



In Memory of Wanda S. Ballard

Wanda S. Ballard, 87, one of the founders of Ballard & Tighe, passed away on December 23, 2011. Ms. Ballard, a former Speech and Language Specialist at Evergreen Elementary School in Whittier, California and her friend, Phyllis L. Tighe, a former classroom teacher and Reading Specialist, also at Evergreen School, decided to join in creating their own company thirty-five years ago because they could not find instructional materials to meet the needs of their ESL (English as a Second Language) students. The following is a recount from Phyllis Tighe.

There were two occurrences that were instrumental in Ballard & Tighe's early success because they forced educators to find materials (that Wanda and I quickly realized we could create and publish) to meet the following governmental requirements:

The Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) declared that "no person in the U.S. shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The landmark Supreme Court decision in Lau vs. Nichols (1974) acknowledged that "there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education in mainstream classrooms." The court ruled that "public schools must accommodate language minority students' linguistic and academic needs in special programs for at least some period of time."

Therefore, school districts with large numbers of students from non-English speaking homes were mandated to take educational measures to address language minority students' needs, both to acquire English as a second language and to learn appropriate grade level content. Schools had the option either to develop a program specifically designed for language minority students or to supplement the mainstream program with some second language support. At this time, Wanda was the Speech and Language Specialist for Evergreen School in Whittier, California (the one East Whittier City School District school that was being flooded with students straight from Mexico with no formal schooling). I was the Reading Specialist for Evergreen, having a master's degree in Reading. Wanda was assigned these students for part of the day to teach them to speak English. I had special reading groups and received these students to teach them to read English. Because Evergreen had so many students in these categories, the school received federal money to educate the students. Wanda and I were friends and soon realized we needed a special program for these target students.

During the spring of 1976, Wanda and I began meeting in the evenings at her home daily to create an instructional program for English learners. She used her speech and language background to create the content of the program and I used my reading background to create the Pupil Profile Card for Wanda's content as well as for the creation of the Pupil Test Booklet. This was a grueling experience because we were both teaching full-time as well.

Over the summer we spent all our time on the project and in September of 1976, we completed our first English Oral Language Program—the IDEA Kit. Wanda became the president of Ballard & Tighe while I was the vice president. She and I created a small flier about the program and sent out the fliers in a mass

mailing. One early order we received from the mailer was for ten kits in New York. We were on our way! We attempted to speak at different school districts to sell the program. At one such presentation, in Los Nietos, I think, the principal said we should create a companion program in Spanish and that Dr. Henry Dalton should write it. Hence, the Spanish version was written and published in 1977. This occasion was also our introduction to our wonderful friend, Henry.

It didn't take long until we realized selling our program wasn't among our strengths. So we began our Sales Representatives Program. At this time, we suffered from our makeshift arrangements of office space with the assembly and storage of materials. The way we assembled the picture boxes for the IDEA Kit necessitated a lot of busy work because we had to place the appropriate unit divider cards among the picture cards so that the proper group of cards could be easily stored and retrieved. There needed to be room for the storage of kit boxes together with the supplies necessary for mailing. We first used Wanda's home for our office, then my home. We stored materials in my garage, and then moved our materials to one medium-sized warehouse. Shortly thereafter we needed two medium-sized warehouses. It became a real hardship to have the office and warehouse in separate locations. So we were in the market for a consolidated office and warehouse.

Paul Ballard, Wanda's son, told us of several such combination buildings that were available for purchase. We visited the different locations and preferred the 480 Atlas Street building in Brea. It was at this time that we met Kent Roberts, one of the owners of the real estate company who sold us the building. It was a great day when we moved in. Having the office and warehouse in one location was wonderful!

I'm not sure of the date when we met Dorothy Roberts. She said that she had always wanted to own a company as her father had done and that she and Kent might like to buy Ballard & Tighe from Wanda, her husband John and my husband, Chuck and me. We were very impressed with Dorothy as well as with Kent. After several get-acquainted dinners, we felt sure that she and Kent would be able to succeed in their Ballard & Tighe ownership.

In 1989, we sold the company to Dorothy and Kent. Wanda wanted to retire after this and worked for Ballard & Tighe a short time after the sale. I worked with Dorothy and Kent for another three years, retiring in 1992.

Wanda and John remained our close friends all of their lives. They were honest people of integrity, a must among partners! Wanda and I especially were constantly working together in harmony. She was very intelligent, caring, generous, and hardworking. I could never have found a better day-to-day partner. Both Chuck and I feel a profound loss in Wanda's passing and in John's passing earlier on May 6, 2010.

With Ms. Ballard's and Ms. Tighe's early guidance, Ballard & Tighe has continued to specialize in and be recognized as a leader and innovator in developing instructional and assessment materials for English learners. All of us at Ballard & Tighe offer our deepest sympathy to the Ballard family at this difficult time.