

**Memorial Resolution**  
**Associate Adjunct Professor Robert Weiskopf**

Robert Weiskopf, Associate Adjunct Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, died at the age of 60 in June of this year, a death that ended his career as the best lecturer in the department, year in and year out, for the last 25 years. Indeed, judging by student comments he was the best lecturer that many students had at I.U. Over that 25-year period Bob taught over 25,000 students. His courses were always among the first to close during registration, despite the fact that they enrolled 96, or 255, or 417 students, depending upon the course and the room size. There were certainly students who would have “majored in Weiskopf” had he taught more courses. As it was, he taught four different courses, and there were many students who “minored in Weiskopf,” taking all four of those courses. There were also the “legacies,” students whose parents had taken courses from Bob and had sent their children to I.U. with instructions to be sure to sign up for Weiskopf’s course. Not surprisingly, he received several teaching awards, including TERA awards and the Student Choice Award in 2004. Upon hearing of his illness this past fall, his students sent him hundreds of cards, notes, and emails.

Some of the qualities that made Bob an outstanding lecturer are obvious. First, he loved teaching. Of all the things that he did, and he did many other things, he said that teaching gave him the most satisfaction. It might sound like a contradiction, but Bob said that lecturing, particularly to a large class, was tiring and that at the same time the students energized him. Second, with as many as 400 students, one has to be something of a performer, and Bob was. In explaining some of the psychopathologies, Bob would take

on the characteristics of the person so diagnosed, often without telling the class what was going on. He would begin to talk more slowly, have difficulty finding words, sigh and shrug, and make every movement with great effort. Eventually the class would understand that Bob was portraying a depressed client. Bob would go on for a while longer until students wanted to tell him that that was enough; he should stop. Several points were clearly demonstrated: First, and most obvious, the students got a first hand look at the behavior of a depressed patient. Second, and less obvious, students realized that simply telling a person to stop behaving in a certain way is no guarantee that they can stop. Also, clients with certain problems may be difficult to deal with: It was a performance with a clear, pedagogical purpose. A third quality, and one clearly related to the other two, was simply Bob's enthusiasm for teaching. Closely connected to his enthusiasm for teaching and a key element in it was his enthusiasm for learning. Several years ago he commented on how impressed he was with all the exciting things going on in neuroscience. He wanted to learn more about it and convey the excitement of recent development in the area to his students in his introductory class. So, he sat in on our graduate neuroscience seminar, participated in the discussions, did the readings, and returned to his students the excitement of learning new ideas.

Bob's enthusiasm extended well beyond teaching to include travel, the work that his children were doing, Italy and Rome, Barbara's, his wife's, pasta, but above all to include ideas and learning about ideas. Following a conversation with his son about a case in law school, Bob bought and read half a shelf of law books, because he found the subject interesting and quite different from his scientific readings, and also so that he could

discuss some of the issues with his son. He was a voracious reader and collector of books on travel, books on places where he had been or wanted to go, and books about places that he was unlikely to go—just to know what it would be like.

Bob's enthusiasm extended to his use of colorful language in a lecture to make a point. About once a year Bob would stop by a fellow faculty member's office and report that he knew he went over the top that day in class. It was just too much. He knew that he would have to watch his language, that he would have to tone it down. Bob was one of the few people who could become extremely enthusiastic about curbing his own enthusiasm.

Those who knew Bob primarily through his teaching at I.U. often assumed that was his only job. Bob had two other occupations. He was employed as a psychologist at Quinco Behavioral Health Systems in Columbus, Indiana. For 35 years, Bob served at Quinco, where he directed the clinical internship program. He also had a private clinical practice in Bloomington. Many people who knew Bob only through Quinco or his private practice assumed those were his only jobs. With Bob's enthusiasm and energy and his wide range of interests, people speculated that if you checked Wikipedia and looked up the term "multitasking" you might well read "See Weiskopf, Robert." In Rome, for example, Bob combined his morning exercise and sightseeing: He used to run around the city, up and down the seven hills, to famous churches, tour them from the outside, and then keep running.

During his illness, which began in September 2006, the one thing that Bob said that he missed the most was teaching. He wanted to explore ways he might be able to continue to contribute. He helped the instructors who took over his classes last fall with detailed notes, lecture outlines, exams, and so forth. But of course he wanted to do more. He thought about attending one of our neuropsychology classes and describing to the students the effect that his brain tumor was having on his cognitive and motor skills. As he said, it was a chance to use his own illness as a teaching tool.

Part of Bob's history, not known to many, was the fact that he was born in Germany in a Jewish rehabilitation camp, as his father and mother were survivors of German concentration camps. He came with his family to the United States at the age of 3. As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, he considered several majors, including philosophy and psychology. He eventually decided on psychology because, as he wrote in his application for graduate training at Indiana University, it "satisfies both my philosophical and scientific inclinations." Bob entered I.U.'s graduate program in 1968 and earned his PhD in 1974. He began teaching at I.U. in 1981. He was promoted to Associate Adjunct Professor in 1993. In his memory the Department has established an annual award for the outstanding undergraduate teaching assistant.

There was much that instructors could learn from observing Bob and his teaching, but there was an element that, while observable, was not easily transferable—Bob's personality, his way of engaging an entire lecture hall in the excitement of an idea, and making that idea real, vivid, and personal. Bob was unique and is irreplaceable.

Bob is survived by his wife, Barbara; his sister and her husband, Fay and Ben Finer, and their children Carl and Mitch Finer; his children and their families, Emma Weiskopf and Herb Gregg, Daniel Weiskopf and Beth Weiskopf; and Ben Newman, Mark Newman and Valerie Taylor and their children Soren and Ingmar Newman-Taylor.

This resolution of admiration and appreciation will become part of the minutes of the Bloomington Faculty Council.