

A solid-gold man



Bullington with President Ruch at the November ceremony in his honor.

JOHN KELLER

Richard Bullington

- Born March 12, 1920, in Philadelphia
- Served as Navy fighter pilot aboard aircraft carrier USS Lexington during World War II
- Earned Ed.D. from University of Alabama in 1953
- Worked as high school teacher and elementary school administrator in Alabama from 1945-53
- Served in Air Force as jet fighter and combat crew training director at Williams AFB, Chandler, Ariz., 1953-57
- Worked as elementary and high school principal in Arizona from 1957-61
- Taught at Arizona State as education professor and was promoted to department chair from 1961-68
- Served as Boise State executive vice president, 1968-77; '78-87
- Served as Boise State acting president 1977-78
- Served as vice president for information technology and extension from 1987-89. Retired from Boise State, 1989.
- Died Dec. 21, 2002, in Boise

Last November Boise State's division of Academic Technologies honored Dr. Richard Bullington, the university's former executive vice president and interim president, by naming the Bullington Digital Classroom in his honor. The dedication ceremony recognized Bullington's 21 years with Boise State, and in particular his leadership role in supporting and encouraging the use of technology in education.

University officials and friends gathered in the Simplot/Micron Building for the ceremony to pay their tributes to the frail and elderly Bullington and his wife, Pat. After a few remarks by friends and ex-colleagues, including former Boise State President John Barnes, Bullington spoke briefly, thanking the university for the honor. The timing was fortuitous. Although Bullington was not in the best of health, nobody knew his sojourn on earth was nearly over. Bullington passed away four weeks later at the age of 82.

Bullington's friends and former colleagues gathered once again two days after Christmas at a memorial service to celebrate his life. Once again, Barnes was called upon to pay tribute to his old friend. His eulogy is excerpted here:

We gather to celebrate the life and to remember the contributions of Dr. Richard Bullington. [Just a few] weeks ago [my wife] Shirley and I joined a group of Dick's friends and admirers to dedicate the Richard Bullington Room at Boise State University. Dick was the pioneer of this building whose dreams came true when this modern center became a reality.

No one knows when his term on this celestial ball is to be over. We must be as prepared as was Dr. Bullington to meet our maker, to close the book of life with no regrets and with humble confidence that we have contributed widely to this troubled world while briefly sharing its space. Dick certainly was.

In my first year at Boise State in 1967, we conducted a wide search for a new position called executive vice president. A committee of deans and faculty narrowed the applicants to three and interviewed each person. Finally, Dean [Joseph] Spulnik, the chair of the committee, [said the group unanimously] recommended Richard Bullington. [Spulnik's] only comment was that Dick was at Arizona State, where I had previously been a professor.

A year or two after Dick arrived at Boise State, Spulnik walked into my office and said, "That Bullington is a great vice president. At least we got one good man out of ASU." I agree that we did. His view was amplified by our faculty and other administrators.

Bullington and I worked closely for nine years to help create what is now Idaho's largest and finest university. Only occasionally did I and Little Richard, as I called him — this big, solid-gold man — have time to recreate, just with each other, alone on Idaho's rivers and small streams. On one occasion, we caught no fish. It didn't matter to us. We enjoyed being together in the solitude of a remote stream. As we returned to his car and put our empty creels in the trunk, Dick said, "John, failure is not a passing grade." I later learned that this was just one of many life capsule views that he shared with multitudes of people — students, faculty and friends.

I have been fortunate to work with many excellent people, but I have never met, much less worked closely with, a solid-gold man like Dick. When the State Board of Education wanted to run me out of this state, they loved Dick Bullington. When

I needed to get State Board approval for a major project at our university, I asked Dick to visit with the board members at home or their place of work. They always welcomed him.

His integrity, warmth and skills contributed to numerous goals. He achieved for BSU through these personal interactions more than time permits me to recite. For instance, some members of the State Board wanted us to build a minidome for sports like Idaho State had. We had plans for a double-deck stadium that was expandable for a growing university. Even the unwilling were converted by this solid-gold man. When I thought it necessary to bite someone on the leg just to focus his attention on BSU, Dick was by my side with first-aid cream and bandages.

Finally, he became a friend, like a father, to dozens of young athletes. Years after their graduation, many returned to thank him for his friendship and help. Some brought their wives and children to meet him. They honored him with their presence. He taught them so much about how to live a golden life.

Well done, our true and faithful friend. May we who linger behind do as well in our own lives.