

## In Memoriam

### ALFRED SENN

**D**R. ALFRED SENN, PROFESSOR Emeritus of Germanic and Balto-Slavic Philology, died on February 9, 1978 at his home in Connecticut. He was born in France of Swiss parents in 1899. He grew up in Switzerland and received his doctorate in linguistics at the University of Fribourgh.

In 1921 Dr. Senn moved to Lithuania; he married there in 1923. Receiving a position at the University of Kaunas, he taught in the Department of Comparative Philology until 1930. In 1931 he came to the United States and, after a year as a Sterling Research Fellow in Germanics at Yale, received an appointment at the University of Wisconsin. He taught Germanic and Indo-European Philology for seven years. In 1938 he accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania as Professor of Germanic Philology. In 1947 his expanded interests resulted in his establishing the Department of Slavic and Baltic Studies and the adding of Balto-Slavic Philology to his title. He served as chairman of the department until 1965 and retired at the age of 70 in 1969.

Alfred Senn's range of interests was truly remarkable. During his career he taught Old Church Slavic, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Lithuanian, Old Prussian, Gothic, Old Norse, Middle High German, Sanskrit, Indo-European Linguistics, and Old Irish. As a researcher, he had an international reputation in several fields. He is probably best known for his work in lexicography, directing the compilation of the monumental five-volume Lithuanian-German Dictionary. This dictionary was begun in Germany in 1932 and was completed here at Pennsylvania by Alfred Senn and Anthony Salys in 1966. It is one of the dictionaries that have made the University of Pennsylvania the leading academic lexicographic center in the world. Alfred also collaborated on other dictionaries: the Walde-Pokorny *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Sprachen*, Feist's *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der gotischen Sprache*, and Buck's *Dictionary of Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*.

Another field of Dr. Senn's activity was his research on the so-called Balto-Slavic unity. His trail-blazing studies influenced all subsequent

research on this topic. He wrote important grammars of several languages, including Old High German, Russian, and Lithuanian. Lack of space precludes more detail. We can just mention in passing significant papers on verbal aspect in various languages, folklore, problems of translation, onomastics, Swiss language and literature, and linguistic borrowing.

Alfred held numerous national and international posts. He was national president of both the American Association of Teachers of German and the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. He was the president of the International Association for Slavic Languages and Literatures and the American Name Society. He lectured at the Universities of Paris, Brussels, Strasbourg, Basel, Innsbruck, Zürich, Berkeley, Columbia, Montreal, and many more. He received numerous honors including the Medal of Distinction of the University of Brussels and the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Alfred Senn's accomplishments, encyclopedic erudition, and dedication to scholarship were an inspiration to his students and colleagues. His former students occupy academic positions throughout the country. His warm personality, the twinkle in his eye, his sense of humor, and his readiness to help at any time as teacher, friend, or colleague will never be forgotten.

Morton Benson

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