

## W. Keats Sparrow

### GREENVILLE

W. Keats Sparrow, Dean Emeritus of East Carolina University's Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences, passed away on November 11, 2009. He was 67.



A memorial service will be held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, after which the family will receive friends in St. Paul's Parish Hall. Inurnment in the Sparrow Family Plot at Westview Cemetery in Kinston will be private.

Sparrow was the son of Fred Becton and Tessie Rouse Sparrow of Kinston, where he was born and reared. He held A.B. and M.A. degrees from East Carolina College, where he was a member of Sigma Nu fraternity, and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Kentucky. Before his appointment as Dean of ECU's Harriot College in 1990, he had served as Professor and Chairman of ECU's Department of English. He was a specialist in early North Carolina literature and technical and professional writing and published many articles and books in those fields.

He was active in public life and professional circles and served as President of the Pitt County Historical Society, the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, the North Carolina-Virginia College English Association, and the North Carolina Huguenot Society. At the time of his death, he was President of the Carolina Charter Corporation, the sponsor of the second series of the North Carolina colonial records publication project, and Governor of the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of North Carolina. For many years he served on the Tryon Palace Commission, the Historic Bath Commission, and the North Carolina State Capitol Foundation Board. Formerly he had been a member of the First Flight Centennial Commission and of the Global TransPark Commission. He held membership in the Order of First Families of North Carolina and the North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati. He was also active in the Lenoir County Historical Association and the Lenoir County Colonial Commission.

Many of his varied works and services earned awards and citations. His state and national recognitions included the 1982 National Council of Teachers of English book award, the 1998

Award of Excellence for his term as President of the ECU Chapter of the academic honor society of Phi Kappa Phi, and the 2001 Christopher Crittenden Memorial Award for Significant Contributions to the Preservation of North Carolina History.

In 2007 Sparrow was presented with the Roberts Award for his role in establishing the celebrated North Carolina Literary Review and in 2008, the North Carolina Society of Historians' History Book Award for his edition of *The First of Patriots and Best of Men: The Public Life of Richard Caswell*. He was also inducted as a member of The North Caroliniana Society, the Order of St. John and the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.

Upon Sparrow's retirement from the Harriot College Deanship, the ECU Board of Trustees named the college's State Building conference room in his honor, and his department chairs, faculty, and other supporters created an endowment to support the W. Keats Sparrow Distinguished Chair in the Liberal Arts, an honorary title to be held by all subsequent ECU Harriot College Deans. In 2008, Sparrow was presented with the Harriot College Distinguished Service Medal and in 2009 with honorary lifetime membership in ECU's Friends of Joyner Library.

An accomplished terpsichorean, in 2009 he was also inducted into the Atlantic Beach Shaggers Hall of Fame.

Sparrow is survived by his wife of 47 years, Elizabeth H. Sparrow; a daughter, Nicole S. McDuffy; son-in-law, Robert J. McDuffy; and a granddaughter, Ashley Elizabeth Furr, all of Beaufort; a sister, Karine Sparrow Caglayan; and brother-in-law, Dr. Simer Caglayan of Kinston; a brother, John D. Sparrow, Sr. of Kinston; nieces, Kara Druhen and Rebekah Sparrow; and nephews, Lee Ginter and John D. Sparrow, Jr.

The family will receive friends from 6:00-8:00 Friday at Wilkerson Funeral Home in Greenville.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorials be made to the Sparrow Keynote Lecture Endowment, North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, c/o N.C. Division of Archives and History, 109 E. Jones Street, Room 305, Raleigh, NC 27601, or to St. Paul's Episcopal Church 401 E. Fourth Street, Greenville, NC 27858.

Online condolences at [www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com](http://www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com)