

Martha Heasley Cox  
February 26, 1919-September 5, 2015

Martha Heasley Cox died peacefully on September 5, 2015, in San Francisco, where she had lived for 22 years. Born in Calico Rock, Arkansas, she was the daughter of Jesse Richard and Lillian Seay Heasley. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in English from Lyon College, Batesville, Arkansas, and completed her doctorate degree at the University of Arkansas in 1955. That year she joined the faculty at San José State University, where she taught for 34 years.

Professor Cox was noted for her textbooks on teaching composition and for her critical studies of American authors. She was the Founding Director of the Center for Steinbeck Studies at San José State University, where she endowed Steinbeck Fellowships to support promising writers. She also endowed a lecture series to bring distinguished speakers to the University. In 2000 she received the Tower Award, SJSU's highest recognition for service to the University.

At Lyon College, she endowed the Cox Chair in American literature and the Leila Lenore Heasley Prize for distinguished writers.

In San Francisco, she helped to endow the California Book Awards at the Commonwealth Club and the "Raw Play Series" at the Magic Theatre.

Professor Cox is survived by Annas Heasley, sister-in-law; David Heasley, nephew; and Annette Heasley, niece, in Arkansas. She was preceded in death by her brothers, Therrell and Paul, and by her sister Leila Lenore Heasley.

Memorial gifts honoring Professor Cox may be made to the Tower Foundation of San José State University or to Lyon College, Batesville, AR.



Remembering  
Martha Heasley Cox

Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 2:00 p.m.  
Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies  
San José State University

# Memories of Martha

Her contribution to Steinbeck studies was just as essential as can be. Later comers like us have benefited so much for having this well-conceived Center. She had a vision.

Dr. Luchen Li, President  
International Society of Steinbeck Scholars

My dearest memory is of our trip to New York City in 1977 for a week performing research at the New York Public Library, Kennedy Center Library, and Viking Press. She had far more energy than I, though I was considerably younger. My feet wore out as we walked everywhere to avoid paying for transportation. We took in Broadway plays each night and two on Sunday!

Greta Manville, Steinbeck Bibliographer  
Steinbeck Fellow, 2002-2003

She will always be remembered for her selfless service and great contribution to Steinbeck criticism.

Dr. M.A. Syed, Indian Scholar

I remember clearly the day one of my younger brothers sent me a clipping about her having founded the Steinbeck Center. It was shortly after I graduated from SJSU in 1970. I am pleased to say that I sat with her at some function at SJSU a few years later when I thanked her repeatedly for having founded the Center. She had a wonderful glow about her.

I only met her a few times, but will remember her good company and, of course, her generosity--the Steinbeck Fellowship helped me finish my book, so I'll always be grateful.

Lysley Tenorio, Author, Steinbeck Fellow 2007-08

My husband and I gave her a ride back to SF after my last Fellows reading, and Martha told us about all the books she was reading for the California Book Awards. When she got out of the car, my husband and I both turned to each other and said, "That's how I want to grow old."

Kirstin Chen, Author, Steinbeck Fellow 2011-12

# Program

Nicholas P. Taylor  
Director, Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies

Dr. Lisa Vollendorf  
Dean, SJSU College of Humanities & the Arts

Dr. Arlene Okerlund  
Former Dean and Academic Vice President; Professor Emerita of English, SJSU

Jim Coplan  
Friend and Former Staff Member at the Commonwealth Club

Peter Nathaniel Malae  
Author, Steinbeck Fellow 2007-2008

Reception to follow in the Special Collections Lobby

*"In the classroom, she focused with memorable energy on the books and authors she loved most, a list that started with Steinbeck and never really ended."*

Dr. Paul Douglass  
Former Director of the Center, 2005-2012

