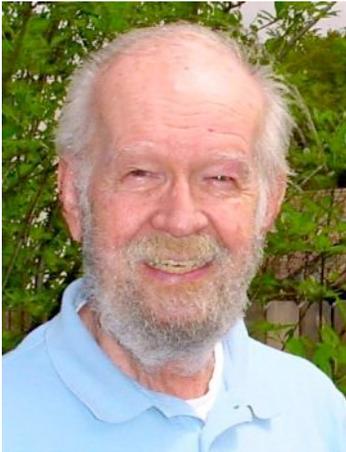


## A. Leslie Willson

Professor emeritus  
PhD, German,  
Yale University



### AUSTIN -

## Amos Leslie Willson Jr., 84, died Friday, Dec. 28, 2007.

Memorial services will be at 7 p.m. Saturday in Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home.

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<[http://www.amarillo.com/stories/010408/obi\\_obit22.shtml](http://www.amarillo.com/stories/010408/obi_obit22.shtml)>

Amos Leslie Willson Jr. was born June 14, 1923, in Texhoma, Okla. He died Dec. 28, 2007.

Leslie grew up in Amarillo, where he graduated from Amarillo High School. He was a voracious reader and, contemplating a writing career, entered the University of Texas at Austin to pursue a degree in journalism. World War II interrupted his education and he joined the Army, where he discovered a gift for the German language and quickly became fluent.

Toward the end of his three-year military service, Leslie was assigned along with other German-speaking soldiers to a top secret operation at Fort Hunt, Va., known only by its mailing address, P.O. Box 1142, and only recently declassified. The men of P.O. Box 1142 lived with and interrogated high-level prisoners of war with knowledge of Germany's then-superior submarine and rocket technology, gleaning information that changed the course of the war. After being ordered never to talk about his mission, Leslie was finally able to reminisce in an interview just days before his death.

After the war, Leslie returned to the University of Texas, where he achieved a bachelor of journalism and a master's degree in German and met Margaret Jeanne Redrow, of Cincinnati, a fellow graduate student. Jeanne and Leslie were married in 1950, then moved to New Haven, Conn., where Leslie had been accepted in the Ph.D. program at Yale, and the young couple had a son, Brian, and a daughter, Juliet. After being awarded his doctorate, he taught at Wesleyan College and Northwestern University before accepting a position at his alma mater in Austin, where another son, Kevin, was born in 1959.

He then taught at Duke University and Penn State University before being hired again as a professor at Texas in 1966, when his family moved into the house he occupied at the time of his death.

Through his love of learning and letters, Leslie became an inspiring professor and respected translator of contemporary German literature.

He served for eight years as chairman of the German Department at UT, was co-founder and first president of the American Literary Translators Association and was publisher of a groundbreaking German literary magazine, *Dimension*. He was recognized for his scholarly work with awards from the Goethe Institute and German government. He retired as an emeritus professor in 1992.

In retirement, Leslie kept up lively correspondences with friends both at home and abroad, continued to read voraciously and, with Jeanne, befriended a series of beloved pets, including Thekla von Wallenstein, a German shepherd-husky mix who was curled at the foot of his bed when he died. Jeanne died on May 11, 2006.

Survivors include three children; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorials be to Central Texas SPCA, P.O. Box 98, Cedar Park, TX 78630.

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## A Short Curriculum Vitae

A. Leslie Willson was born in 1923 and raised in the Panhandle of Texas. A Yale Ph.D. (1954), he is now emeritus professor of Germanic Languages at the University of Texas at Austin. He was a faculty member in the Department from 1955-1961 and 1966-1992, when he retired from active teaching. He served two terms as departmental chairman from 1972 to 1980.

He co-founded the American Literary Translators Association in 1979 and was its first president. He served as president of the American Translators Association from 1991 to 1993.

In addition to having published scholarly articles and books on his academic specialties, he has translated plays, poems, and stories by dozens of contemporary German-language authors. His translations of *The Man in the Tower* and *Himmelfarb*, novels by Michael Krueger, and *There Is No Borges*, and *Papa's Suitcase*, novels by Gerhard Koepf, were published 1993-1995 by George Braziller, Inc., Publishers, New York. *Angels Are Black and White*, a novel by Ulla Berkewicz, appeared in 1996 with Camden House. His *Contemporary German Fiction* was published by Continuum in 1996 (an anthology of work by 22 authors) and received a good review in *Choice*. Gerhard Koepf's novels *Two Novels: Innerfar and Bluff, or The Southern Cross* appeared in 1997

with Camden House. In June, 1998, two further novels by Gerhard Koepf in Willson's translations appeared under the imprint of Camden House: 1) *The Way to Eden*, and 2) *Nurmi, or The Journey to the Trout*. Translations in progress include a novel by Hans Christoph Buch, and Joseph Zoderer's *The Turtle Fest*.

From 1968 to 1994 Willson edited and published *Dimension*, a bilingual literary magazine featuring contemporary German-language authors. He is a corresponding member of the Darmstadt Academy for Language and Literature and the Mainz Academy of the Sciences and Literature and is a recipient of the *Bundesverdienstkreuz Erster Klasse* from the Federal Republic of Germany and the *Goethe Medaille* from the Goethe-Institut in Munich. He is a member of PEN Center New York.

In early 1997, the archives for *Dimension* were donated to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, as a record of the 26 years (and 80+ issues) of its existence. It includes manuscripts, correspondence, and graphic art, as well as video and audio tapes, and includes Willson's working library of over 3,000 titles

Note that *The Way to Eden* and *Nurmi* are both hardbound, with dust jacket designs by Willson's older son in Maine, whose website is at <[www.3ip.com](http://www.3ip.com)>. Brian Willson has just added two fonts to the growing font library of the Three Islands Press (3ip): *Houston Pen* (based on the handwriting of Sam Houston) and *Castine* (the name of a small Maine coastal village, the cemetery tombstone inscriptions of which are the source for the display font). Brian Willson's fonts enjoy an international distribution and are fonts of choice for book publishers, advertising agencies (Nestle, Toyota, others). His *Texas Hero* font (based on the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson Rusk) is used on membership cards by the Texas Ex-Students Association. On Barnes & Noble's website, you can see his dust jackets for the books by Koepf (check out also *Innerfar & Bluff*, two novels in one cover, and also Ulla Berkewicz's *Angels Are Black and White*).

Information on *Dimension* (<http://members.aol.com/germanlit/dimension2.html>)

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#### Westwärts

#### **A. Leslie Willson, der Rolf Dieter Brinkmann nach Texas holte, ist tot Süddeutsche Zeitung (2 January 2008)**

Texanischer Germanist -- in dieser Kombination bekommt gemeinhin Prosaisches einen exotischen Klang. Als gelte es, dem gerecht zu werden, lebte A. Leslie Willson, Germanistikprofessor an der Universität Austin, seinen Beruf mit einnehmender Strahlkraft und dem Hang zur Geste aus: Seine deutsche Schäferhündin und der weiße Mercedes, mit dem er über die staubigen Straßen rollte, waren die selbstironischen Statussymbole, die auch ein Drehbuchautor der texanischen Germanisten-Rolle zuschrieb. Neben Lehre und Forschung war Willson als Übersetzer und Herausgeber des zweisprachigen Magazins "Dimension" aktiv. Am nachhaltigsten gewirkt hat er als Gastgeber, der Literatur möglich machte: Regelmäßig lud er Visiting Writer nach Austin ein, Jandl, Walser, Heiner Müller oder Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, der seine Eindrücke 1974 in den epochalen Gedichtzyklus "Westwärts 1 & 2" verwandelte. Für den Träger von Bundesverdienstkreuz und Goethe-Medaille waren offiziöse Ehren kein Antrieb, bis ins hohe Alter leitete ihn seine Begeisterungsfähigkeit für unangepasste Literatur. "Die Kollegen konnten Brinkmann nicht leiden", erinnerte er sich mal: "Wenn er in die Universität kam, fragte er nicht: 'Ist Post gekommen?', sondern: 'Where's my fucking mail?'" Und dann schlug sich A. Leslie Willson lachend auf den Oberschenkel. Am Freitag ist er im Alter von 84 Jahren in Austin gestorben.

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