

**In Memoriam**  
**Jeanne Marie Tessier (Barone)**  
**16 October 1947 – 10 January 2018**

Jeanne Marie Tessier taught for the IPFW Communication Department from 1988 until 2002. Having become a Tenured Instructor, she left once she decided IPFW was eating her soul – her words at the time - and embarked on a new chapter of her life in pastoral care. She was a boundlessly thoughtful, compassionate and wise person, whose formative and aspirational influences continue to guide the rest of us toward becoming half the teacher she was. IPFW was never the same once she left, and now the world will be ever more in need of repair without her.

Jeanne’s obituary, which she had already written herself with typically self-effacing clarity, recounted her varied roles as public speaker, writer, visual artist, retreat director, religious educator, preacher, lector, and Taizé prayer service facilitator. Yet even at IPFW, she already had begun to find ways to intertwine these interests and passions with classes she taught, including the Holocaust and Representation; Art and Communication; and Intercultural Communication. Once she outgrew IPFW, her teaching continued to intertwine with her other emergent personas, whether ministering to the sick and dying or giving art classes to survivors of sexual abuse. She frequently returned to university teaching, because, in her words “she was loved and saved by teachers,” and so “did her best to love and save every student she met.”

Throughout her careers, Jeanne maintained a strong commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. In 1995, she and soon-to-be president of Manchester University Jo Young Switzer co-authored *Interviewing: Art and Skill*. The textbook, still in print today, was way ahead of its time in raising awareness around cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity as central to the interviewing process. Jeanne’s expertise in interviewing and diversity eventually landed her a finalist spot with Steven Spielberg’s Survivors of the Shoah Foundation. There, she received training in working with survivors to document eyewitness testimony of the Holocaust.

Jeanne herself was a survivor of sexual abuse. In 2012, she testified that in 1962 her half-brother Jack McCullough had raped her when she was 14 years old. Her testimony came amid McCullough’s murder trial of 7-year old Maria Ridulph. A judge eventually acquitted him of the rape charge, and in 2017 McCullough was able to get his murder conviction of Ridulph overturned as well.

“As you know,” Jeanne once told the Limberlost Girl Scout Council Service Team Kickoff in 1996 during her keynote address at South Side High School,

these are very hard times in which to grow up female in the USA. Despite all the strides made in pursuit of equality for women in the country, there are many social and cultural forces at work right now that counteract the good that has been done. You know about these forces as well as I do; film and television bombard young girls with highly

sexualized and unattainable ideals of female beauty. At the same time as girls are told they can be anything they want to be, deep cultural patterns still work to convince them they're incomplete without a man, and that, to win a man, they must be willing to sacrifice even their dreams.

But Jeanne had a way of turning the harsher limits of deep injustice, inequality, and trauma into energizing calls to action and accountability. Her 1996 speech, later reprinted in the monthly magazine *Vital Speeches of the Day*, was titled "The Sky's No Limit At All: Be a Dreamer." Drawing on sources as varied as poet Rita Dove, Cervantes, Abigail Adams, Sojourner Truth, and Georgie Anne Geyer, Jeanne observed that

I have come to believe in my own life that all perceived challenges or burdens are really gifts in disguise... I have spent most of my life testing the edges of limits, my own and those imposed limits I've encountered along my rocky path. I am a born questioner and limit-tester, so much so that when I was the age of your Cadette and Senior Girl Scouts, my mother despaired, both of surviving my journey to adulthood herself, and of my surviving getting there.

According to her sister, Jeanne was particularly fond of a lyric from Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem": "There is a crack in everything; that's how the light gets in." Through her work as chaplain, she found new ways to shine love, comfort, and hope upon others encountering the limits and edges of the rockiest stretches of their lives. This, her obituary attests, "deepened her understanding that love is everything." Yet love already deeply imbued Jeanne's teaching, and teaching always coursed like blood through Jeanne's love. It was the most authentic combination of both, the kind earned both by having stumbled over the rocks yourself, and by having come off the harshest edges of a path that few others ever have had to take.

Jeanne is survived by three children, Shelly Elizabeth Barone, Stephen Michael Barone, and Blue Barone Neustifter, two grandchildren; and siblings Kathy Caulfield, Bob Tessier, Jan Tessier; Mary Hunt, and Nancy Jo Tessier.