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Obituaries

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4. OBITUARIES

Delbert L. Gratz (1920-2000)

Delbert L. Gratz was born March 5, 1920 in Richland Township, Allen County, Ohio to Harvey and Fannie (Lauby) Gratz. He attended Bluffton High School and Bluffton College from which he graduated in 1942. On September 5, 1943 he married Thelma Dailey, a classmate at Bluffton College. Two sons and two daughters were born to the union, and at his death they had five grandchildren.

He then pursued an MA degree in history at Ohio State University and a Ph.D. at the University in Bern which he earned with a dissertation titled *Bernese Anabaptists and Their American Descendants*, published in 1953 and reprinted in 1981 and 1994. He also earned an MA in Library Science at the University of Michigan and in 1950 became Professor of History and Head Librarian at Bluffton College which he served for 38 years.

In her "Memorial Tribute to Delbert Gratz" (*Illinois Mennonite Heritage* 28 No. 2) Joanne Niswander asked:

"How does one memorialize a man who did much but never expected recognition? How does one adequately thank a man who shared much but never sought gratitude? How does one describe a man who did extraordinary things but wanted to be nothing more than ordinary? One does it very quietly, as was the nature of Delbert Gratz."

As a historian Dr. Gratz was meticulous, as a librarian diligent and helpful, "in the world of genealogy," as J. Niswander put it, "the name of Delbert Gratz is synonymous with Swiss Mennonite history." Between 1972 and 2000 he also led over 30 Swiss Mennonite Heritage tours to Europe. "Delbert's knowledge of the Swiss countryside and his relationship with the people living there were phenomenal. He loved Switzerland. Each trip, he said, was a kind of 'going home'," J. Niswander attests. He was also a dedicated member of the SAHS, published important research in Swiss Mennonite history, most recently in *Mennonites in Transition* (1997), a book published by the Society. Dr. Gratz also graciously answered pro bono numerous genealogical inquiries sent to the SAHS.

During the Second World War Delbert Gratz, a committed pacifist, served in the Civilian Public Service at Luray, Virginia and at Ypsilanti,

Michigan. From 1944 to 1948 he worked with the Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pennsylvania and in Landau, Germany where a monument acknowledges his selfless service for the people, especially children and the elderly suffering from hunger and the ravages of war.

In June 2000 Dr. Gratz was leading a tour to Europe when he suffered a stroke. He was transferred home and died on Thursday, August 24 at St. Rita's Medical Center in Lima, Ohio. His remains are buried in Ebenezer Mennonite Cemetery of Bluffton, Ohio.

Gustav T. Durrer (1911-2001)

Gustav T. Durrer was born September 26, 1911 in Lucerne, Switzerland. After his general schooling he earned a Dr. med. dent. degree in 1936 from the University of Bern, Switzerland, and was in private practice in Zurich until 1939. He then attended the Dental School of the University of Pennsylvania where he earned a D.D.S. degree in 1940 and did post-graduate study at Harvard University in Oral Pathology and Prosthetics. From 1942 to 1946 he served in the United States Army with the rank of Major and assignments in Prosthetics.



Dr. Durrer was in private practice at the Rockefeller Center from 1946 to 1995. He also taught at the School of Dental and Oral Surgery of Columbia University, was Clinical Professor at New York University, and guest lecturer at the College of Dentistry of Stony Brook University. He published papers in English, French, and German in his field of specialization and was member of numerous professional societies.

Mrs. Margot Ammann Durrer spoke the following words at a farewell gathering:

“After ninety years of full living, my dearest is at peace. I am sharing the sorrow of the thousands bereaved by the heinous attack on the World Trade Center.

Almost four years ago Gusti's kidney failed and his life could be prolonged by dialysis. He graciously adjusted to this whole new world and then - just the day before the tower assault - his brave heart began to falter. On the afternoon of that rainy day last Sunday, he peacefully passed over to the next world.

We come now to pay homage to him. Many of you have known him long before I came into his life. From everyone I am hearing the same

praise for his great kindness, graciousness and gentleness. He loved people and one felt drawn to him. There was room in his kind heart for everyone.

His patients felt his kindness and gentleness; his colleagues respected his skill and judgment; his employees - the staff at the dialysis clinic - the employees in our apartment building - all were touched by his gentlemanly manner. He leaves us with a legacy of love. He shall be sorely missed."

Selina Sutter (1937-2001)

Selina Sutter was born on September 14, 1937 in Oberhasli, Canton Zurich, as the oldest of three children of Hans Otto and Selina Sutter. She grew up in Thun, Canton Bern, spent some time in French-speaking Switzerland after secondary school, then earned a diploma from the Commercial Business School of Thun. In 1960 she took employment with the Union Bank of Switzerland and in 1969 moved to its New York branch. She then spent more than thirty years in that city, working for various banks, then for the Association of International Recruiters, acting as an agent for personnel.

Although having become a New Yorker, Selina Sutter remained tied to her native country where she spent most of her vacations with her family. She was also active in Swiss American organizations such as the Benevolent Society of New York and the Swiss American Historical Society for which she worked as Treasurer and as a member of the Board of Advisors.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001 she was at her desk at 8:30 a.m. on the 79th floor of World Trade Center One and soon after became a victim of that day's tragic events. On November 2 a memorial service was held in remembrance of her at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York City, attended by her siblings, their children, and her friends.