

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION  
CHARLES BIXLER HEISER JR.  
(1920 – 2010)**

Distinguished Professor Emeritus Charles B. Heiser Jr. died on June 11, 2010. Professor Heiser is survived by his wife, Dorothy Gaebler Heiser, their three children: Lynn Marie Monzo, Cynthia Ann Roberts-Hall, and Charles B. Heiser III; and their seven grandchildren. The Heisers were married for almost sixty-six years.

Charles Heiser was born in Cynthiana, Ind., in 1920. He earned his AB (1942) and MA (1943) from Washington University in St. Louis, and his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1947.

Professor Heiser joined the Indiana University faculty as an assistant professor of botany in the same year that he earned his doctorate, working his way up to Distinguished Professor in 1979, and retiring in 1986. A renowned ethnobotanist, Heiser was a leading authority on *Helianthus* (sunflowers). His early studies with sunflowers led to his interest in natural hybridization and its evolutionary significance, as well as an interest in the origin of domesticated plants and agriculture. Heiser went on to become an authority on several other plants of economic importance, including naranjillas, chili peppers, gourds, and totora.

Charles Heiser was very active after retirement, continuing to write and further his research. "Most days he could be found in the greenhouse attending to various bizarre looking plants. His work on hybridization in the sunflower genus inspired and informed subsequent work by Loren Rieseberg, who was recently honored for his work on sunflowers," said Roger Innes, chair. "Charley was also known for his disarming sense of humor and quick smile, and was much loved by his students, including twenty-nine doctoral students, many of whom went on to stellar careers. We will miss him very much."

One of Professor Heiser's doctoral students, Jeffrey Doyle, MA'77, PhD'81, now a professor of plant biology at Cornell University, remembers his mentor's passion. "It was never work for him — it was more like a full-time hobby," noted Doyle, who visited campus in October 2007, to give a seminar in honor of Heiser's sixty years of service to Indiana University. During the visit, Doyle recalls: "He took me out to the experimental field and showed me all the plants he was still working with; it reminded me of my first trip out there over thirty years earlier, when he showed his new students his rows of peppers, the hybrid honey locust trees, and his sunflowers. Same Charley! That's how I'll remember him, and I hope I convey to my own students even a fraction of his passion and joy. It is hard to imagine the world without him. But

then, I think, whenever I see a sunflower or a honey locust, or eat a hot pepper, or recall any of the many cultivated plants of Andean origin . . . well, a part of Charley is there!”

Gregory Anderson, PhD’71, retired Vice-Provost of Research from the University of Connecticut, remembers Heiser’s high scientific standards, his love of writing, and his pervasive dry sense of humor, which he often turned upon himself. “He did not mince words when talking about your, his, or anyone’s quality of science, their logic or their work. This was sometimes hard to take, but always valuable, and eventually . . . valued,” Anderson said. Most of all, Anderson appreciated Heiser’s strong commitment and loyalty to “botany, to science, to his family, to his students, and to Indiana and especially to IU.”

Another of Heiser’s former students, W. Hardy Eshbaugh, MA’61, PhD’64, says that his mentor’s influence on his professional career cannot be overstated. Eshbaugh came to IU planning to earn an MAT to become a high school teacher. Heiser convinced him instead to consider a career as a college professor and to continue his research on peppers. “This was very far beyond my horizon!” Eshbaugh recalled in a note to Heiser’s children. “Now these many years later I have spent the vast majority of my career as a professor at Miami University. Your father started me on one incredible journey, and I will be forever grateful for that. I was the first in my family to get a college degree and I really had no idea what a PhD entailed or what it would mean. I had struggled as an undergraduate at Cornell. However, graduate school was a different matter, and your father started me on a long love affair with learning that continues to this day.”

Professor Heiser was president of several key organizations, including the American Society of Plant Taxonomists; the Society for the Study of Evolution; the Society for Economic Botany; and the Botanical Society of America. His honors include the Guggenheim Fellowship; the Gleason Award of the New York Botanical Garden; the Merit Award and Centennial Award of the Botanical Society of America; a recognition as Distinguished Economic Botanist from the Society of Economic Botany; the Pustovoit Award from the International Sunflower Association; the Asa Gray Award from the American Society of Plant Taxonomists; the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Indiana Academy of Science; and the Raven Award presented by the American Society of Plant Taxonomists. Professor Heiser was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1987.

Loren Rieseberg said of his colleague, “One of the most rewarding aspects of science is that often your heroes are also your friends. Charley Heiser was my first and foremost scientific hero and later became a friend and colleague. Indeed, his presence and collections were key to my decision to come to IU,” adding, “Isaac Newton famously wrote ‘If I have seen further it is only by standing on the shoulders of giants.’ Charley is one of the scientific giants on whose shoulders we stand today, although it is doubtful we see any further than he did.”

In recognition of Distinguished Professor Charles Heiser's many contributions to the scientific and scholarly life of the Department of Biology and to the university at large, be it resolved that this memorial resolution become part of the permanent records of the proceedings of the Bloomington Faculty Council and that copies be sent to the following people: David Zaret, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Roger Innes, Chair of the Department of Biology; Dorothy G. Heiser; Lynn M. Monzo; and Cynthia A. Roberts-Hall.

Kathy E. Wyss, Department of Biology