

March 9, 2020

Dear colleagues:

I'm saddened to report the passing of Professor Emeritus Randall Baker on March 4. His contributions to the O'Neill School were as far reaching as were his talents and abilities. During his 22 years in Bloomington, he served as an international expert on historical perspectives in the analysis of contemporary environmental policy and problems, and was a sought-after speaker and accomplished author of more than two dozen books ranging from academic books to novels – including two novels in which he used his dry wit to poke fun at Indiana University. Professor Baker served as the director of international programs from 1986 to 2002, developing institutional partnerships globally on behalf of the O'Neill School, and creating a strong academic linkage with the Peace Corps, which served as a major source of outstanding students in our MPA program. Additionally, he took the lead in internationalizing the MPA curriculum by helping develop the Comparative and International Affairs Concentration. His collection of flags – including some from countries that no longer exist – were kept ready and loaned regularly to Indiana University's Office of International Affairs. Indiana University presented Professor Baker with the John W. Ryan Award for distinguished contributions to international programs in 2008.

Upon leaving the O'Neill School, Professor Baker worked diligently to help shape Western University in Baku, Azerbaijan, where he had previously received an honorary degree. Afterwards, Professor Baker moved permanently to Bulgaria where he was a Distinguished Professor at New Bulgarian University (NBU) in Sofia – an institution from which he received a second honorary degree and where he had completed two Fulbright fellowships.

Professor Baker had initially traveled to Sofia, Bulgaria as the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and subsequently, developed deep ties to this city and institution. Professor Henry R. Cooper, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, who had been on the initial trip to Bulgaria with Professor Baker commented, "He managed to make superb contacts with all the appropriate movers and shakers, eventually arranging even a meeting with the first non-Communist prime minister of the country." During this trip, Prof. Baker also arranged for a Bulgarian educational reformist to visit IU, laid plans to found a private university (which now has 10,000 students), and when he returned to the United States, published a book about the trip.

"Most importantly," Cooper said, "Randall stayed engaged: Bulgarians came to us, we went to Bulgaria. New initiatives were constantly being launched, IU faculty were being internationalized, and IU students were being exposed to students from a country many had never even heard of."

He was made an Honorary Member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, an Honorary Professor of Western University in Azerbaijan, and received a Distinguished Service Award from NIDA in Thailand in 2002. He was an Honorary Graduate of Moscow State University, was named an Honorary Citizen of Breze, Bulgaria, and appointed an Honorary British Consul in Rwanda.

Professor Baker received his bachelor's with honors in Natural Sciences and Economics from the University of Wales in 1965. He then earned his master's from the University of East Africa in 1966 and Ph.D. from the University of London in 1968.

Whether he was adding more foreign currency to his O'Neill office wallpapered in money; motorcycling through Great Britain with the O'Neil School's founding Dean, Chuck Bonser; flying in a hot air balloon over Cappadocia, Turkey with Professor Emerita Maureen Pirog; or accepting a diploma from Idi Amin, Randall Baker led a full and very interesting life. Said Maureen Pirog, "He was a vibrant, flamboyant and colorful personality in a sometimes drab sea of khaki. If people are remembered by those whose lives they have touched, he will be remembered for generations to come."

There will be a celebration of life event in Bloomington in the next couple of months and I will pass along new information as it becomes available.

Siân Mooney, Dean
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