

In Memoriam

Dr. Richard Ramsey

The Department of English and Linguistics lost a true friend and colleague on January 6, 2022. Richard (Rick, as we all called him) Ramsey was a part of the IPFW family for 28 years, serving in various capacities within the department (Director of Writing; Director of the Graduate Program; Chair of the department). His commitment to the department and to IPFW is legendary, his thoughtfulness and graciousness exemplary of the kind of person he was. I personally met Rick in 2007 when I assumed the chair position in the department that he had held before his retirement. Rick typified a level of humaneness, decency, collegiality that are reflective of the best qualities found in the finest examples of our profession. When I met Rick and Yvonne, they immediately brought me into their home, where we broke bread and where they made me feel that I had known them for years, that I was already a long-standing member of the IPFW family. As John Minton, Rick's colleague for a number of decades, observes, Rick was "utterly selfless, supportive, and level headed," the qualities that he brought to a department in need of a cohesive, unifying presence. John notes that it would be hard to imagine what our department and our campus would be like today without his basic decency and calm resolve, from assuming, when asked, leadership roles across the department (e.g. director of our graduate program, writing program administrator early in his career, and finally chair of the department) to keeping his door open to assist all who crossed his threshold. As his memorial service demonstrated, the expansiveness of his mentoring and support was broad and deep.

His contributions across the campus included his role as a founding member of the Brown Ink Society, whose practice of providing financial assistance to students in need of support embodies the level of empathy and intrinsic thoughtfulness that coursed through his very being. As George Kalamaras and Mary Ann note, two of his colleagues whose careers parallel Rick's tenure in the department, Rick's sensitivity to others, his willingness to mentor and lend a hand and often a shoulder to those needing support was legendary. The calmness and leadership he provided to this department accounts for the ongoing strength of the department: his spirit continues to inform all that we are and all that we do.

A brief biography might note his birth in Milwaukee, his undergraduate career at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1963 with a slight detour in the US Army Infantry, and his return to academia for graduate degrees at the University of Illinois (MA 1969 and Ph.D. in 1973). More notable, as Rick warmly observed in a video recorded by his daughter Katy prior to his death, was his courtship of and marriage to Yvonne; their union of 43 years was notable for their willingness to share their home

and their lives with all around them, especially with the members of the department for their many parties and fetes. We are a much stronger, much more cohesive department because of the gentleness and patience he encouraged in us all. While citing Shakespeare might be at times cliché, I believe a line from *Hamlet* is especially relevant here: “He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.” And truly we shall not.