

James A. Palmer

It has been so long ago since I met Jim Palmer that I cannot recall when it was. Nonetheless the meeting made a lasting impression on me since I still call him by his then given nickname "Scrap." To all who know Jim, the reason for the nickname is obvious—his aggressive, winner-take-all attitude.

No, that is not fair to Jim, but whoever here wonders where the cartoon character Beetle Bailey originated need only gain access to Jim's military records for verification. I think Jim still gets royalties from the publisher. At least he should.

Jim has had more titles as a faculty member in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) than any other non-tenured professional. Behind that sly smile and two-sided compliment is a man who holds an A.B. in what we knew as government and a Doctor of Jurisprudence as well. Jim has been a dedicated public servant, superb researcher, excellent teacher, and thoughtful colleague concerned about the future of our school.

His list of achievements, particularly in the fields of highway safety and corrections, leads a long list of publications that extends into the fields of election law and legislative redistricting. His interests are many and not just confined to the academic world. It takes real perseverance to remain a Chicago Cubs fan. Jim, I have been informed that 2007 will not be the year the Cubs win the pennant, Lou Pinnella managing or not!

His state government service was exemplary as he constructed the highway safety programs for the state of Indiana that became a model used by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And he represented the state administrations of Governors Roger D. Branigin and Edgar D. Whitcomb. Prior to that he was administrator of the Indiana Safety Responsibility and Driver Improvement Act.

He left state government to become an assistant professor, then an adjunct instructor, and he retires now as a lecturer in SPEA. He taught undergraduate and graduate courses in the legal affairs sector, where he helped to develop and expand the offerings and widened the scope of student interest in the impact of law upon society and policy-making processes.

Jim has been a respected and beloved member of the faculty since 1971, when he joined the IU Transportation Research Center as a research scientist and attorney for the center. He joined the SPEA faculty in 1973 and has taught a variety of law-related courses culminating with his retirement at the conclusion of the 2006–2007 academic year.

Hundreds of students have benefited from his ability as a teacher. The legal research he taught his students has provided them with opportunities not available to everyone. His ability to relate to students is renowned, and his concern for their success sets an example for the rest of us to emulate.

There is a quotation from that famous anonymous seer that resonates with teaching excellence: "To Teach Is To Touch A Life Forever." Jim Palmer, you will never know just how many of your students bear the mark of success because they had the good fortune to have their academic life touched by you and your skills as a teacher. In your own way you have shown by example the value of preparation and the skill required to follow up.

"Scrap," you leave a school full of people—students, staff, and teaching colleagues—who admire your abilities, respect your integrity, understand your sense of humor, and, most important of all, hold you in great affection (especially one of your fraternity brothers who has always found you ready to help when times got tough).

May you enjoy your new ventures and challenges, and may you know that the welcome sign is always out at SPEA, even for a Cubs fan.

David Allen