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In Memoriam: Val Nolan Jr., JD'49

Remembered as a supportive colleague, a curious intellectual, and an inspirational and humorous teacher, Val Nolan Jr., JD'49, made enormous contributions throughout his fascinating and varied life. The professor emeritus of law and biology passed away on March 27, 2008, at the age of 87.

After graduating from Indiana University in 1941 with an AB in history, Nolan worked as a Deputy U.S. Marshall before joining the Secret Service. He began working in the Washington, D.C., Field Office, but soon joined the White House detail providing security for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1942, he guarded the president on a nationwide "secret" tour of defense installations, recalling "the trip wasn't so secret after all, because thousands of people saw him."

Later that year, Nolan left the Secret Service to join the Navy, where he served in intelligence as a Japanese language expert. He also spoke Latin, Classical Greek, German, and some French. Initially, he was assigned to an amphibious group and interrogated Japanese prisoners. He was then assigned to the railroad section as an interpreter, working to determine how successful the bombing of the Japanese railroads had been.

Nolan followed in his father's legal footsteps, entering law school in 1946. On his way to graduating first in his class, Nolan 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 Indiana Law faculty, teaching Property, Wills, Land Titles, and Conflicts for the next 36 years until his retirement in 1985. During that time, he served as a mentor and model for countless law students.

In addition to his legal expertise, Nolan also became a world-renowned ornithologist. In 1957, he was appointed a research scholar in the Biology Department and later began teaching a course for a faculty member on sabbatical. In the late 1960's, while already a tenured professor in the Law School, he was given a joint appointment with Biology.

Nolan served as Acting Dean of the Law School in 1976 and again in 1980, when he helped persuade the Indiana Legislature to expand the Law Building.

A memorial service will be held Oct. 3 at the Law School. Memorial contributions can be made to the Sycamore Land Trust or the IU School of Law.