



James J. Buffer, Jr.

Many industrial arts, technology education, and now technology and engineering education leaders have made their mark on our profession. Their legacy is something that members of the profession enjoy and have a responsibility to continue and build upon.

This is the fourteenth in a series of articles entitled "The Legacy Project." The Legacy Project focuses on the lives and actions of leaders who have forged our profession into what it is today. Members of the profession owe a debt of gratitude to these leaders. One simple way to demonstrate that gratitude is to recognize these leaders and some of their accomplishments. The focus in this issue will be on Dr. James Buffer and his experience as faculty at the Ohio State University.

Photo above: My son Fr. Thomas, (left) is a Catholic priest in Ohio. Next is Jeffrey who holds a bachelor's degree in industrial Tech and taught Intech in Ohio schools until he became a senior administrator with the Ohio Commission on Rehabilitation. Son Jimmy is on the right and is a middle school assistant principal in charge of curriculum—they always have an adequate supply of industrial Tech faculty on staff. Not pictured is my wonderful daughter Karen J. (Buffer) Rinehart.

by
James J. Buffer,
Jr. and Johnny
J Moyer, DTE

James J. Buffer, Jr.

1966-1990: The Ohio State University, Professor and Associate Dean for Research, College of Education

1990-1995: Virginia Tech, Horace G. Fralin Professor and Dean, College of Education

Degrees:

Chicago State University, B.Ed.

University of Illinois Urbana, Ed.M. and Ed.D.

Post-graduate studies at DePaul University (Chicago) and Columbia, Harvard, and OSU

Place of Birth: Peru, Illinois

Married to: Loretta, who earned her M.A. and Ph.D. at Ohio State. We have three sons and one daughter and three grandchildren who are proud Ohio State graduates. Our oldest son, Jeffrey, majored in Industrial Technology at Ohio State.

Occupational History:

Chicago Board of Education, classroom teacher of industrial arts and special education, administrator of special programs for adults, middle school counselor, and two funded projects (1958 through 1963).

Besides teaching, I was employed as a farm laborer for several summers and worked at a pharmacy and grocery stores for several years while attending high school. During college, I worked as an opinion surveyor on a variety of human development issues, including information about the launching of *Sputnik* in 1957, which provided content for *Life Magazine*. I also worked as a union electrician in the construction trades during summers while teaching in Chicago schools.

During your graduate studies, the University of Illinois was well known for its quality program. Who were the major faculty members who were known throughout industrial arts and vocational education at that time? What type of program or philosophy did they advocate that attracted outstanding students?

There were several prominent graduate programs in IA/VE during my early years of collegiate study. Originally, I had planned to complete my master's degree in a different discipline in Chicago, but Dr. Rudy Lockette recommended that I write a letter of inquiry to Dr. M. Ray Karnes, his former advisor at IL. I did and was pleased to receive a positive response. Dr. Karnes encouraged me to enroll in the U of IL, which I did. I was a full-time master's student in Urbana and studied with three well-known faculty in IE: Ray Karnes, Rupert Evans, and Don Lux. I also studied with graduate students who gained prominence in vocational and industrial education, including Jerry Moss, John Rowlet, and several others. After graduation, I returned to teach in Chicago public schools and completed studies at DePaul U for the doctoral degree, but I found the academic program at Illinois to be more challenging and relevant to my career goals. In the meantime, I was offered a full tuition scholarship at NYU in counselor education, most likely because of my work as a counselor in the inner city of Chicago and involvement with two funded projects (Ford Foundation and Sears Executive Club). However, I remember the gracious invitation extended to me by Dr. Rupert Evans when he drove me to the train station after my last master's seminar and recommended that I return to Illinois for doctoral studies, and the rest is history.

I returned to Illinois in '63 to complete the doctorate with Rupert Evans. Karnes and Lux were still on the faculty as were Jake Stern and Tommy Tomlinson, who was a wonderful mentor.

You have a unique background that included work in special education as well as technology education. How and why did you obtain that experience, and how was it uniquely utilized during your tenure at Ohio State?

A Chicago school administrator asked me to teach a special education class for children with limited intellectual development during my first year in Chicago. My preparation was limited to the information acquired from Dr. Bob Smith, who was specializing in special education at IL, and also the work done by Dr. Ray Karnes with his spouse, Francis, an internationally known leader in what was then called mental retardation. I was intrigued by the challenge and was able to integrate my work in industrial arts with other academic studies such as reading, math, and science. I completed graduate courses in special education and counseling that would complement my work. Frankly, I became intrigued with the innate talent of children labeled as "mentally challenged," and felt that they were not developing their full intellectual potential in "normal" classes. However, their work with multisensory tasks in Industrial Arts seemed to benefit their cognitive and social skills. Based on my work at OSU and Chicago, I received an invitation from the OSU special education faculty to become part of its academic program and taught classes for graduate students as well as industrial technology (Intec) students.



Dr Mike Scott, left; Dr. James Buffer, center; Dr. Ed Reeve, right. Mike and Ed finished all three degrees with me at OSU.

The Ohio State program history is about as legendary as any in the profession, with the likes of Dr. William E. Warner (AIAA President, 1939-40) followed by many outstanding professors up to the time that you, Dr. Donald Lux, Dr. Willis Ray (AIAA President, 1978-79), and others were active. What strengths did the faculty bring to the program over the years? Why were they superior?

The work done by my colleagues at OSU was legendary. Drs. Lux and Ray were innovative thinkers who pursued curriculum development and implementation of the Industrial Arts Curriculum Project (IACP) program. Other former faculty, such as Dr. Ed Towers, also made a significant contribution to the early development of IACP. Although Dr. Warner was retired when I joined the faculty at OSU, his recognition as an educational innovator was evident and influenced the work of Dr. Lux, one of his advisees, and other junior faculty. The innovative curricular work was complemented by other faculty members, including newly graduated Dr. Dean Hauenstein and a cadre of outstanding graduate students who chose to attend OSU.

Dr. William E. Warner was Lux's mentor and advisor, and he was greatly influenced by the early curricular work of Warner. Willis Ray was an Illini who studied with Ray Karnes, Rupert Evans, and other Illinois faculty, and was well grounded in educational research methodology, inquiry, experimentation, and creative problem solving—traits that most of us Illinois graduates seemed to develop as part of the culture.

The program received many applications from well-qualified doctoral students and post-doctoral scholars who wished to be part of the Industrial Arts Curriculum Project (IACP) initiative.

There were many students involved in the IACP on campus as well as several satellite model school systems—allow me to name a few representative examples: Drs. Bill Dugger, Art Rosser, Mike Scott, Paul Caley, John Gallagher, John Karsnitz, Lewis Keift, Jim LaPorte, Bob Wenig, and Bill West. These research associates provided much of the developmental work creating and field-testing the IACP instructional materials.

You were on the faculty of a graduate program that was rated as one of the best in the country. Why was the program one of the best? Please describe the program qualities, size, type of graduate, evidence of success, etc. Also, OSU was known to call the field "industrial technology" rather than "technology education" at that time. What was the reasoning behind the industrial technology term? Why did OSU eventually change to technology education?

OSU had one of the best graduate programs for several reasons. We tended to attract quality graduate students, most of whom had professional involvement in the IACP initiative. Secondly, students were required to study disciplines to broaden their perspective in research methodology and inquiry and also the social, philosophical, and psychological principles of educational behavior. This component of their studies helped to broaden their perspective of the discipline of Industrial Technology and Praxeology. The term "Industrial Technology" was derived from a comprehensive philosophical analysis of technology, praxeology, human development, and learning, and formed the substantive thesis for deriving technological principles and instructional content. All OSU students were well based in this philosophical study and shared the substantive content with others, information that soon formed the basis for a "discipline" of Industrial Technology.

It would seem that the department was running at its peak when the Industrial Arts Curriculum Project (IACP) was being developed, tested, and promoted in the profession. Please describe the type and level of activity during this point in history. Did IACP increase the number of graduate students in both quantity and quality?

The IACP initiative helped to recruit talented graduate students who were looking for a new perspective regarding their educational discipline. Professionals were looking for an opportunity to explore the foundations and study of educational praxeology and science of intellectual inquiry. Many young professionals, like myself, were questioning the future of educational programs based on the manual arts or manual training and seeking a field of study that would expand on the socially redeeming values of "technological literacy" for all learners.

If you could have changed the direction of anything related to the field during your career, what would you have changed?

What would have really made a difference that was never attempted or just didn't happen?

I was blessed to be on a faculty at Ohio State that encouraged inquiry and intellectual cooperation across the university community and embraced professional interaction with faculties from other disciplines. During my tenure at OSU, I developed several graduate degree programs, including Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, and an interdisciplinary program in Neurosciences that included a research laboratory in the College of Medicine and involved faculty in medicine, engineering, and education. I also developed the Office for Research and Development Services in the College of Education, which included an outreach program to provide training and development services to the private sector, including major manufacturing corporations, institutions of higher education, and banking, financial, and sales operations located throughout the U.S., China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Indonesia. These relationships allowed me to involve graduate students in outreach and research endeavors as well as providing the opportunity to travel internationally to work collectively with clients. I had the pleasure of serving on the boards of banks, corporations, and lecturing at universities globally on a breadth of topics. And I always made it a point, even when speaking at Harvard Medical School or major corporations and universities, to let the audience know my training was in Industrial Education and not neuroscience, business, or finance.

In 1990, I took an early retirement from OSU to become Dean of the College of Education at Virginia Tech. In retrospect, this was a good decision since I had an opportunity to work with one of the top technology education programs in the country that had a superior faculty and attracted quality students. During this time, the program at OSU was not gaining any support from the dean of the newly reorganized College. Bill Umstatt and Keith Blankenbaker had recently retired, and Don Lux and Willis Ray had retired several years earlier. Karen Zuga and Paul Post were, in essence, managing a comprehensive program that imposed too many restrictions regarding program options and student support. Dr. Zuga retired, and Dr. Post remains as a faculty member in Science, Mathematics, and Technology (SMT) and represents technology education.

During my tenure at Ohio State, I had the opportunity to work with faculty from across the university community on a number of projects; some were facilitated by my role as Research Dean of Education. Using practices derived in my studies at Illinois and OSU, I was able to initiate several outreach programs in business and industry development. It's amazing how the principles of curriculum development and IACP applied in other areas, too. Also, I developed several graduate school options, including special

education and rehabilitation counseling. This was a cooperative program in neuroscience education with associates from other colleges across the campus that was based in the College of Medicine and the Collegiate Management Institute. This initiative was supported by the Central Association of College & University Business Officers (CACUBO). The CACUBO was an international university institute that focused on university personnel leadership/management skills. Such initiatives gave the OSU industrial technology department a different image and reputation. I'm confident that invitations to serve on several corporate boards in education, business, and the banking industry, for example, would not have happened without my activities among researchers and scholars across the university community.

I feel good about my experiences in industrial technology at OSU and feel that they helped to contribute to my professional development and that of many graduate students. I'm very proud of my career and am most grateful to the fellowship of a distinguished group of scholars at the Ohio State University and in my professional associations.

Thank you Dr. Buffer for sharing some of the highlights of your service to our profession. The Legacy Project has now interviewed fourteen very influential leaders. It is beneficial for current (and future) leaders to read about the issues that existed and how they were addressed "back in the day." In a few months the next interview will appear in this journal. If you have a suggestion of a leader to recognize, contact Dr. Moye with that person's name and contact information.



James J. Buffer, Jr., Ed.D., was an industrial arts and special education teacher, administrator of adult special programs, middle school counselor, Chicago Board of Education member, and managed two funded projects (1958 through 1963). Dr. Buffer passed away on October 12, 2017.



Johnny J Moye, Ph.D., DTE, serves as ITEEA Senior Fellow. He is a retired U.S. Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, a former high school technology teacher, and a retired school division CTE Supervisor. He currently serves as an adjunct professor with Old Dominion University's

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