



Franklin "Frank" Mann

August 14, 1947 - July 23, 2014

Frank Mann, 66, was found in his car at 8:40 a.m. at the AM/PM on 12th Avenue and Highway 198. Chief Deputy Coroner Shawn McRae said it was confirmed that Mann died from a heart attack. He was survived by his 29-year-old daughter Jofrae Jessee.

“He was incredibly intelligent and always very funny,” Jessee said. “He liked to make jokes about himself a lot.”

Mann worked as a teacher throughout his adult life, including as an English and drama teacher at Hanford High School. He retired in 1999 after working there for 22 years.

“He was always active and interested in the school, even after he retired,” said Hanford Joint Union High School District Superintendent Bill Fishbough.

“Frank was very passionate about education and the kids.”

While working as a drama teacher at Eureka High School in the early '70s, Mann met his future best friend, Larry Whatcott. In 1970, Whatcott was just entering high school and Mann had just been hired at the school, the youngest and newest teacher at the time.

“He had an enormous impact on my life,” Whatcott said. “He was an

inspirational and motivational drama teacher. He could always rally the troops.”

Whatcott said Mann had a different approach to teaching drama than was common at the time, as he focused on teaching the students about the facets of drama, such as lighting, set design and costumes, as well as the history of drama rather than focus strictly on acting.

“He was there to teach us the entire realm of theatre,” he said. “We got a very well-rounded education.”

After working together on plays throughout Whatcott’s high school years, they continued staying in touch, maintaining a strong friendship over 44 years. Whatcott said it was primarily their shared passion for writing, movies and theatre that brought and kept them together.

“He was a strong advocate of playwriting,” Whatcott said. “He knew I had a knack for it. He had a gift of bringing out the best in students by finding their potential and developing it.”

Whatcott said Mann’s encouragement led him to pursue writing and directing as a career. Currently, he lives in Southern California with his family and has produced a short film and wrote several scripts that have won screenwriting awards.

“If I never stepped in Frank’s classroom, I would never be a writer and director in Hollywood today,” he said. “I owe it all to Frank.”

At the time of Mann’s death, the longtime friends were working on a docudrama about unsafe driving called “Wheelz: The Young and the Reckless,” based partly on his experiences teaching at the Santa Fe Driving

and Traffic School for nine years. Mann was directing the film while Whatcott was asked to co-write the script with him.

“I wanted to help out an old friend,” he said. “He’s done so much for me over the years. I always loved working with Frank.”

The film features recreations of some of the tragic automobile-related deaths that Mann was involved in during his life, with the goal of showing it to local teens to encourage them to make good driving choices.

“He always had a dream of making a movie,” Jessee said. “I told him that I was very proud of him and that this was a great thing for him to do. He was finally pursuing his dream.”

The movie began filming in Hanford and Avenal this spring, with several key sequences being shot before Mann’s death. Whatcott said it’s still unknown if or when shooting will resume.

Regardless of what happens with the film, Whatcott said Mann has impacted a lot of people during his life and has left behind a strong legacy.

“I’m pretty much devastated,” he said. “When you lose your best friend, it’s very hard to deal with. However, it’s always a joy to get to talk about your best friend.”

Tribute Wall

CH

“ Frank and I were in drama class together at Montebello High School. I always admired him and knew he would achieve his goals. The first time I saw his name on the credits I knew it had to be the same likable, friendly guy I had a crush on. He was so driven and focused he couldn't help but succeed. It saddens me to know he's gone. Claudette Whitaker Hudson

Claudette Whitaker Hudson - January 02, 2015 at 06:27 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Video Tribute



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - September 26, 2014 at 05:20 PM

JF

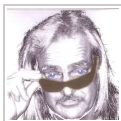
Wonderful tribute to Frank!

John Ferry - October 03, 2014 at 03:41 PM

MG

Nice video Frank was my Teacher in Traffic School. Very well liked man. You can tell he liked to teach and he had his heart into it. Frank Thank you, You'll be missed. My heart goes to the family.

Melissa Gonzalez - October 11, 2014 at 06:40 PM



I was one of his drama students at Eureka High - he was one of my favorite teachers I have ever had - Hans Ingebretsen

Hans Ingebretsen - August 21, 2021 at 02:26 AM

MV

Oh Mr. Mann. How I miss our chats. I want to say I'm sorry for the teasing I did in highschool. I was immature. Now I'm the one sweating constantly. At least I know all about the condition. Thank you friend.

Manuel Vasquez - October 21, 2021 at 06:37 PM

LW

So proud to be his friend for 44 years. So happy to be in the photos with him. He changed my life forever when I stepped into his drama classroom at EHS in 1970.

Larry Whatcott - October 13, 2023 at 02:43 PM

JJ

“ *My Dad would have been 67 today. Happy Birthday Dad!*

Love,

Jofrae

Jofrae Jessee - August 14, 2014 at 09:17 AM

CM

Mr Mann was my favorite teacher. You are so missed . I had the pleasure of him yeah wring my to boys to drive. Rest in peace sir!

connie miller - August 01, 2016 at 01:13 PM

RS

*Mr Mann was my favorite high school teacher. I had so much fun in Drama. I have wondered many times over the years what became of him and tonight I am saddened to find out he has passed. He taught drama at Eureka High school in 1971 in Eureka, California.
Rest in peace Mr Mann
Thanks for the fond memories.*

Robin Stockton - March 09, 2023 at 12:54 AM

LC

“ Frank was born and grew up in L.A. His mother told me that with their family's experience and connections in the Hollywood movie industry, he had many opportunities. Instead, he chose to become a Drama/English teacher, a profession in which he achieved a masters degree, and was always passionate. Frank influenced and made a difference in the lives of many people through his dedication as a teacher. It was a joy going places in Hanford with Frank. So many people knew him and wanted to talk to him. And of course he remembered them and took great delight in talking with them. Frank loved watching movies and could discuss & recall many details about these films years later.

How I will remember my cousin, Frank: He was gregarious and loved to make others laugh with his quick wit and endless repertoire of jokes. He was compassionate and would reach out and lend a hand to those less fortunate. He brought his mother from Louisiana some years ago to Hanford so he could take care of her. (Her passing this past March effected him profoundly). He wasn't afraid to tackle an issue and would speak up publicly when he perceived of a travesty. He was passionate about the film he was currently making targeted at saving the lives of young drivers. He was an original; one of a kind. Rest in peace. Linda

Linda, Frank's cousin - August 10, 2014 at 01:59 PM

EL

“ Jofrae, my name is Eleazar Solorio your dad was one of a kind! i am sure you know that, if more people in our world could be like your father, how much better a place it would be. i was one of Franks students that enjoyed his teaching style, and would visit him periodically through time. I would like to share with you a story of when Frank and I drove out to Huron to pay our respects to the family of a classmate and student of Franks who died in an auto accident. Frank read about the accident and when he saw me in town a month later he informed me of the tragic event. We agreed to make a trip and on a Saturday morning. I picked him up from your house on Beverly drive, and we drove out to Huron not knowing exactly where to find Emilio's family. Frank picked the first business he thought we could learn how to find our classmates house. To our amazement Emilio's mother worked at that very place. She was extremely surprised that a teacher and student would drive out from Hanford on a blind expedition on her late son's behalf. She graciously visited with us and informed us where to find the cemetery and grave site. After a few minutes visiting with her we drove out to the cemetery. At the cemetery we both talked about what we recalled about our time with our friend, addressing his grave site as if we were talking with him. We joked we cried and after a while said our goodbye's. on our way home he told me how important it was for him to pay his respects to Emilio's mom, and he thanked me profusely for making the trip out with him. i was still somber and and when i dropped him off at home he said " that when somebody you enjoyed life with dies to always make a sincere effort to pay your respects to the family". I am now doing that very thing he shared with me so long ago. i would see Frank periodically and he always had something good to say to me. May god bless you and fortify you during this time, one of your dads friends, E. Solorio = Solozar88@gmail.com

elazar - August 09, 2014 at 08:31 PM

JF

“ This is a letter I sent to Frank's daughter. I have edited and revised for better general reading:

Hi Jofrae,

Nancy Lewis Long informed me of your Dad's passing. I was a close friend of Frank during High School in Montebello. We worked together on High School plays such as, Caesar and Cleopatra. He lived just a few doors away from me on Alston St. After he graduated from High School and went on to Long Beach State he and I organized two community productions in Montebello. I should mention that he was the driving force in getting the community behind us. He was always so wonderfully entrepreneurial. I acted in one of them and directed the other. The plays were Tennessee Williams, The Glass Menagerie, that he directed, and John Osborn's, , which I directed. We both had leads in the latter. I'm attaching a few photos and news clippings of these events as well as a short video clip from an 8mm movie of us just before curtain time for Glass Menagerie.

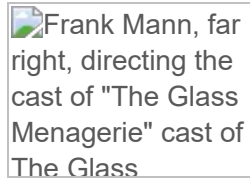
A couple of years after High School I was drafted into the army. Two years went by and when I came home Frank had landed a teaching job in Eureka. I felt we both had synchronistic qualities that would have made a good "team" in producing feature films. But judging from the testimonials of his former students, he made a positive and influential mark on people. Personally, I went on to make documentary films and always wished he and I could have continued working together. While both still in High School we did start a short dramatic film shooting on 16mm with the help of Frank's uncle, Edward Mann, an excellent film editor (Birdman of Alcatraz and so many more). He was also a director, and I fondly remember shooting in Santa Monica on the beach, the pier and on streets in Venice, Ca. Frank and I both "starred," and I was the director. We never completed the film for lack of funds. And, unfortunately, the footage we shot has since disappeared.

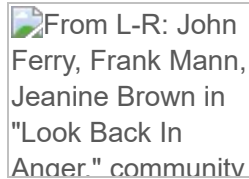
After a couple of years in college and then military service, decades passed and we lost contact with each other. Why - I will never know. Then about 10 years ago or so Frank contact me out of the blue. We had many wonderful and long conversations about the past over the phone. The Frank Mann I remembered was still Frank with his wit and great sense of humor. One day, my wife and I had to go somewhere near Hanford for a function, and Frank and I arranged to meet at a Chinese restaurant for lunch. It was great to see him, and we enjoyed visiting for several hours. I have many other fond memories of my early years with Frank, too many to mention here. But those memories keep him alive in my heart.

I am truly saddened about your father passing. In my mind he will always remain as a kind, very talented, funny and wonderful friend.

My deepest condolences to you.

John Ferry

 Frank Mann, far right, directing the cast of "The Glass Menagerie" cast of The Glass

 From L-R: John Ferry, Frank Mann, Jeanine Brown in "Look Back In Ander." communitv



John Ferry - August 08, 2014 at 05:25 PM



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

August 08, 2014 at 04:50 PM



“ http://www.hanfordsentinel.com/news/local/former-hanford-high-teacher-dies-at/article_10537310-23e2-545e-96d8-b6b6f669c74f.html

steve - August 07, 2014 at 10:01 AM

JJ

A small correction to the article. The date of his passing was Wednesday, July 23rd.

Jofrae

Jofrae Jessee - August 07, 2014 at 10:21 AM

SM

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Sylvia Martinez - August 05, 2014 at 09:30 AM

SM

“ I worked with Mr. Mann for over 10 years at Santa Fe Driving & Traffic School. He was known for his kindness and silly jokes. He taught Drivers Ed to more than 1/2 of Hanford's and surrounding areas teenagers. His main concern was "Drivers Safety". He was sooo excited for this movie. He mentioned after this movie he was going to Eureka to direct another one. I will never forget the last day I seen him, which was Tuesday evening. We were in the office he wanted to make sure I emailed everyone their script and was excited that Avenal streets were going to be closed. As he was leaving he turned around and said "thank you for everything you have done for me" and in his Elvis voice "Thank you, Thank you, Thank you"

"Don't lend a short guy money, because he might come out short"



Sylvia Martinez - August 05, 2014 at 09:26 AM

BK

“ Mr. Mann (respect prevents me from being more informal) took my interest in lighting and made curriculum where there was none, just for me. I read, experimented and finally added technical arts to the Hanford High's stage productions all with 1 on 1 instruction from Mr. Mann. He mentored me in lighting, sound and other stagecraft's including motion picture and TV to such a level that my college faculty advisor allowed me to skip the lower division requirements. He is a mentor, friend and one of the best teachers I could have asked for.

Brad Kane - August 04, 2014 at 02:53 PM

MT

“ I first met Frank Mann as a college student. I had responded to an advertisement for the Zcbest exam from a local newspaper. He helped me pass the exam and is the primary reason if me becoming an educator.

melanie Tatco - August 03, 2014 at 09:48 PM

KA

“ i spent a summer in a creative writing class taught by him during summer school. in that one class i learned so much. he was kind, funny, and great at teaching. many years later i would see him at my sisters soccer games because my sister was on his daughters team. he will be greatly missed, he was an inspiration.

kay - August 03, 2014 at 07:42 PM

CW

“ Frank Mann was a friend and a example to all. He was my Drama teacher and a long time friend of over 40 years. He was a inspiration to all and was smiling most of the time. Frank had a dream that must live on in his friends and supporters. I made a promise to him that I will not forget and Franks Dream can live on. This is only the close of act 1 Do not strike the setlower the house lights and make Frank proud.....I know that Frank would be proud of all of you....The stage is set Act 2 is almost ready to go....I will miss you Frank but your dream will live on.....Chris Woody Drama class of 1975 and 1976 Eureka High School Eureka Calif.

chris woody - August 03, 2014 at 01:43 PM

JC

“ *Mr. Mann is the reason I became interested in theatre. He held me after class and mentioned that I should audition for the up coming play. We had many talks about theatre and the arts. I now have a degree in theatre and just returned from acting in New York in an off-Broadway show. While there I was asked what it was that got me interested in acting, the answer was, Mr. Mann. Thank you for all that you have done for so many lost people.* ”

Jerry Costner - August 03, 2014 at 12:37 PM

KC

“ *Mr. Mann had a lasting impression on his students. I was only in his class for a semester but he was one of the most memorable teachers in my high school experience. Many years later I still reflect on his wise words. I'm sorry to hear of his passing.* ”

Kali Camara - August 03, 2014 at 09:14 AM

TG

“ *I don't ever remember a time when Mr. Mann was not smiling. He was a very nice and helpful teacher. My deepest condolences.* ”

Toni Galindo - August 03, 2014 at 02:35 AM

LH

“ I remember when Frank and I lived in the same apartment complex and we became friends. He knew I was having company come from out of town and also knew how small my car was. He offered to let me use his nice big comfy car for while they were in town. I thought that was very generous, especially since we'd only known each other a couple of weeks and were just neighbors. But, found that, that was just the type of guy he was. He gave from the heart. He told me many times how much he loved the kids. Teaching them and bringing them out of their shells and letting them know that they are worth everything in the world. I got to meet JoFra when she was a teen and you could tell how much they both adored each other. My heart goes out to her. May God bless her dearly.



Linda Heinrich - August 03, 2014 at 01:27 AM

LH

“ Linda Heinrich lit a candle in memory of Franklin "Frank" Mann



Linda Heinrich - August 03, 2014 at 01:18 AM

CP

“ Mr Mann was a great teacher. Entering high school I was very shy and he saw that. He asked me to stay behind class one day and talked to me about building my confidence. I never shared with him how that conversation and the way he treated me help shape who I am.

christan parreira - August 02, 2014 at 09:19 PM

NW

“ Mr. Mann, I will remember you as the best teacher you were to me. I'm sorry that I had to make a choice between you and Mrs. Cook. I was there before school start and your Mailman and Mrs. Cooks Thanks for the movie you was making hope I can see it when it's done. Thank You Mr. Mann

Nancy E. Wright Class of 83

Nancy Wright - August 01, 2014 at 09:56 PM

DB

“ Frank changed my life. He was my high schol drama teacher when i was a Sophmore. I was rather shy and he cracked the shell i had built around myself. He believed in me. Although i didnt see him after high school i thought of him often. We had a going away party for him when he left Eureka. It was a huge party...he had touched so many lives. Our final parting was all of us sang "To Sir with Love" ...May Frank rest in peace knowing he touched so many lives. Delight Dawn Bird

Delight Bird - August 01, 2014 at 07:12 AM

L"

“ Frank was my best friend for 44 years. Our friendship began as student and teacher and just kept on going and growing. I came to know his parents, his wife and daughter. Not too many people in life get to say that about any of their high school teachers and I am very fortunate I can say this about Frank. He was my mentor, too, and if I had never stepped into his classroom 44 years ago I never would have been a movie screenwriter and director living in LA. Every writing and directing award I have won I owe to him and I told him so many, many times. I will miss him from here to eternity.



Larry Whatcott, co-writer "Wheelz" - July 31, 2014 at 08:11 PM



“ 2 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - July 29, 2014 at 01:54 PM