

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

FREIDRICH W. STROTHMANN (1904 – 1982)

Friedrich W. Strothmann was born in Elberfeld, Germany, on October 25, 1904. In 1924, after graduating from the local *Gymnasium*, he enrolled in the University of Cologne. There in 1929 he received his Dr. Phil. in Germanic philology under the direction of the distinguished scholar Friedrich von der Leyen, and a year later earned diplomas in both English and Philosophy. In the latter subject, which he studied under Professor Nikolai Hartmann at Cologne, he developed an enduring interest in the philosophy of Kant and Herder, which also led to his becoming an expert in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. His doctoral dissertation *Die Gerichisger handlung als literarisches Motiv in der deutschen Literatur des ausgehenden Mittelalters* (Jena 1930) was reprinted in 1969 by the Wissenschaftliche Buchesellschaft in Darmstadt.

In 1930 he was appointed an instructor in Germanic languages at Stanford, and that September arrived by ship in San Francisco to find awaiting him a first-term teaching load of four courses, ranging from elementary German to Middle High German philology and the plays of Schiller. At the end of that busy year, he returned to Germany and, with the help of a non-quota visa arranged for by President Ray Lyman Wilbur, then on leave as Secretary of the Interior, was able to bring his wife Luise back with him to Stanford. Over the next few years, despite heavy responsibilities within his own department, he helped his colleagues in English to set up an important minor program in philology which, as the executive head of that department enthusiastically reported, attracted its graduate students "to real philological study." In addition, he won acclaim for his excellent work as a member of the planning committee of the then-existing School of Letters, and still found time to pursue his study of Medieval Latin and to deepen the knowledge of the writings of Aquinas for which he was noted among many generations of Stanford students.

An amusing sidelight to these latter interests is that, as America's entry into the Second World War approached in 1941, rumors began to circulate that two Stanford professors of German were seen to be out suspiciously late of nights around the Menlo Park area. A letter from Professor William Cooper, head of the department, informed President Wilbur that the suspicious persons in question were Professor Strothmann and his colleague, Kurt Reinhardt, who were spending Thursday evenings reading Latin and the works of Aquinas with faculty members of the nearby St. Patrick's seminary.

Willi Strothmann's limitless energy and enthusiasm for the general educational enterprise of the University during these earlier years did not stricken, but rather presaged his later impressive achievements as one of the most innovative and influential educators in Stanford's history. From 1949 until his retirement in 1970 he served as executive head of his department, which expanded for a decade (1958-1968) into the Department of Modern European Languages. As its leader, he worked tirelessly to elevate the various language divisions, several of which had been treated before as mere service units, into strong representatives of the humanistic

disciplines. In 1953, he wrote a report on *The Graduate School Today and Tomorrow* that led to his founding of Stanford's interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Humanities, which he also directed during the first five years of its existence. Mindful too of the need to expand the horizons of the under-graduate curriculum, he conceived the idea of the Overseas Campuses and in 1958 served as the director of the original center at Beutelsbach. From 1960-1969 he also supervised the highly regarded NDEA Summer Institute for Advanced Study at Bad Boll, Germany. For his contributions to scholarship and to education in German studies he was awarded the Medal of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1959, and in 1960 the Silver Medal of the Goethe-Institut in Munich. He was also the first recipient of the Lloyd W. Dinkelspiel Award for outstanding service to undergraduate education at Stanford.

His varied scholarly interests are also reflected in his publications. He is best known for his coauthored textbooks. *German Reading Grammar* (1940), *Reading German* (1943), and *German: A Structural Approach* (1967), which has enjoyed three editions and has been used in more than 500 universities and colleges. In addition, he published articles on Germanic philology, on Herder and T.S. Eliot, and, as general editor of the Milestones of Thought series, issued by Frederick Ungar Company, brought out selections from the writings of St. Augustine and Jean Calvin.

As teacher, administrator, student of philology and philosopher, and educational innovator, F.W. Strothmann has bequeathed a heritage to Stanford that will long survive his more than fifty years as a member of the University community.

Walter F. W. Lohnes, Chairman
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