

William R. Heitzman

1934-2007

PROFESSOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS/DECISION SCIENCES, EMERITUS

B.S.M.E., Ohio Northern University, 1956; M.B.A., California State University, Fullerton, 1969; D.B.A., University of Southern California, 1975

California State University, Fullerton From 1970-1997

Birth: October 13, 1934; Death: May 10, 2007

Bill joined the department as Assistant Professor in 1970 and taught in the IS/DS department for twenty seven years. He retired as a Professor, then served five additional years in the Faculty Early Retirement Program.

I first encountered Bill Heitzman in 1968. He was working a software engineer at Chrysler Corporation's Assembly Plant in Los Angeles. Bill was in his mid-thirties. He was nearly finished with the MBA program offered in night school at CSUF. He had enrolled in my advanced statistics course, Experimental Design, as an elective in the MBA program.

I was intrigued because MBA students hardly ever chose such an elective. I began chatting with him during office hours and discovered that he was finding his industrial job rather tedious and was really excited by the new concepts he had learned in operations research and statistics. We discussed the possibility of Bill making a career change (as I had at the same age) and entering the teaching profession. I explained that he would have to obtain a Ph.D. or a D.B.A. to secure a permanent position at a university. What we could offer him was an Assistant Professor position (at a hefty pay cut from his engineering job) while he enrolled in a doctoral program. It would be a formidable task indeed.

Bill had two young daughters. His wife, Ruth, could not work full time with the girls to rear. But he and Ruth took on the daunting task. Somehow they weathered the ordeal with all those family responsibilities and financial hardships. Bill earned his D.B.A. at U.S.C. while handing a twelve-unit load at CSUF. Ruth deserves much of the credit.

Bill turned out to be a natural in the classroom. His experience in industry all those years and his M.B.A. were very helpful in teaching our undergraduate business majors and MBA students. An unexpected bonus for our department was that he quickly became one of our experts in computer languages and the use of computer packages. We were teaching the Basic programming language by the 1980's. There was no suitable textbook in Basic aimed at business majors, so he wrote one. We used his textbook for many years in our course in computer concepts. In addition, he authored, with F.W. Mueller, a Business Statistics textbook. Bill developed several computer simulation programs for faculty to use in our Statistics courses—for example, one to illustrate graphically the Central Limit Theorem and another to show the distribution of sampling estimates of regression lines.

I would characterize Bill's teaching career as a department chair's delight. His classes ran smoothly and efficiently. I do not recall a single complaint from students, and Bill was never absent or even tardy.

Bill made many other contributions to the department. He was a major author of our Personnel Document, and he served for many years on recruitment committees and personnel committees. He wrote a software package (still in use) to assist faculty in estimating optimum retirement dates.

Bill attended high school in Delphos, Ohio. He was an athlete, earning letters for four years in both basketball and baseball. He was also class valedictorian--unique for a successful athlete. Bill went to Ohio Northern University. He earned a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering in June, 1956. He played intercollegiate basketball there for four years. I should mention that it is extremely difficult to earn an engineering degree as an athlete with all those afternoon labs competing with basketball practice and road games.

Bill worked for four years as a mechanical engineer in Lima, Ohio, then began a three-step move which finally landed him in the Los Angeles area. He worked in Denver for four years in the design of power plants; then, worked at the U.S. Naval Navy Air Station in China Lake designing air conditioning systems. His next job was prophetic, as a software engineer at Chrysler Corporation. This was in 1965-69 and it was here that he began the MBA program at CSUF, completed in June, 1969. In June, 1975, He was granted a D. B. A. from the University of Southern California.

As we might expect, Bill served as a softball coach for many years. Both his daughters played successfully from age nine through high school. He also coached his grandson. His principal hobby was restoring classic cars, including the '70 AMX and '65 Mustang Convertible. After retirement, Bill played golf, traveled extensively, and spent lots of time with his grandkids' sports activities – basketball, gymnastics, and soccer.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; two daughters, Lynne Funk and Julie Thompson (husband, Matthew); four grandchildren, Tyler and Kelley Funk and Rachel and Justin Thompson.

Submitted by
Herbert Rutenmiller
Professor of Information Systems/Decision Sciences, Emeritus

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