

George Schulz-Behrend Professor emeritus

PhD, German Literature,
State University of Iowa



George and Betty Schulz-Behrend, 1998 (with Bevo)

Wolfgang F. Michael, right, directed 40 German plays during his time at UT.

George Schulz-Behrend, left, was business manager for the productions.



I am George Schulz-Behrend, Professor emeritus of Germanic Language at the University of Texas at Austin. I was born in 1913 in Greifswald, a university town north of Berlin in Germany. My education started in the schools of my home town and continued in Boys High school in Brooklyn, NY, where my parent had emigrated in 1928. Then, having received a BA in English and a MA in German from the University of Colorado at Boulder, the PhD followed from the State University of Iowa at Iowa City in 1944. Meanwhile, I had acquired some teaching experience of German and English in college, of Latin in high school. The intent of devoting my life to the profession of scholarship and teaching inspired me first about the time I entered graduate school. Today when I am past 80 it is as strong as ever.

When the Chairman of the Department of Germanic Languages, Professor Lee M. Hollander, called me to the University of Texas at Austin in June of 1946, the department enjoyed a solid reputation -- as an undergraduate department. A bright student desiring the PhD was sent elsewhere. That was about to change, when men like Robert T. Clark, Helmut Rehder, Win P. Lehmann and A. Leslie Willson would take over the chairmanship. But that was some years in the future. Meanwhile, a few old-timers, Professor Wolfgang F. Michael, who had also just arrived, and I explored what we would do.

Michael, besides being a genuine scholar, had a great gift for directing extracurricular activities: e.g., he instituted the daily *Stammtisch*, a table in the Student Union where German was spoken; the *Deutschübende Gesellschaft*, where every Wednesday night over Streuselkuchen and coffee, games were played and German was practiced, and chiefly the annual German play. Michael selected a full-length play, e.g. Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*, chose the amateur actors; then, having trained them with painstaking attention to correct pronunciation and suitable gestures, he produced the play, first on campus in Austin, then to the delight of the largely Texas-German audiences in some of the most unlikely towns of the state. I served as the production manager and general gofer for close to forty years.

The holdings of UT's Main Library (in the Tower at that time) were respectable but insufficient for extensive research. With the help of student assistants I located specific lacunae and found antiquarian booksellers in Germany capable of supplying the missing titles. Whenever special opportunities arose, I cheerfully applied for (and usually obtained) special funds. Thus the gaps were gradually filled. The library staff, noticing the changes, made me a Faculty Fellow. These activities also got me on the Faculty Library Committee, the Sub-Committee for Library Space and the Building Committee for the Perry-Castañeda Library. Yet this was only a small part of my committee work.

For several years I was busy with a project I called *Samstagsschule für Kinder*/ Saturday School for Children. After the war ended, many US soldiers were stationed in West Germany and Austria. They had taken their families along, and even though the children had attended US schools abroad, many had picked up enough German to be able to converse fluently with the native. Most parents wanted this skill to be preserved after their return home, but there were no schools to help them. Bilingual children of US soldiers asking for German? Who's kidding who? In a news release I asked the parents to bring their children to my office on campus, but instead of a dozen or two, over a hundred came. Even more arrived the following Saturday. The meetings were held for an hour every Saturday, gratis, as long as there was a demand for them. I found several willing helpers, obtained a grant from the *Sängerrunde*, the German Singing Society of

Austin, and together we kept those children from forgetting their German. Later a few schools even started classes in German. Q.E.D.

I never considered the teaching of beginners' courses as a burden. In fact, I collaborated with two of my colleagues, Professor H. Rehder and Professor W. P. Lehmann, in writing a beginner's grammar, *Active German*, which was specifically designed for our students and our needs. Professor W. F. Michael and I edited a reader with on-page vocabularies that saved the user time, increased his reading speed and improved his enjoyment of the stories. My favorite undergraduate course was the senior course in the difficult skill of writing. All the students were required to translate assigned exercises. This homework was corrected, discussed and rewritten. In addition there were "free" assignments-- creative writing in prose or verse, translation, reports, whatever. These assignments, too, were corrected and improvements called for. This intensive course came as close as possible to private instruction. Future teachers appreciated the chance to learn here what they had for some reason missed or forgotten and what they might need soon enough in their own classroom.

After I had taught many of the courses in the Department, one day the Chairman of the Graduate Studies Committee asked me what my field of specialization would be. I ventured "modern literature." He waved that aside by replying, "We all do that. How about the literature of the German Baroque era?" He not only approved but was downright enthusiastic about my next suggestion, a critical edition of the works of the poet Martin Opitz (1597-1639). To prepare myself for both of these tasks I applied for and received a Fulbright stipend to Vienna. In 1968, Vol. I of the *Collected Works of Martin Opitz* appeared in Stuttgart, Germany; Vols. II through IV followed, each volume produced with a grant-in-aid of publication from the Research Institute of the University of Texas. The editorial work on Vol. V is about to be completed. I offered courses and/or seminars at UT, and as guest professor in Berlin and Marburg.

Connected with my ever-deepening involvement with the era of the Baroque is my translation of the significant novel of the Thirty Years' War, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1669; my translation 1964, revised edition 1993). A number of my scholarly papers, first read in this country, Germany, Switzerland, England and the Netherlands, the published in learned journals, deal with the Baroque, as do four dissertations and a number of theses I directed. As the one in charge of the Baroque symposium sponsored by the Germanic Department of the University of Texas at Austin in 1968, I had the pleasure of editing the papers read there: *The German Baroque: Literature, Music, Art* [1972]. On my 75th birthday former students, friends and colleagues presented me with a Festschrift entitled *Opitz und seine Welt* (Amsterdam, 1990).

The West German Government granted me a Gratitude Award and bestowed the Order of Merit on me, but the accolade that pleased me most was that Poland's grand lady of Baroque studies crowned me a poet laureate in Wollfenbüttel after I had dashed off at a moment's notice a poem in Alexandrines.

-statement from 1998
