

Craig E. Nelson

The retirement of Craig E. Nelson marks the formal end of a remarkable academic career characterized by the breadth of his research interests, by his pivotal role in the development of environmental studies programs and the formation of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, and by an illustrious record of teaching highlighted by the creativity of his approaches and international recognition as one of the leading exponents of "critical thinking."

Craig began his academic career at the University of Kansas (B.A. with honors in zoology in 1962) and did his graduate work in zoology at the University of Texas, Austin (M.A., 1964, Ph.D., 1966). He came to the zoology department at Indiana University as an assistant professor in 1966, and was promoted to associate professor of biology in 1971, and to professor in 1987.

Craig's strong interests in natural history were cultivated during his undergraduate years and resulted in significant research on the distribution and systematics of such diverse groups as amphibians, snakes, and bats in Central America and Mexico. Craig's graduate research centered on the microhylidae, a family of small frogs and narrowmouth toads with a worldwide tropical distribution. His master's thesis dealt with the systematics of the Mexican microhylid genus *Hypopachus*, while his Ph.D. explored the evolutionary relationships of all North American microhylids.

This work expanded in Craig's early years at Indiana University, included South American microhylids, and involved taxonomy, phylogenetic relationships, biogeography, and community ecology. His approaches were diverse and in many cases pioneering. Especially noteworthy was his ability to recognize the value of new techniques (e.g., protein electrophoresis, genetics) and his willingness to apply them in innovative ways. Subsequent work focused on the structure of entire amphibian communities and the complex of interacting factors responsible for it. This led Craig and his students into studies of "adaptive strategies" and far more theoretical approaches to evolutionary ecology.

This all became a stimulating part of many seminar groups and courses to which Craig contributed.

Craig's research also involved an important long-term collaboration with Michael A. Ewert, in which they explored the ecology, behavior, and evolutionary ecology of turtles. Of particular significance is their seminal work that demonstrated the importance of environmental factors, especially temperature, in sex determination in turtles and other reptiles.

Craig directed 21 doctoral and nine master's dissertations. This work was diverse and invariably innovative, a tribute to Craig's broad interests and interactive involvement.

A major part of Craig's contribution to the university began in 1969-70 with his participation in the incipient environmental movement. This spawned an honors seminar, Crisis Biology, which he co-taught. The students and faculty members involved became major players in the first Earth Day celebration. Craig was an important member of the Earth Day Committee, and was one of the major speakers at Hanover College's Earth Day. In 1970-71, Craig offered a College course, on Environment and Man, and an Honors course, Environment and Society. Subsequently Craig became a pivotal member of the committee that established an interdisciplinary Environmental Studies Program and ultimately the School of Public and Environmental Affairs. He served as the first director of Environmental Studies. As a result, his teaching and service commitments involved both biology and SPEA.

Craig always carried a heavy service load, serving on or chairing many committees. His university service involved a wide range of committees and other roles, e.g., Urban Affairs, University Distinguished Teaching Awards, Wells Scholars Curriculum, Collins Living-Learning Center Advisory, Honors Core Faculty, and the Bloomington Faculty Council. In biology and SPEA he served on myriad committees including faculty search committees in evolution, ecology, and organismal biology (EEOB), the Howard Hughes Undergraduate Initiative (chair of several), and the Biology Promotions Committee. He also served as director of the graduate program in EEOB.

Craig's greatest gift to the university has been in the realm of teaching. Over the years he has taught a remarkably wide variety of courses in biology, SPEA, and the Honors College. His offerings in evolution and community ecology, and the Ecology Seminar, were critical to EEOB. He always made significant contributions to Ecology Seminars through his insightful and stimulating commentary. Craig was also an effective participant in the creation versus evolution controversy, often debating creationists in both local and national contexts.

During his career Craig gained an international reputation as a proponent of "critical thinking" in teaching. His involvement in critical thinking began in the 1970s and continued to grow. He introduced the methodology into his lecture and seminar courses, and offered many courses on critical thinking. His contributions extended well beyond the university; he is now recognized as an international authority on the subject. This expertise has led to his involvement in literally hundreds of seminars, short courses, and workshops at universities all over the United States, and his participation in many Chautauqua Courses for College Teachers.

Craig's contributions to teaching have resulted in an impressive array of prestigious awards; for example, two IU Student Alumni Council Outstanding Teaching Awards, an Amoco Foundation Award "In Recognition of Distinguished Teaching," selection as Sigma Xi National Lecturer, selection as Carnegie Scholar for 2000-01, an award from the Carnegie Foundation as Outstanding Doctoral and Research University Professor of the Year for 2000, and, most significantly, receipt of the President's Medal for Excellence, Indiana University (2001). The latter represents the highest honor bestowed by Indiana University.

All of us who have known and worked with Craig over the years recognize the significance of his contributions in research, service, and teaching, and congratulate him on a wondrous career. He has brought great distinction to his discipline and the university and has made our lives more stimulating.

Donald R. Whitehead