

BROMMEL-DENSON-EVERSON-SNELL SCHOLARSHIP IN COMMUNICATION, MEDIA AND THEATRE

With this scholarship I salute three former students that I taught before I came to Northeastern. It was students like these three that inspired me to go on for further degrees. Before Northeastern I taught 20 years: eight years in Iowa high schools; eight at Indiana State University and four at University of North Dakota. I met Christine Yarrington-Denson in my sophomore English and Speech Classes in Keokuk, Iowa and I immediately recognized her special abilities in both areas. I invited her into debate and other speech activities. Wise choice, for she went on to become a state champion in both debate and extemporaneous thinking. In both events, Chris dazzled judges with her serious analytical skills in discussing complicated national issues. I have been so proud of her as a lawyer. That she became a judge and even tried cases before the US Supreme Court did not surprise me.

I taught both Judith Leas-Everson and Ronald Snell at Indiana State University. Both took classes from me and worked hard in the debate and speech activities program. Each followed me to Indiana University where I recommended them to my major professors for doctorates. Each had as their dissertation advisor, Dr. Robert G. Gunderson, my beloved mentor. Gunderson served at one time as both the editor of the American History Journal and later editor of the Quarterly Journal of Communication. Each became professors of communication and earned state recognition as outstanding teachers: Judy in Illinois and Ron in Wisconsin. Each published and made Gunderson and me proud. Each held administration positions but later in their careers returned to their first love, teaching.

Chris writes, "Dr. (then Mr.) Brommel was the debate coach extraordinaire and by turns cudged and nurtured his debaters to first place in the state of Iowa for the affirmative team, of which I was a member!" (Chris also won a state championship in Extemporaneous Speaking.) Their friendship has maintained from the 60's to the present, a mutual admiration society and nurturing relationship.

Ms. Denson studied at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, and graduated in 1964 after attending her first year of Duke Law School (then called “the combine program”). At Duke she had the honor of being the only woman in her first year! She graduated from Duke Law in 1966 and, after passing the North Carolina bar, went to work in the North Carolina Attorney General’s Office doing both trial and appellate work. She argued at every level of State and Federal Court including the United States Supreme Court. Ms. Denson went on the staff of the North Carolina Industrial Commission where she was a trial judge. At the end of that career she had argued or heard cases in 98 of North Carolina’s 100 counties. In intervals, there were stints in private practice in Raleigh and an eight-month term as Assistant County Attorney in Durham handling the civil side of child abuse cases for the Department of Social Services. Ms. Denson retired to Springfield, Illinois, where she has done several non-profit employments and volunteer work. She has two wonderful grown children, a daughter who is a very accomplished attorney in St. Louis, Missouri, and a son who is in the hospitality industry in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Judith Leas Everson earned her bachelor’s degree in speech, magna cum laude, at Indiana State University, and her Master’s as well as Ph.D. in speech and American studies at Indiana University, followed by post-graduate work in English at the University of Wisconsin. In 1970 she joined the founding faculty of Sangamon State University, now the University of Illinois at Springfield. Before retiring as professor emerita in 2001, she chaired the English department, won two awards for teaching excellence, and served as Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences. She served as president of the James Jones Literary Society and secretary of the Illinois Humanities Council. In 2011 she received the Distinguished Service Award of the U of I Alumni Association, and in 2012 she was honored with an endowed English professorship at UIS in her name.

Judy states, “At a pivotal point in my intellectual development, I was fortunate to have come under Dr. Bernard Brommel’s influence at ISU both in the classroom—where his drive and dedication helped inspire her own career choice—and on the debate circuit, where his guidance helped lead our team to a national championship. His generous mentorship continued when I attended graduate school at his doctoral institution. His unflagging interest in his former students’ pursuits continues to this day, complemented by his promotion of greater access to higher education for promising pupils in need of financial support. In short, Dr. Brommel, over his long and productive life, has combined the highest academic standards with the broadest social outreach, making him a model worthy of not only admiration but also emulation.”

Ron Snell's story begins with his parents. "My father was a coal miner," he wrote, "and mother was a saleslady in a department store before becoming a homemaker. Both were denied a college education because of the Depression. All five children were told we WOULD go to college, and we did. As the oldest, I was the first to graduate from Indiana State where I met Dr. Bernard Brommel, the son of an Iowa farm family and a first generation college-educated teacher. He took this coal miner's son under his care and further showed me the importance of education and encouraged me to seek more. After graduating from Indiana State I, too, taught high school, but Bernard's example and encouragement soon sparked my desire for a doctorate. His recommendation to the faculty of Indiana University made that dream a reality.

After Indiana University I taught at the University of New Mexico for three years but left to teach at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls for over 30 years. I was chairman of the department, Faculty Senate member, and Chair of the Faculty Grievance Committee. I received the Outstanding Teacher Award and my greatest love and enjoyment came from teaching students—most of whom were first generation college students. Dr. Brommel truly loved teaching and inspiring all students, but he always sought out first-generation students for additional encouragement. Dr. Bernard Brommel began as my teacher, my mentor, my inspiration, and is now my great FRIEND."