

Joshua R. Brown

Dedication: For "Herr Beam"

"Des glee Ding kann net lewe!" (That little thing cannot survive) – a prophecy uttered back in 1925 after a grandmother saw her newborn grandson – so small that he was kept warm in a cigar box in the oven. Fortunately, his grandmother was wrong and eighty years later, we are able to present this special supplemental volume of the *Yearbook of German-American Studies* honoring him, C. Richard Beam, and his service to Pennsylvania German and German-American studies.

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C. Richard Beam was born on February 15, 1925, in the Red Run Hotel in Red Run (*die Rot Kuh*), Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Charles and Marcella Beam. As a boy, he learned Pennsylvania Dutch from his grandparents Beam and Slabach. He attended local schools and graduated from Ephrata High School. Following graduation, he joined the Army and served in the European theater during World War II. He returned home and attended Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster. As a German major, he came under the tutelage of Dr. J. William Frey, who encouraged Beam that dialect studies are a worthwhile endeavor. He graduated from Franklin and Marshall in 1949 and (following the directions of Frey) studied at the Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany. He then continued at the University of Vienna from 1951 to 1953. After spending time abroad, he returned to attend Middlebury College in Vermont, where in 1957, he received a master's degree in German.

His path through academe eventually brought him back to Pennsylvania, where he completed doctoral coursework under Dr. Albert F. Buffington at the Pennsylvania State University. In 1961, Beam joined the faculty at Millersville State College as professor of German, bringing Buffington's Pennsylvania German dictionary with him.

On July 11, 1964, he married Dorothy J. Pozniko, a music teacher and concert pianist. During this time, Beam also planned a study exchange with the university in Marburg, establishing the Junior Year Abroad Program at Millersville State College (of which Hopkins and Brown are alumni).

From 1967 to 1970, Beam lived in Marburg as resident director of the Junior Year program with his wife Dorothy. In 1970, the Heimatstelle Pfalz published his first dictionary: an *Abridged Pennsylvania German-English Dictionary*.

Back in the U.S., he began a weekly dialect radio broadcast on WLBR (Lebanon) with his friend Ernest W. Bechtel. It was here that *Bischli-Gnippli* (his *nom de plume*) was born. Bechtel called himself the *Busch-Gnipple* (clodhopper), but Beam being smaller and thinner called himself the little clodhopper, or *Bischli-Gnippli*. They titled the show *Die Alde Kummraade*, which has been on the air ever since. In addition, Beam began writing weekly dialect newspaper columns. He still edits the columns in the *Ephrata Shopping News* and the *Sugarcreek (Ohio) Budget*.

In 1986, Beam and Leroy T. Hopkins met with the dean of humanities to establish a Center for Pennsylvania German Studies at Millersville University. Beam has been the director of the Center ever since its inception and regularly publishes and reprints dictionaries, scholarly works and a quarterly newsletter. He and his wife Dorothy also sponsor the annual J. William Frey Lecture for Pennsylvania German Studies at Franklin and Marshall College.

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Unfortunately, this brief statement of Beam's accomplishments does not fully convey his energy and scholarly pursuits. So I shall recollect my own impressions of C. Richard Beam.

On a Saturday morning in February of my second semester of freshman year, I received a phone call from "Herr Beam." I was still accustomed (as freshmen generally are) to sleeping until the sun has well warmed the outside, before even considering rolling out of bed. The ringing was an unwelcome disturbance, but I managed to grab for the phone and utter a half-asleep "hello." In stark contrast, the voice on the other end was full of energy and he seemed to sing his words. He had heard of my interest in working at the Center—my grandmother spoke the dialect, I wanted a job, so why not? He wanted to set up an interview with me on the following Monday, after my Russian class.

Monday morning (a rainy and gray day in Lancaster County), I waited outside of Byerly Hall on campus for his wife, who would pick me up. She arrived with a hearty "hello" and wave from the car window and drove to their home, where I met C. Richard Beam for the first time. The very first thing that struck me was their kindness and enthusiasm, fueled no doubt by an overwhelming dedication to Pennsylvania German studies and fostered by years of teaching college students. It was not the regular job interview that one would expect. He was reclined in his *Faulenzerstuhl* asking all sorts of things about my last name and family roots. After a brief introduction into what my job at the Center would be, I was hired and given plenty of extra reading material (Pennsylvania German newsletters and other dialect material—apparently learning this language came with the job description.)

I returned that following Saturday and received a copy of *Em Schteffi Miller Sei Waddebuch* (Stephen Miller's dictionary). Our task that day was to take the dictionary and go over words with an Old Order Mennonite bishop in New Holland. I was nervous to say the least—my first visit to a Mennonite home, the first plain people I had ever met. This would be my first bout with field work. I feared that they would all converse in the dialect and I would not understand a single word which is exactly how it happened! I quickly picked up my first dialect term *Hochdeitsch*—that would

be my answer, when I was asked if I speak the dialect (“Kannscht Deitsch schwetze?” “Nee, Hochdeitsch.”)

That Saturday, I learned several things that give “Herr Beam” his character: his sense of humor, his constant questioning and his passion for field work and talking to people. I soon got to know “Herr Beam” better and watched the ease of conversation and friendly jests that flowed from his personality whether speaking with Amish farmers or the highest members of university administration. He could talk to anyone and leave a lasting and pleasant impression.

I have been away from Millersville for several years now, but I often think back to my days at the Center among piles of papers, books, and field recordings or sitting on the back porch as I read through a final draft of a word list to “Herr Beam.” I remember my first task at the Center: typing informants’ sentences into the computer and then translating them into English. I began slowly, deciphering their script and assimilating it to our Buffington–Barba–Beam orthography. It was a painful start—“baptism by fire,” Beam joked – but I stuck with it and I am pleased that I had the opportunity to co-edit the first two volumes of his massive dictionary opus.

I will not soon forget our frequent field work tasks—Mrs. Beam pulling the car around, “Herr Beam” standing out front with brown suitcase and recording equipment in hand, and Yossi (my *nom de plume*) in tow. I often think about all of the people I have met in his presence and how I soon became more familiar with the backroads of Lancaster County than I ever did in my own neck of the woods.

His character is nothing but unique. In fact, that is the only word with which I can describe it best. His affable nature, love for literature, lima beans, Wagnerian operas, and bow ties all add to his character. His contributions to the field of German-American studies are immense. His field recordings, articles, publications, dictionaries, reprints, refinement of the Buffington–Barba orthography, newspaper columns, and radio broadcasts all amount to no small measure of Pennsylvania Germanica. His vigorous work for *die Mudderschprooch* has greatly impacted this field and has kept (and will keep) many German-American scholars busy for a very long time. His enthusiasm and effort on behalf of his ancestral language and culture are to be lauded. To this end, we present this collection of essays dedicated to Professor C. Richard Beam.

The present collection of essays is a broad compilation of works on German-American studies. As a mentor to many researchers, Beam has assured a legacy of study and interest in Pennsylvania German and this volume is representative of his efforts. Michael Werner presents a report of Beam’s crucial role in helping with the dialect newspaper *Hiwwe wie Driwwe*. We then have a block of language-oriented papers. Karen Johnson-Weiner writes on identity and sectarian education and Bill Keel writes about Kansas German varieties. An article on linguistic convergence by Achim Kopp precedes an article on historical dialect analysis by Walter Sauer. We include two articles on Pennsylvania German folkloristic studies: on folk narratives by Simon Bronner and on powwowing by David Kriebel. Leroy Hopkins (Beam’s former student and colleague at Millersville) proposes areas of research into the Afro-German diaspora. The festschrift ends with an interesting article (although relevant but not concerning Pennsylvania German) on *Sprachinselforschung* (language island research) by Helmut Protze. We thank all of the contributors for their patience. We

especially thank Bill Keel at the University of Kansas and the Society for German-American Studies for their efforts behind the realization of this publication.

It is for his personal character and his scholarly work that we offer this volume to the field of German-American studies and especially to our mentor and friend, our dear "Herr Beam."

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