



## R. Keith Michael

November 16, 1930 - October 19, 2025

Dr. R. Keith Michael, 94, Professor Emeritus of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance at Indiana University Bloomington, died peacefully in Bloomington on October 19, 2025. His wife of 71 years, Marion Bankert Michael died shortly after on October 23rd. Keith is survived by his nieces Karen Nafzinger Moore (Tom) and Nancy Jo Carter (James) and his nephew James R Michael (Cathy J) and by the many colleagues, friends, and students whose lives he touched throughout his remarkable career.

He was preceded in death by his father, James R. Michael, his mother, Lena Ruth Synder Michael, his brother Kay D. Michael and his nephew Lloyd K. Michael.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1930, Keith's lifelong devotion to theatre began early and deepened through his education and professional pursuits. He earned a B.S. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1952, an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa in 1958, and a Ph.D. from the University of Bristol in England in 1970.

Before entering academia, he built an accomplished professional career in theatre, beginning as an actor and stage manager with the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia. He went on to co-found Theatre L'Homme Dieu in Alexandria, Minnesota, serving as producer and artistic director during the 1960s, and later held the same roles at the Brown County Playhouse in Nashville, Indiana.

In 1971, Keith joined Indiana University as the first chair of the Department of

Theatre and Drama. During his twenty-five years as chair, he expanded the faculty, directed or oversaw more than four hundred productions, and played a key role in planning the Lee Norvelle Theatre and Drama Center, which opened in 2002.

He served as president of the National Association of Schools of Theatre, received the Indiana Governor's Arts Award (1997), was inducted as a Fellow of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre (1999), and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Indiana University (2002).

Before his academic career, Keith served four years in the United States Navy as an anti-submarine warfare officer aboard the USS Thaddeus Parker, a destroyer escort.

Keith and Marion shared a lifelong love story that began when he cast her as the lead in a university production. Together they traveled widely, read on sunny beaches, and shared a devotion to their long-haired dachshunds—beginning with Rommel and followed by four more beloved companions. Annual trips to the Westminster Dog Show with friends, and frequent visits to New York City to see Broadway performances, were among their greatest joys. Keith was also a painter whose work reflected his appreciation for light, story, and the beauty of everyday life.

Dr. Michael will be remembered for his passion for theatre, his generosity as a mentor, and his enduring belief in the power of art to enrich the human spirit.

Memorial contributions may be made to the R. Keith Michael and Marion Bankert Michael Scholarship: <https://give.myiu.org/iu-bloomington/P370013006.html>

Celebration of Life Open House for Keith and Marion to be held at Meadowood Retirement Community on December 20, 2025, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm.

Arrangements are being handled by Allen Funeral Home, Bloomington, IN.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC **20**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Meadowood  
2455 E. Tamarack Trail  
Bloomington, IN 47408

# Tribute Wall

SN

“ It is deeply moving to learn that Keith and Marion Michael, being so inseparable in life, stayed by each other’s side even in passing. Seventy-one years of marriage is a beautiful testament to love and accomplishments that truly knew no bounds.

*As a 1982 graduate of Indiana University’s Master’s program in Theatre & Drama, with a minor in African American Theatre, I find myself looking back fondly on the legacies of the Michaels.*

*Coming to Bloomington directly from Shaw University—a historically Black academy in Raleigh, NC—I arrived with a mix of thrill and trepidation. Entering such a prestigious thespian department, surrounded by academic riches, a host of celebrity alumni in the arts, and peers from Ivy League institutions, I felt both like a kid in a candy store and a grad student nervously wondering if I could truly achieve academically at this level.*

*While I struggled to find my footing, the environment fostered by the Michaels provided the support I needed. The foundation from Shaw gave me the essential tools and cultural history to strive for greater opportunities. Profoundly, it was Keith’s department that had the late distinguished professor Winona Lee Fletcher to help see me through. As the world’s foremost scholar on Black Theatre, Fletcher became my phenomenal mentor and a second mother.*

*The Michaels played an integral role in building my IU community. Marion’s voice and diction course for majors was as intriguing as she was warm, and Keith’s assuring smile was like a ‘Santa Claus’ of the arts—always delivering the goods for department majors. The Michaels’ unwavering support of Fletcher’s work and their deep friendship with her allowed students like me to prosper. I am forever grateful.*

*Rest well, Keith and Marion; your countless legacies will forever be in the spotlight—BRAVO!*

---

**Sababu C. Norris** - April 20 at 12:00 PM

KM

“ *Keith and Marion’s grave in Muncy Pennsylvania.*



-----  
**Karen Moore** - November 13, 2025 at 09:35 AM

MB

“ *Wonderful contribution to my hometown of Alexandria Minnesota with the creation of Theatre L’Homme Dieu. It’s a lasting legacy!*  
*Mary Bursch*

-----  
**Mary Bursch** - November 05, 2025 at 10:51 AM

TM

“ *Keith and Marion had a lasting impact on their students. Their theatre skills, instinct for the stage, respect for language, and teaching techniques brought artistic awareness and personal development to eager learners. Ted May. St. Cloud State University -- 1962*

-----  
**Ted May** - November 04, 2025 at 01:30 PM

AB

“ *1 file added to the album Keith*



-----  
**Ash Babler-Browning** - October 28, 2025 at 10:07 AM

AB

“ 1 file added to the album Keith



---

**Ash Babler-Browning** - October 28, 2025 at 10:06 AM