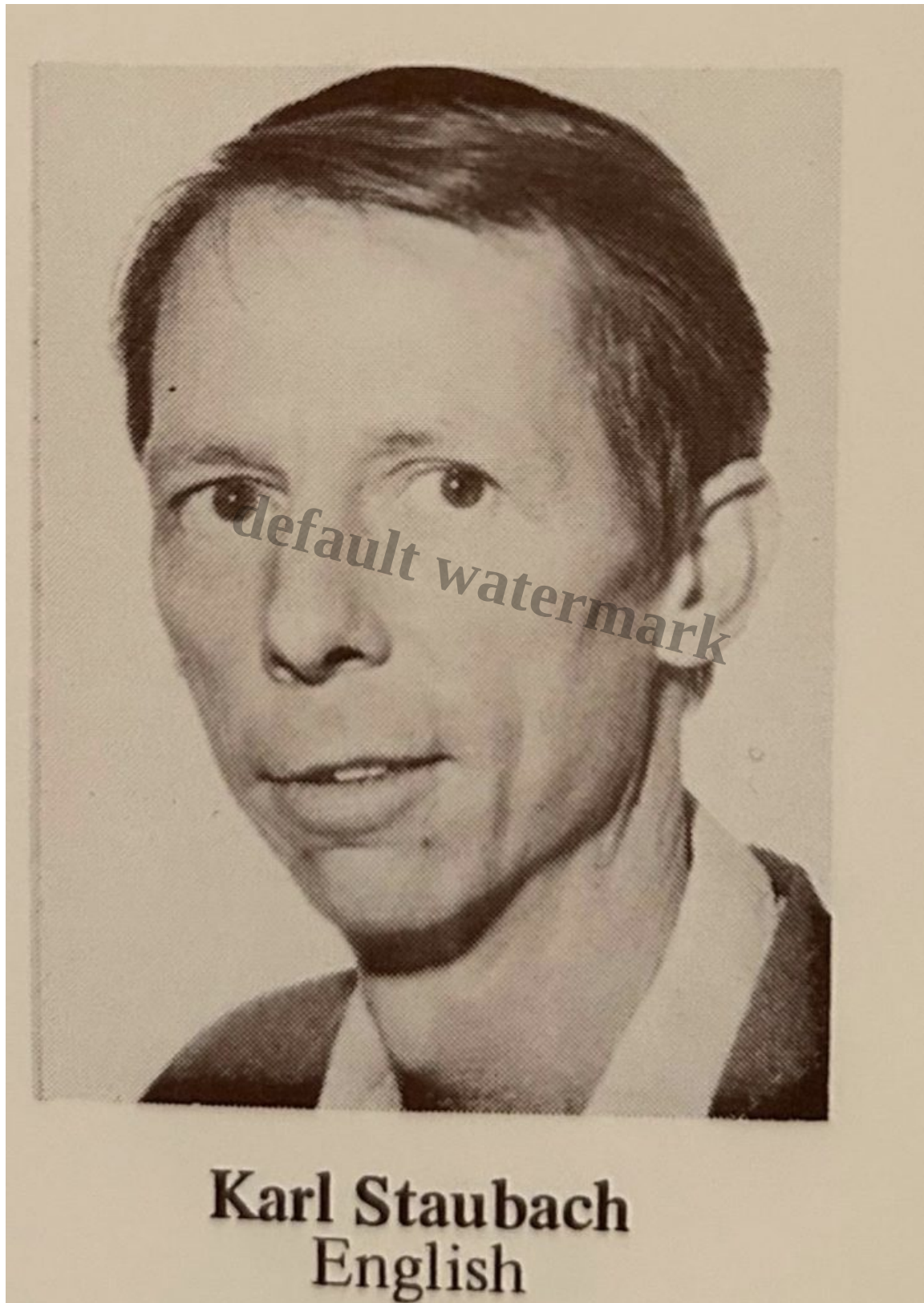


Karl Staubach Jul 10, 1932- Feb 26, 1933

Description

I am forwarding this notification of the passing of Karl Staubach from Marta Gillen, Sr. Executive Assistant to the President of DVC:

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From the DVC Yearbook 1974

We are sad to report the passing of former employee Karl Staubach. Karl was an English instructor who retired in 1994 after 30 years with DVC. Another former instructor and friend, Clark McCowen, wrote a remembrance which is below. Nancy Zink

Remembrance from Clark McKowen, English Professor, retired from DVC:

Karl Staubach, my colleague and friend of 60 years, died February 26. He would have been 92 in July. I won't be able to check with him anymore on how the family of jumping spiders he knew for several years are faring in a bush by his front steps.

Karl came to the college in 1964 when the world was new and everything was possible. Only gradually and sometime later did I learn this new guy who looked like he got his clothes from Goodwill and cut his own hair was the son of Charles Neff Staubach, a linguist on the faculty of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, chairman of the Department of Romance Languages in the 1950s and involved with work of such ground breakers as Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield, and the young Noam Chomsky. Karl, I discovered over time, knew their work intimately. He took a sabbatical while at DVC to do doctoral work with Leonard Newmark at the linguistics department Newmark established at UC San Diego.

Well, Karl. It turned out he didn't get his clothes at Goodwill, he got them at the Purple Heart Veterans store on Sunday when they had discounts. If the pants were too long, he cut them to fit but didn't see any point in hemming them. He did cut his own hair, though. He didn't wear a watch. The increasing flow of students past his window told him it was time for his next class. I think he was on the lunar calendar. It also turned out that if he wasn't a genius, he was the next thing to it, and watching that mind at work over the decades, with his droll sense of humor, (I could never get more out of him than a slight curvature of the lips) never ceased to astonish and delight me.

He was not just good at, but very good at, anything he set his mind to. Just to cap off a game of billiards, he would set one ball on top of another, like a period. He would copyedit his students' papers for them as if they were getting ready for publication. (A good copyeditor can demand four cents a word.) When he was in the United States Forest service, he surprised the packer when he loaded a mule right the first time he tried. (If the load's off balance, the mule won't budge.) He was an accomplished guitarist, made guitars for kids out of cigar boxes. He was a proficient classical pianist but preferred New Orleans jazz and could position tacks on piano strings for the right tinny sound for a one-man performance at a faculty party. He and Bill Harlan did a Laurel and Hardy bit at another party. And so on, and so on.

His abiding investigation into the nature, structure, and function of language colored the way he watched little kids decode the funny sounds coming out of people's mouths and reconstruct them in their wetware into an AI app we call language. Back in the sixties he was telling me about work going on with oscilloscopes, linguists looking at vibrations of meaning units of sound and breaking them into tiny building blocks by which we can now create a Siri or an Alexa, or an Elvis or Joe Biden. He told me about generative grammar theory and deep grammar, the work of Chomsky, Bloomfield, Sapir, Newmark, the universal properties human language.

He had a drive to get to the root of things, not for piling up information, but to become a native speaker, of everything he turned his mind to. He experienced trees as fellow intelligent beings. He was fluent in sailing and sailboats, with a fine eye for elegant design. He once made a sailboat from the top of a Volkswagen bus and published the design in *Popular Mechanics*. He and his Ashland friends designed and sold mastheads. He and Rosie and their kids had a cabin on Diamond Lake in Oregon with a sailboat tied up to their dock. He was an excellent swimmer.

Somewhere between high school and coming to DVC, he managed to have a thoroughly good time acquiring fluency in the language trees and lakes and mountains and oceans and stuff in the sky.

He fell in love with the Pacific Northwest and its whipped-cream topped ice-cream-sundae volcanic mountains, which he and a buddy, when they were sixteen, saw for the first time in on a trip out from Ann Arbor in a beat-up but functioning old car that he could fix, of course, whenever it broke down. He didn't like gadgety cars and never bought a new one that I'm aware of. When I visited him last year, he was driving an old Toyota his kids had made him get when they worried about the wreck he'd been driving for years. The Toyota was a bit too fancy. I think it had turn signals.

Some Karl solutions:

Our two classes were to watch a film together, but AV hadn't sent the take-up reel for the 16 mm projector and there wasn't time to send for it. Karl says to me, "Okay, let it run out on the floor. Don't let anyone mess with it." It's piling up, and kids nearby are pointing, "Mr. McKowen!" Film over, Karl threads the film onto the empty reel, and it snakes right back, no big deal.

Karl's kids' bikes were always getting flats, so Karl replaces the innertubes with garden hose, and that takes care of that.

A few years ago, Karl caught his hand on the sharp edge of an end table and tore open a four-inch flap of skin. He can't drive himself off to ER like that, so he lays the flap back in place and wraps it nice and tight with some paper towels, goes on about his business, and a couple of weeks later there's an almost invisible line where the tear was.

When he was quartermaster for his unit in Korea, things were being stolen from the supply depot, so Karl released a cobra among the supplies. He put a note on the door announcing the new resident. So much for that.

On Mount Adams, Karl and I and his friends, two couples from Ashland, are setting up camp on Bird Lake and Karl goes looking for firewood. He comes back, says he has found some but needs some help, so I go with him. It's a twelve-foot or so, four-inch thick log. How the hell are we going to chop that up? Well, we don't. Once you get a good fire going, you push the end in and you just keep nudging the burning end along as needed.

If you looked in on one of his mythology classes, you might have thought you'd stumbled into a cottage industry, people making crossword puzzles for mythological gods, making flags, making up songs, plucking a guitar, carving personal totems everybody confidently going about . . . whatever. You might have had trouble finding Karl. People were learning all about mythology and didn't seem to need someone identified as a teacher. It was that way in all his classes, invisible teaching, tons of learning, empowered human beings. To give his oldest son Charlie an idea of how the stock market worked, he bought him a share in Dr Pepper.

For the first day of Karl's Humor and Wit course, Bill Harlan played the role of a disgruntled student trying to argue his way into the class. Pies, set out for a treat, became props for an escalated argument. The class was treated to a pie-in-the face comedy routine as an introduction to the course. Karl designed the course and was the only one who ever taught it.

Karl and Les Hatch set up a mentoring program between the college and College Park High School and Valley View Middle School across the street. But the innovative way it worked was that, not some high-achieving DVC student, but a college kid not doing all that hot was paired with a kid from those schools who wasn't flourishing either. The kid got to come over to the college among the big guys. For maybe once in his life the college kid was being looked up to and the school kid was going to college and for once in his life was spending time with someone not unlike himself. Guess how well it worked.

That's the way Karl approached everything. In his Spock-from-Star-Trek way there would be a long pause and then out would come an elegant resolution. I got familiar with the process when we co-chaired the English division. "Karl, how can we democratize the courses, time of day, day of the week for teachers' loads?" He made a grid on the chalkboard in back of the division office for every class we offered. In a series of four rounds, teachers would make their first choice, then their second, third and fourth. "Karl, how can we make registering for classes less tedious for students?" In those days students waited in block-long lines at the gym where departments would sign them up for classes. Our table was festive. I've forgotten, what all went on, but it was a bright glow amid rather dull surroundings. There was the Chinese New Year hotel room overlooking the parade we booked for the English teachers and their families, the retreats, the guest poets, the speakers we brought in for the whole college on latest research on reading and composition as it affected their own disciplines. I would ask Karl for an idea for X, he would do his Spock shtick, and then a printout of ideas. We put them all in play.

The list goes on, his theory of gravity, his demonstration of Fermat's last theorem, which he was still polishing the last time we talked, his anticipation of Mount St. Helens blowing 1400 feet off her top, his predictions of where the next earthquakes would likely occur along the western edge of North and South America, His recognition that Velikovsky would prove right about how hot Venus is (800 degrees, *not* the establishment view of 200), his gift of *The Old Farmer's Almanac* for Christmas.

But you get the idea.

He departed on Rosie's birthday. She had died five years earlier, but wherever she might be holding forth, the kids thought he probably didn't want to miss that party.

Jumping spiders can live sixteen years.

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Author

uf4retired