



**Herbert Deinert**

December 13, 1930– August 4, 2010

Herbert Deinert, Professor Emeritus in the Department of German Studies at Cornell University, died on August 4, 2010 at the age of 79. Deinert was born in the small town of Wiedenbrueck, Germany.

He was a noted scholar focusing on German literature and intellectual history since the time of Martin Luther. His early work centered on the topic of "Rilke and music", and later on the works of Goethe, Hesse, Kafka, Mann, Brecht and others. More recently he wrote on the influence of Protestantism on Germany directly after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Herbert studied at a Franciscan school, then at the nearby Evangelisches Stiftisches Gymnasium. Although studying at a protestant school, he continued to have a leadership role in the Catholic youth movement. He considered entering the priesthood, but decided that his calling lay elsewhere. He was drawn to literature and entered the University of Münster, supporting himself by working in a furniture factory one semester and studying the next. At the invitation of Father Philotas Boehner, who was then director of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, Herbert moved to Olean, NY. After teaching for a year at a Catholic high school in Buffalo and working nights at a steel mill, Herbert was offered a teaching assistantship at Yale University. There he continued his study of German literature, completing his Ph.D. four years later. Deinert met his fellow student and future wife Waltraut von der Emde at Yale University. Deinert joined the faculty at the University of Georgia then at Duke University. In 1965 Deinert brought him and his family to Ithaca to begin his career at Cornell. During his Cornell career he chaired the Department of German Studies, was their Director of Undergraduate Studies and of Graduate Studies, and served in various positions, including President, of the American Association of Teachers of German, Central NY chapter. From 1960-68 he was director and professor of the Berlin branch of Classrooms Abroad, a Summer Study Abroad Program for US students. He was at the same time a panelist and consultant for The National Endowment for the Humanities. Even after his retirement from active teaching in 2004, he continued as coordinator of the Cornell Exchange Programs with German universities and the DAAD program, giving Cornell students from diverse fields and backgrounds the opportunity to study in Germany on a fellowship.

Sharing his insights and his love of literature, music and art with his students - both formally through teaching, and informally through friendship and mentoring - was at the core of his

academic life. Students remember him as someone who cared as much about the quality of their lives as about the quality of their education. Many kept in touch with him after graduation, and continued to turn to him as a mentor. To the delight of many he was also a gentle but humorous satirist of academic politics and everyday life. His parables, essays and commentaries often graced the pages of the Cornell Daily Sun and the Ithaca Journal.

Herbert is survived by his wife, Waltraut Deinert, his children, Erika Deinert, Mark Deinert and his partner Sara Sawyer, his two sisters in Germany, Marlies Hambrink and Ursula Deinert, his niece and nephew and their children.

*Office of the Dean of Faculty - (Information gathered from Ithaca Journal Obituary)*