

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
James Herbert Vaughan
(1927-2018)

James H. (“Jim”) Vaughan, professor emeritus of anthropology at Indiana University Bloomington, died in Bloomington on November 2, 2018. He was a member of the anthropology faculty from 1967 to 1991 and served two terms as chair of the department (1969-1975 and 1978-1981), as well as one year as acting chair (1990-1991). He also held a faculty appointment in the African Studies Program, whose presence helped to recruit him to the Bloomington campus, and he served as secretary of the Bloomington Faculty Council from 1977 to 1979. Jim was an excellent teacher as well as scholar who directed 17 graduate students to their Ph.D., of whom at least five were international students. Beyond Bloomington, Jim had a significant involvement with the Central States Anthropological Society, in which he held a series of offices, including president from 1968 to 1969.

Jim was born on July 28, 1927, the son of James Herbert and Beatrice (Spence) Vaughan. He grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, and his childhood in the segregated South stimulated an interest in race relations that eventually led him to the study of African cultures. In an Emeriti Oral History Project interview conducted in 2008, he described one of the formative experiences of his childhood: being reprimanded for addressing an African American woman as “ma’am” and failing to understand why his elders told him that was wrong. The complete interview is on DVD and available for viewing at the Emeriti House.

Jim served in the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy during two wars, World War II and the Korean War. As an air intelligence officer, his duty was to brief pilots, not only on their missions, but also on current events. Like most faculty members of his generation, he had no formal instruction in teaching, but he said learning to hold pilots’ attention was excellent training for the university classroom.

Jim received his B.A. in mathematics from the University of the South (Sewanee, 1950), his M.A. in sociology from the University of North Carolina (1952), and his Ph.D. in anthropology from Northwestern University (1960). At Northwestern, he was a member of the first African Studies Program in the U.S. and studied under the direction of the distinguished Africanist anthropologist Melville Herskovits. In the reverse of anthropological tradition, he got his Ph.D. before he did his first fieldwork. His background research became his dissertation. After it was accepted, he went to study the lives of the Margi people of northeastern Nigeria on a Ford Foundation Fellowship in 1959.

Jim returned to Nigeria multiple times over the next 30 years and published extensively on Margi culture. In 1997, his book, *The Diary of Hamman Yaji: Chronicle of a West African Muslim Ruler*, co-written with Anthony Kirk-Green, won the African Studies Association’s Text Prize. Just before Jim died, his ethnographic study, “The Margi of the Mandaras: A Society Living on the Verge,” was uploaded to IU Scholar Works and made available at <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/2022/21947>. In addition to his skills as a writer, Jim was an outstanding ethnographic photographer. An exhibit of his photographs, taken between 1960 and 1987, was shown at the Mathers Museum in 2005-2006, and the companion website he created can be viewed at <http://www.indiana.edu/~margi>.

In his 2008 oral history interview, Jim referred to himself several times as a “reactionary.” He most certainly did not mean this word in its common political sense. Instead, he wanted to identify himself

as someone who reacted strongly to contemporary theoretical trends in cultural anthropology. He was perhaps better described as a contrarian—someone who reacted skeptically to the prevailing wisdom, especially when it lacked solid empirical grounding. He was first and foremost a proponent of data collection and analysis to support assertions about human behavior. Related to this interest, he led the Department of Anthropology's efforts in promoting computer skills and the formation of its first computer lab for student and faculty research.

Jim was married to Ann Richard for 68 years, and they had a daughter, Susan, and a son, Richard. Ann, Susan, and Richard all survive Jim, along with his daughter-in-law Margaret, a granddaughter, a great-grandson, and the last of a series of beloved Scottish Terriers.

In his leisure time, Jim enjoyed sports cars (especially his MG TD and his Lotus Europa) and sailing his sloop *Yamadu* on Lake Monroe and along the Virginia coast. He was a fine wine enthusiast who delighted in discovering both French and California varietals at good prices and cultivated dealers in Virginia and Bloomington who would recommend good buys. He loved good food and specialized in his retirement years as a bread and pasta maker and enjoyed dinners based upon locally collected mushrooms. To his colleagues in both anthropology and African studies, Jim was a good friend with a generous spirit. He and Ann were legendary for their hospitality, always willing to host a party for a holiday, a reception for a visiting scholar, or a get-together for no particular reason at all, other than conviviality.

We request that this memorial tribute to James H. Vaughan be presented to the members of the Bloomington Faculty Council, that it be preserved in its minutes and archive, and that after its presentation copies be sent to the members of his family.

Geoffrey W. Conrad

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