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# In Memoriam: Val Nolan, Jr., 1920-2008

Ken Yasukawa  
*Beloit College*

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**IN MEMORIAM: VAL NOLAN, JR., 1920–2008**

KEN YASUKAWA

*Beloit College, Department of Biology, Beloit, Wisconsin 53511, USA*



Val Nolan, Jr., 1920–2008

Val Nolan, Jr., emeritus professor of law and biology, died on 27 March 2008 at the age of 87. Val will always be remembered for his warm humanity and sense of humor. He was a supportive colleague, a wonderful scientist, an inspirational teacher, and a valued friend.

Val was born on 28 April 1920 in Evansville, Indiana, to Val and Jeannette (Covert) Nolan. His father, Val Nolan, Sr., was U.S.

Attorney for the southern district of Indiana and a trustee of Indiana University (IU). His mother was an acclaimed author of children's books. Following his graduation from IU in 1941 (AB in history with highest honors), Val was a Deputy U.S. Marshall, then a member of the Secret Service, providing security for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1942, Val joined the U.S. Navy and was

one of the first to be trained in the Navy's Japanese Language School (1944, valedictorian). He served in Naval Intelligence in the Pacific under the President's son, James Roosevelt.

In his father's legal footsteps, Val entered the IU School of Law in 1946. Before graduating first in his class in 1949, he served as Editor of the *Indiana Law Journal* and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Order of the Coif, and Phi Delta Phi. He then joined the IU Law faculty, teaching Property, Wills, Land Titles, and Conflicts for the next 36 years, until his retirement in 1985. As a member of the Law faculty, he was a mentor and model for countless law students, and he served as Acting Dean of the Law School in 1976 and again in 1980, when he helped to persuade the Indiana Legislature to expand the Law Building. He was recognized by a Distinguished Alumni Service Award and elected to the IU Academy of Law Alumni Fellows.

Robert Kassing, JD '64, partner at Bose McKinney & Evans, said of Val, "No other teacher in my life impacted my ability to think critically nearly as much as Professor Nolan, for which I am forever in his debt. He cared deeply about the students and the school, befriended and benefited so many of us, and will be greatly missed."

"He was one of just a few people who had a significant impact on my life," said Michael (Mickey) S. Maurer, JD '67, of Maurer, Rifkin & Hill. "He had a sense of humor. He once asked me a question in class to which I answered 'yes.' He replied that he was looking for a shorter answer." In 2000, Maurer and his wife, Janie, endowed the Val Nolan Chair in Law, in honor of his favorite professor.

Dean Lauren Robel, the Val Nolan Professor of Law, said, "I have been so honored and humbled to have my name associated with his. He was a giant, but a gentle one. His integrity and intellectuality set the standard for many of us at the school, both as students and faculty."

While serving as a member of the Law faculty, Val also actively pursued his passionate interest in ornithology, which was inspired by his high-school teacher. In 1957, he was appointed as a research scholar in the Department of Zoology, and later he began teaching a course for a faculty member on sabbatical. In 1968, Val received a tenured joint appointment in the Law School and the Department of Zoology, which later became the Department of Biology. Always generous with his praise, Val credited Margaret M. Nice, Harold F. Mayfield, and Robert W. Storer with encouraging his ornithological work.

Val studied Prairie Warblers in the wild for two decades before he wrote *Ecology and Behavior of the Prairie Warbler* *Dendroica discolor*, which was described by the AOU as the most comprehensive study of a single species of bird ever published. He then shifted his research focus to other species, including the Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Indigo Bunting. He also began his studies of the winter distribution, site fidelity, and migration of the Dark-eyed Junco. That work eventually expanded to include the breeding biology of juncos, which he and many colleagues studied at the Mountain Lake Biological Station in the Appalachian Mountains. He and his colleagues pioneered

the "phenotypic engineering" approach to avian physiological, behavioral, and evolutionary ecology. He published more than 100 papers, which have been cited more than 2,500 times, and he mentored 20 Ph.D. students, establishing a lasting tradition in ornithology at IU and mentoring some of the top scientists in avian behavior and ecology. One, Ellen Ketterson, herself a Distinguished Professor of Biology and Gender Studies at IU, eventually became his wife and primary research collaborator. Although Val retired from teaching in 1985, he maintained an active scientific research program until his death.

Val's research was supported by numerous grants from National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and the American Philosophical Society, and he won many awards and honors. Among the most notable honors were a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Brewster Medal from the AOU, and the Margaret Morse Nice Award, which he shared with Ellen, from the Wilson Ornithological Society. In addition to serving the AOU in numerous capacities, including as Vice President, he was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Animal Behavior Society.

Dan Cristol, College of William & Mary and a former student, said, "Val led by example, whether it was technical writing, scientific ethics or the importance of lifelong learning. If my office were to catch fire, the one thing I'd grab would be the paperback copy of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* that he gave to me."

I have many fond memories of Val. He loved to talk about baseball and IU basketball. He taught Advanced Ornithology, which recruited me to the field. This course was careful, thorough, analytical, and case-history based. But what I remember most were the field trips. We students experienced a variety of emotions, from awe at his knowledge and ability, to wonder at his talent for getting us to see the natural world through the eyes of a scientist, to a bit of fear as we tore down the road while watching for birds. He also encouraged me to tackle a thesis project on the Red-winged Blackbird (which I continue to study 26 years later) and provided both the day-to-day and "big-picture" guidance that a callow graduate student needed—he was the very model of a modern ornithologist. I also have vivid memories of our junco sampling trips to Alabama and South Carolina. Traveling, netting birds, and sharing motel rooms with Val were singular experiences. As I think now about Val, it is clear that he was the most important person in my professional development. I owe him everything.

Val raised three children with his first wife, Susanne. Ellen Ketterson, his wife of 28 years, elder son Val Nolan III and wife Lynn of Bloomington, daughter Ann Nolan of Bloomington, and younger son William A. Nolan and wife Alicia of Powell, Ohio, survive him. He was the loving grandfather of four: Val Nolan IV of Los Angeles, Jenny Nolan of Bloomington, and Thomas and Christopher Nolan of Powell. He also leaves his brother Alan T. Nolan and wife Jane, and his sister Kay Nolan Loble and husband Alan of Indianapolis.

Val died as a result of a car accident on the way to watch recently arrived spring migrants, as he had done with so many of his students. He died as he lived, with a passion for ornithology.