

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
IRVING KATZ
(September 24, 1932 - January 24, 2008)

When Irving Katz retired in 2002, the *Indiana Daily Student* described Katz as a “living legend.” His introductory courses, “American History 1 and 2” were rites of passage for generations of IU freshmen and among the university’s most popular classes. He enlivened lectures with his own personal and family history, which spanned the twentieth century. The son of Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Poland, he grew up on New York City's Lower East Side during the Depression. After graduating from City College he served in Korea. “I was very grateful to the United States Army for defeating the Nazis,” he explained. Many members of his extended family had been killed in the Holocaust. Experience as an infantry corporal made him a dedicated pedestrian; he eschewed cars and encouraged students to walk with him and to tell him about their own histories.

After earning his bachelor's degree from City College (CUNY) in 1954, Irving began teaching at an East Harlem high school in 1958. A year later, he received a master's degree from New York University, followed by a PhD in 1964. That was also the year that he arrived at IU as an assistant professor of history. Although he had offers from Northwestern and the University of California Berkeley, Irving chose Bloomington, joking “because the offices were bigger.” He authored two important books on U.S. business history, *August Belmont: A Political Biography*, and *Investment Banking in America: A History*. These achievements facilitated his promotion to associate professor of history in 1968. He was later promoted to full rank in 1981.

He received awards for teaching excellence from the History Department and the Borns Jewish Studies Program. He served as vice president of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society, and he received the Thomas Hart Benton Mural Medallion for distinguished contributions to Indiana University. He was a natural talker and gave innumerable lectures to community audiences throughout the Midwest on aspects of American Jewish history and, especially, Israel. President Myles Brand ranked him among “the very best” of Indiana’s faculty, noting that “this institution is a better place because of him.”

He married Sara Katz, and fathered two children, a son, Jonathan, of Newport, Rhode Island, and a daughter, Naomi, a graduate of the IU School of Music. She and her husband Gerhardt Koch are musicians with the New York City Ballet, and Katz retired to Manhattan to be close to his

children and his beloved granddaughter, Sarah Joyce.

Professor Katz encouraged his students to learn about and appreciate music. For seventeen years, he dined weekly with students in Forest and Briscoe quads, leading them in discussions of politics, current events, and culture. He arranged to take groups of students to dress rehearsals and performances at the Musical Arts Center, giving many of them their first experience with opera. Opera, he explained, brought together all of the fine arts, visual design, drama, orchestral and vocal performance. "When it works," he said, "it's heaven." In recognition he was made an honorary member of the IU Residence Halls Alumni Association in 1987.

Professor Irving Katz, 75, passed away Thursday, January 24, 2008, in New York City of complications stemming from a hip injury. He was a professor of History and Jewish Studies at Indiana University for 38 years. He is survived by his children and grandchild, a brother, Murray Katz of New York City, and a cousin, Morris Borger, of Jerusalem.

This memorial resolution is respectfully submitted to the Bloomington Faculty Council for inclusion in its minutes. It is very fitting that Professor Katz be honored by IU in this manner, given his four decades of dedicated service to this institution. Copies of this resolution should be sent to Murray Katz of New York City, the Congregation Beth Shalom of Bloomington, Indiana, and the Borns Jewish Studies Program, Indiana University.

Nick Cullather