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Dietmar Kuegler. (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.)

Dietmar Kuegler

1951-2022

In Memoriam by Albert Winkler

A dear friend and strong supporter of the Swiss American Historical Society, Dietmar Kuegler, died on December 3, 2022, in the village of Övenum on the island of Föhr, Germany, where he had lived for several years. For many years, he translated and published my articles from the *Swiss American Historical Society Review* dealing with the Swiss in the American West in his *Magazin für Amerikanistik* in Germany. He also translated and published eleven of my books including *The Germans and Swiss at the Battle of the Little Bighorn 1876*, which was also published in the *SAHS Review*.

Dietmar had contracted the Covid virus in June of 2022 on a visit to the United States, which made him sick for about a week. When he recovered from this illness, he contracted Long Covid even though he had three shots to prevent the virus. This condition wore him down and finally killed him six months later. His death was unexpected, because he exercised, took care of his health, and his mother lived to be over one hundred years old.

Dietmar Kuegler was born in Dolberg, Ahlen, Germany, on June 4, 1951. He had one older sister. His father was a World War II veteran who had been deployed on the Russian Front, and he was too mentally disturbed to take on the responsibility of providing for a family and soon left. Dietmar's older sister also left as soon as she could. A kind American helped support the family in the difficult years following the war. As a child, Kuegler was afraid of him but later appreciated what the man had done for them. This experience helped him have good feelings towards Americans.

As a young boy, Kuegler read many books by the famous German author Karl May, who wrote popular novels about the American West. Kuegler also enjoyed watching American TV shows including *The Rifleman*, *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Erp*, and *Laramie*, which helped his interest. Kuegler's writing career began when he started reporting for a newspaper, and he wrote his first novel on the American West at age seventeen. At age twenty-four, he published his first history book about American gunfighters. For nearly the next fifty years, he

was a prolific author, and he wrote and published 70 history books and over 2,000 essays on American History mostly dealing with the American West, the United States Cavalry, the Indian Wars, the Civil War, and the Texas Rangers.

Kuegler's works have been published in Germany, France, and Austria. He was hardly content in writing for others, and he began his own publishing firm, the *Verlag für Amerikanistik*, in 1982, which focused on American History. In the following years, he published over 250 books as well as a quarterly magazine the *Magazin für Amerikanistik: Zeitschrift für amerikanische Geschichte*. At the time of his death, the *Magazin* was the longest running magazine in Europe on American history.

Kuegler's fascination with the United States kept him returning to America, and he visited the United States four times in 2022 alone. For many years, he took tour groups to various historical sites in America. He also participated in historical reenactments of events in the West, and he liked to joke that he fit the bill nicely when he was asked to portray the bad guys. Kuegler spoke perfect English, and he used that skill to give lectures at American academies, museums, and universities. He has also placed lectures on YouTube.

Kuegler was very close to his mother, and he was sad when she passed, but he soon met the love of his life, Karen Rogowski, who was a professor of biology at a university in New York City. Ms. Rogowski met Dietmar for the first time in 2014 when she and her mother stopped in Kuegler's mill for dinner. He had just purchased the old mill on the island of Föhr, and he sold it two years later. Karen's mother had come to visit the place where she was born and had grown up. She left shortly after the Second World War and had not returned since, but she remembered playing in Kuegler's Mill as a little girl. Dietmar and Karen talked a bit and became Facebook friends. Karen and her mother visited the island again in 2016, and Dietmar and Karen became engaged later that year. The two married in April 2022, but sadly she became a widow later that year. I think Dietmar's time with Karen was the happiest time of Dietmar's life.

Kuegler was always kind and was a very good friend to me. For years, he would call me on the phone every week or two, and we would talk history and laugh and joke as well. Even though we chatted in English, he said my German was so good that he arranged for me to give lectures in German at a number of institutes in Germany on American History. I certainly had him fooled. Despite my fractured German, I managed to survive the challenge.

I received his last email on November 7, 2022 when he stated he and Karen had contracted LONG COVID.

“We still suffer from it. We are very exhausted, permanently tired, lost our taste and smell, have circulation trouble, a loss of concentration, pain in the joints I always thought of you, but to tell you the truth, I did not have enough energy to do correspondence. I can only do the most necessary writing for my business. . . . Now, I feel very, very weak. I do hope you and your family are doing fine. I wish you all the best. Please, forgive my silence. The last few weeks I had often the feeling I would die. Karen, too, is in a bad state. We do hope to survive. My feeling is, it is getting somewhat better, but very slow.”

Even in his terminal illness, he tried to be optimistic, and he was still kind and concerned about me. Dietmar was one of the finest men I have very known, and I am sure he will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

~ *Albert Winkler*
Utah Valley University