

Albert W. Ruesink

Al Ruesink retired from the Indiana University Department of Biology in June 2012, after 45 years of service to IU. Born and raised on a farm near Adrian, Michigan, Al spent his youth learning botany and zoology from a very practical point of view. He received an early lesson in growth and development when his father challenged him to carry a newborn lamb down the road to a nearby bridge and back every day to build up his strength. The lamb grew much faster than Al's muscles! Supplementing his practical education on the farm, Al attended a one-room brick schoolhouse from grades K-8, then moved on to the big high school in town, where Al graduated as the valedictorian of his class of ~220 students in 1958. Al then attended the University of Michigan, completing his B.A. in Botany in 1962, graduating with high honors and distinction. It was at Michigan where he met the love of his life, Kathy, a botany graduate student, and they are still together 51 years later. For years Kathy was a valued academic advisor at IU.

From Michigan, Al moved on to Harvard University for graduate school, where he developed novel methods for studying the cells of plants, publishing papers in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and in *Science*, two of the most respected scientific journals. He completed his Ph.D. in Biology in 1966 and then moved on to a post-doctoral research post in Zurich at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology.

Indiana University was fortunate to entice Al back the USA with an Assistant Professor position in the Department of Botany in 1967, a mere five years after completing his B.A. and at the ripe old age of 27. Al moved steadily up through the professorial ranks after his arrival, becoming an Associate Professor in 1972 and Professor in 1980.

Al distinguished himself early in his IU career as a talented and dedicated teacher and highly effective administrator, making major contributions to the curriculum design of what was then called the Division of Biological Sciences. He was "rewarded" for these efforts by being appointed the Director of Undergraduate Programs, and Chair of the Division's Committee on Curriculum and Courses (CCC) in 1978. Unbelievably, Al has served as Chair of the CCC ever since. This has got to be the longest running committee chair of any faculty member at IU, 34 years!

Al has won numerous awards for his teaching and dedication to undergraduate education. The first among these came in 1980, when he received the Amoco Foundation Distinguished Teaching Award, a

University-wide recognition as one of IU's finest educators. Perhaps his most cherished awards, though, have come from his former students. In 1999 he received the Senior Class Award for Teaching Excellence in Biology and Dedication to Undergraduates (voted on by Biology seniors) and in 2010 he received the Student Choice Award for Outstanding Faculty, an all-campus award from the IU Student Alumni Association. In 2006, Al's freshman molecular and cell biology class was selected by the Center for Educational Policy Research at the University of Oregon as one of 20 "best practices" courses across the nation for developing advanced placement Biology standards.

To say that Al has been dedicated to undergraduates is an understatement. During his 45 years at IU, Al has taught over 14,700 students. He has written in excess of 2,700 letters of recommendation. As if that was not sufficient, Al has also volunteered as a Residence Hall Fellow for the last 28 years, sharing meals with undergraduates and acting as an informal mentor to hundreds (thousands?) more students.

Al has also been a selfless servant of the Biology Department, and of the University. The list of committees on which Al has served extends for six pages! The reason he has been asked to serve on so many committees (and chaired many of them) is that he is highly effective at getting people to communicate and come to consensus. These talents have also been recognized by numerous awards, including the Campus Distinguished Service Award in 1990 and the Pinnell Award for Distinguished Service in 1992. Because of his recognized people skills and deep knowledge of the university, Al was asked by President Myles Brand in 1999 to serve as his Special Assistant for Faculty Relations, in which role he advised the president on faculty-related issues for the next six years, assisting with several searches for new chancellors across the IU system. This was a particularly interesting time to be working with the President as it spanned the firing of Bobby Knight and ensuing controversies.

Between all of his teaching, letter writing, and committee work one might think Al never took time out for fun, but one would be wrong. Al and Kathy have been faculty sponsors of the IU folk dancing club for over 30 years, organizing over 1000 of their Friday evening dances, with Al typically serving as DJ and often teaching dance steps at the same time. On the weekends, a familiar sight on the rural roads of Monroe county is Al and Kathy on their semi-recumbent tandem bicycle. With Kathy in front in the recumbent seat, and Al in back on the regular seat, it gives the illusion of Al pushing Kathy in a wheel chair! Al reckons they have traveled over 56,000 miles together on this bike.

Somewhere amidst all of these activities, Al and Kathy also found time to raise two wonderful daughters, who have now started families of their own, one in Washington and one in Vermont. I don't expect Al and Kathy to slow down in retirement, but I do expect their grandchildren will get a little more quality time with two terrific grandparents.

Roger Innes