

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

on Behalf of B. Bruce Wagener

1934-2011

Associate Professor of Communication and Theatre, IUPUI

The Department of Communication Studies at IUPUI mourns the passing of Dr. B. Bruce Wagener.

B. Bruce Wagener was one of the founding members and the first chair of what is now the Department of Communication Studies. Bruce was originally a Purdue faculty member. He came to Purdue from Ohio State University where he earned his MA in general communication and his PhD in communication theory in the 1960s. Bruce's tenure with Purdue, and then IUPUI spanned four decades until his retirement in 1998. He directed the basic speech course which was in a lecture, recitation section format. So Bruce lectured all day every Friday at different locations around the city. As Bruce remembered it, IUPUI had "classrooms out the ears, but not many students." Jennifer Cochrane calls Bruce "the original face to face lecturer. Every lecture was a performance." Bruce founded speech night, the longest continuously running event on the IUPUI campus. Former Chair Dorothy Webb calls Bruce's work with the basic course and speech night "a living legacy." Bruce and colleague Dave Burns established the Burns Wagener scholarship, which is still given today.

In the early days, there were three Purdue faculty members with offices on 38th Street across from the fairgrounds and three IU faculty members with offices in the Marott building on Meridian. These individuals formed what would become the Department of Communication and Theatre at IUPUI. It couldn't have been easy merging faculty from different universities with different areas of expertise who were housed at different locations around the city. But that was Bruce's first charge as a new chair. According to former chair Dorothy Webb, "One thing I'm certain about is that Bruce made a great difference in the way our departments (Purdue and IU) merged and he provided leadership to bring the two entities together. (Most of us learned of the merger when we opened the Indianapolis Star one morning and learned that we were now IUPUI.) It took a long time to get past a lot of problems. Bruce excelled in finding common ground!"

Bruce was a storyteller and his greatest love was oral interpretation. If the walls of Cavanaugh could talk, and incidentally Bruce remembered Cavanaugh as a "comfortable abode," those walls would tell of the many Listeners Theatre productions Bruce directed, which included students Mike Scott, Bill Stuckey, and Paul Siddens. As Bruce conveyed in a telephone conversation back in December, he was always "so impressed by how much students cared and their willingness to work. Their productions would have put professional theatres to shame."

Perhaps students cared so much because they had a great teacher. I think this story may sum up the kind of teacher that Bruce was to so many of his students. Paul Siddens is a communication and theatre alum from the 1970s who had Bruce as a professor. Paul is now a professor at the University of Northern Iowa. Paul relayed this story. "A few years ago, two of Bruce's former students came to UNI to see one of my productions. Later that evening, after watching the production, and watching me interact with my student performers and crew, we were talking about the production and they both smiled at me and said, 'You know, watching you tonight was

just like watching Bruce.” Paul calls this the “greatest compliment” he ever received. It sums up what he always wanted to do: “teach and work with students in theatrical productions just like Bruce.”

What a joy it must have been to work with B. Bruce Wagener. He has left a lasting legacy on our department and our school and he will be greatly missed.

Bruce is survived by his partner John, his daughters Krysti and Kerra, four grandchildren, his former wife Myrla, and a sister.

THUS, BE IT RESOLVED, that this memorial resolution be placed in the minutes of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis Faculty Council with a moment of silence observed in his honor. A copy of this memorial resolution will be delivered to his partner and children.

This resolution is written on behalf of B. Bruce Wagener’s former students and the staff and faculty of the Department of Communication Studies. This resolution was prepared by Kristy Sheeler, Chair of Communication Studies.

Passed by the IUPUI Faculty Council at their meeting on February 7, 2012.