

University of Scranton

NEWS

Scranton, PA 18510

(717) 961-7661

Bill Genello 717-961-7661 (office)
[REDACTED] (home)

Paul Brown 717-961-7661 (office)
[REDACTED] (home)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCRANTON--Dr. Louis D. Mitchell (Ph.D.), a longtime University of Scranton professor who was also noted as a prolific author and composer, died Wednesday morning (March 29) in Mercy Hospital, Scranton, after a long illness.

A native of North Carolina, Mitchell joined the University faculty in 1961 and held the rank of professor of English. Although blind since childhood, he made many contributions to the fields of music, literature, and education.

"Prof. Mitchell was a very special person at the University," said University President Rev. J.A. Panuska, S.J. "He inspired all of us by his devotion to students, his scholarship, and his personal courage in overcoming obstacles. We will miss him greatly."

Mitchell composed the music for a traditional Latin Mass, titled "A Mass in D Minor in Honor of St. Augustine," to commemorate the Order of St. Augustine Recollect's 400th anniversary.

The Mass, which took Mitchell a year and a half to complete, is scheduled to be performed for the first time at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Newark, NJ, sometime this fall. One of the compositions, "Ave Maria," was used for a Dec. 3, 1988, Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Mitchell's other musical accomplishments include a libretto for an opera based on Jean Toomer's novel "Cane," and the lyrics and music for two plays: "Ballad of the Winter Soldiers," which was performed at Lincoln Center, and "Star of the Morning," an off-Broadway play that earned him an award from the American Society of Composers and Publishers in 1985.

A lifelong music enthusiast, he began composing during his junior high school days. At Fordham University, his alma mater, he wrote original music for the annual class shows.

He was under consideration for composing the Mass of the Holy Spirit for Fordham's 150th anniversary celebration in 1991.

Aside from his musical interests, including performing piano recitals and having an appreciation of opera and the theatre, Mitchell was an accomplished writer. This past year he finished three volumes of short stories based on folk tales his parents told him.

(more)

Mitchell Obituary.....ADD 1

He was the American correspondent for the London-based Jesuit magazine "The Month." His articles were also published in the "Vermont Cursillo," the "Merrick-Washington Magazine," "Africa News" and "The Crisis."

A scholarly writer, his works include "The Story of the Descendants of Benjamin Spaulding," a historical book which is due for release and is based on the life of his ancestor.

He also completed a book about Dr. Aaron McDuffy Moore, the first black physician in Durham, NC and the first cousin of his mother. Mitchell was working on his autobiography at the time of his death.

A scholar in 17th and 18th century literature, he lectured extensively at prestigious universities such as Harvard, Boston, and Columbia. He also addressed students at Oxford and the Universities of London, Madrid, Jerusalem, Amsterdam, Brussels, and Dusseldorf.

His topics included Afro-American literature; his favorite poet, Milton; human rights; and teaching the blind.

Mitchell was educated at the New York Institute for the Blind. The school later recognized him as the most distinguished graduate of the 1940-1950 period with its Distinguished Graduate Award.

He earned a bachelor's degree at Fordham College and a master of fine arts degree from Fordham University. He received his doctorate from New York University after completing graduate studies at Columbia University.

He was named the Fordham Alumni Educator of the Year in 1982 and was recognized by the Senate of Pennsylvania as "Educator of the Year" in 1983.

This past year he was awarded a certificate of appreciation from the American Civil Liberties Union upon his resignation from the board of directors for health reasons. Last May, the Knights of Columbus, Council No. 7622, honored Mitchell by naming him "Knight of the Month."

(more)

Mitchell Obituary.....ADD 2

His other honors include election to the American Folk Theatre board of trustees and being listed in "Who's Who Among Black Americans," "Images of the Afro-American in the Theatre," "Oxford Companion to the Theatre," and "Who's Who in the Theatre."

Mitchell is survived by a brother, Lofton, and a sister, Mrs. Gladys Blair, both living in New York City.

The funeral is scheduled for Saturday (April 1) at 9 a.m. from the Edward T. Walsh-Frank M. Regan Funeral Home, 715 Linden St., Scranton. Mass of Christian Burial is at 9:30 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Church, Gibson St. and Taylor Ave., Scranton.

Interment will be at the Flushing Cemetery, Flushing, NY.

Friends may call Thursday, 7 to 9 p.m., and Friday, 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Louis D. Mitchell Scholarship Fund at the University of Scranton.

--bg--

Simeon Booker
Editor
Jet Magazine
820 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Il. 60605

Durham Herald

115 Market St.
Durham, N.C. 27702

Carolina Times
P.O. Box 3825
Durham, N.C. 27702

Wilmington Journal
P.O. Box 1618
Wilmington, N.C. 28402

Whiteville News Reporter
P.O. Box 707
Whiteville, N.C. 28472

Afro-American
628 N. Eutaw St.
Baltimore, Md. 21201