IN MEMORIAM
STANLEY NEWMAN WERBOW

Stanley Newman Werbow, born April 19, 1922, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, died on October 9, 2005, in Austin, Texas. His wife, Naomi; three daughters, Susan, Emily, and Carol; and three grandsons survive him. At his memorial service, members of his family, including a favorite nephew, friends, and former colleagues in their brief remarks recounted Werbow’s love for and active interest in aiding young people and his fascination with language and language learning. Some mentioned his many sources of happiness: sailing on Lake Travis, attending concerts, traveling, reading, exploring the Internet (even before the World Wide Web made it easier), keeping up with old friends, and especially interacting with his children and grandchildren.

Werbow first became interested in foreign languages and cultures in secondary school, where he was particularly inspired by his Latin teacher at Roosevelt High School in Washington, D.C., Mabel Murray. He started learning German in high school, but when Werbow entered George Washington University, he chose Latin as his major. He did, however, continue his study of German, and Edward H. Sehrt, a noted scholar of Old High German and Old Saxon, whetted his interest in philology, especially the historical linguistics of the Neogrammarians.

In the midst of his undergraduate years, Werbow left the university to serve as a cryptanalyst technician in the U.S. Army 849th Signal Intelligence Service during World War II. Attaining the rank of staff sergeant, he was stationed in Italy. His unit was involved in surveillance operations during the Battle of Monte Cassino, a heartbreaking task for an individual vitally concerned about the monastery’s medieval manuscripts that there ultimately destroyed during the bombing
of that site. Intellectually engaged in even the most trying circumstances during these years in Italy, Werbow availed himself of the opportunity to learn Italian and retained a love for the language and for Italian culture. A memorable experience late in his life was revisiting, with his wife Naomi, an Italian family whose barn had been his unit's headquarters during the war years.

Returning from military service, he reenrolled in George Washington University in the fall of 1945. Since the only professor of Latin and Greek there was still on active duty with the Navy, Werbow also took courses at Catholic University in order to fulfill the requirements for a double major in classics and German. He received his B.A. in the spring of 1946.

Immediately thereafter, Werbow applied to and was accepted in graduate school at Illinois University and UCLA; however, because of his father's poor health he decided to stay in Washington, where he taught German and English at Eastern High School. Having not specifically prepared himself as a high-school teacher, he found an ideal mentor in Emily M. White, director of foreign languages in the Washington D.C. public schools.

In the summer of 1946, Werbow attended the Middlebury College German Summer School, where he not only met his future wife, Naomi Ecker, but also came into contact with Arno Schirokauer and Ernst Feise, noted scholars who, during the regular school year, constituted the graduate faculty of the German department at the Johns Hopkins University.

Upon the invitation of Schirokauer and Eduard Sievers, Werbow enrolled in graduate studies at Johns Hopkins in the fall of 1947 where he was one of four graduate majors in German. As he recounts in his 1997 memoir, "Schirokauer was an exciting teacher and taught us Old and Middle High German language and literature, while Ernst Feise gave us charming and insightful
instruction in the rest of German literature.” He also took coursework with Stefan Einarsson (Icelandic), Leo Spitzer (romance philology), and Charles Singleton (Dante).

In the summer of 1948, Werbow attended the Linguistic Society Institute at Ann Arbor, Michigan, studying with Bernard Bloch, J. R. Firth, and Edgar H. Sturtevant, where he became attracted to Bloomfieldian descriptive linguistics. In 1950-51, he had a Fulbright scholarship in Groningen, Holland, where he studied with G.A. van Es (Dutch syntax), T.A. Rompelman (German philology), Th.C. van Stockum (Tristan), and J. Brouwer (gothic). Here Werbow availed himself of the opportunity to become fluent in Dutch. Decades later, he initiated the Dutch program at The University of Texas at Austin and taught Dutch until a replacement could be found. Upon his return from Holland in June of 1951, Werbow taught summer school at the Ohio State University where he took a conference course with Hans Sperber on Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Medieval epic, Willehalm.

After resuming his studies at John Hopkins in the fall of that same year, Werbow commenced writing a dissertation on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century German stylistic-syntax. In 1952, he married Naomi and started to work at the Defense Department by day and on his dissertation at night.

In the spring of 1953, Werbow received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins. Robert T. Clark, the chair of the German department at The University of Texas, had heard Werbow give a seminar report when Clark visited Johns Hopkins. Subsequently, Clark invited Werbow to come to Texas, which he did in the fall of 1953. Ostensibly, Werbow was hired to take over the teaching of Middle High German from Lee Hollander, then 73. As Hollander was, however, by no means ready to relinquish his claim on the course (and continued to teach it for another decade),
Werbow had to wait some years until Hollander left on a Fulbright to Norway before he could finally teach his first course in his specialty.

Other courses he taught in these early years included phonetics and phonemics, morphology, and syntax. He also taught beginning German, using the audio-lingual method developed by Freeman Twadell and promoted by Helmut Rehder (a method subsequently referred to by the somewhat pejorative epithet “mim-mem” (mimicry and memorization), for which he co-authored a second-semester textbook, *German: Review and Progress*. This method demanded drill in dialogues and pattern sentences sounded out by the instructor, which are then repeated by students. Werbow maintains in his memoir that teaching a combined three sections of beginning German by this method led to a subsequent persistent hoarseness. He also taught the reading course for graduate students in other disciplines, using C.V. Pollard’s *Key to the Rapid Translation of German*, a book especially popular among science students, since it enabled them to manipulate German sentences without having to worry about how to speak the language. In other words, he was teaching German via two totally antithetical methods.

Neither approach suited Werbow completely, as he had had first-hand experience with the Middlebury approach to language acquisition and had found it fulfilling. As a fluent speaker of German, Werbow was the first non-native German speaker to teach the sophomore conversation course. In teaching this course, he relied on his Middlebury experience, intermingling the direct method with echoes of the *Wandervogel* movement (the utilization of folk songs, learning proverbs and poetry) and role-playing skits typical of the Middlebury program in his day and frequently used in today’s classrooms. In conjunction with this course, Werbow also inaugurated a tradition of a German table in the Student Union, a daily lunch where German was spoken in
the summer of 1956. In its early days, the participants included not just undergraduate and graduate students, but senior members of the faculty, such as Helmut Rehder, as well as faculty members from other departments, notably John Silber. Wolfgang and shortly thereafter his wife, Marian Michael, continued the tradition for many decades, and the Stammtisch, one of Werbow's many enduring legacies, continues to draw a mix of students and faculty from outside the department. Another enduring pedagogical-support activity Werbow initiated while he was chair of the German department was a tutorial study hall, a service by graduate students that assists German learners at all undergraduate levels.

From 1961 to 1962, Werbow received concurrent Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships to do research on medieval German syntax in at the University of Marburg, Germany. He also held a visiting professorship at the University of Marburg in 1963. In the summers of 1984, 1987, and 1989, he was a guest professor at the University of New Mexico Summer School in the Taos ski valley.

His publications include numerous articles in *Festschriften* and scholarly journals on such topics as Baroque literature, Early New High German narrative, the self-definition of German in the Early Modern period, and especially questions concerning medieval German literature and language. He edited Martin von Amberg's *Der Gewissensspiegel* (1958) and *Formal Aspects of Medieval German Poetry* (1969), the proceedings of a symposium with the same title which he organized in 1966. He was also an advisory editor of the series *Texte des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*.

Werbow contributed new courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He developed advanced undergraduate courses in Middle High German and a graduate survey of
Medieval German literature. In addition to regular teaching of graduate courses in Old High German, and Methods of German Literature and Philology, Werbow created seminars on Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried's Tristan, Middle High German Lyrics, Medieval German Religious Literature, and Early New High German. Numerous theses and dissertations grew out of these seminars.

In the mid 1960s, Werbow was graduate adviser for the Department of Germanic Languages and became its chair in 1968. In 1971, he was appointed dean of the newly created College of Humanities, serving in this capacity until 1978. Despite these obligations, Dean Werbow also found time to be president of the South Central Modern Language Association (SCMLA), a recognized venue for many younger colleagues and graduate students in the humanities to participate in the annual conference and publish in its prestigious quarterly journal, both activities significant for the faculty development. His presidential comments stressed the need for programs in the humanities to confront tendencies toward "vocationalism" in higher education by focusing on enabling students to become effective communicators in their own and in foreign languages, a goal he saw as best achieved in humanist studies.

Graduate Vice President William Livingston recalls Werbow's deanship after the dissolution of the College of Arts and Sciences as steadying and significant to the institution and humanities programs during a difficult period of reorganization that ultimately lead to the creation of the College of Liberal Arts in 1978. While dean, Werbow instituted the contract B.A. Honors major in humanities and the Yiddish program within the Department of Germanic Languages. On April 20, 1979, Dean Werbow received Das Verdienstkreuz 1. Klasses des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. This award was given to him by the German government for
outstanding service to German studies in the United States. In 1980 to 1981, he was again called upon to manage a college in transition, on this occasion as acting dean of the College of Fine Arts, overseeing the inauguration of the new Fine Arts Building. Those who worked with him as an administrator particularly appreciated his calm manner and willingness to listen to all sides of controversies. A humanist in the most literal sense, Werbow's dry sense of humor and what some observers described as his "persuasive sagacity" often facilitated negotiations among faculty and, at the same time, reflected his careful approach to personal interaction and problem-solving.

Upon his return from administrative duties, Werbow team-taught a seminar on Narrative Strategies in Medieval German Literature with Hubert Heinen and gave numerous conference courses in German and Dutch mysticism. Among the undergraduate courses he taught, he particularly enjoyed the senior survey of German literature from its beginnings to Humanism. He also actively supported a graduate-student initiative to have weekly readings in Middle High German, enlivening them with his skill at recitation (which did not, however, overshadow the less accomplished attempts of the students) and providing participants with his insightful explication of difficult passages. From 1986 to his retirement in 1997, Werbow taught one semester a year. In 1997, he was appointed professor emeritus.

Stanley Werbow's accomplishments and contribution to his discipline were recognized not only by the University but nationally and internationally as well. In 1997, he received the prestigious Pro Bene Meritis Award from the College of Liberal Arts and the Liberal Arts Foundation Advisory Council of The University of Texas at Austin. Truly a scholar and a gentleman, Stanley Werbow's legacy is also that of a notable administrator and a teacher dedicated to his students, his department, and his institution. His desire to establish a scholarship
for the Liberal Arts Humanities Program was characteristic of this man's dedication to encouraging students who demonstrated exceptional excellence in humanist studies. The Professor Stanley N. Werbow Memorial Scholarship in the Humanities was created, and its recipients are known as Stanley N. Werbow scholars. The words of Naomi Werbow, stressing his dedicated service to the College of Liberal Arts, eloquently summarize her husband's life work and bear repetition here: "During his fifty years of teaching—forty-four of them at The University of Texas at Austin—he served as Graduate Advisor, Chairman of the Department of Germanic Studies, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts (from 1971-78), and Acting Dean of the College of Fine Arts." Throughout it all, he remained accessible to students, staff, and faculty—a "Mensch," the term that in Yiddish (yet another language Werbow mastered) refers to the richly human side of this extraordinary humanist.

William Powers Jr., President
The University of Texas at Austin

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Hubert P. Heinen (chair), John M. Hoberman, and Janet K. Swaffer.