

Name:  
Last Residence:  
BORN:  
Died:

**Frank Xavier Barron**  
95003 Aptos, Santa Cruz, California, USA  
17 Jun 1922  
6 Oct 2002



## Frank X. Barron, pioneer in the psychology of creativity, dies at 80

October 09, 2002

By Jennifer McNulty, Staff Writer, UCSC

Frank X. Barron, a World War II veteran and a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, died October 6 following complications from a fall. Barron was an internationally influential figure in the study of human personality for nearly half a century. He was 80 years old.

### **Editor's Note: This obituary was prepared by the family of Frank X. Barron**

The pioneering studies of creative writers, architects, research scientists, and mathematicians, which he designed and carried out with other gifted colleagues at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at UC Berkeley in the 1950s and '60s, still stand as classics in the field of creativity research.

Barron was an imaginative designer of innovative personality measures and scales that have

helped deepen our understanding of personality and personality functioning. His analysis of ego strength as the power to rally from setbacks and hardship anticipated many aspects of what contemporary psychologists now study under the label of psychological resilience. His work played a crucial role in helping to shift personality psychology's focus away from psychopathology toward psychological health and personal vitality.

His American Psychological Association citation in 1969 for the Richardson Creativity Award honors him: "For his insightful studies of the creative process and of the creative person. For his conceptualization of several significant variables of personality, for his development and standardization of tests to measure those dimensions of personality, and for his researches which have demonstrated their functional role in the creative person: the disposition to originality, preference for complexity, independence of judgment, esthetic sensitivity, ego-strength, and psychological health. For his contributions to our understanding of the psychology of imagination, of the needs for order and disorder as motives in creativity, and of the role of diffusion, integration, and enduring attention in the creative process, especially as these have been revealed in the creative writer. And for the elegance and grace with which he has reported his findings and discussed their implications for the nurturing of creative talent."

Barron's publications were many. *Creativity and Psychological Health* (1963) is considered one of the world's major works on the topic of creativity. *Creativity and Personal Freedom* (1968) and *Creative Person and Creative Process* (1969) report much of his published work. Other works include *Scientific Creativity* (1963, with C. W. Taylor), *Artists in the Making* (1972), *The Shaping of Personality* (1979), *No Rootless Flower: An Ecology of Creativity* (1995), and an anthology, *Creators on Creating* (1997). A festschrift in his honor, *Unusual Associates*, was published in 1996. A book of poetry, *Ghosts*, will be published posthumously.

Barron was a Guggenheim Fellow, Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and SSRC Faculty Research Fellow; he received the American Psychological Association's (APA) Richardson Creativity Award (1969) and Rudolf Arnheim Award for outstanding contribution to psychology and the arts (1995). He was also president of APA's Humanistic Division from 1989 to 1990. He contributed to *Scientific American*, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Science*, *Contemporary Psychology*, *Journal of Personality*, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, and other scholarly journals in psychology and education. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, La Salle College, in 1979.

After coming to Santa Cruz in 1969, Barron taught courses in personality and human creativity, where he charmed hundreds of students with his breadth of knowledge, subtlety of mind, and love of language. He also helped establish UCSC as a campus where serious courses in the psychological study of creativity are routinely offered to undergraduates, where creativity research is a respected enterprise, and where students and faculty alike understand that human creativity can contribute to psychological health, personal freedom, and social well-being. He was a fellow of Porter College and served as chair of the UCSC Psychology Board of Studies, now the Psychology Department.

Born in the coal-mining town of Lansford, Pennsylvania, he graduated in 1942 as a philosophy major from La Salle. His interest turned to psychology following a summer job as an attendant in a hospital for the mentally ill:

"On the ward there was hurt and pain so big and so deep that speech could not express it. I had been interested in philosophy, and suddenly philosophy came alive for me, for here the basic questions of human existence were not abstractions: they were embodied in human suffering"

(Barron, 1990).

That year he began his master's degree studies in psychology at the University of Minnesota. WWII intervened, and he served the U.S. Army in Europe as a medic. He returned to complete his M.A. in 1948. He received his Ph.D. in 1950 from the University of California, Berkeley, and taught at Harvard, Bryn Mawr, University of Hawaii, Wesleyan, and from 1969 until his retirement in 1992 at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He developed much of his work as a founding member of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at UC Berkeley from 1949 to 1968.

During a 1979 discussion of his work, Barron cited a willingness to take risks as a common characteristic among highly creative individuals: "Creativity requires taking what Einstein called 'a leap into the unknown.' This can mean putting your beliefs, reputation, and resources on the line as you suffer the slings and arrows of ridicule." Barron went on to note: "Other common attributes are a strong motivation to bring order and definition to the world, as well as independent judgment. Creative people are able to go against the mainstream. While in many ways they can be quite conventional, they tend to rebel against conformity as they accompany their own private visions down lonely, untrod paths."

Barron, with twinkling eyes, gentle heart, humor, fiery spirit, floppy hats, and poems for all occasions, will be missed. Three days before his passing, creating until the end, he began outlining a program of research on attitudes towards death, with belief in life after death as a central variable. On the last day, with his family around, he had this to say: "Amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing, amazing." Thank you Frank, for all you shared and the gifts you left.

Barron is survived by his wife of 42 years, Nancy Jean Barron; his son, Frank Charles Xavier Barron; and his daughters, Brigid Jessica Sarah Barron and Anthea Rose Maeve Barron.

A mass will be held Saturday, October 12, 2002, at 11:30 a.m. at Holy Cross Church in Santa Cruz, California. Contributions for a student research award in Barron's honor may be directed to the UCSC Foundation, care of John Leopold, Social Sciences 1, Faculty Services, University of California, Santa Cruz, 95064. Please include "Frank Barron Memorial Award" in the check's memo line.

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## **F. X. Barron, 80; Studied Science of Creativity**

By **ERICA GOODE**

Source: OCT. 13, 2002, The New York Times

Frank X. Barron, a psychologist whose work on creativity influenced a generation of researchers, died on Oct. 6 in Santa Cruz, Calif. He was 80.

The cause was complications from a fall, his family said.

Psychology has become increasingly specialized over the years, but Dr. Barron, an emeritus professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz, stood out as a scholar who blended the scientific study of personality with the less readily quantified insights of philosophy, religion and the arts, his colleagues said.

He was best known for the intensive studies of highly creative people -- writers, architects, mathematicians -- that he and his colleagues carried out in the 1950's and 1960's at the Institute for Personality Assessment and Research, more widely known as IPAR, at the University of California at Berkeley.

Creative people in the various fields, ranked for their originality by their peers, were brought to the institute for four or five days of rigorous interviews and extensive psychological testing.

Dr. Barron once described the highly creative person as "both more primitive and more cultivated, more destructive, a lot madder and a lot saner than the average person."

In the studies at IPAR, the most creative participants, Dr. Barron and his colleagues found, appeared highly neurotic on personality tests but also showed high levels of ego-strength, a trait that allowed them to channel their pathology into creative work. They resisted conformity and demonstrated a willingness to take risks.

Significant creative advances, Dr. Barron held, required a high tolerance for disorder and a preference for complexity, combined with the ability to extract order from chaos.

Dr. Barron's own style, his colleagues noted, reflected many of these characteristics.

"He worked in a way that might seem, if you hadn't followed it for very long, to be casual and without any particular focus," said Dr. Harrison Gough, an emeritus professor at Berkeley who worked with Dr. Barron. "But after a few years it became clear that there was an inner compass that guided him and continued to guide him for all of his life, really."

Two of Dr. Barron's books, "Creativity and Psychological Health" (1963) and "Creativity and Personal Freedom" (1968), are considered classics in the field.

He also developed the Barron Ego-Strength Scale and other personality tests still in wide use.

At Berkeley, Dr. Barron, a graduate school classmate of Timothy Leary, helped conduct some of the earliest experiments with psychedelic drugs, including psilocybin and LSD.

At the time, LSD was legal, and its use was confined primarily to research settings. Dr. Barron later expressed great ambivalence about those years and about the widespread use of LSD, his daughter Brigid Barron said.

"He never would have anticipated that so many people would be hurt by drugs," she said.

Dr. Barron's friends included not only leading psychologists like Dr. Paul Meehl and Dr. Donald McKinnon, the director of IPAR, but also many counterculture luminaries of the 1960's, including Dr. Leary, Allen Ginsberg and Michael Murphy, the founder of the Esalen Institute, the healing retreat with sulphur hot springs in Big Sur, Calif.

"He was always someone who straddled the sciences and the humanities," said Dr. Alfonso Montuori, a philosopher at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Francis Xavier Barron was born in Lansford, Pa. He graduated from La Salle University in 1942 and began a graduate program at the University of Minnesota, but his studies were interrupted by the war. He served as an Army medic in Europe.

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## **Frank Barron, UC Scholar, Author Explored Psychology of Creative Mind, 80**

DGH, Los Angeles Times, Oct. 15, 2002

Frank X. Barron, the internationally known UC Berkeley scholar who began exploring the creative mind in the 1950s, and UC Santa Cruz [California] psychology professor from 1969 to 1992, died October 6, 2002, at his Santa Cruz, California, home of complications from a

fall, at the age of 80.

The author of several books about the psychology of creativity, Barron also delighted in writing poetry. A book of his poems, "Ghosts," will be published posthumously. Risk-taking, the veteran researcher said on several occasions, is a common characteristic of creative people. "Creativity requires taking what [Albert] Einstein called 'a leap into the unknown,'" he said in a 1979 discussion of his work. "This can mean putting your beliefs, reputation and resources on the line as you suffer the slings and arrows of ridicule."

Barron, a native of Lansford, Pennsylvania, earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from La Salle College, served as an Army medic in World War II, and completed a master's in psychology at the University of Minnesota and a doctorate at UC Berkeley. He began his half-century of pioneering research as a founding member of Berkeley's Institute of Personality Assessment in 1949. Although he had teaching stints at Harvard, Bryn Mawr, the University of Hawaii and Wesleyan, he remained with the institute until moving permanently to UC Santa Cruz in 1969.

During the 1950s, Barron conducted in-depth interviews with creative thinkers, including architects, research scientists, mathematicians and such writers as Norman Mailer, Truman Capote and Jessamyn West. He also helped design personality measurement tests. Barron detailed many of his findings in what is still considered a major work on creativity, the 1963 "Creativity and Psychological Health," which former Times book editor Robert Kirsch praised as "a work which is both readable and illuminating, informative and challenging."

A creative person, Barron observed in that book, pays attention to vague insights that most people cast aside on grounds of good sense and has "ego strength" that helps him rally from difficulties. He also is strongly motivated to find new ways to bring order to the world, and is willing to rebel against conformity to do so. "The creative genius," Barron wrote, "may be at once naive and knowledgeable, being at home equally to primitive symbolism and to rigorous logic. He is both more primitive and more cultured, more destructive and more constructive, occasionally crazier and yet adamantly saner than the average person."

Among Barron's other books were "Creativity and Personal Freedom," "Creative Person and Creative Process," "Scientific Creativity," "Artists in the Making," "The Shaping of Personality," "No Rootless Flower: An Ecology of Creativity" and, in 1997, "Creators on Creating," an anthology co-edited with his daughter, Anthea Barron.

Frank Barron's work helped point psychology toward improving psychological health and personal vitality, as well as toward treating mental illness. He earned the American Psychological Assn.'s Richardson Creativity Award in 1969 and its Rudolf Arnheim Award for outstanding contribution to psychology and the arts in 1995.

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## **Frank Barron - Pioneer in the Psychology of Creativity**

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**Frank Barron**

**Frank Xavier Barron**

(June 17, 1922, Lansford, Pennsylvania - October 6, 2002, Santa Cruz, California) (Aged 80)

**Nationality:** United States of America

**Category:** Scientists

**Occupation:** Psychology of Creativity, Psychologists,

**Unique distinction:** A pioneer in the psychology of creativity and in the study of human personality, professor of Psychology at the University of California Santa Cruz.

**Gender:** Male

**Quotes:** 1. The creative genius may be at once naive and knowledgeable, being at home equally with primitive symbolism and rigorous logic. 2. The sorcery and charm of imagination, and the power it gives to the individual to transform his world into a new world of order and delight, makes it one of the most treasured of all human capacities. 3. The creative individual not only respects the irrational in himself, but also courts the most promising source of novelty in his own thought. 4. The making of thoughts is the most common instance of human participation in the creative act. 5. Never take a person's dignity: it is worth everything to them, and nothing to you. 6. The refusal to choose is a form of choice; disbelief is a form of belief. 7. A creative person respects the creative spark in other individual men, and in all men (and women). 8. Creativity requires taking what Einstein called 'a leap into the unknown.' This can mean putting your beliefs, reputation and resources on the line as you suffer the slings and arrows of ridicule.

**Achievements:**

**Social and professional position:** Frank Barron was American Psychologist, Professor, Non-Fiction Writer, Poet.

**The main contribution to (what is known):** A pioneer in the psychology of creativity and in the study of human personality. He has approved a holistic and cosmological approaches to Creativity, discover the complex interplay between creativity, personal health and successful personal life.

**Contributions:**

**1. Philosophical,** methodological and cosmological approaches to Creativity. Barron emphasized that psychology gains great strength from its origin in philosophy and said that creativity research has reopened "some of the doors that were closed to psychology when it self-consciously separated itself from philosophy" (1975).

*1.1. He considered holism* and emergent evolution as the fundamental factors of change, discontinuity, and creation. At that the laws of evolution were the basis of the relationships between complexity and simplicity, differentiation and integration, order and disorder. Barron argued, that the creative process itself embodies an essential tension between the establishment of environmental constancies and the interest of new experience and saw a person as a dynamic system in a process of constant self-renewal and self-reorganization.

*1.2. He used a holistic,* integrated, multidimensional approach to creativity and revealed in his works the deepest connections between its philosophical, religious, artistic and spiritual aspects.

*1.3. Cosmological motive.* Barron believed, that a key ingredient of creativity was deep motivation, or "the cosmological motive" which manifested itself as "the desire to create one's own universe of meaning, personally defined" (1995). Barron cited N. Berdyaev: "But man as a

person, the same man, gains mastery over egocentric self-confinement by disclosing a universe in himself...Personality is a universe, it is filled with universal content” (1975).

**2. Essence of Creativity.** “All creation is collaboration”. He wrote that creativity manifested itself as the rhythmic alteration and a genuine resolution or synthesis of certain common antinomies. “Apparently contradictory principles of action, thought, and feeling, which usually must be sacrifice done to the other, are instead expressed fully in one sequence, the dialectic leading at special moments to an unusual integration”. (1964,1995)

Barron argued that the creative process was inherent in everyone and penetrate the activities of everyday personal life. Moreover creativity had not very much relationship with conventional IQ as measured by intelligence tests and could be considered as a source of beauty, and openness to dipper universe meaning. Barron wrote: "creativity is a quest for meaning. It is an attempt to penetrate the mystery of the self, and perhaps the even greater mystery of Being”(1997).

**3. Nature of the creative person.** Barron conducted his pioneering studies of highly creative people that consisted testing and in-depth interviews with writers, architects, research scientists, and mathematicians during the 1950s and 1960s at the IPAR at UC Berkeley.

As a result of these studies he has identified Barron identified key characteristics of the highly creative individuals:

*3.1. Cosmological commitment.* He noted that creative individuals have one distinguishing characteristic. "The thing that was important was something that might be called a cosmological commitment”. “It was a powerful motive to create meaning and to leave a testament of the meaning which that individual found in the world, and in himself in relation to the world”(1965).

*3.2. Intuition.* Creative people have a high level of intuition. “So our finding was that intuition, linked with some degree of introversion, was related to creativity”(1965).

*3.3. Preference for complexity.* Barron said: “Creative subjects, sought to find a way to take something quite complex and, in it, find a simple order. This is something like the definition of elegance in mathematical explanation. And the same, I think, probably applies to a work of art. So that frequently the final product or explanation is amazingly simple but is based on an extremely complex substrate of empirical or individual observations”(1965). “Their universe is thus more complex, and in addition, they usually lead more complex lives, seeking tension in the interest of the pleasure they obtain upon its discharge”(1958). Creative people like things messy, disordered, ambiguous, and asymmetric but they also have a strong motivation to bring order and definition to the world.

*3.4. Integration of dichotomies.* Barron argued that Creative people used the holistic approach to antinomies, polarities, or oppositions. Creative individuals were able to entertain many opposites in psychic life simultaneously. They may be at once naive and knowledgeable, being at home equally with primitive symbolism and rigorous logic, may be highly disciplined, yet quite free, at once masculine and feminine. “The creative person is both more primitive and more cultivated, more destructive, a lot madder and a lot saner, than the average person.” (1958).

*3.5. High levels of ego-strength.* Barron developed The Barron Ego-strength Scale (1953) which indicated a positive aspects of functioning and psychological well-being. He argued, that creative people appeared highly neurotic on personality tests but also showed high levels of ego-strength that allowed them to rally from setbacks and hardship. Creative individuals also have:

- independence of judgment;
- ability to go against the mainstream, “the creative subjects maintained their independence

and expressed the correct opinion, rejecting the consensus”;

- a willingness to take risks;

- adventurousness and courage to commit themselves at some point which was important in their lives.

**4. Creative growth** and expansion of consciousness. Barron believed, that: “Creative people are especially observant, and they value accurate observation (telling themselves the truth) more than other people do.”(1958), "I think there's an increase in complexity and openness, simply as a result of the perception of a wider range of stimuli in quite common sensory modalities. Here I'm thinking of such things as increased vividness of color, enhanced perception of detail, greater acuteness in listening to music” (1965). “The evolutionary task, in the individual and in the species, is to create an ego that is itself capable of including the states of consciousness we now call paranormal... the ego already possessed of considerable scope is more likely to be able to use such an experience further to grow and enlarge itself...” (1968)

**5. Study of human personality.** Barron’s research have helped deepen understanding of personality and personality functioning. His works shifted personality psychology's focus away from psychopathology toward psychological and personal health and helped to understand the interplay between creativity and successful personal life.

**Honors and Awards:** Barron was a World War II veteran. In 1969 he was awarded the American Psychological Association's Richardson Creativity Award. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, La Salle College, in 1979. He was president of the APA's Humanistic Division from 1989 to 1990. In 1995 he was honored with the Rudolf Arnheim Award for outstanding contribution to psychology and the arts. In 2005 an endowment was established in Professor Barron’s honor, which provides an annual Frank X. Barron Award in Creativity Research.

**Major works:** Barron F. The Psychology of Imagination. – "Scientific American", CXCIX, September 1958. Barron, F. X. (1963). Creativity and Psychological Health. Princeton: Van Nostrand, Barron, F. X (1963). Scientific Creativity. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Barron, F. X. (1965) The Creative Process and the Psychedelic Experience. Explorations magazine, Berkeley California, June-July. Barron, F. X. (1968). Creativity and personal freedom. New York: Van Nostrand. Barron, F. X. (1969). Creative Person, Creative Process. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Barron, F. X 1972.Artists in the Making. New York: Seminar Press, Barron, F. X 1979.The Shaping of Personality. New York: Harper & Row. Barron, F. X (1995). No rootless flower. An ecology of creativity. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton. Barron, F. X., Montuori, A., Barron, A. (1997). Creators on creating. New York, N.Y. :Penguin.

**Life:** Barron died on October 6, 2002, in Santa Cruz.

**Origin:** Frank Barron was born on June 17, 1922 in the coal-mining town of Lansford, Pennsylvania, to Francis and Sarah Ellen Barron.

**Education:** In 1937 he attended La Salle University, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1942. He received his Master of Arts from the University of Minnesota in 1948, and his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1950.

**Career highlights:**

Barron served the U.S. Army (1943 - 1946) in Europe as a medical sergeant. He taught as a visiting professor at Harvard, Bryn Mawr College, University of Hawaii, Wesleyan and from 1949 to 1968 worked as a founding member of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at UC Berkeley. From 1969 until his retirement in 1992 he taught courses in personality and human creativity at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Personal life:**

**Family:** Barron married Nancy Jean Camp in 1961, and they had three children: Francis Charles Xavier, Brigid Jessica Sarah, and Anthea Rose Maeve.

**Personality:** Barron had a gentle heart, great sense of humor and impressed with his erudition, subtlety of mind and love of language. He was fond of poetry and wrote a book of poems "Ghosts".