



Mr. Gerhard Hans Weiss

August 6, 1926 - October 2, 2019

Weiss, Gerhard Hans Age 93, of Minneapolis, distinguished teaching professor of German (emeritus) at the University of Minnesota, died peacefully on Oct. 2 from complications of Parkinson's disease, at his home at The Kenwood Retirement Community. He was predeceased by his beloved wife of 56 years, Janet Marilyn (Smith) Weiss, on Feb. 25, 2010. A kind, gentle, and witty man, Gerhard was born in Berlin, Germany on Aug. 6, 1926, to a Jewish father, Curt E. Weiss, and a Protestant mother, Gertrud M. (Grothus) Weiss. He experienced hardships under the Nazis during his early years because of his part-Jewish background. He and his parents survived the war in Berlin; later, he often spoke publicly about his experience as a Holocaust survivor. Gerhard and his family emigrated to the United States in 1946. After serving in the U.S. Army in Japan, he received B.A. and M.A. degrees at Washington University in St. Louis. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin Madison, where he met Janet, a graduate student in library science who was taking his class to fulfill a foreign language requirement. He taught in the Department of German at the U of M from 1956 until retirement in 1998, but for years thereafter filled various teaching and administrative roles. Over the course of his career he chaired his department, served as associate dean for humanities and fine arts in the College of Liberal Arts, as interim director of the Center for Austrian Studies, as acting chair of other departments, and as chair or member of more committees than anyone can remember. Gerhard was founding editor of the Minnesota Monographs in the Humanities series

and editor of the journal, *Die Unterrichtspraxis*. He wrote and lectured profusely on German civilization and culture. He served as national president of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) and was vice president and president of the German Studies Association. Gerhard was honored with the Bundesverdienstkreuz erster Klasse (Cross of Merit, First Class, of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany) and the Cross of Honor, First Class, for Arts and Sciences from the Republic of Austria. The AATG honored him with its Distinguished German Educator Award and named him honorary member of the association. He received many other awards, including the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Society for German-American Studies. At the U of M, he was named Morse-Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor of German and was honored with the Arthur Motley Award for Outstanding Teaching and the University of Minnesota President's Award for Outstanding Service. He retired from the U.S. Army Reserves in 1986, at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Gerhard is survived by his brother Kenneth Wilde (Eve); children John Weiss, Susan (Weiss) Spencer (James), James Weiss (Elizabeth Davies); grandchildren Dana and Colin Spencer, Ethan and Daniel Weiss; niece Carol (Wilde) York (Kevin); nephews Thomas (Alyssa) and Lawrence Wilde; cousin Miriam Merzbacher; and brother-in-law David Smith (Jane Bell). He was predeceased by his baby grandson Andrew Spencer. He was an active member of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church for more than 60 years. Gerhard's family wishes to thank the staff and residents of The Kenwood for their devotion since he moved there in 2015. A funeral service will be held at 11 am Sat., Nov. 16 at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, 511 Groveland Ave., Mpls., MN, 55403. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Gerhard Weiss Fellowship in German Studies for graduate students or the Gerhard and Janet Weiss Scholarship in German at the University of Minnesota Foundation, 200 Oak Street SE, Suite 500, Mpls., MN 55455

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV **16**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church
511 Groveland Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Tribute Wall

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“ *My sympathy to Professor Weiss' family and friends. He was an incredible human being who made this world a much better place. His kindness, emotional intelligence, spirit, and grace set a high standard that all of us should strive to attain. - Becky Orttel, class of 1993*

Rebecca Orttel - October 23, 2019 at 02:14 PM

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“ *Great teacher! I have often told people how lucky I was to have benefited from his guidance, kindness and knowledge.*

Steve - October 18, 2019 at 09:44 AM