In Memorial

Francis J. Murphy
(1935-2006)

The Reverend Francis J. (Frank) Murphy, a long-time member of the Western Society for French History, died of cancer on 28 August 2006, in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts. He was 71 years old. Born in Boston, he was educated at the College of the Holy Cross where he received his A. B. in 1957. He was ordained a priest five years later after studying at St. John’s Seminary. Father Murphy served at various parishes in the Boston area and for the last two decades as chaplain of the order of the Sisters of Charity.

Turning his attention to European, especially French history, he earned both his M. A. (1970) and Ph. D. (1971) at Catholic University. His doctoral dissertation, "Maurice Thorez and ‘La Main Tendue’: French Communists and Catholics, 1936-1939," would later be published in revised form by the University of Florida Press. He also wrote a biography of a French priest active in the wartime Resistance, Père Jacques: Resplendent in Victory.

After receiving his doctorate, Father Murphy joined the faculty of Boston College as a part-time instructor. He taught there for thirty-four years, and in June 2006, he was awarded the title of Associate Professor Emeritus. While at Boston College he developed into one of the school’s most popular teachers because of the caring attitude that he showed his many students who knew him affectionately as "Father Murph."

He was actively involved in the work of the W. S. F. H., serving as its vice-president, then as its president in 1993-1994. The Society held a special session to honor his memory, organized by Bryant Ragan of Colorado College, at the 2006 meeting at Long Beach. His numerous friends recalled his
warmth, kindness, and sense of humor and the encouragement that he offered those who faced personal and academic problems. They fondly remembered his strong Boston accent that made him instantly recognizable. His Irish charm and cheerfulness always made him welcome at the annual meetings and won him friends of all faiths who feel deep sorrow at his passing.

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