

Nathan W. Shier

Associate Professor of Applied Health Science

“To teach is to learn twice.” *Anonymous*. Nathan Shier has embraced a lifelong love of teaching and in turn learning, about nutrition. Born to Mildred and Maynard Shier on October 20, 1943, in Lansing, Michigan, Nate was the younger of two sons. His interest in food and nutrition as well as his attention to detail may well have been innate—his dad was a journeyman meat cutter for Swift and Kroger for over 30 years. Maynard Sr. was well known for his fine cuts of meat and poultry and ability to present them in such a way as to enhance customer appeal. And oh, the feasts the Shiers would have at home!

Nate stayed in Lansing for college, with a B.S. in Animal Physiology (1965) at Michigan State, followed by an M.S. in Biology (1969). During his master’s work, Nate became less interested in a career as a physician to treat illnesses, and began to consider the role of prevention in medicine to preserve health. His reconsideration occurred just as links were being made between cigarette smoking and lung cancer (1964), warning labels were placed on cigarettes (1969), and Senator George McGovern was learning about connections between blood cholesterol levels and heart ailments (1968). The late 1960s were a time of great change in many ways in the United States, including attitudes toward nutrition as prevention. Under the guidance of his doctoral mentor, Dr. Olaf Mickelsen, Nate developed the skills to move nutrition science principles gleaned from the classroom into the laboratory, so that students could discover the status of their own health and nutrition through examining blood and urine assays. Yet, Nate Shier is not one to abandon a dream. Midway in his doctoral studies he was invited to interview for admission to Marquette Medical School (now the Medical College of Wisconsin). He considered the offer but declined, as he and his wife, Patricia, had just started their family with the birth of their first son, Christopher. Family has and always will come first for Nate, and he recognized that school plus surgical residency would mean six or more years of too many hours away from his family. He happily stayed at Michigan State, finishing his Ph.D. in human nutrition in 1975.

Nate’s first academic position was at Wayne State University (Detroit) as an assistant professor from 1975 to 1979. There he taught in the nutrition science program as well as the medical school. In 1979 he moved his family to Bloomington, accepting the position of associate professor in nutrition science in the Department of Home Economics at Indiana University. It is said that change is good; that being said, Nate has had many “good” experiences at IU. In 1984 he received tenure, and the nutrition science and dietetics programs moved from the College of Arts and Sciences to the Department of Applied Health Science in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER). In 1987, during construction of the Sample Gates (at Kirkwood and Indiana Avenues), a truck filled with pea gravel crushed the gas line supplying the foods and nutrition laboratories in Wylie Hall. A decision was made to permanently disable this line. Oops, there go the gas ranges and Bunsen burners for classroom work and lab research. Always one to

compromise, Nate worked diligently to assure that students' current and future educational experiences were not compromised. Finally, in the mid-1990s the nutrition and dietetics move to HPER was complete, with the foods and nutrition labs on the ground floor in HPER, where they currently reside.

Nate has a love for teaching and working with students. He has always been a student advocate for both undergraduates and graduates. His efforts in teaching earned him in 1985 the Distinguished Independent Study Award for Human Nutrition, given by the National University Continuing Education Association, and in 2007, the Teaching Excellence Award from the School of Continuing Studies at Indiana University. As his colleague for 22 years, I am acutely aware of Nate's tireless devotion to his teaching and to his students. He taught introductory nutrition courses to those exploring nutrition for the first time, pouring over newspapers and magazines for current events relevant to the day's nutrition topic. Seniors in nutrition science and dietetics always looked forward to Dr. Shier's advanced nutrition class, marveling at his experiences in the lab and knowledge of metabolic pathways. Graduate students appreciated his gentle guidance with their laboratory work in nutrient assays of foods indigenous to Latin American or Western African diets. During his tenure at IU, Nate chaired or served on 18 doctoral committees and chaired 16 and served on 8 master's theses. As Nate notes, "Our job is one you just cannot leave at 5:00. Every evening, Saturday and Sunday, I think about it and what I need to do to make it better for these students . . ."

Nate was also a notable mentor to colleagues. Junior faculty recognized his attention to detail and ability to view situations objectively. Those of us who worked closely with him appreciated his wit, textbook knowledge of nutritional biochemistry, and willingness to help whenever asked. We will miss visiting Nate in his office of many plants, be they dracaenas, philodendrons, Norfolk Island pines, or his newest addition, a seven-foot pineapple propagated from a fruit he purchased a year ago. In your retirement, Nate, enjoy your passion for gardening, traveling, and spending time with your wife, Pat, and your three grown children, Christopher, Emily, and Timothy. We know you'll continue to stay physically active, cook a lot, and continue to read, read, read. IU was so fortunate to have Nate Shier as a faculty member for 28 years. Now, we can have him as an emeritus!

Alice Lindeman