William Herron McGowan, Professor of Philosophy at CSULB from 1967 to 1996, died this August 14, 2013.

Bill McGowan was born William Kerr Henry Herron III Feb. 8, 1931, and adopted by Stuart Rice McGowan in 1938 in Cleveland, Ohio. He attended Cranbrook Preparatory School, and then Kenyon College, graduating in 1953. He attended Johns Hopkins University, receiving his Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1957 with a dissertation titled “Berkeley’s General Theory of Signs.” He taught first at Washington & Jefferson College in Pennsylvania (1957-60), then at Eastman School of Music (1960-66), where he offered one of their first Humanities courses. After a year as a Visiting Professor at the University of Arizona in Tucson, AZ (1966-67), Bill joined the Philosophy Department of California State University at Long Beach and after teaching some twenty-nine years retired in 1996.

At CSULB he regularly taught Introductory Philosophy, as well as courses in the History of Modern Philosophy. His main teaching and philosophical interest was in the British Empiricists, especially Bishop George Berkeley, and in closely associated areas of the philosophy curriculum, like Epistemology, Philosophy of Perception, and Philosophy of Language. Bill was deeply interested in the cultural, literary, and political context of his central philosophical figure, Berkeley. He was a long-term member of the International Berkeley Society, and published a variety of articles and reviews in *The Berkeley Newsletter, The Journal of Educational Thought, Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, and South Central Review* (of the Modern Language Association). His essay “Berkeley’s Influence on American Philosophy” was published in the Viewer’s Guide to “The Dean of Thin Air”, a 1983 TV-film documentary produced by WSB TV, Rhode Island, funded by NEH.

Bill McGowan and Carol Ann Hawkins were married January 2, 1952. They had two children, Richard and Lynn. The family settled in Huntington Beach when Bill joined the CSULB faculty. Carol McGowan died in 1995. Richard is now a research scientist in acoustics and speech production working in the Boston area. Lynn lives in Huntington Beach, and is a writer and editor, as well as an active volunteer on behalf of animal welfare.

Outside his family and his interests in eighteenth-century philosophy and culture, Bill was passionate about music. He was an accomplished pianist, and a deep devotee of classical music and opera. Like many academics, Bill found it financially necessary on occasion to moonlight. He taught part-time at local colleges and at El Toro Marine Base. He enjoyed teaching students with real-world experience. “Fun facts” from his children’s memories include his stint as a part-time security employee at Disneyland, dressed as a Keystone Cop. And he delighted at the time in wearing a Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs shirt to class (a “shocking” departure from his normal departmental persona).

On April 19, 2005, as a result of hypoglycemia, Bill blacked out while driving home from a doctor’s visit. He survived the accident severely injured, and totally blind. At the time he was working on a book on Berkeley, which, sadly, remains unfinished. Bill lived the last several years of his life at an Alternative Senior Care facility, sustained by books-on-tape from the Braille Institute, music programs from KUSC, and visits from family and friends. Colleagues noted his “philosophic” demeanor, for Bill retained his linguistic wit and as much of his former interests as possible, and he adjusted to his fate with courage and determination.
His family suggests that in lieu of flowers Bill could be remembered by a gift to the Metropolitan Opera – whose broadcasts were one of his favorite radio programs throughout his life. Bill will be remembered by friends and colleagues at an informal memorial service to be held during the coming fall semester.