

## Richard Weld Bailey

Died: April 2, 2011



Richard W. Bailey, an internationally renowned scholar of the English language, who contributed significantly to nearly every subject of interest in English language studies, died on Saturday at his home in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He was 71.

Professor Bailey taught in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan for 42 years (1965 – 2007), where he was honored in 2002 with a collegiate professorship: the Fred Newton Scott Collegiate Professor of English.

He was a pioneer in the application of computers to research in the humanities, attending early conferences sponsored by IBM and the Rand Corporation (1964 and 1967).

He quickly applied what he learned to the Early Modern English Dictionary project he was leading at the University of Michigan. With A. J. Aitken and Neil Hamilton Smith, of the University of Edinburgh, he edited *The Computer and Literary Studies* (1973) and later he edited *Computing in the Humanities* (1982). He and his University of Michigan colleagues, Marilyn S. Miller and Colette V. Moore, collaborated on a digital edition of an Early Modern text, *A London Provisioner's Chronicle, 1550-1563*, by Henry Machyn (2006).

Professor Bailey's work in lexicography and automation influenced many other major dictionary projects, including the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, the *Dictionary of Old English*, and the *Middle English Dictionary*. He was also well known as a historian of lexicography.

For Professor Bailey, this interest in the history of dictionaries was part of his larger interest in the history of English, not only the history of its structure and use, but also of attitudes toward varieties of English around the world. With Manfred Görlach, then of the University of Heidelberg, he edited *English as a World Language* (1982) and founded the journal *English World-Wide*. His articles made major contributions to scholarship on American English, Canadian English, Scots, and English in Sri Lanka, Japan, China, among other places.

As a historian of English, Professor Bailey is best known for books such as *Images of English* (1991), *Nineteenth-Century English* (1996), and the forthcoming *Speaking American*, as well as the linguistic true-crime story, *Rogue Scholar: The Sinister Life and Celebrated Death of Edward H. Ruloff* (2003). Professor Bailey was admired for his ability to find out remarkable and hitherto unknown facts, and though he loved a good story and told many of them, his research was scrupulously driven by empirical linguistic and historical research.

Professor Bailey was especially concerned that we listen to what others, historical or contemporary, have to say about their language and language use. One of the chapters in *Nineteenth-Century English* is titled "Voices." *Images of English* is remarkable for its inclusion of extensive extracts, so that readers can hear what

people had to say about English in their own, unmediated words. Professor Bailey has been quoted as saying, "There's a great deal to be learned if you just shut up and listen, rather than saying, well, I have these academic credentials and therefore my opinion's the only one worth having."

A volume to honor Professor Bailey, titled *Contours of English and English Language Studies*, is forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press and will be available this summer.

Richard W. Bailey was born on October 26, 1939, in Pontiac, Michigan. He attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1961. As an undergraduate, he also had the opportunity to study at the University of Edinburgh. He did his graduate work at the University of Connecticut, taking his Ph.D. in 1965. He returned to Michigan to teach at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1965. He was particularly loyal to his roots and spent parts of the summer on Drummond Island in Lake Huron, just east of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Dr. Bailey was a committed citizen and often put his knowledge of English to use in social and educational settings. He was an expert witness in what is known as the Ann Arbor Black English Case (1979). With Dennis E. Baron and Jeffrey P. Kaplan, he recently submitted an amicus brief in the United States Supreme Court case *District of Columbia v. Heller*. He assiduously mentored graduate students about how to make their work matter inside and outside the academy. In 2001, he received the D'Arms Award for Graduate Mentoring. For 34 years (1974-2008), he was a most valuable trustee of Washtenaw Community College, and he served as chair of the Board of Trustees from 1985 to 1994 and 1999 to 2000; the college library was named in his honor in 2005. He recently received the Genesis Humanitarian Award from St. Clare's Episcopal Church and Temple Beth Emeth.

Professor Bailey was President of the American Dialect Society from 1987 to 1989, President of the Dictionary Society of North America 2001 to 2003, and editor of the journal *Dictionaries* from 1978 to 1990. In 2005, he was named a Fellow of the Dictionary Society, its highest honor.

He was President of the Guild of Scholars of the Episcopal Church (2003-2007) and a dedicated member of the Episcopal Church throughout his life. Professor Bailey was also a dedicated member of The Flounders, a group of men who play water polo at noon three times a week at the University of Michigan Intramural Building.

Professor Bailey was the beloved father of Nony, Andrew, and Oceana Bailey. He was the devoted husband of Julia Huttar Bailey from 1990 to the present. And he was a dear friend of Claire and Hallie Dykstra.

Services will be held at St Clare's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan: a Gathering/Visitation from 5-8 pm on Monday, April 4, and a Memorial Service at 11 am on Wednesday, April 6. Memorials may be made in his name to St. Clare's Episcopal Church or to the Washtenaw Community College, Richard W. Bailey Scholarship Fund. For further information please phone Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors, Brighton, 810-229-2905.