

WILLIAM KEITH BOOKWALTER

By El Ravenswood Staff

William Keith Bookwalter was born and raised in Finley, Ohio, the home of Cooper Tires.

His grandparents were German immigrants who over time got absorbed in the American melting pot, first by altering their name to Bookwalter, and then by facilitating the loss of German as a language spoken within the family.

His parents grew up as farmers, but his father, a World War 2 veteran, due to a war-related injury, had to abandon country life and seek out a living in the city. He enjoyed his entire elementary, middle and high school experiences, all in public schools where he played basketball, football and tennis. In high school he took Spanish.

Despite living in the city, the family maintained its country roots and he grew up fishing, hunting with bow and arrows and scavenging in the fields.

He went to Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, graduating in 1973 with a degree in high school English, and Social Psychology. He continued honing his skills in Spanish.

While in college, he became a member of the Baha'i faith, a fruition of a life-long journey of spiritual curiosity and inquisitiveness.

Following his graduation from college, he taught High School English in Eden, Ohio. In 1975, he and his wife and their first child drove to Honduras where he spent the next nine years teaching in international schools. He eventually moved to Colombia, spending an additional 30 years in various roles as teacher, principal, assistant director, and staff developer



in various cities including Bogota, the capital.

While in Colombia, he combined teaching with research, eventually completing his doctoral work in “Logical Thinking” among third graders frustrated with learning Mathematics and Science. He eventually got a Ph.D. in Human Development with emphasis in Cognitive Development and Education.

As an educator, he has advocated for the holistic education of children acknowledging their biological, social, psychological and spiritual natures.

“In Latin America, teaching holistically was a lot easier,” he said recently. “Schools had chaplains,

prayer rooms and teachers could delve into topics such as love, death and beyond etc. without fear of any kind of retribution.”

Mr. Bookwalter came back to the United States after spending 40 years in Latin American countries. Until he was hired by the Ravenswood City School District in 2015, he worked as the Director of a Montessori Pre-School in San Luis Obispo.

“Coming to a Spanish Dual Immersion is like coming home,” he said recently. “After 40 years of teaching English to kids from various countries in the world, it feels good to reconnect with the teaching of Spanish.”