

Howard H. Keller

Howard Keller's zest for life can be felt in all he does. His great loves – the languages and literatures of Europe, travel to almost anywhere and everywhere, and fine wine and cuisine – reflect his passion for culture and his appreciation for the diversity of human experience. His unflagging spirit of adventure finds its regular expression not only in culinary and literary expeditions to Chicago, but also on board the sailboat he keeps at Lake Monroe, on the frequent hikes he enjoys taking through Indiana's state parks, and even at the controls of the planes he occasionally pilots.

Howard brought his personal warmth, his engaging charm, and his far-ranging intellect into many a classroom over his 39-year academic career. He has served on the faculty of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University for 22 years, where he primarily taught courses on Russian language but also developed a popular TOPICS course with the provocative title "How Thought Influences Language." His retirement will leave a gap not easily filled. Before coming to IU in 1983, Howard spent 13 years as a professor of Russian and linguistics at Murray State University in Kentucky. Prior to that, he was a Fulbright lecturer in linguistics and TESL at Sofia State University in Bulgaria and an assistant professor of linguistics at Southern Illinois University. It was in Bulgaria that Howard met his German wife Helga, starting a life-long love that not only gave birth to their daughter Christiane, but also to Howard's professional interest in the German lexicon.

Howard was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and attended Brooklyn Preparatory High School, a Jesuit institution that required four years of Latin and offered three years of Classical Greek. He graduated from Fordham University in 1963, with a major in Russian and a minor in Latin and Greek. While still an undergraduate his love of all things French was launched through a study-abroad year at the University of Paris, Ecole des langues orientales vivantes. Howard went on to defend a dissertation four years later at Georgetown University on "Dostoevsky's Buffoon: A Study in Alienation." An ROTC obligation from college resulted in two years of active duty as an Army officer. Eight months of this service were spent in Vietnam as a captain on the intelligence staff at the MAC-V headquarters in Saigon.

Howard's scholarship is rooted in his fascination with words, their internal structure, the relationships among them, and how vocabulary is best taught. This is best seen in the titles of his three books, *German Root Lexicon* (1973), *A German Word Family Dictionary* (1978), and *Random House Russian-English English-Russian Dictionary* (1999), as well as his edited collection *New Perspectives on Teaching Vocabulary* (1978). His published articles similarly deal with problems of lexicography, vocabulary acquisition, computer-assisted instruction, and semantic nets, bearing such representative titles as "The Role of Common Semantic Denominator in Russian Root Structures" (*Russian Language Journal*), "Getting a Start in Computer-Assisted Language Learning" (*Slavic and East European Journal*), "Pedagogical Wishes for a Machine Dictionary: An Example from Russian" (*Modern Language Journal*), and "Measuring Russian Prefixal Polysemy: The 53 Most Frequent ZA- Verbs Matched Against 20 Meaning Classifications for ZA-" (*Russian Language Journal*). He has been invited to lecture on these and related topics all over the world, including not only many European countries but also India and Mexico, and has presented his research on diverse aspects of Russian language pedagogy at numerous competitive conferences. He has also served as a consultant on binational panels in Russia and Ukraine.

Throughout his career, Howard has selflessly given to his profession. He was the book review editor from 1979 to 1980 and from 1981 to 1984 he served as editor in chief of *Slavic and East European Journal* (*SEEJ*), a leading publication in Slavic studies. *SEEJ* is the journal of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, which is the primary organization of specialists in Slavic languages, literatures, and cultures in North America. Howard's contributions to the field were recognized by his being elected vice president of that organization in 1978. In 1991, he also guest-edited a special issue of *SEEJ* on pedagogy. While at Indiana University, in 1984 and 1985, he directed our internationally known Summer Workshop in Slavic and East European Languages, and served the Slavic department as undergraduate advisor from 1998 until 2003.

As for retirement, to Howard this means merely a change of labels. In the years to come he plans to continue to pursue his interests in travel and consulting, and to continue working with his beloved Russian, Polish, Spanish, and French literatures. Boats, he points out, will still need to be sailed and occasional Cessnas will still need to make holes in the sky.

Steven Franks