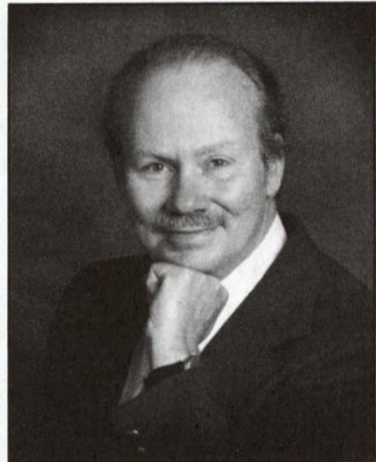


## Henry “Hank” Geitz (1931–2012): In Memoriam

With the passing of Professor Henry “Hank” Geitz on October 27, 2012, our profession lost one of its true guiding lights. Hank’s tenure as director of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin during the decade of the 1990s was characterized by his unflinching desire to mold the field of German-American Studies into a vehicle worthy of scholarly endeavor. Beyond sponsoring several conferences focusing on different facets of our interdisciplinary field, such as the 1991 conference on the German Language in America, and hosting the very successful 1996 Annual Symposium of the Society for German-American Studies in Madison, Hank was troubled enough by the direction of the Society in the early 1990s to hold a special workshop at the Max Kade Institute in the fall of 1993 on the “definition and future of German-American Studies.”



Hank was both a gracious host and a stern taskmaster at that 1993 meeting. Those of us invited to participate recognized the seriousness of this “meeting of the minds” in our field. The resulting volume published in conjunction with an issue of *Monatshefte* (86,3 [Fall 1994]) contained some fourteen contributions by leading scholars in our discipline addressing critical questions, such as the tendency for some to glorify any achievement of German-Americans by falling into the trap of filiopietism. Hank was very much concerned that the Society and the field not drift too far in the direction of heritage groups, while at the same time recognizing our dependence

on them for our historical, linguistic and cultural research. That German-American Studies remains a serious scholarly endeavor is a tribute to Hank's striving to make it so.

Henry Geitz, Jr., was born in Philadelphia on January 18, 1931. His undergraduate years were spent in his home town, earning a BA at the University of Pennsylvania in 1951. After completing an MA at the University of Nebraska in 1954, Hank served two years in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956. After his military service, Hank continued his graduate work in German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1956 and earned his PhD there in 1961. His first appointment as an assistant professor was at the University of Richmond in Virginia. He then returned to Madison in 1962 to remain there for the rest of his academic career. Promoted to Full Professor in 1972, Hank was later appointed Director of the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, serving in that capacity from 1990 until his retirement in 1997.

While his lifelong interest in German-American Studies characterized his career, Hank was also very much involved with study abroad, serving as the resident director of the University of Wisconsin's programs in Freiburg, Germany (1967-68) and Budapest, Hungary (1989-90). He also served as associate director of the University of Wisconsin Academic Programs Abroad from 1983 to 1989.

Hank's contributions in promoting the study of German language, literature and culture both in Wisconsin and in Europe were recognized on several occasions: The Silver Medal of the University of Freiburg, Germany, in 1984; the Outstanding German Educator Award of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German in 1989; and the *Verdienstkreuz am Bande* (cross of merit) of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1991.

The association of this author with Professor Henry Geitz goes back to the fall of 1971, when Hank was still an associate professor in the German department at Madison. I had enrolled in a correspondence course on Goethe's *Faust* (parts I and II) through the U.S. Armed Forces Institute while serving with a military intelligence unit in Phu Bai, Vietnam. While I never met my instructor at that time, the handwritten name "Henry Geitz" together with a letter grade appeared at the top of each returned assignment. I very much appreciated his meticulous attention to detail and his personal interest in some unknown soldier in a faraway place. Neither of us knew whether all twenty-four assignments in that course would be completed. At the end of my first assignment in December 1971, Hank wrote in German: "Ideal gesehen, wird ein Dialog zwischen uns entstehen, der für uns beide sehr interessant sein kein." Unfortunately, the vicissitudes of that war in Southeast Asia in



*Zu Charles Sealsfields strategischer Inszenierung seiner Identität*

the late winter of 1971-1972 did not allow me to continue that “dialog” with Hank or complete the correspondence course. It was only some twenty years later, in the context of a conference on German-American Studies at Madison that I finally met my former instructor and resumed that mutually rewarding dialog begun in December of 1971. We shall miss our colleague and friend.

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