

Remembering Professor D. Ray Heisey, Ph.D.

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IAICS misses our good friend, D. Ray Heisey who lost his battle with thyroid cancer at age 79 on May 20, 2011. Ray served as IAICS president from 2001-2003, having been an enthusiastic member since 1994. His leadership paved the way for IAICS to develop the global participation it enjoys today.

“Dr. Heisey was one of the most generous souls I’ve ever met,” said Guo-Ming Chen (University of Rhode Island), IAICS executive director. “As a member of my dissertation committee and the director of the graduate program, he expected nothing but the best work from me, yet he was kind in offering personal and academic help whenever I needed it. Dr. Heisey’s enthusiasm, devotion to education and personal and scholarly integrity continue to impact me now, 28 years after I first met him. Dr. Heisey was my mentor and will forever remain my role model.”

Professor Emeritus and Director Emeritus of Communication Studies at Kent State University, Ray was a renowned intercultural communication scholar. Many of the research and teaching assignments initiated during his tenure at Kent State continued after his retirement in 1996. He frequently brought colleagues and students at Kent State together in collaboration with scholars and students from the Far East, Middle East, Europe, and North America. He loved traveling and experiencing other cultures, having lived in or visited over 40 countries.

In remarks during Ray’s memorial service on May 28, Mei Zhong (San Diego State University) said, “I was honored to be his last doctoral student at Kent before he retired in the end of spring 1996. Obviously, as we all know, retirement did not slow him down a bit. For all the years before and after his retirement, Dr. Heisey was extremely kind to international students. So, beyond his interest and theoretical work in intercultural communication, he also practiced what he preached in life. I especially remember and appreciate his inquisitive spirit in that he was always eager and ready to explore anything. I think that is why he was able to maintain a fresh look at life till the very end. Dr. Heisey truly embodied a great educator and a wonderful human being. He was a beautiful soul and those of us who’ve had the good fortune to have met and worked with him are truly blessed.”

Ray was a prolific author and editor whose publications included numerous peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, books, and popular press publications. In fact, he was recognized in May for his earlier assistance and advice in the publication of *The Cultural Economy of Falun Gong in China: A Rhetorical Perspective* by Ming Xiao (University of South Carolina Press, 2011). Further, his publications are reflective of a scholar whose interests extended far beyond a single field of academia and classroom. His work encompassed multiculturalism, cultural diversity, global communication, political communication, women’s roles and communication, religion in communication, genealogy, and history.

“I see Ray as an embodiment of some fundamental ethical principles of intercultural communication,” said Wenshan Jia (Chapman University, Orange, California), who delivered a eulogy at the International Academy for Intercultural Research 2011 Annual Conference in Singapore. “First and foremost, Ray recognized the existence of equal amount of potential for humanity, never more for some human groups and never less for other ones. Furthermore, he seems to have practiced the conviction that the more ideologically and culturally different certain human groups are, the more an interculturalist needs to immerse him/herself with them to achieve a better understanding and cultivate a working relationship. Last but not least, Ray seems to have practiced the conviction that the less communication scholarship there is on a given culture, the more such scholars need to be empowered. His successful efforts to go beyond the European model of rhetoric and explore rhetoric and communication in the Middle East and China illustrate the above very well. I believe that Ray’s professional life as an intercultural scholar, intercultural educator and intercultural practitioner was a unique success because he had integrated these three principles in his daily professional life. I have been asking myself what would be the best way for us to memorialize Ray. I guess that he would not object if I say the best way would be for us to practice the above three intercultural principles. Perhaps this would make Ray relive!”

Ray’s impressive career had far-reaching impact, evidenced in the following synopsis¹:

- Editor of *Chinese Perspectives in Rhetoric and Communication* (2000).
- From 1975 to 1978, he was granted leave from Kent State to serve as president and a professor of Damavand College in Tehran, Iran, where he assisted in the educational development of this private university college for women offering bachelor’s and master’s of arts degrees.
- Ray’s international teaching posts included Peking University, School of International Studies, in Beijing and also Renmin University, Department of International Politics, in Beijing during Fall Semester 1996.
- He was a visiting professor for the Estonian School of Diplomacy in Tallinn, Estonia in 1993; the University of Lund, Department of Applied Psychology, Sweden, in 1992; and University of Leuven, Center for Communication Studies, Leuven, Belgium in 1972 and 1973. His stateside visiting teaching appointments included Messiah College, Ashland

¹ The remainder of this article is a part of the obituary written by Margaret Garmon, <http://www.kent.edu/cci/news/newsdetail.cfm?newsitem=2D5AC0C2-A458-026B-61B468EB88384596>. Thanks to Paul Haridakis and Margaret Garmon of Kent State University for sharing this obituary, also published by the Communication Research and Theory Network, a service of the National Communication Association (May 25, 2011, Number 11986).

Theological Seminary in Ashland, Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and The Ohio State University.

- Ray initiated exchange programs with institutions in England, Sweden, Poland and China. One exchange arranged for editors from the Guangming Daily newspaper in Beijing to come to Kent State and for faculty from Kent State to go to Beijing.
- Ray was presented the President's Medal in May 1997 by proclamation of the Kent State University Board of Trustees for 30 years of outstanding service to the university. Heisey was the recipient in 1992 and 1996 of the Faculty Award for International Culture from Kent State's Beta Zeta Chapter of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. The award recognizes recipients for "building a body of international studies or cultural exchanges which enrich our campus and our community."
- International honors included an Honorary Professorship in the Beijing University of Self-Study by the university president in 1994 for work in international communication and education. In 1996, Ray and colleague Wenxiang Gong of Peking University International Politics Department, co-hosted an international conference on "Communication and Culture: China and the World Entering the 21st Century" held in Beijing.
- Ray joined the Kent State faculty as an associate professor in 1966 and was promoted to the rank of professor in 1970. He served as Coordinator of the Division of Rhetoric and Communication from 1980 to 1983 and as Acting Director of the School of Speech Communication from July through December 1993. He was then appointed Director of the School of Communication Studies, a post he held until June 1996.
- Heisey graduated in 1954 from Greenville College in Greenville, Ill., where he majored in speech. He completed a post-graduate program in 1957 at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., with a major in theological studies. Ray earned a master's degree in 1955 from The Ohio State University in Columbus in speech and a doctoral degree in 1964 from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., with a major in public address and group communication.
- Previous to joining Kent State, Ray held a number of teaching and administrative positions at Messiah College from 1955 to 1966 including chair of the Division of Language, Literature, and Fine Arts, Director of Debate, and Head of the Speech Department.

Ray Heisey was born in Gladwin, Michigan, on January 9, 1932, and was raised in Louisville, Ohio. He attended Kent Presbyterian Church since 1968 and had been an active member of the choir and frequent contributor in adult education. He was an avid genealogist, serving on the board of the Brimfield Historical Society, and authoring *Healing Body and Soul: The Life and Times of W. O. Baker*, a leader in the Brethren In Christ denomination (BIC). Heisey himself was an ordained minister in the BIC church. In addition to his wife, Susanne (VanValin), whom

he married in 1959 and who accompanied Ray on most of his world travels, survivors include sons Kevin (Elizabeth) and grandchildren Erin, Megan, Clare and Paul of Chagrin Falls, Ohio; Alec (Alece) of Mechanicsburg, Pa, and Ian (Christine) of Cleveland; sister, Ruth Blackketter, of Leedey, Okla; brother, Marion J. (Beverly) of Albuquerque, New Mexico; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother, H. Orville.