

## Ketterson / Nolan Research Group Collection

This document is part of a collection that serves two purposes. First it is a public archive for data and documents resulting from evolutionary, ecological, and behavioral research conducted by the Ketterson-Nolan research group. The focus of the research is an abundant North American songbird, the dark-eyed junco, *Junco hyemalis*, and the primary sources of support have been the National Science Foundation and Indiana University. The research was conducted in collaboration with numerous colleagues and students, and the objective of this site is to preserve not only the published products of the research, but also to document the organization and people that led to the published findings. Second it is a repository for the works of Val Nolan Jr., who studied songbirds in addition to the junco: in particular the prairie warbler, *Dendroica discolor*. This site was originally compiled and organized by Eric Snajdr, Nicole Gerlach, and Ellen Ketterson.

### Context Statement

This document was generated as part of a long-term biological research project on a songbird, the dark-eyed junco, conducted by the Ketterson/Nolan research group at Indiana University. For more information, please see IUScholarWorks (<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/7911>).

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## **Memorial Resolution**

**Val Nolan Jr.**

**(April 28, 1920 – March 27, 2008)**

Indiana University Maurer School of Law lost a legend when Val Nolan Jr. died on March 27, 2008 in an auto accident at the age of 87. Val was a special person, a kind of Renaissance man – with a dual career as both a law professor and professor of ornithology. He was exceptional as a teacher, scholar, scientist, adviser and reluctant administrator, but more than that, he lived a storied life that inspired his students, his colleagues, and his friends.

Born in Evansville, Indiana, to a prominent Irish Catholic family, Val was the eldest of three children. Each of Val's grandfathers had served as the mayor of Evansville, and Val's mother, Jeannette Covert Nolan, was a newspaper woman and author of novels and non-fiction for young adults. His father, Val Sr., was an attorney, a graduate of IU Maurer Law, and a trustee of Indiana University. Val would tell stories of his early years while his father served as Evansville's prosecuting attorney. These were the days of an active Klan in southern Indiana, and bricks were hurled through the window and crosses were burned in the yard of his family home. The family was relieved when Val Sr. accepted the position as U.S. Attorney in Indianapolis. Val Jr. attended Shortridge High School, and in his senior year, he decided to take a special course in ornithology – a decision that would change his life.

Captivated by the subject, Val pursued the study of ornithology independently when he went to Indiana University, for there were no such courses offered. He took a broad liberal arts course at IU majoring in history and classical studies, where he learned Latin and Greek as well as French. He graduated in 1941, Phi Beta Kappa, and planned to attend graduate school. But in Val's senior year, his father died suddenly of a heart attack, and with that shock and with World War II looming on the horizon, Val put his plans to go to graduate school on hold. He accepted a job, offered by a family friend, to be a deputy U.S. Marshall.

This work led to an offer by the Secret Service where Val served on the White House detail protecting President Franklin Roosevelt. When pressed, he told stories of witnessing history as President Roosevelt met with world leaders, assisting in the details of a command performance

by Irving Berlin, accompanying the president to Hyde Park in the Roosevelt roadster, and traveling the country inspecting secret military installations.

Although this was important work, Val was a young man and wanted to join the war effort. So with his new connections, his Phi Beta Kappa credential, and his facility for languages, he was accepted into the U.S. Navy's Japanese Language School. He graduated at the top of his class and as a member of Naval Intelligence he was stationed in the Philippines and then in Japan, first to help with the war in the Pacific, and later to work with the Japanese people after the war had ended. For years we heard rumors of his cracking enemy codes and saving important war plans, but Val always modestly denied these more daring tales.

Throughout the war, Val dreamed of returning to school to study ornithology. His brother, Alan, then at Harvard Law, helped him meet an ornithologist at Harvard. But instead of advising him on how to pursue his dream, he discouraged Val from entering the field. Disappointed, and believing that a career in ornithology was no longer a possibility, Val decided to go to law school. He chose Indiana to be near his family and the birds that he planned to continue to study, now as an avocation. Val graduated in 1949, first in his class with a near perfect grade average, and he served as the editor in chief of the *Indiana Law Journal*. He was offered teaching positions at the law schools of the University of Chicago, and at Penn, but he chose to teach at Indiana because of his continued affection for the area. He taught property because of a curricular need at the time, and remained in this area throughout his career.

All the while, he pursued ornithology as a self-taught scientist, compiling an impressive record of research, and building a reputation as a major scholar in the field. In 1957 he received a rare double Guggenheim in both law and ornithology, and in 1967 his work was acknowledged with a joint appointment at Indiana in both the Law School and the Biology Department.

In Biology, he taught Advanced Ornithology, Animal Migration and the Biology of Birds. His comprehensive work, *The Ecology and Behavior of the Prairie Warbler*, won the William Brewster Memorial Ward in 1986, given to the most important book on birds of the Western Hemisphere.

In 1987, Val was given the Indiana University's Distinguished Alumni Service Award. In 1989, he was inducted into the Indiana University Law School's Academy of Law Alumni Fellows, and in 1999, he was honored by one of his former students with the creation of the Val Nolan, Jr. Professorship of Law. Val was an inspiration to his students in both law and ornithology. He was a supportive colleague, a passionate scientist, a valued friend and a loving husband, father and grandfather. He leaves behind his wife Ellen Ketterson, Professor of Ornithology at IU, with whom he shared both his life and his science; a sister Kay; three children, Val III, Ann and Bill; and four grandchildren.

Vital to the end, Val died on his way to conduct field research on the birds to which he devoted his life. He will be missed by all who knew him.

In the name of his many friends, colleagues and former students, I request that this resolution be presented in the Bloomington Faculty Council, and that copies be sent to those persons named on the attached page.

Colleen Kristl Pauwels

Indiana University Maurer School of Law - Bloomington