



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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It was great seeing many of our members at the Symposium in Austin, TX. Thanks to Marc Pierce and UT-Austin's German Department with its faculty, staff, and students for a well-planned and executed meeting. Besides the inspiring presentations, the conversations in between them and at the informal meetings were the added value that in-person conferences provide. I am also fully aware that in the post-COVID times of decreased conference funding, many participants must chip in their own funds to come to our symposia, or are, unfortunately, unable to attend and show their interesting work. One way to make our symposia more accessible for graduate students and recent graduates, was the Board's decision to increase the graduate student/early-career stipends to \$1500.

To even the playing field even more and open our annual meetings to participants not only in the U.S. and Germany but around the world, we decided at the business meeting in Austin that after the symposia 2025 in Milwaukee and the 50th anniversary symposium in 2026 (possibly in Pennsylvania), we would try to hold our 2027 symposium online and decide afterwards how often we would want to organize them in that format (every other

year? every third?).

How well the increased accessibility has served us is evident in the numbers of downloads of articles from our Yearbook for German American Studies: Between January 2023 and December 2023, we had more than 24,000 downloads^[1]. Thank you to Bill Keel for seeing this project through!

I wish you all a relaxing summer.

Mit besten Grüßen,

Marcel P. Rotter

SGAS President

^[1]To break it down:

YGAS for 2022 (1,320 issue downloads) and 2023 (3,579 issue downloads).

For 2023 (January – December 11), YGAS has 20,387 (articles) + 3,579 (issues) = 23,966 total downloads (January 1-December 11).

For 2022 (July-December), YGAS has 2,959 (articles) + 1,320 (issues) = 4,279 total downloads (July-December)

Call for Letter Archive Information

Dear SGAS colleagues,

It was great seeing many of you at the symposium in Austin, TX earlier this year. I vividly remember the talk by Dr. Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C.) on the need for making the correspondence between German immigrants to the U.S. and their remaining families in the German-speaking lands and vice versa accessible online. Many U.S. archives, such as the Max Kade Institute in Madison, WI, do a stellar job in making letters available – be it on their websites, in publications such as our Yearbook for German American Studies, or in talks and exhibitions across the Midwest.

Other letter collections in the U.S. might linger, barely used, in regional historical societies or still in private hands of the families, the *Kurrent* script possibly preventing the use by local researchers. The German Historical Institute, under the leadership of Dr. Lässig and Dr. Atiba Pertilla, has started to scan letters in U.S. collections (https://migrantconnections.org/s/mobile_en/page/contributors) and is also supporting the plans to scan the only significant collection of letters TO Germany in Gotha.

I would like to send out a call for information on significant collections of German immigrant letters in the United States to help the GHI identify such collections and add to their database (see above). Please use this form to provide the necessary information if you have some collections in mind:

<https://forms.gle/gZ9TnAec3nD9sV1p7>

Gotha Letter Project – An Update

Wolfgang Helbig and Walter Kamphoefner with the help of the History Department at the University of Bochum have done outstanding work in researching the biographical, geographical, and social context of the writers (and recipients) of the 11.500 letters in the Gotha collection.

Judging from my conversations with symposium participants in Austin, it seems that the impression on this side of the Atlantic was that after the publication of the two letter editions “Briefe aus Amerika” and “Deutsche im U.S. Bürgerkrieg” the use of the collection has dwindled. Nothing could be further from the truth as I was assured by Dr. Monika Müller, director of the manuscripts and in charge of the *Auswandererbrieife* collection at the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, which is part of the University of Erfurt’s library. During a recent research trip, she told me about the countless mini-projects university students

undertake for their respective classes and certifications. She also mentioned a theater play that an Iranian student, living in exile in Hamburg, recently wrote based on some letter series. It was performed in Hamburg to historicize the current immigrant experiences.

In sum, it seems to be a lack of communication and, therefore, a wrong impression that U.S.-based scholars have about the Gotha *Auswandererbriefe*. Professor Ursula Lehmkuhl, Uni Trier, has created several very helpful finding aids with her students. <http://auswandererbriefe.de/>. She is interested in an English version of her website, which I promised her to create together with some students of mine. She also continues to apply, together with Dr. Lässig, for Academy grants that would pay for three librarians for three years to make the letters accessible on the *Caliope*, the manuscript portal of the German (European?) library system. The final goal (as far out as 9-10 years) is to have a searchable database hosted by the University of Mainz.

When I was in Gotha, I also came across a letter to Wolfgang Helbig regarding the microfilming of all materials (letters, transcriptions, background research, etc.) for the Library of Congress (<https://lccn.loc.gov/97207808>). While working with paper in Gotha has its value, those interested in smaller topics, or a narrow selection of letters might save some travel money by consulting the 40 microfilm rolls in Washington.

48th Annual Symposium The University of Texas at Austin Austin, Texas April 4-6, 2024

Co-sponsored by the Houston Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany and the University of Texas Department of



German Consul General Kai Henning, opening remarks

Germanic Studies, the Conference began with a *Geselliges Beisammensein* at the German Free School of Austin. After registration and a welcoming address by Marc Pierce (UT Austin), Symposium attendees heard opening remarks by German Consul General Kai Hennig (Houston) and Steven Hoelscher, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the College of Liberal Arts (UT Austin).

After more than forty Presentations and

Roundtables, Kit Belgium (UT Austin) led a tour of historical sites in Austin. The final banquet at the ETTER-HARBIN ALUMNI CENTER honored this year's SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award winner, Walter Kampfhoefner.



Kit Belgium leading the tour of Austin historical sites



THE 48th SYMPOSIUM OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: WALTER KAMPHOEFNER

LAUDATIO BY TIMOTHY G. ANDERSON

It's my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce Dr. Walter D. Kamphoefner as this year's recipient of the SGAS's Outstanding Achievement Award. A fifth-generation German-American Missourian with ancestral roots in the Tecklenburg region of Westfalen, Walter was a first generation college student when he enrolled at Concordia College, from which he received a bachelor's degree in 1970. He went on to receive his master's and doctorate from the University of Missouri in 1972 and 1978, respectively, the latter of which was supported in part by a DAAD dissertation fellowship in Münster in 1975 and 1976. His doctoral research on the migration of the first major wave of German immigrants to North America in the early 19th century revolutionized our understanding of the push factors involved, casting the immigrants not as passive actors, but rather as active participants responding to global-scale economic changes during the first industrial revolutions in northwestern Europe. Together with scholars such as Jon Gjerde and Robert Ostergren, Walter was a leading voice in a paradigmatic shift that challenged the normative, highly

romanticized conception popularized by scholars such as Oscar Handlin that contextualized 19th -century immigrants as "uprooted," powerless, and reactive. His doctoral research was published first in German – Westfalen in der neuen Welt: Eine Sozialgeschichte der Auswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert – and later in 1987 as *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* by Princeton University Press. Subsequently, Walter collaborated with the noted scholar Wolfgang Helbich at the Ruhr Universität Bochum in the collection and interpretation



Marcel Rotter, SGAS President, Walter Kamphoefner, and Timothy G. Anderson

of thousands of letters dispatched from the United States back home. This collaboration resulted in three book-length publications, published in both German and English. His most recent booklength publication – *Germans in America: A Concise History* – published by Roman & Littlefield, is a remarkable work of

synthesis, in my opinion the best and most complete appraisal of the history and contributions of German-Americans in the United States that cements him as the preeminent scholar of German immigration to North America. Altogether in his illustrious academic career, Walter has published 12 books, over 60 articles, dozens of book reviews, and is the recipient of two Fulbright awards. His research has also been supported by funding from the

NEH, the DAAD, and the German Marshall Fund. And last, but not least, Walter has served as Vice President and President of this organization, from 2013-2015 and 2015-2017. It is altogether fitting, then, that I present this year's recipient of the SGAS's Outstanding Achievement Award, Dr. Walter Kamphoefner.



WALTER KAMPHOEFNER, WINNER OF THE 2024 SGAS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

I feel a little like Tom Sawyer attending his own funeral. Normally my role at this banquet is delivering the laudatio, not being the subject. I've done it four times, for Fred Luebke, Reinhardt Doerries, Kathleen Conzen,^[1] and Wolfgang Helbich. I didn't just get here on my own, and I'm indebted to each of them in one way or another. The first three I met before I had even finished my dissertation, and their interest and encouragement helped reassure me that I was on the right track in a dismal job market. As I said in his laudatio, I can safely say that I would not be where I am today had it not been for Wolfgang Helbich.^[2] We first met circa 1980 because of our mutual interest in immigrant letters. Although I was only a postdoctoral researcher in Germany with an uncertain future and he was an established professor, he offered me the opportunity for what proved to be a very productive collaboration over more than four decades.^[3] It lasted almost to Wolfgang's dying day; I received his last e-mail only nine days before his passing. I'm also greatly indebted to my "Doktorstiefvater," Konrad Jarausch. Incidentally, I have a review of his memoir coming out in our next Yearbook.^[4] Konrad hired me for some summer work when I was the classic starving grad student, and held my feet to the fire so I got a Fulbright dissertation fellowship application submitted. When it got near notification

time, I would call my housemate Don Johnson (not that Don Johnson!) as soon as he got home from work every day to see if there was anything in the mail. One day there was, and I asked whether it was a thick envelope or a thin one. He said thick, and I said, meet me down at the Old Heidelberg in 20 minutes. I'm buying beer. Until that day, I wondered whether I had a future in the history profession, but from then on, I figured I had a fighting chance. I guess I was an unlikely candidate for an academic career: eight years in a one-room grade school, first generation college, first generation high school on my mom's side, a bit roughhewn around the edges coming off the farm.^[5] I have a grad school buddy from Connecticut who to this day is not sure whether I was pulling his leg about eating squirrel heads.

I wish I could say that I was smart enough in 1971 to realize that with a new law taking effect in 1968, immigration would be a hot issue for the foreseeable future. But truth be told, it was more dumb luck. I was just interested in my own ethnic heritage and wanted to put my language skills to use. That being said, I always kept one eye on current events when writing about immigration in the past. When I gave a Liberal Arts distinguished lecture some fifteen years back, my topic was "What's New About the New Immigration?" Short answer: not much besides skin color and countries or origin.^[6] I've documented the

survival of heritage languages (a term I prefer to foreign languages), well beyond the second generation that sociological models have postulated. I've pointed up the historical precedent for meeting immigrants halfway, with things like translated laws and ballots and voting instructions, bilingual education and even two-way immersion programs. As I tell my students, you may think bilingual education is an innovation of the radical sixties, but it's not the 1960s but the 1860s. As I did in today's paper and my recent zoom lecture with the German Texan Heritage Society, I enjoy reminding people about when German Americans and Republicans in the Southern and border states were the good guys, standing apart from Anglos on issues of slavery, secession, and race.^[7] Sometimes immigrants make the best Americans.

When the younger President Bush got up on his high horse about a Spanish translation of the National Anthem, I had my 15 minutes of fame pointing out that translation of DAS Star Spangled Banner was an old American tradition going back 150 years to schoolteacher and choir director Hermann Seele of New Braunfels, Texas. It had a subsequent echo in Germany when a Green Bundestag member suggested translating the German anthem into Turkish, much to the outrage of conservatives. I played to ball to a former student of Helbich and me, working as a journalist in DC for a German press syndicate. Whenever another paper ran his piece, he'd e-mail me a copy. One arrived

with the headline: SZ und BZ. I said to myself, Wow, Süddeutsche Zeitung! Is there also a Berliner Zeitung? Schön wäre es. It was the Sindelfinger Zeitung and Böblingen Zeitung. Oh well!^[8]

Within SGAS, I must thank Bill Roba for convincing me in 2013 to run for office. Until then, I was not an annual regular, in part because the conference competed with the OAH national history meeting. Since then, I've never missed this symposium. I also started contributing to the Yearbook more regularly, facilitated by Bill Keel's dedicated and effective editorship.

It has been a pleasure working with Tim Anderson, with Paul Fessler who but for Covid would have driven nearly 1,000 miles to be here, and with a number of other grad students from whom I learned almost as much as they learned from me.^[9] Two more were on our program; Dr. Erika Weidemann Bravo left after presenting on Friday, but Sophia Rouse presented this morning from her freshly completed Master's thesis.^[10] She's off to Germany to teach English on a Fulbright before continuing with Ph.D. work at the University of Maryland.

Back in 1988, people could not understand why I would leave the University of Miami for Texas A&M. There were two main reasons: 1) I am not a beach person. And 2) Miami did not have a Ph.D. program in my field. Even so, I've only been the official advisor of a half dozen dissertations, but I was never that concerned about whose

name appeared on the signature page if I could help a promising young scholar, including Ossies[11]and Wessies[12]as well as Americans,[13]and the occasional geographer or economist[14]along with historians. I had the pleasure of introducing Viktorija Bilić to Alison Efford, who combined their efforts editing the correspondence of Matilda Anneke, now out as a book in both languages.[15]And Viktorija is currently translating my latest book into German.

If you know me well, you know that I have always stood up for scholarly integrity, but I must confess to a minor lapse on my part. Before I completed my dissertation, I had discovered the Scheben Collection of immigrant letters but had more pressing projects before I could work with them. However, there was one colorful letter I couldn't resist citing. But to keep other scholars off the trail, whenever I cited it in English, I gave the source as an archive in Bonn, but whenever I cited it in a German publication, I cited the Wisconsin Historical Society where Scheben had deposited carbon copies. Please don't hate me; it's since been published in its entirety.[16]It was this Scheben Collection, which Helbich and I had each discovered independently, that led to our collaboration on immigrant letters. But as it turned out, we ended up with so much great letter material from Helbich's solicitations that we only used one writer from the Scheben collection in our editions: Angela Heck whom I surreptitiously cited.

My approach to history is summed up in what I wrote in the introduction to my newest book: "At times I find it necessary to push back and debunk the claims of ethnic enthusiasts and 'professional Germans,' but I do not hesitate to debunk the debunkers where their corrective has gone too far." [17]Apropos pushback, I wrote another review in our upcoming Yearbook, refuting the false equivalency of the treatment of German Americans compared to Japanese Americans in World War II.[18]My fellow Missourian Carl Schurz said it best: "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right."

And not because it's customary, but because it's deserved, I should also give a shout-out to my wife, Anja Schwalen. People always say, oh, your wife is German; how fortunate that your research is also on Germany. Well that is true, but they have the causal arrows reversed. We met while I was doing research in Germany, when Helbich tasked her with cleaning up one of my German texts, and the rest is history. She had never been to America at that point, but was willing to take on the challenge of a new country, an unfamiliar educational system, and teaching high school Spanish sometimes to native speakers who thought they knew it better than her. Nonetheless, she generously left it up to me whether to accept a job offer from Humboldt University in Berlin back in the nineties, or to stay in Texas. Over the years, she's proofread and critiqued practically everything I wrote in German,

plus helping me puzzle out difficult peasant scrawls in Sütterlin. Above all, she has tolerated my hobby horse of checking out one more example of cultural landscapes or vernacular architecture or ethnic cemeteries while driving the backroads rather than the main highways.

I've always been one for the backroads, the

blue highways, the road less traveled; in fact, you could call me a transatlantic provincial.

So thank you Anja, thank you Tim, thank you SGAS. It's been a great ride!

[1]"Frederick C. Luebke Distinguished Achievement Award," SGAS Newsletter, 31:2 (June 2010), 9-10; Doerries:<https://sgas.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/newsletter35.1.2014.08.pdf>; Conzen:<https://sgas.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/newsletter36.2.pdf>;

[2]<https://sgas.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2017-38.2-SGAS-Newsletter-July.pdf>.

[3]The fruits of our labors, later with the cooperation of Prof. Ursula Lehmkuhl, now numbering over 11,000 letters, are archived in the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha under the name Nordamerika-Briefsammlung (NABS): <https://www.auswandererbriefe.de/sammlung.html>.

[4]*The Burden of German History: A Transatlantic Life*. By Konrad H. Jarausch. New York/ Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2023.

[5]Here is an interview from the State Historical Society of Missouri about my one-room grade school experience: <https://shsmo.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/oral-history/transcripts/c4051/kamphoefner.pdf>.

[6]Unfortunately, this question has lost none of its relevance over time. My latest iteration was presented at an immigration workshop in Poland and published in their journal: "What's New About the New Immigration? A Historian's Perspective over Two Centuries," *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 45:3 (2019), 7-17: <https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-c02a1683-fa2f-4b14-a0c4-866800bf76d1>.

[7]"Harry Wurzbach, the Last Protagonist of Black and Tan Republicanism," Paper presented at the SGASSymposium, Austin, TX, April 6, 2024. "The 1848 Revolution in Texas: The Black-German Republican Reconstruction Era Alliance and Progressive Politics," Zoom lecture, German Texan Heritage Society, March 21 2024.

[8]My research was widely cited by Claudia Feldman and Eyder Peralta, "Anthem Angst," *Houston Chronicle*, May 4, 2006, A1,4. The German echo originally ran in Marcus Günther, "Der deutsche Text ist fast vergessen," May 7, 2006, *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, and was distributed through its syndicate.

[9]Timothy Gene Anderson, "Immigrants in the World-system: Domestic Industry and Industrialization in Northwest Germany and the Migration to Osage County, Missouri, 1835-1900," Ph.D. Diss., Texas A&M University, 1994. Paul Rudolph Fessler, "Speaking in Tongues: German-Americans and the Heritage of Bilingual Education in American Public Schools," Ph.D. Diss., Texas A&M University, 1997.

[10]Erika Weidemann, "A Malleable Identity: The Immigration of Ethnic Germans to North America, 1947-1957," Ph.D. Diss., Texas A/M University, 2020. Sophia A. Rouse, "'Let The Storm Begin!': Ethnic Politics, German Americans, and the Mass Lynching of Eleven Italians in New Orleans, 1830-1899," M.A. Thesis, Texas

A&M University, 2024.

[11] Uwe Reich, *Aus Cottbus und Arnswalde in die Neue Welt: Amerika-Auswanderung aus Ostelbien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Studien zur Historischen Migrationsforschung 5) (Osnabrück: Rasch, 1997). Axel Lubinski, *Entlassen aus dem Untertanenverband: die Amerika-Auswanderung aus Mecklenburg-Strelitz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Studien zur Historischen Migrationsforschung 3) (Osnabrück: Rasch, 1997).

[12] Robert Fuchs, *Heirat in der Fremde. Deutschamerikaner in Cincinnati im Späten 19. Jahrhundert* (Studien zur Historischen Migrationsforschung 29) (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014). Jochen Krebber, *Württemberg in Nordamerika: Migration von der Schwäbischen Alb im 19. Jahrhundert* (Transatlantische Historische Studien 50) (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014).

[13] Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Publications of the German Historical Institute) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[14] Timothy Anderson, see above FN 6. Simone A. Wegge, "Migration Decisions in Mid Nineteenth-Century Germany," Ph.D. Diss., Northwestern University, 1997.

[15] *Radical Relationships: The Civil War-Era Correspondence of Mathilde Franziska Anneke* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2021); German: *Radikale Beziehungen* (Steiner, 2023).

[16] Jürgen Macha/Marlene Nikolay-Panter, Wolfgang Herborn, eds., *Wir verlangen nicht mehr nach Deutschland: Auswandererbriefe und Dokumente der Sammlung Joseph Scheben (1825-1938)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

[17] *Germans in America: A Concise History* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 5.

[18] *Enemies Among Us: The Relocation, Internment, and Repatriation of German, Italian, and Japanese Americans During the Second World War*. By John E. Schmitz. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021.



RUTH REICHMANN

IN MEMORIAM

With the death of Ruth Reichmann on January 6, 2024, at her home near Nashville, Indiana, at the age of 95, the Society for German American Studies lost another of its ardent supporters and advocates over several decades. Ruth was born in Munich on July 29, 1928, and grew up in Nürnberg, where she witnessed the destruction of her city and country during the Second World War. After beginning her studies in Nürnberg, she immigrated to the United States in 1952 and enrolled in the University of Cincinnati School of Medicine. There she met her future husband Eberhard (Eb) Reichmann, an immigrant from Swabia (Eb preceded her in death in 2009). They married in 1956 and enjoyed 53 years of marriage. The couple moved to Bloomington, Indiana, in 1959 where Eberhard had been appointed assistant professor of German at Indiana University.

At Indiana University, Ruth earned a B.A. in Speech and Theater, an M.A.T. in German, and a Ph.D. in 1986 with a dissertation entitled "Intercultural Adult Education: Its Nature and Exemplification."

In addition to a rich array of civic activities, Ruth together with Eb engaged in fostering the recognition of the German heritage of their adopted state of Indiana in the early 1980s. They began by conducting research on the New Harmony Ethnic Heritage Project in 1980-81. Ruth and Eb were appointed by Governor Robert Orr in 1983 to the Indiana State German Immigration Tricentennial Commission with Ruth as Executive Vice Chairperson. Through this commission they met many Indiana Germans throughout the state longing for recognition of Indiana's German heritage and history. Together with others, Ruth and Eb founded the Indiana German Heritage Society (IGHS) in 1984 to continue the work of the commission, with Ruth as its first president. Tours, conferences, workshops, exhibits, and publications followed. Ruth served as editor and contributor to the *IGHS Newsletter* for many years and on the board of directors of IGHS for over 30 years. IGHS named her President Emerita and Hoosier German American of the Year in 2013. Ruth co-founded, with Eb and Giles Hoyt, the Max Kade German-American Center at IUPUI (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis). Adding Dolores Hoyt, the Reichmanns and the Hoyts also endowed a chair at the Max Kade German American Center in 1989 to guarantee the perpetuation of the teaching of the German language and the study of German Americana. Ruth also served as the Center's first director. She also served as an adjunct assistant professor at IUPUI and the

education chair for the Society of German American Studies.

As Don Heinrich Tolzmann recollects, he first met Ruth when she and Eb came to visit the German-Americana Collection at the University of Cincinnati. She impressed him by her love of the German heritage and for her strong interest in the teaching of German American Studies. The tenth annual SGAS Symposium was held in Cincinnati in 1986, and the minutes reported: "Ruth Reichmann noted that October 6, 1983, was proclaimed German American Day in recognition of the German American Tricentennial and that something similar should be done to recognize the continuing contributions of German immigrants to American culture." After discussion, the following resolution was endorsed: "The membership authorizes the president of the society to prepare a resolution calling for the President of the United States to call attention to the contributions of German Americans have made to the United States." A German American Day Committee was charged with that task and Ruth was asked to join the committee. She worked to pass a resolution by Congress for the 6th of October. In August 1987, it was signed into law by President Reagan. Now this day is commemorated annually across the country and has led to the celebration of German American Weeks and German American Heritage Months. We are indebted to Ruth for bringing forth the idea of recognizing "the continuing contributions of German immigrants to American

culture," and for her dedicated efforts on behalf of German American Day.

Ruth then chaired the SGAS Educational Task Force, which completed guidelines for the introduction of German American Studies into the curriculum at all educational levels. Copies were printed in the *SGAS Newsletter* and the *AATG Newsletter*, so that the combined distribution to individuals and educational institutions numbered in the thousands. These guidelines exerted a major influence in encouraging the introduction of German American Studies into the curriculum at all levels. In 1995, the nineteenth annual SGAS Symposium was held in Louisville, and the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award was presented to Ruth and Eberhard Reichmann. In addition to the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award, Ruth received many awards recognizing her vision, planning, passion, devotion, time, energy, and stubbornness, in her many fields of interest including the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* of the Federal Republic of Germany (1991).

It was a pleasure and honor to know and work with Ruth and Eb. They will both be missed by their SGAS colleagues.

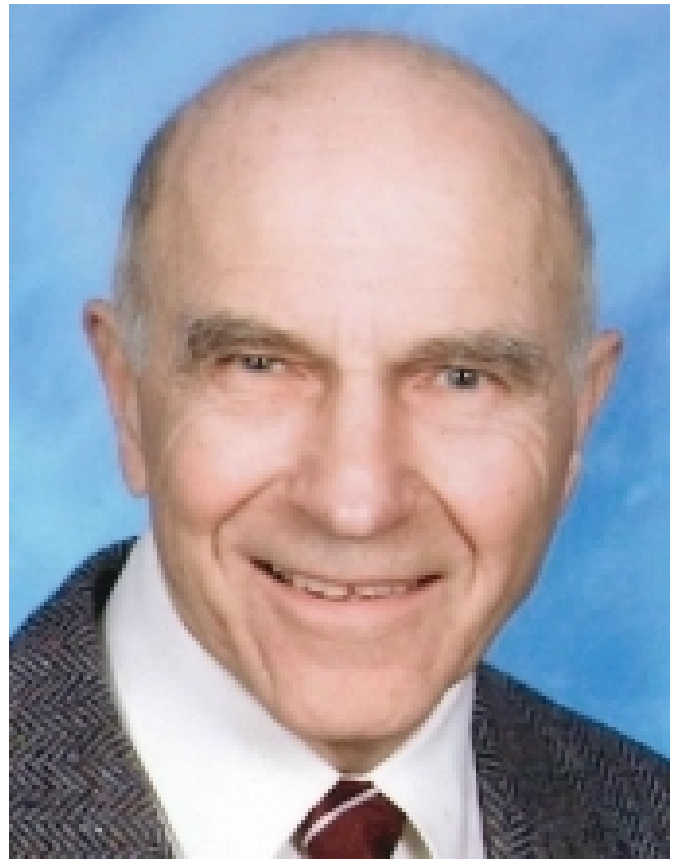
William Keel with Don Heinrich Tolzmann and William Selm

LAVERN J. RIPPLEY

IN MEMORIAM

With the passing of LaVern J. Rippley on January 6, 2022, German American Studies lost one of its foremost leaders, who over the last half century helped to shape and to define the field. Born on the family farm near Waumandee, Wisconsin, on March 2, 1935, he attended St. Boniface School in Waumandee and Holy Cross Seminary High School in La Crosse, Wisconsin. In 1956 he completed his undergraduate studies at Holy Cross Seminary College, also in La Crosse, and then acquired his teacher certification in English, Latin, and German at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where he met and married Barbara Jean Brickner in 1960.

After serving in the U.S. Army, Vern returned to River Falls to teach German and Latin at the local high school for two years, and during his second year he decided to pursue graduate studies in German. In 1961 he completed an M.A. in German at Kent State University in Ohio and then began doctoral studies at Ohio State University in Columbus. In 1963-64 he studied at the University of Munich on a Fulbright Fellowship, and in 1965 he received his



Ph.D. from Ohio State. He was an Assistant Professor of German at Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio, from 1964 to 1967 and also taught German part-time at the Ohio State campus in Lima for two years beginning in 1965. In 1967 he was appointed Associate Professor and chair of the German Department at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and was promoted to Full Professor in 1971.

During his 50 years of service at St. Olaf, Vern conducted 25 trips to Germany and the countries around the Baltic Sea for students and German teachers. Through Dieter Cunz, one of his professors at Ohio State University,

Vern became interested in German American Studies, a field in which he would become a preeminent scholar and driving force in establishing the Society of German American Studies.

Vern presented at the first SGAS symposium on "German Culture in America and Ohio," organized by Robert Ward in 1973 in Cleveland, Ohio, and from 1974 until 2022 he served on the editorial board of SGAS publications, beginning with *German-American Studies*, *Journal of German-American Studies*, and the *Yearbook of German-American Studies*. In 1979 he organized the third annual symposium of SGAS at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, at which he was elected as the organization's second president. During his term as president from 1979 to 1981, he was instrumental in transforming the *Journal of German-American Studies* into the SGAS Yearbook with J. Anthony Burzle of the University of Kansas as its first editor.

In 1981 he became the editor of the SGAS Newsletter, and under his editorship the Newsletter offered a wealth of information, most of which he authored, ranging from announcements of upcoming events and the program of the annual symposium, to articles on German

American topics and reviews of recent publications and media in the field. Vern also helped to introduce German American Studies courses at the college level through numerous presentations at conferences and with his course proposals published in *Unterrichtspraxis* in 1976 and 1998, which remain influential today. For his many contributions to the field of German American Studies, he was awarded the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award in 1981, and in 2011 he received a Special Award for serving as editor of the SGAS Newsletter for three decades.

During his career, Vern published more than 150 articles and over 200 book reviews in scholarly and popular journals and magazines and presented more than 200 academic papers and lectures at conferences. He authored, co-authored, edited, or translated 18 books. His book *The German-Americans*, first published in 1976 and then reprinted in 1984, continues to be a starting point for research in German American Studies, and his books *The Immigrant Experience in Wisconsin* (1985), *Of German Ways* (1988), and *The German-Bohemians: The Quiet Immigrants* (1995) are exemplary studies for students researching the field. For his many contributions to the teaching of German Studies in the

United States, including the summer seminars that he organized for German teachers, the American Association of Teachers of German made Vern an honorary member in 2009. In 2019 he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Ohio State University, his alma mater.

Vern's love of polka music and dancing led him later in life to take up the concertina, an essential instrument of most dance bands in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and to write its definitive history, *The Chemnitzer Concertina: A*

History and an Accolade (2006). Here he traced the history of the concertina from its origin in 1834 in Carlsfeld, Germany, to the time when the factory moved to Chicago around 1910 and then to New Ulm, Minnesota, in 1950. LaVern J. Rippley is survived by his wife Barbara Jean, son John of Northfield, daughter Larissa Rippley of St. Paul, Minnesota, and granddaughters Naya and Anjali Tadavarthy.

William E. Petig, Stanford University

THE 49TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE SOCIETY FOR
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