



Summer 7-22-2003

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Recommended Citation

Hanna, Jeffery, "Illinois Wesleyan President Minor Myers jr. Dies" (2003). *News and Events*. 4337.

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July 22, 2003

CONTACT: Jeffery G. Hanna

Illinois Wesleyan President Minor Myers jr. Dies

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Minor Myers jr., who as its president led Illinois Wesleyan University through a period of unparalleled achievement, died Tuesday, July 22 in Bloomington. He was 60.

Myers had informed the Illinois Wesleyan community in February that he had been diagnosed with lung cancer. He had undergone treatment at both Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and in Bloomington.

Arrangements are being handled by East Lawn Funeral Home. A private service for the family will be held in Copley, Ohio, at a date to be determined. A commemoration of Myers' life will be held at the Shirk Center on Monday, August 25, at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to the Minor Myers Honors Collection at The Ames Library or to Mayo Clinic.

"Minor was passionate about the value of a liberal arts education," said Janet McNew, who was provost under Myers and is serving as acting president. "He was the very model of a liberally educated person whose interests ranged far and wide, and who cherished learning as an end in itself. We all learned so much from Minor. First and foremost, he taught us to dream and then showed us how to make those dreams a reality. The Ames Library and the Hansen Student Center and the Shirk Center are dreams that he had for this University, and they came true. Minor believed that Illinois Wesleyan was a special institution and that he worked every day to make it better. We will miss his leadership."

Myers became the 17th president of Illinois Wesleyan in 1989. During his 14-year tenure, the University increased its student enrollment, selectivity, and academic profile; raised \$137 million in a capital campaign; and completed \$115 million of renovation and construction, including The Ames Library, the Center for Natural Science, the Hansen Student Center, and the Shirk Center for Athletics and Recreation.

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In addition to the impressive physical improvements to the University, Myers led key initiatives that changed Illinois Wesleyan in other important ways. For instance, the University faculty established an annual student research conference; created semester-long programs in London and Madrid; added major or minor programs in American Studies, Anthropology, Biochemistry, Cognitive Science, Women's Studies, Environmental Studies, Greek and Roman Studies, International Business, Russian, and Japanese Studies; and altered the calendar to develop May Term, a month-long semester during which innovative courses and off-campus study are emphasized.

"This is an enormous loss," said Craig Hart, president of the Illinois Wesleyan Board of Trustees. "In countless ways, Minor Myers had become the heart and soul of Illinois Wesleyan. He had the highest aspirations for this University, and he pushed all of us to join in his vision. His enthusiasm was infectious. He was a joy to be around."

During Myers' tenure, the University was granted a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, and developed exchange programs with Pembroke College of Oxford University and with Obirin and Keio universities in Tokyo.

Born in Akron, Ohio, Myers earned a bachelor's degree in 1964 from Carleton College in Northfield, Minn. He went on to Princeton University, where he was awarded the master's of arts (1967) and doctor of philosophy (1972) degrees in politics and political philosophy.

Myers launched his academic career in 1968 as an instructor in government at Connecticut College, where he achieved the rank of full professor and department chair of government. In 1984, Myers was named provost and dean of faculty at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y., where he served for five years before becoming Illinois Wesleyan's president in 1989.

Myers constantly reminded Illinois Wesleyan's students that the goal of their education was not simply to find a job but to find what fascinated them and to pursue that. Each year at Commencement, he exhorted the seniors to "go forth and do well. But, more importantly, go forth and do good."

For Myers, a complete liberal arts experience combined learning and discovery. He emphasized the importance of a faculty of excellent teachers with enthusiasm for research. In an interview in the *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine* last December, Myers said: "The greatest teachers are the ones who are inspired from the inside because they are asking interesting questions to which they are finding answers, and in

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doing so they pass along a real and authentic enthusiasm for discovery, in their own field and any other field. And that enthusiasm energizes their students and enlivens the entire institution.”

Myers himself was a consummate scholar and a teacher whose varied personal interests included playing the piano and harpsichord, discussing music history, and collecting books and meteorites. His particular fascination with the 18th century led to his expertise in furniture, musical instruments, publishing, and higher education during the American colonial period. He was also well versed in the history and culture of Revolutionary France.

Myers was the author or co-author of eight books, including *The Insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati* (1998) and *A Documentary History of American Interiors from the Colonial Era to 1915* (1980).

In recent years he had been completing a survey of multi-talented individuals in Europe, the Americas and Japan since the Renaissance with the working title *Polymath: The World of the Multi -Talented*. In 2001, he and Carl Teichman, executive assistant to the president, co-authored *Illinois Wesleyan University: Continuity & Change, 1850-2000* .

In addition, Myers wrote numerous articles and papers that ranged in topics from “baroque cuisine” to American baseball to Roman imperial coinage.

In 1994, Myers’ original musical play, *The College Inn Revisited*, which focused on the 1920’s jazz movement in Chicago and the role that city played as a launching ground for Broadway theatre in New York, was performed at the Chicago Historical Society.

Myers helped guide many educational organizations and institutions, serving on the boards of directors of the Foundation for Independent Higher Education, the Associated Colleges of Illinois, the Institute for the International Education of Students, and the Lyman Allyn Museum at Connecticut College. He was secretary general of the Society of the Cincinnati from 1986-1988.

Active in the Bloomington/Normal community through his years at Illinois Wesleyan, Myers was a co-winner of *The Pantagraph’s* inaugural “Person of the Year” award in 2001, sharing that honor with Victor Boschini, then president of Illinois State University.

Myers is survived by his wife, Ellen, and their two sons, Minor III, and Joffre.

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