Obispo) to teach 3D design, mostly sculpture and ceramics, as a professor in the Department of Art & Design at Cal Poly. It was here that Henry met his second wife and completed his family with the birth of two more daughters. In his 30 years at Cal Poly, Henry's many accomplishments included starting the glassblowing program, and assembling the sculpture garden filled with ceramic heads and busts created by students over the years.

Henry was especially well known for his offbeat sense of humor, his love of puns and wordplay. As an avid fan and supporter of the arts, he participated in bit parts in many shows locally at the Melodrama, Pismo Light Opera Theater (PLOT), and Pacific Repertory Opera. Henry was a proud, sentimental and very involved "stage dad" who drove his girls and their friends to many of their theatre rehearsals and productions. He loved and supported opera, Gilbert and Sullivan, any Stephen Sondheim production, and local theatre, especially

musical theatre.

In retirement Henry continued to refine his skills as an artist/sculptor, working mostly in cast bronze. He exhibited locally and in galleries in Montecito, California and in Chicago, Illinois. Most recently, opening the day after his passing, his works are on exhibit at the High Street Gallery in Salem, Oregon in a show titled "Gestalt" which includes the work of his lifelong friend Donald E. Smith.

Henry's unexpected death occurred as he was recovering from elective heart surgery. Many tears have been and will be shed as we remember a remarkable man whose passing leaves the world a sadder and less vibrant place. Henry was an artist, sculptor, teacher, husband, father and friend. He is survived by his first wife Sandra Mauck (Anderson) and their three daughters, Kathleen Romagnoli, Allison Hannigan and Leslie Obenauf, and by his wife Denise Wessels (Middleton) and their daughters Jennifer Wessels and Annie Wessels. Surviving family also includes seven grandchildren, and many nephews and nieces living across the country and overseas.

Family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances are invited to a memorial reception on Saturday, April 22nd from 3-5 p.m. at the San Luis Obispo Museum of Art at 1010 Broad Street in downtown San Luis Obispo. In lieu of flowers Henry's family will appreciate donations in his memory to SLOMA or to any local theatre or arts group.