

In Memoriam
Irwin Mallin
June 20, 1962-May 6, 2019

Irwin Mallin, Associate Professor of Communication, passed away Monday, May 6th, 2019. Irwin earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 2001, after earning a B.S. (1984), M.A. (1995), and J.D. (1987) from Syracuse University in New York. Irwin first came to IPFW in 1999 as a Future Faculty Teaching Fellow, and was hired in 2002 to the position in the Department of Communication. Irwin played a central role in advising both in the department and campus wide. He was recognized as Featured Faculty for Service Excellent in Spring 2019 for his career's work in revising the advising practices of faculty campus wide. Irwin was profoundly invested in the success of our students, faculty and staff.

Irwin's commitment to education is tangible in his family history. Though he held his family stories close to his chest, there was no mistaking his expressed and deeply held love for his father, Zurick, and his uncle, Towia, co-owners of a tailor shop in Syracuse, New York. Zurick and Towia were born in Mlawa, Poland and survived most of the Nazi violence and occupation in the Warsaw Ghetto. They eventually become prisoners of the Auschwitz Concentration and Death Camp. Before liberation, both were transferred to some of Auschwitz's most brutal labor sub-camps where they experienced considerable violence. They both managed symptoms of PTSD for the remainder of their lives. These experiences did not prevent them from providing Irwin with a rich childhood.

Irwin was born to Zurick and Evelyn Esther Mallin. Zurick and Evelyn met when he visited the United States after being relocated to Israel post-liberation. They married, had Irwin, and visited Israel with some regularity. After his father and uncle naturalized and opened their tailor shop the thread of their story thins a bit. But there is no doubt that their stories and experiences included Irwin's pursuit of higher education. While going through Irwin's belongings we found some curious pages of notebook paper with hand-written civics questions—"How many American colonies were there?" "What year was Constitution signed?". When we asked Irwin about these papers, Irwin shared that his father and uncle were learning and practicing English and Civics for their naturalization. Irwin kept them because they signified something important about power and freedom found in education. Irwin often cited the ability to help people change their lives as the reason he wanted to be a professor.

Certainly, being a lawyer would have been a more lucrative professional trajectory, but Irwin insisted that he could simply help more people in more ways in higher education.

Irwin certainly made good on his promise to make a big difference in people's lives. His colleagues found piles of thank you cards in his office, snuck into boxes, used as bookmarks, displayed on bookshelves; the gratitude of at least two generations of faculty, students, staff filled the office. Card after card expressed appreciation for helping the student or faculty member overcome a significant hurdle. Often the hurdles were material—Irwin advocated for resources, made a donation, extended a paper deadline, or otherwise cleared a barrier to a persons success. Many more were thank yous for Irwin's simple, yet profound belief in them—he was their

cheerleader, their mentor, their source of support, their point of information. The thank yous were for small things and big life changing things. Most noted Irwin's enduring belief in them—his aggressive optimism, his insistence on “keeping hope alive”, and the belief that we can all do better.

There is no doubt the Department of Communication and PFW as an institution is richer for having had Irwin call this place his home. Irwin's generous spirit lives on in the considerable donations his estate will make to both local and national organizations whose goals are to help curb hunger, aid students in emergencies, and otherwise work to make the lives of people better.