MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
PROFESSOR MICHAEL BERKVAM
(November 26, 1942 –August 21, 2011)

"Everyone is replaceable," said Michael Berkvam humbly—and with typical modesty—on the occasion of his retirement from IU in 2006 after thirty-five years on the faculty. Continuing, however, in equally characteristic yet witty vein, he quipped, "I understand that they are still planning to hold classes in the fall. I can't believe they would do that without me."

Michael was born in 1942 on November 26th, a day he liked to proclaim "the most sacred of the year"; he died at home in Bloomington, after a brief illness, on August 21st, 2011. While at IU, he held all ranks in the Department of French and Italian, from lecturer in 1971 until his retirement as full professor in 2006. Throughout his years at IU, he remained energetically committed to his students and colleagues, from serving the department as Director of Graduate Studies (1998-2003) to teaching in the summer Freshman Intensive Seminar program. He was a core faculty member of West European Studies and an enthusiastic member of the Hutton Honors College, in which he particularly enjoyed teaching. His commitment to the highest standards of fair procedure led to his tireless service on crucial committees: the College of Arts and Sciences Tenure Committee, the Student Conduct Review Board, the Faculty Grievance Committee, the Affirmative Action Committee, the Lilly Library Faculty Advisory Committee, among many others. Beyond Bloomington, he served as Resident Director of study programs in Strasbourg (1984-1985) and Quebec (summer, 1989 and 1990). A gifted and inspiring teacher, he was the recipient of numerous teaching awards, most notably the Indiana University Distinguished Teaching award in 1983.

Born into a blue-collar community in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Michael remained close to his Norwegian roots—and was always quick to remind friends that these were *not* Swedish. His ancestors immigrating to the US took a new family name in honor of a railway station from a beautiful part of their homeland. Inheriting from his roots a love of chilly climates and adventure, Michael grew up with broad interests in international cultures, literatures, histories and sports. Affable and gregarious, he knew virtually everyone in Eau Claire, and, as he would later with long-suffering colleagues, he loved swapping insults and bad jokes. Combining his love of people with his love of baseball, he became a radio announcer, broadcasting the Eau Claire games of the Boston Braves, who had moved to Milwaukee when Michael was a child. Coming to Bloomington in 1971, Michael became a devoted fan of the Cincinnati Reds, whatever their record in any particular season. He also adored football, and remained fiercely loyal to his home-state Green Bay Packers—cherishing, in particular, a gift from his wife Mirka of seats at the fifty-yard line for a bone-chilling game at the Packers' home, Lambeau Field.

Michael earned his BA degree from St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, in 1964; following two years' study at the Sorbonne in Paris, he went on to garner MA and PhD degrees from the University of Wisconsin, holding various teaching positions in France during this period. He joined the Department of French and Italian at Indiana University in 1971 as a sabbatical replacement, subsequently becoming Assistant Professor in 1973, before being promoted to Associate Professor in 1980, and Professor in 2000.

Although he began his career as a specialist in the literature, culture and history of the French Enlightenment, Michael eventually made a radical change to contemporary French literature, particularly women's writing, and to cinema, another of his passions. He developed diverse courses on topics such as post-1945 French literature, war and literature, francophone literature, women's writing, and New Wave cinema. He took an especially sardonic interest in the French 50s and 60s with their concomitant rise in consumerism and the flowering of radically innovative literature and cinema. His research interests extended to the New World as he translated eighteenth-century texts on the colonization of Louisiana. Drawing on his early training as an historian, he sought constantly to place literature and film within their social, political and historical contexts. An accomplished linguist, Michael was fluent in French and conversant in several other languages, including Polish, thanks to Mirka's encouragement. His research was honored by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Lilly Foundation. His published titles include *Liberty, Equality …or Death: The French Revolution, 1789-1794* (1989) and *Writing the Story of France in World War II: Literature and Memory, 1942-1958* (2000). He seized the opportunity to share the riches of the Lilly Library by curating several exhibits, among them, "La Vie Parisienne, 1650-1900"; "Eighteenth-Century Cities: A Panorama"; "William Wordsworth in France: 1790-1792"; *"Les Misérables"*; "Liberty, Equality …or Death: The French Revolution, 1789-1794."

As a teacher, Michael imposed the rule of never teaching a course he wouldn't want to take himself. He enjoyed the opportunity and flexibility provided by IU, which he would not have had at a smaller institution, to develop and teach more unusual courses. Inspired by two high-school teachers who expanded their curricula to include unconventional materials, Michael had been encouraged to study in thoughtful and meaningful ways: a gift he attempted to pass on to his own students through searching for ways to make learning more relevant to their own experiences. Throughout his career, Michael was to treat every student as a unique individual; a frequent beginning-of-semester assignment was to schedule an appointment to come talk to him individually. He also insisted that students write him a brief essay on themselves, making use of the information they provided (interests, hometown, etc.) to bring the class material more sharply in focus for them.

Convinced that greater attention to each student—observing, respecting, responding to each—was a motivating force, Michael enjoyed seeing his students react to such interest,

first with surprise, then with increased confidence and engagement. He saw each new semester as a challenge to develop a close, working relationship with a particular group of dissimilar individuals, and constantly sought ways of engaging every student. Early in his career, Michael adhered to the French pedagogical tradition of lecturing, but came to realize that he preferred—as the students themselves did—more discussion and interaction. He also welcomed the greater risks that such an approach entailed, as they opened the teacher's position to challenge and debate—creating a dynamic of exchange that Michael relished. Unsurprisingly his friendships with students continued once they had graduated, often for decades.

Although Michael's gift for friendship was exemplified by his close and often quirky relationship with IU colleague William Cohen, he also devoted time and energy to many other friendships. His unpredictable but always compassionate sense of humor, his willingness to stand by his colleagues through thick and thin, his great warmth and his booming laugh are among his greatest legacies.

Michael was buried—in classic baseball weather, the sweltering heat of an August afternoon, and wearing his Cincinnati Reds cap—next to his great friend William. He is survived by his wife Mirka; daughter Stephanie Dos Santos (of Paris, France); son David and his wife Rachel (of Portland, Oregon); step-daughter Inka Davis and her husband Kevin (of Chicago, Illinois); granddaughters Safia and Kiara Dos Santos (of Paris, France); his brother Mark and sister-in-law Geri; and nephews James and Christopher Berkvam (of San Carlos, California). A scholarship fund in Michael's name has been established at Indiana University to assist graduate students studying French film and contemporary French literature by women.

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