

## Helmut Huelsbergen (1929–2017): In Memoriam



Professor emeritus Helmut Ernst Huelsbergen died Thursday, January 5, 2017, at The Reflections Memory Care in Battle Creek, Michigan. Helmut had moved to Michigan in 2013 from his home in Lawrence, Kansas, to be near his youngest son's family. He was born February 14, 1929, in Krefeld-Linn, Germany. In 1949, he spent an academic year at Bethel College in Newton, Kansas, through an exchange program of the Mennonite Central Committee, earning a B.A. in English in 1950. After returning to Germany in 1950, he completed a Ph.D. in English at the University of Cologne in 1956. He began his teaching career in the German Department at the University of Kansas in 1958, retiring in 1994 after 36 years of service. Helmut served from 1972 to 1981 as department chair and held the position of director of the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies from 1989 to 1997.

Helmut was instrumental in establishing the German Summer Language Institute in Eutin, Germany, for the University of Kansas. In 1961, he had participated in the first Summer Language Institute in Holzkirchen as an instructor. As that program grew more popular, the department chair, J. Anthony Burzle, sent Helmut to Kiel in 1964 to find a site for a second summer program in Germany. Having no luck in Kiel, Helmut rented a car and began driving south toward Lübeck, checking out the towns of Preetz and Plön. When he arrived in Eutin, his questions about hosting a KU summer program met with success and the first group of KU students went to Eutin

in the summer of 1966 and have done so continuously for 50 years now. Helmut spent many summers guiding college students through what was often their first experience of foreign travel and studying abroad. In the late 1980s, as Lawrence, Kansas, was attempting to establish its first Sister-City partnership, Helmut joined forces with his colleagues Frank Baron and William Keel to propose Eutin as a sister city to the Lawrence city government. In 1989, that effort met with success and we have enjoyed a rich partnership over more than 25 years with Eutin involving exchanges of hundreds of high school students as well as members of professional and cultural groups.

Helmut's research interests included American neologisms of the 19th century, German Baroque literature, in particular the German poet Andreas Gryphius, and German mysticism. His particular interest in the first Germans in the American Colonies at Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683—from his hometown of Krefeld—led him to take an active interest in the Society for German-American Studies. Beginning in 1981, he served fifteen years as associate editor of the Society's scholarly journal, the *Yearbook of German-American Studies*, together with his colleagues at the University of Kansas, J. Anthony Burzle and William Keel. The *Yearbook* was published initially with the assistance of the Max Kade Foundation and later, through Helmut's initiative, the Hall Center for the Humanities at the University of Kansas. Beginning in 1985, Helmut began serving, in his capacity as associate editor, on the Executive Committee of the Society for over a decade. In recognition of Helmut's scholarly accomplishments and service to the Society, he was presented the SGAS Outstanding Achievement Award at our 1997 Symposium in St. Louis, Missouri.

Helmut had many interests outside of academia, including stamp collecting, gardening, playing chess, and researching German-American genealogy with his wife. He married Ursula Arnold in 1962 (they met in Watson Library at the University of Kansas when she was a Fulbright exchange student from Frankfurt in the fall of 1961) and they had three sons: Lorenz, Anselm, and Benjamin. Helmut is survived by his sons and by five grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Ursula, and a granddaughter, Olivia.

For this editor, Helmut was a cherished colleague and dear friend for nearly forty years. The many afternoons and evenings spent debating editorial questions for the SGAS *Yearbook*—in Toni Burzle's basement office, at Helmut's dining room table or in my living room—are simply unforgettable. Our many trips together to SGAS symposia and fall executive committee meetings throughout the United States, whether by train, plane or automobile, and our many side trips to sites of German-American historical and cultural interest remain vivid memories. May he rest in peace.

*William D. Keel, Editor*