



Gerry McNamee

Memorial service  
Stenard Memorial Garden  
Eastern Oregon University  
June 27, 2009

Thomas Gerard McNamee was born August 1, 1942 to Isabelle (Reilly) and Thomas F McNamee in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was raised in upstate New York in the Rochester area, graduating from Webster High School in 1960.

After high school, Gerry attended Saint Bonaventure College in New York for a year, where rumor has it he studied briefly for the priesthood. He moved to Florida in the early 60's to attend the University of Florida at Gainesville, but was out of school long enough to get drafted. He quickly enlisted in the Navy. Early in his Naval career, he met and married Karen Becker. He served in the Navy for three years during the Viet Nam War, moving to San Francisco following his discharge in 1967. There he joined his wife and new baby son, Dylan. Gerry graduated from San Francisco State in 1969. While living in San Francisco he worked as a brakeman on the cable cars.

After graduation Gerry moved with his family to Eugene to attend graduate school at the University of Oregon. He received a master's degree in English Literature in 1972. While in Eugene, Gerry worked as a social worker for several years with Children's Services.

After the breakup of his marriage, Gerry moved to Ireland for a year to explore his roots. He embraced the lifestyle and became a fisherman on an Irish fishing boat. When he returned to Eugene he worked as a councilor at a boys home.

In 1977 Gerry sold his house in Eugene and with his second wife Paula Geddes moved to a primitive abode on Cricket Flat near Elgin, where his son Aaron was born. Four years later they moved to Elgin, embracing modern conveniences. In 1987 he moved to Enterprise where he purchased and renovated an old cheese factory. In 1992 he moved to La Grande to pursue a teaching degree at Eastern.

Gerry has lived in Eastern Oregon for the last 32 years, doing various jobs, including juvenile councilor, ranch hand, construction worker, river guide, career rehabilitation councilor, and electrician. But the job he enjoyed the most was teaching English and international studies at Eastern Oregon University. He taught at Eastern from 1994 until he retired in 2007.

For Gerry, the best part of his teaching career at Eastern, was working with the international students. His class in American language and culture was enjoyed by those born here as well as those from around the world. He also felt himself very fortunate to have been able to act as an ambassador from EOU to both Pohnpei Micronesia and at the University of Talca in Chile. He particularly fell in love with the people of Chile and made many friends there.

Although Gerry loved bicycle riding, skiing, motorcycles, football, goats and travel, his first love was books. He read continually and inspired others to read as well. After his cancer diagnosis, when he began to lose physical strength, he could still derive great pleasure from his books, now having seemingly endless time to read.



## EPIC

I have lived in important places, times  
When great events were decided: who owned  
That half a rood of rock, a no-man's land  
Surrounded by our pitchfork-armed claims.

I heard the Duffys shouting "Damn your soul"  
And old McCabe stripped to the waist, seen  
Step the plot defying blue cast-steel -  
"Here is the march along these iron stones."

That was the year of the Munich bother. Which  
Was most important? I inclined  
To lose my faith in Ballyrush and Gortin  
Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind.  
He said: I made the Iliad from such  
A local row. Gods make their own importance.

*Patrick Kavanagh*

