The Passing of a Servant Leader

Sally Jongsma
*Dordt College, sally.jongsma@dordt.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice](https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice)

Part of the Christianity Commons, and the Higher Education Commons

**Recommended Citation**
Available at: [https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol62/iss1/6](https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol62/iss1/6)

This News is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dordt Voice, 2016- by an authorized editor of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.
Ribbens served Dordt College for 37 years as professor, registrar, director of admissions and financial aid, academic dean, director of the library, and vice president for academic affairs. He played a major role in shaping and running the young institution as it moved from a junior college with fewer than 100 students to a thriving four-year college of more than 1,200. Today his name, along with that of his wife, Henrietta, appears on Dordt’s main classroom building.

"With Doug Ribbens’s passing, most of the founders of the college are gone," said President Erik Hoekstra. "We give thanks to God for the lives and vision of these pioneers."

Ribbens began teaching on the first day of classes in 1955. He set a high bar of excellence for himself and for the college.

"He always pressed us to grow, not just in student numbers, but in reputation as a quality Christian college," said Hoekstra, noting that even in retirement, Ribbens wanted the founders’ vision for a biblically grounded education in all areas of life to remain central at Dordt College.

"He had a heart for people who could be touched by the college’s mission and would bend to accommodate that."

— President Emeritus Dr. Carl Zylstra

Dordt’s third president, Dr. Carl Zylstra, noted, “When we named the Ribbens Academic Complex, many people recognized that the naming honored the academic founder of Dordt College. "He had a heart for people who could be touched by the college’s mission and would bend to accommodate that,” Zylstra added, recalling the testimony of students who have told him of the “second chance” Ribbens gave them.

Today, the Douglas and Henrietta Ribbens Academic Complex honors the couple’s contribution to the college, including their financial contributions. Throughout his life, Ribbens continued to believe that a broad education that helps students develop a strong world-and life-view is the best preparation a student can have upon leaving college. To help make that possible, he and Henrietta funded several Ribbens Elementary Teacher Education Scholarships for Dordt students.

Ribbens kept a relatively low profile during his years at Dordt, but his visionary and administrative contributions played a major role in what Dordt College became during his 37 years of service and in what it is today.

SALLY JONGSMA