Wolfgang O. Sack

March 17, 1928 — June 21, 2005

Most of his associates called him Wolf. He was born in Leipzig, Germany and grew up in eastern Germany and in Berlin. By the time he was six years old, in 1934, the Nazis were in control of the national government. In WWII, his entire class and their teacher were drafted as a home defense antiaircraft unit. They were expected to continue schooling in the morning and drill on their gun in the afternoon. Near the end of the war, Wolf was running from the advancing Russians when he was shot in the leg, but he made it to the American lines.

In 1951, he immigrated to Canada. While he was selling nursery stock in Ontario, he found his way to Guelph, the site of the Ontario Veterinary College, founded in 1862, and the oldest living veterinary College in North America—the alma mater of Septimus Sisson, author of the first comprehensive textbook of Veterinary anatomy in English (1910). Unaware of this omen, he applied for admission and was accepted.

Wolf was well grounded in veterinary anatomy, first under John Ballantyne at Guelph, where he received the D.V.M. degree from the University of Toronto in 1957. After two years in a veterinary practice in Chicago, he returned to Guelph as an Assistant Professor and later, Associate Professor (1959-64). On leave from Guelph, he completed an embryological study of the pharynx of the dog under Professor Tom Grahame of the University of Edinburgh and received a Ph.D. degree in 1962. After his stay in Edinburgh, Wolf went to Giessen in the spring of 1962 and studied for six months under Professor August Schummer, of Nickel Schummer, and Seiferle, authors of the five-volume gold standard, Lehrbuch der Anatomie der Haustiere.

In 1964, Wolf was appointed Associate Professor of Veterinary Anatomy at Cornell, and he and his wife, Lorraine Brant Sack, and their two young sons, Christopher and Kevin, moved to Ithaca. When his boys were old enough to crew for him, Wolf enjoyed sailing his 26-foot sloop in races on Cayuga Lake. Much later, Kevin and his wife presented Wolf with a cherished grandson, Jacob, now seven.

Wolf was an enthusiastic musician, with a particular love of baroque and early classical music. Soon after coming to Ithaca, he built his own harpsichord. He sang regularly with several Cornell and Ithaca choirs. His main instrument was the recorder, with a special preference for the bass. He played for more than forty years with groups ranging from trios to octets and larger, thereby sharing much pleasure with many friends.
Wolf was a dedicated teacher, illustrating his lectures with diagrams and models and carefully labeled dissections sealed in museum jars. He worked constantly on the improvement of the large animal dissection guides for the course he taught. His efforts were much appreciated by his students, who often celebrated his birthday (on St. Patrick’s Day) with embarrassing enthusiasm. His rare lapses into German usually went unnoticed, but he confused the German an (at) with English on, resulting in a startling invitation to “sit on the table.”

Wolf’s translation of volume II of Nickel, Schummer, and Seiferle: *The Viscera*, was a significant advance in anatomy for Anglo-Americans, and his first big project at Cornell. His work in writing and translation and his compulsion to get it straight, to do it right, account for his early association with the International Committee on Veterinary Anatomical Nomenclature. The committee was formed because the terms of position and direction in the human nomenclature are not applicable to quadrupeds or embryos, and many features of animals are absent in man. The committee consists of about 40 members, varying from year to year. They work in English, French, or German. Wolf served as an English-German and German-English interpreter in heated exchanges at meetings in 1960 in New York, 1961 in Vienna, 1963 in Hannover, 1965 in Giessen and Wiesbaden, and 1967 in Paris, where the first edition was finally hammered out.

His contributions to the nomenclature went far beyond interpretation. The nomenclature is in Latin and his editing of those Latin endings made the American committee members look far more erudite than they really are. He served on the Subcommittee for General Terms and Regions and Parts of the Body, the Subcommittee on the Skin and its Derivatives, and the Editorial Committee. He took over the neglected committee on Veterinary Embryological Nomenclature, reorganized it, and turned out a complete list of terms in record time.

Wolf was the author or co-author of 28 research publications on the anatomy of domestic animals, including embryology, vagal innervation of the stomach, abomasal displacement, blood vessels and nerves of the bovine abomasum and intestines, bones and nerves of the equine limbs, genital ducts, clinical anatomy of the equine hock, parasites of the equine visceral arteries, passive stay apparatus that enables the horse to rest while standing, function of the bovine cecum, surgical access to the joints of the limbs of the sheep and goat, and the equine hoof.

Wolf was a joiner; he belonged to the American Veterinary Medical Association, New York State Veterinary Medical Society, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (London), American Association of Anatomists, American Association of Veterinary Anatomists (President 1981), European Association of Veterinary Anatomists and the World Association of Veterinary Anatomists (Secretary-General 1983-91, President, 1991-95). He handled sales in the Western Hemisphere of the 316-page volume containing *Nomina Anatomica Veterinaria, Nomina Histologica Veterinaria*, and *Nomina Embryologica Veterinaria*.

Wolf served on several faculty committees of Cornell University and the College of Veterinary Medicine. He was promoted to Professor in 1973, and retired to emeritus status in 1991.

_Abraham Bezuidenhout, Alan Dobson, Robert E. Habel_