

# Ken Rainey

## *A Legacy*

### **Katherine Staples**

*Austin Community College*

I approach the teaching of both undergraduates and graduates as facilitator and mentor in order to help students to develop their own research strategies and learning activities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century—with the abundance of information made available through the Internet and World Wide Web right on students' desktops—I am no longer their chief source of information. Of course, I might be a source of wisdom, that is, one who might direct them to useful sources of information.

—Ken Rainey, *Statement of Educational Philosophy*

This award [the Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research] will be given each year to an STC member who has made a positive difference to practice or teaching in the field of technical communication from conducting a lifetime of quality research.

—*Society for Technical Communication*

Something there is that doesn't love a wall.

—Robert Frost, from "Mending Wall"

**K**en Rainey had no use for walls, not walls of any kind. He spent his adult life and his academic career in courteous but persistent opposition to all of them: walls of racial bigotry, walls of theoretical and cultural difference, walls of the boundaries between established organizations and academic programs. Those who remember Ken from CPTSC remember him as a spokesperson for many different technical communication organizations, representing (and mediating) differences, gracefully reminding us of common goals and values. Ken Rainey's long career in education, research, and professional service reflects his untiring and generous effort to bring students, professionals, scholars, teachers, organizations, and programs together as collaborators in education... and beyond.

In this effort, Ken was always an active and voracious learner, delighting in new directions in technology, pedagogy, practice, and research.

Ken's publications reflect his many interests (including international educational liaisons and pedagogy, visual communication, document design, collaboration, internships, science, and mythology in the writings of Joseph Campbell, and American drama). Of all these interests, Ken was perhaps proudest of collaborative publications that supported others. Recognizing the need for an established and inclusive body of technical communication research, in 1998, he published a review of doctoral studies in business, scientific, and technical writing. Ken saw to it that this information to promote new research and recognize emerging scholars continues today through the efforts of the organizations Ken worked with, including the Society of Technical Communication (STC), the Association for Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), and the National Committee for Teachers of English (NCTE).



**Kenneth Rainey**

Ken and I collaborated on a number of projects. Perhaps the most exciting was the special 1995 education issue of *Technical Communication* we co-edited. This issue brought together many different voices and perspectives. I vividly remember the enjoyment of working with Ken to include diverse voices on diverse issues. Ken never failed to address and recognize positions not his own. This too makes for possible conversation.

Ken's service in STC consistently promoted shared research and educational initiatives. He established and led the STC Academic/Industry Committee and served as STC Assistant to the President for Academic and Research Programs—all while serving actively in the STC Atlanta Chapter and on a huge range of university and departmental committees at Southern Polytechnic University. Ken supervised seven of the department's theses. As Chair of Humanities and Technical Communication, he established an educational exchange program with China, continued to teach in Germany (which he loved), developed multimedia presentations and materials for high school teachers, and continued his research on technical communication in Germany, on the standards needed by professional communicators, and in the viability and validity of technical communication certification. Ken was never, never discouraged in his efforts to help shape connections for the future.

*Ken Rainey: A Legacy*



Ken Rainey's professional rewards and accomplishments are many, but perhaps they meant less to him than his honest pleasure in connections of all kinds. Ken was a modest, tireless, and brilliant designer of the new. He had the grace and wisdom to see that the future of technical communication is for many, not few, to create. His vision made multidimensional bridges and wise and intelligent detours through walls of all sorts. His legacy is for us to carry on— together.

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Katherine with Ken at the 2005 CPTSC annual meeting in Lubbock, Texas.