

## Memories of Dietmar Hagel

By Drew Griffith

Dietmar went to a Jesuit high school, as I know, because he had a large encyclopedia that had been discarded from its library, and that he stored in the closet of the office I was given upon my arrival.

As a student he spent a summer in Rome boarding with an Italian family. They had a beautiful daughter, who introduced herself with the words, "*Mi chiamo Sara, come il deserto.*" He did not elaborate further, but the twinkle in his eye suggested that he and Sara had had some good times together.

Dietmar was very proud of having worked as a research assistant for the great historian of Greek religion, Walter Burkert when the latter worked (until 1966) at Dietmar's home university of Erlangen.

Having married a Kingstonian, Dietmar arrived in town with an excellent command of one of Canada's official languages. Unfortunately, that was not English. It must have taken considerable pluck to present himself at the office of the Head of Classics, Eric Smethurst to ask for a job. Clearly, he was a convincing applicant.

When I myself arrived at Queen's in 1987, the Department was still licking its wounds from the Administration's concerted attempt to close it down six years before (*plus ça change...*). The Head at that time, Tony Marshall was credited with having rallied support to save the Department, and one of the best cards in his hand was Dietmar's CLST 129 "Introduction to Archaeology" course, which, with over 75 students [**fact-check this against Dietmar's Dean's Report**], had allowed Tony to argue how popular Classics is with students.

Before directing his own excavations, notably at Kiapha Thiti in Attica, Dietmar accompanied Dick Hope Simpson on the latter's archaeological surveys, and Dick would often use him for scale in photos, taking advantage of the fact that he was precisely two metres tall. It would be common for Dick to say during slide-lectures, "As you can see, such-and-such a feature is half a Hagel high." Dietmar lived for a time with his teenaged son Chris in an old farmhouse he had renovated on property in Pittsburgh township (which, incredibly, bordered a river named the Styx!). Chris was taller than his father, and the cupboards and countertops reflected this fact. I was able to wash my hands in the sink, but only by raising my elbows nearly level with my shoulders.

Many Queen's students accompanied Dietmar on his digs, recording the finds unearthed by the local farmers employed to do the actual digging. The chance to spend the summer in Greece was always a huge draw to our grad program.

Dietmar served for several years as Chair of Faculty Board, during which time meetings were kept to a very strict time-limit, which was widely appreciated since they were held, then as now, late on Friday afternoons. When meetings would reach the Other Business portion of the agenda, Dietmar would ask, "Are there any other matters worthy of the attention of this body?" This question was usually enough to deter anyone from prolonging the meeting with minutiae. His term as Chair coincided with a period in which union and management were involved in tense negotiations over the Collective Agreement. Once during that time Robert Silverman gave his report as Dean, which consisted mainly of recounting his extensive travels fund-raising on behalf of the Faculty. He concluded his report by saying, "As you can tell, I'm getting a lot of practice talking to rich people." Dietmar said, "Not here." The room dissolved in laughter, and the Dean sat down red-faced.

Another incident in his time chairing Faculty Board gives a clear sense of Dietmar's work-ethic (to which the countless independent studies courses he taught gratis further attest). He was hospitalized in Kingston General for weeks for a serious illness, but when the time came for the monthly Board meeting, he disconnected himself from his intravenous drip, and walked the few steps to Richardson Hall to take his place at the front of the room, before returning to his sickbed again once business had been concluded.

Dietmar became Head of Classics immediately after Ross Kilpatrick's ten years in that position. This might have provoked objections to yet another white male taking this position, and he showed his diplomatic *nous* by creating two new administrative positions in the Department and appointing a woman to each: Carolyn Falkner as Grad Coordinator and Anne Foley as Undergrad Chair. Never effusive, he was nonetheless reliably supportive. He encouraged me to go up for Full Professor (which I successfully did) and, in the same year, to apply for one of the Chrétien government's newly announced Canada Research Chairs (which I did without success).

Dietmar commanded respect among the Administration for his intelligence and learning, the appreciation of his Departmental colleagues for his unstinting hard work, and the affection of everyone for his laconic sense of humour.

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A former student of Dietmar's, Paula Antonakos-Boswell <paula@paula-antonakos.ca> emailed me last year (Jun 5, 2023) hoping to get in touch with him. I told her what I could. She would probably be very happy to provide some kind of testimonial. Here is the email I received: "Good morning, Dr. Griffith, "I was hoping to be able to reach Dr. Hagel. I was a former student (1987) and he had done significant work on my hometown village in Greece, AMYKLES. He will recall that he met my uncle, Sarandos Antonakos, who came from Greece and visited him and authored the book, *Amyklai*.

"I would love to speak with him again and chat with him about Amykles.

"Please let me know how I can reach out to him.

"Thank you, Paula."

On April 1, 1997, when I was living in Edmonton, Alberta, I received an early morning call at 8:00. I figured it was my sister or brother calling to make an April Fool's prank, but in fact, it was Dr. Dietmar Hagel calling to offer me the Roman history position at Queen's. I was overwhelmed by that news and he, pleased that I was pleased, then declared, "I need you to say that you accept." I rambled about how happy I was, how I had to call my parents, my supervisor, my friends, etc., so much so that he needed to ask a few more times that I say the precise words "I accept". Dietmar told me after I arrived in Kingston that he found my reaction delightful.

Dietmar was the Head of Classics for my first decade. To say that things ran smoothly and efficiently while he was Head and while Teresa Smith, so trusted by Dietmar and us all, was our secretary would be an understatement. Dietmar arrived at the Head's Office every morning at 7:30 and left around 5:00 each afternoon. He mentioned that even after many years as Head, the work involved still took up most of his time. Somehow, with only so many hours in a day, he managed to teach very popular courses and to maintain his archaeological research at Megalopolis and at other sites in Greece.

I have a few favourite stories about Dietmar. One was that on October 6, 1997, I met him at the departmental coffee pot, and I mentioned, "Today is my birthday." He replied, "Yes, thank you." I thought he hadn't heard me, so after I repeated what I had said, he stated, "It's your birthday? It's my birthday!" As Ross Kilpatrick's birthday was three days earlier, I realized I was in Libra-friendly territory.

Dietmar told me that he lived in an old stone house in the country and that he had to install the electricity and the plumbing. When I asked how much all that work cost, he replied, "Not much. I did it myself." That was impressive and when I then asked if he had ever taken a plumbing or electrical course, he replied, "No, but the library has books. I took the books out, opened them up and did the work." A scholar, an athlete and a jack of all trades, as it turned out.

In the early 2000s, the Department needed an adjunct professor for our growing enrolment of students, so Dietmar headed to Dean Silverman's office to press for the position. At our next departmental meeting, someone asked, "Dietmar, did you get the position?" Somewhat slowly, he replied, "No, we didn't get a position... we got three positions!" When we asked how that happened, Dietmar, in his very dry way, replied, "It's amazing what two diabetics can get done 10 minutes before lunch."

Dietmar, the athlete, scholar, administrator, and oftentimes, the very dry comedian, will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and colleagues. Tu, Dietmar, noster collega et amice, in pace requiescas.



