

Memorial Resolution
Kenneth James Balthaser
Associate Librarian Emeritus
12 November 1939 – 31 January 2009

Ken Balthaser passed away Saturday, January 31, 2009. Ken retired in May 2003 as Associate Librarian Emeritus with 42 years of service. He came to IPFW in 1966 and was awarded his Doctor of Education from Indiana University (Bloomington campus) in 1967. He completed the Master of Science in Librarianship from Western Michigan University in 1978. During his tenure at IPFW he served as Associate Professor of Education, teaching graduate instructional technology courses, and worked as Director of the Learning Resource Center, Associate Librarian, and Assistant Director for Special Projects at the Walter E. Helmke Library.

Ken was responsible for several firsts at IPFW. He built the Learning Resource Center (LRC) from scratch. As LRC Director, Ken oversaw the use of audiovisual equipment across campus and also supervised the design and development of graphic elements needed by faculty and students for published articles and books, and a great variety of presentation venues. He was an innovator, moving rapidly from 16 mm movies to videos, and overhead transparencies to mobile computers in the classroom. Lee Peitzman called Ken "the ultimate can-do guy." While under Ken's watch LRC researched for possible purchase everything from "beeper balls" to barcode scanners. Many times Ken personally attended to AV needs across the campus. There are reports of Ken coming in on weekends and evenings to assist in equipment setup and use. Ed Leonard wrote of Ken, "Whatever I needed – classroom or conference setup – Ken was always there, willing to take that extra step." Ken's dedication and support earned him the gratitude and praise of many faculty members, and in 1986, Ken was formally acknowledged for his "behind-the-scenes facilitation of faculty research" when he was awarded a Certificate of Recognition from the IPFW Chapter of the Sigma Xi scientific research society.

No one can comment on Ken's tremendous contributions without also noting those of his wife, Linda. Ken and Linda were inseparable and their love for each other and for IPFW showed in all that they accomplished. In 1978, Ken and Linda committed themselves to ensuring the success of IPFW's new Weekend College program. Together they were on campus every weekend making it work. Another first at IPFW that Ken managed and made successful was the development of television courses. Again Ken spent days, nights, and weekends to assist faculty in using this medium for IPFW's nascent distance learning program. An early adopter of televised courses, Tom Laverghetta, remembers Ken being so calm and collected. "He used to straighten my tie every time he was around before I went on camera. I think that sometimes I would move the tie just to have him straighten it."

Ken believed in the value of continuing education. Not only did he serve for many years on the Senate Continuing Education Advisory Subcommittee, he took a personal interest in staff professional advancement. Ken and Linda sponsored the LRC & Library Staff Development Grant. This grant provided to LRC and Helmke Library full-time staff, their spouses and dependent children, after fee courtesy and financial aid, the remaining costs for classes taken at IPFW. The grant essentially reduced tuition and

class-material costs to zero. Over the years, Ken and Linda provided tuition grants to a number of staff, making it possible for them or family members to complete their education.

Ken took a personal interest in IPFW students as well. He supported student rights in his long-time service to the Campus Appeals Board and the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. Lenore DeFonso writes that Ken was keenly interested in the appeals process and in protecting student rights. She mused that, "maybe Ken was a judge in another life?" In 1992, the Indiana-Purdue Student Government Association recognized him with a Certificate of Appreciation for devoted and invaluable services rendered.

Ken will also be remembered for the many generous acts and thoughtful little things that he did to make us smile and remind us not to take ourselves too seriously. In the library, Ken provided a never-empty candy bowl that we could all count on when we needed a sugar fix. Tom Laverghetta remembers that Ken provided parties, pictures, and plaques for his 100th, 300th, 500th, and 750th classes on television. Tom thought these were from LRC, but he found out later that it was Ken who actually planned and financed these celebrations. Alan Sandstrom stated that "LRC generously provided film and paid for the developing of my ethnographic field photos over three sabbatical leaves from IPFW. Only later did I discover that these costs were borne out of pocket by Ken and Linda Balthaser, and I am ever grateful for their support. He was an exceptional individual with a vision for IPFW that has hardly been surpassed by any others." Barbara Blauvelt, Secretary for History and Political Science departments, still has a photograph taken by Ken of Mike Downs leaning on a computer with a note attached that read, "Here is a picture of Mike Downs using a computer."

There was also a playful and athletic side of Ken that many do not know. Sushil Usman reveals that "Years ago, he and his lovely wife Linda used to play badminton in the parking lot of IPFW." Professionally, Ken showed his interest in athletics by serving many years on the IPFW Senate Subcommittee on Athletics. At events, Ken and Linda were great fans of IPFW Athletics, especially men's volleyball. In fact, they are the only IPFW fans whose bleacher seats in the Gates Center have nameplates attached to them."

Ken's work on behalf of IPFW has been acknowledged through a number of formal awards and honors. In 1993 he was recognized with a "Great Men Then and Now" award for his support of the program and activities of IPFW's Multicultural Services Department. He received the Paul E. Shaffer medal in 2005 in recognition for outstanding service, leadership, and generosity to IPFW. In honor of his loyalty and generous support in the pursuit of excellence, Ken was named a life member of the Purdue University President's Council, and, in 1988, he became a lifetime honorary board member of the Indiana University at Fort Wayne Alumni Association.

It is the many expressions of gratitude from faculty and staff that tell of Ken's dedication, professionalism, and heart. The sentiments of those who knew and worked with our colleague and friend, Ken Balthaser, can be summed up by Linda Ruffolo who wrote to Ken on his retirement that "you have always represented all that is good about the cooperative spirit on this campus. Your knowledge, ability, good nature and 'can do and will do' attitude will always be remembered and appreciated."

Written by: Cheryl Truesdell, Dean, Walter E. Helmke Library