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Former UCSC Chancellor Dean McHenry, shown in March 1962 on the future site of the campus, 'was not just head of a university. He was building a place,' Professor John Dizikes said Tuesday.

Founding chancellor shaped UCSC, county's future

By DAN WHITE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Dean E. McHenry, who guided the fledgling UC Santa Cruz campus from its days of chaos, died Tuesday at Dominican Hospital of natural causes. He was 87.

The campus's founding chancellor was a plain-spoken administrator with an almost obsessive eye for detail. He set the tone for today's UCSC with inspired faculty hires and groundbreaking university design.

In the process, he also helped change the face of Santa Cruz County itself.

He helped found UCSC in reaction against the trend of the "mega-university," which he believed was ruining education with its impersonality.

He was in charge at a time of student sit-ins and anti-Vietnam War rallies which sometimes shocked him, and a financial crisis toward the end of his tenure in 1974. But this "experimental" university would thrive, grow and influence other institutions. UCSC has changed dramatically since his days there, yet his imprint lasts. Even the campus's centerpiece — its main library — now bears his name.

He was appointed chancellor in July 1961, four years before the campus opened. Professor John Dizikes, then 33, was one of McHenry's earliest hires, in 1965. Dizikes recalled those days as full of hard work and excitement. "We were too ignorant to be scared," he said. People felt they were part of a bold experiment and were not entirely sure where it was going.

But McHenry was a conservative and capable administrator, he said.

Dizikes is still astonished when he recalls McHenry's hands-on role on almost every as-

pect of UCSC, including all faculty hires.

"He was not just head of a university," Dizikes said. A 1965 story shows McHenry taking on a forest fire with a shovel.

"He was building a place," Dizikes said. "And he knew every square foot of it. He was there before anything was built. There is a famous picture of him sitting in a desk out in a field, where the university was going to be."

McHenry oversaw the development of \$63 million in construction projects and the hiring of more than 1,000 employees.

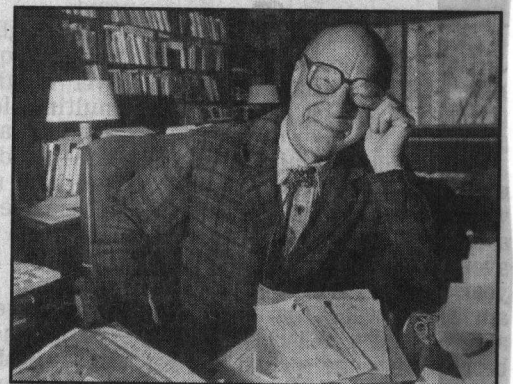
During his 13 years, he would see the campus population balloon from 650 to 5,000. Today, UCSC has 10,600 students.

The growth has been dramatic, but UCSC is still modestly sized compared to much of the UC system.

While other universities emphasized grades, UCSC would introduce a system in which they were all but irrelevant. Students would receive pass-fail grades and written evaluations — a system that has changed somewhat over the years as students were given the opportunity to select grades as well as evaluations.

McHenry's campus also helped bring about the area's transformation from a sleepy tourist town and agricultural center to an intellectual melting pot. The transition was trying for area residents, who marveled at the long hair and outlandish fashions. "It must be bad for barbers, but Goodwill Industries seems able to sell almost any strange costume," McHenry noted in 1968.

Norm Lezin, one of the family owners of Salz Leather, was Santa Cruz mayor during McHenry's tenure. He said there were sometimes hard feelings between the campus and the city, with students "acting out" on Pacific Avenue.



Bill Loveloy/Sentinel file

McHenry at home in 1993.

But Lezin said McHenry, in his dealings with the city, was "always impeccable, very passionate about his vision for this campus," and that most of the tension between Santa Cruz and the students materialized after McHenry's tenure.

Born in Lompoc, McHenry earned a bachelor's degree from UCLA in 1932, and served as student body president. He earned a master's degree from Stanford in 1933 and a doctorate from UC Berkeley in 1936.

Before becoming chancellor, he had established a career as a political scientist and college professor with several books to his credit, including "The American System of Government."

In 1958, his former Stanford roommate Clark Kerr took over as president of the UC system. Kerr recruited McHenry as academic assistant to the president. He also helped Kerr lay the groundwork for new UC cam-

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uses in Irvine, San Diego and Santa Cruz. Kerr chose McHenry to lead the latter campus.

Taking the lead from such models as Cambridge, Oxford and Swarthmore College, the two formed a vision of a campus that blended residential and academic life. The addition of founding provost Page Smith, a noted historian and beloved teacher, and renowned botanist Kenneth Thimann helped galvanize McHenry and advance the university.

Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood said his faculty hires helped set a tone for the university that still exists.

"I think Dean McHenry is really a legend in his own time, most prominently for establishing the UCSC concept that good living and learning environments were compatible with a world-class research university," Greenwood said.

His vision of a college-based system was prophetic, Greenwood said. Such learning centers as the University of Pennsylvania and University of Virginia are now looking at the residential college model, she said.

Over the years, UCSC changed aspects of this original concept. The colleges are no longer independent of each other. This eroding of his original vision deeply saddened McHenry, Dizikes said.

"He felt always that things were being cut away and reduced. (The college system) just didn't work out the way we wanted," Dizikes said.

But McHenry remained a force on campus. After his retirement, he served on the UC Santa Cruz Foundation, and remained involved in the development of UCSC's Arboretum, Long Marine Laboratory and the Santa Cruz Rotary. He also offered his help to Greenwood and shared his knowledge of campus history with her.

"For that, I will always be personally grateful," she said.

Even when his health was diminishing, he remained active, said longtime friend Jack Baskin, a retired developer and philanthropist who donated \$5 million toward UCSC's engineering school last year.

"His presence never diminished," Baskin said. "Over the last few years he went to very many events, having kind of dragged himself to some of these things, but he was always there and always with a smile."

In retirement, he and his wife, Jane, were active in the family-owned and operated McHenry Vineyards on their Bonny Doon ranch.

He is survived by his wife, Jane; two daughters, Sally MacKenzie of Kansas and Nancy Fletcher of Texas; two sons, Dean McHenry Jr. of Claremont and Henry McHenry of Davis; nine grandchildren and seven great grand-children.

At his family's request, contributions in Dean McHenry's name may be made to the UC Santa Cruz Foundation and designated for the Dean E. McHenry Fund, or the UCSC Arboretum.