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## One of a Kind

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## One of a Kind

**President Emeritus Lloyd Bertholf, leader of a decade of innovation at IWU, dies at age 103.**

**By Tim Obermiller**



**“Lloyd Bertholf was deeply committed to giving Illinois Wesleyan students the best education possible.” — President Myers**

It could not be said the news was a surprise. Many on campus knew that the health of Lloyd M. Bertholf had recently been failing—and yet when news broke that Illinois Wesleyan’s 103-year-old president emeritus had died on Jan. 20, 2003, it was as disorienting as if the old stone benches on the quad or the Founders’ Gates on Main Street had suddenly disappeared.

Like those landmarks, Bertholf’s presence had the comforting aura of a permanent fixture on Illinois Wesleyan’s campus. Though he had retired as president 35 years earlier, he maintained close ties to the IWU community. To see him with his warm smile, sparkling eyes, and spry walk at a campus event felt both reassuring and inspiring. As much as anyone in its recent history, Lloyd Bertholf seemed to embody the finest traits of the institution he had served and helped transform: moral integrity, intellectual curiosity, tolerance of others’ beliefs, and the aspiration to achieve higher standards of excellence.

“Illinois Wesleyan University and American higher education have lost a great man,” said IWU President Minor Myers jr. “The entire campus community mourns his passing. Personally, I will miss his wise counsel, humor, and friendship.

“Lloyd Bertholf was deeply committed to giving Illinois Wesleyan students the best education possible,” Myers added. “All you have to do is walk around campus to see how he turned that commitment into tangible assets that students today still benefit from, more than three decades after he left office.”

Hailed as the University’s first modern president, Bertholf was inaugurated on Feb. 11, 1959, and retired in July of 1968. During that period, enrollment grew from 1,148 students to about 1,500. The faculty increased from 75 to 109. Total value of the campus grew from \$6.5 million to \$14.3 million. Campus acreage increased by 31 percent to 33.8 acres at a cost of nearly \$650,000.

In all, 10 new buildings went up during Bertholf's presidency, including Holmes Hall, McPherson Theatre, and the Sherff Hall of Science (now the Center for Liberal Arts). Three residence halls were also constructed, and the old science building was transformed into Stevenson Hall.

In a 1984 memoir of his presidency, Bertholf said that while he expected to be remembered more as "a building president, my major interest, actually, was in the academic program."

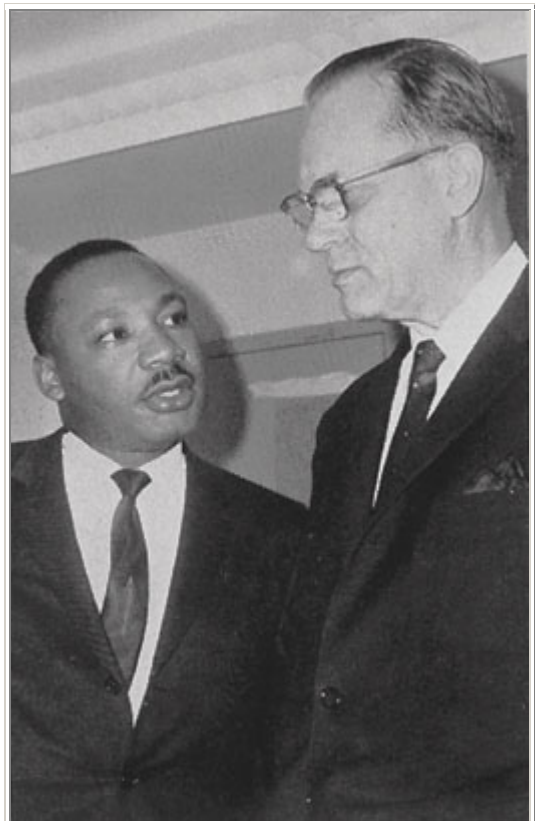
Among his most lasting achievements in that area was the founding of the School of Nursing. For the previous 30 years, the University and Brokaw Hospital had conducted a cooperative agreement in which graduates received three years of "technical education" through the hospital, with collegiate work at IWU added on. Bertholf led the movement to transform this arrangement into a full-fledged baccalaureate program in which "student candidates [were] taught by educationally qualified nurse-teachers, in a collegiate setting, using hospitals as laboratories," he wrote in his memoir.

Bertholf also pioneered IWU's "Short Term," a month-long period when students could elect to take internships—many overseas—or study a single course intensively. Originally held in January and later moved to May, this shortened term reflected Bertholf's goals for revamping the curriculum to inspire "creative instruction, increase student motivation, and stimulate students to assume more responsibility for their own learning."

He also encouraged student autonomy by giving IWU's Student Senate full authority over student activity fee funds. Those funds now total over \$300,000 annually, according to outgoing Student Senate President John Rapp '03, and promote student leadership in such endeavors as *The Argus*, *Wesleyana*, Titan TV, and WESN, as well as over 100 special interest groups on campus. A plaque has been placed in the Student Senate meeting room honoring Bertholf for "his unwavering support of student leaders, and his belief in the value of a well-rounded education."

Rapp was among many student, faculty, and administrative leaders who paid tribute to Bertholf in a celebration of his life held Jan. 29 in Evelyn Chapel. At that event, Professor of History Paul Bushnell remembered Bertholf as "genial and humane"—a leader "who could always rise to the occasion" and who wasn't afraid to take flak for controversial decisions he sometimes made.

Other campus administrators of that era might not have wanted to hire Bushnell as a professor because of his active role in the civil rights movement. But when he



A memorable campus visitor during the Bertholf years was Martin Luther King Jr..

informed Bertholf about his activism in a 1966 job interview, Bushnell said, "I found a willing and interested listener" who wanted to meet growing student demand to find professors able to "address issues of greater relevance in our society." This open-minded attitude later encouraged Bushnell to initiate the first course ever taught at Illinois Wesleyan on African-American history.

According to Myers, Bertholf also supported active recruitment of African-American students, and twice invited Martin Luther King Jr. to speak on campus, once in 1961 and again in 1966.

Bushnell said that Bertholf's greatest contribution to Illinois Wesleyan may have been his dedication to shaping "a congenial community of scholars and learners....This was a place to grow, and I appreciated the fact that his perspective was so broad."

Bertholf's broad perspective was developed during a century of tremendous technological and political changes. Born in 1899 to a farming couple in Kansas, Bertholf grew up in a home with no electricity or indoor plumbing. He was home-schooled until third grade, when he began attending a one-room schoolhouse.

At the encouragement of his parents, he began college at Friends University in Wichita, Kan., before enlisting in the Army during World War I. He had just begun training at Ft. Monroe when an armistice was declared in 1918. He returned to Kansas to complete his bachelor's degree in biology at Southwestern College. Though he wanted to be a doctor, he realized his family didn't have the money to pay for medical school. He leapt at the opportunity to work as a lab assistant at Johns Hopkins University, and was eventually accepted into that school's prestigious master's and doctoral programs in biology.

While at Hopkins, Bertholf sent a marriage proposal to his childhood sweetheart, Martha Washburn. They wed in 1921 and remained a close couple until Martha's death in 1999 at the age of 101. In his memoir, Bertholf called his wife his most valuable advisor.

After earning his Ph.D. from Hopkins, Bertholf taught biology at a small women's college, and also began to conduct summer research in a Washington, D.C., honeybee laboratory for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He developed a lifelong interest in bees' behavior and published many papers on the topic. In 1930, he studied at the University of Munich with Karl von Frisch, who discovered how insects communicate.



At a 1999 celebration of Bertholf's 100th birthday and the nursing school's 40th anniversary, alumni like Amanda Lenk Xenos '00 (above) expressed their gratitude to the former president.

After serving as professor of biology and later dean of the faculty at Western Maryland from 1924 to 1948, he became professor of zoology and dean at College of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif., and was named academic vice president there in 1957 before being elected president at Illinois Wesleyan that same year.

Following his retirement from IWU, Bertholf was president for one year of the Central States College Association, a consortium of 11 Midwest campuses. He was a member of numerous academic honor societies and served as national president of Beta Beta Beta, the national biology honorary society, from 1946 to 1953. In 1975, he was awarded an honorary doctor of humanities degree from Illinois Wesleyan.

A member and leader of the Wesley Methodist Church in Bloomington, he also served on the General Board of Lay activities of the Methodist General Conference. In 1966, he was a delegate to the World Methodist Conference in London.

Bertholf also served as president of Region 3-B, Comprehensive Health Planning Agency, an organization encompassing 16 counties in east-central Illinois. He was a member of the board of directors of the Bloomington Rotary Club and served as president of the IWU Federal Credit Union.

The Bertholfs spent their later years at the Westminster Village, a retirement community in Bloomington. There he led an exercise class, and he and Martha also made a habit of visiting residents in need of company and good cheer.

Survivors include a daughter, Dr. Lynn B. Westcot of Normal; a son, Dr. Max E. (Nancy) Bertholf of Daleville, Va.; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and a sister, Faye McCoy of Wichita, Kan.

Speaking at the Evelyn Chapel service about her father, Lynn Westcot recalled his humor, grace, reserve, and acute sense of fairness and morality.

“He wanted his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be proud of who they are,” said Westcot. “But to do so, one has to meet certain standards. Daddy tried all his life to meet standards of morality and goodness. He also tried to be non-judgmental—though he sometimes failed, as he would readily admit.”

Though he had a wry and playful sense of humor, it was important for her father to maintain an appearance of dignity and composure, Westcot recalled. He never took to wearing casual clothes,

even in retirement, and when she bought him several pairs of walking shorts, he responded, “Honey, you might as well take these back to the store—I don’t look good in cutoff pants.” Never one for public shows of affection, he reserved the phrase “I love you” for his wife Martha alone.

“That was just a private thing between them,” Westcot recalled. “Maybe that’s why they had such a long marriage, 78 years. But when I got Daddy to the nursing home, I would leave his room saying, ‘I love you,’ and he would never answer. And so one day, I said, ‘I LOVE YOU.’ And he said, ‘Ditto.’ But it wasn’t long before he was saying, ‘I love you, too,’ and I’ll keep that memory for a long time.”