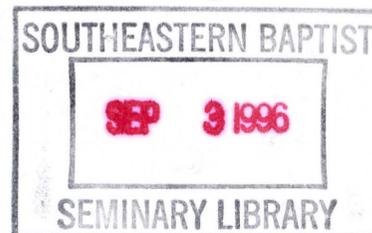


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Southeastern loses longtime Old Testament professor to death

By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C.--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary lost a longtime standard-bearer Feb. 12. Max Rogers, professor of Old Testament at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary since 1961, died Monday after an extended illness. Rogers was 63 years old.

A native of Richmond, Va., Rogers came to the seminary after serving on the faculty at Columbia University, New York City, and Brooklyn Friends School, Brooklyn, N.Y. Syndor Stealey was president of Southeastern at the time.

"In the 42 months that I have known Max Rogers, he became a precious friend and always an ardent supporter of the seminary," said Paige Patterson, noting that it was not until he was named president of Southeastern in 1992 that he met Rogers.

Patterson mourned Rogers' death, saying: "Anytime you lose a professor by transfer to heaven, the seminary is wounded and the professor profoundly missed."

He said Rogers was a very special individual, known for his "gentleness and sweetness of spirit."

Steve Andrews knew Rogers both as a professor and colleague, noting he rarely saw him without a smile. Andrews, assistant professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern, earned his Th.M. from Southeastern where he studied under Rogers.

"Wherever we chanced to meet -- on the steps of Binkley Chapel or the hallways of Adams between classes -- he always had a hearty greeting and then a broad grin would unfold across his face. It was an encouraging smile," Andrews said.

"He was an excellent Old Testament scholar and a practicing Christian," said James H. Blackmore, professor emeritus of A.Div. Studies at Southeastern. "He was always kind and considerate of others -- reaching out to people regardless of their circumstances or social status," Blackmore added, fondly recalling his friend and colleague of 30 years.

"He was a respected scholar, a brilliant thinker, and an excellent teacher," Andrews noted, pointing out that Rogers was both a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and a Danforth Graduate Fellow, having earned his Ph.D. at Columbia.

Graduating summa cum laude from Duke University in Durham, N.C., with a B.A., Rogers earned his B.D. at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He did postdoctoral work at the University of Munster in West Germany.

Fred Sandusky, who was registrar at Southeastern from 1955 to 1985, said when students enrolled for Rogers' classes they found a professor who had not only studied in depth in Old Testament studies but one who also read widely in other disciplines.

"Those who took the introductory courses in Old Testament usually wanted to enroll for his advanced classes," Sandusky recalled.

Rogers spent his last sabbatical examining the latest research on the Dead Sea Scrolls, said L. Russ Bush, dean of the faculty at Southeastern.

"He once told me he considered Southeastern to be one of the top ten theological schools in

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the country academically," Bush said. "If that is true, Max Rogers had no small part in making it so."

Acknowledging that Rogers might have differed with the more conservative turn Southeastern has taken in recent years, Patterson said, "Max Rogers was nonetheless notable for his kindness and generosity toward those who held different views than his own."

Andrews called him a "compassionate gentleman," saying, "He was really concerned about the welfare and success of his students. He was always willing to be a friend."

Bush said Rogers was a unique individual, noting he knew of several occasions when Rogers "dug into his own pocket to assist students financially."

Students always knew when Rogers was on campus -- his black Studebaker prominent in the sea of more contemporary autos in the faculty parking area in front of Southeastern's Stealey Hall.

"I'll miss that Studebaker," Patterson mused. "I'll deeply miss Max on this campus."

Sandusky said Rogers' involvement in church and community life earned him the respect and endearment of his friends and co-workers alike. At his death, Rogers was a member of Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham.

And it will be in Watts Street Baptist, Thursday, Feb. 15 at 11 a.m., that Rogers' family and friends will gather to recall the gentle kindness and immeasurable intellect that Max Rogers brought to those who knew him. He will be interred in the Elmwood Cemetery in Enfield, N.C., alongside his parents.

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