



## Hannelore Wass

April 14, 2013

Wass, Hannelore, Professor Emerita, University of Florida, died Friday, April 12th, 2013 at the age of 86. She is survived by her son Brian Wass; stepsons, Ray Sisler, his wife Susan, and David Sisler, his sons Gregory and Jonathon; and by step daughters, Betty Ann Rainbow, her husband Fred and children Andrew, Peter, and Leslie, and Susan Cole-Sisler, her husband Larry and daughter Lisa. Hannelore Wass's husband, Harry H. Sisler, preceded her in death.

Hannelore Wass was a kind, loving, and compassionate person who will be missed by her family, and many friends and colleagues. Dr. Wass was born September 12, 1926 in Heidelberg, Germany and was an internationally recognized pioneer in thanatology, the study of death, dying and bereavement, and a sought after lecturer and consultant in the U.S. and abroad. She was the Founding Editor of the international professional journal *Death Studies*, now in its 36th year of publication.

Growing up in Germany, most of Hannelore's childhood and adolescent years occurred during the Hitler dictatorship and her early adulthood was following WWII. In 1951, she was awarded a yearlong Training Fellowship for young German educators to study Democracy in U.S. schools and communities which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education under the Cultural Exchange Program. Upon her return to Germany, she established a Parent

Teacher Association, took a leading role in a three year experimental teaching program, and developed curriculum for teaching English at the middle school level, among others, in the city of Mannheim, a school system which served as a model for adoption by the State of Baden. . In 1957, she received a teaching contract and immigrated to the United States to teach in the Pittsfield, MA school system which she had visited during her fellowship year.

Hannelore Wass earned the equivalent of a B.A. in Education when she was in Germany, and received her MA and PhD in human Development and Educational Philosophy at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After various teaching positions, she joined the Department of Foundations of Education (Psychological) in the College of Education at the University of Florida. Her teaching and research focus was on the broad spectrum of human development, from childhood and adolescence to adulthood, aging, death and grief. Dr. Wass developed five graduate courses in these areas during her tenure at the University of Florida. She was an Associate Member of and Liaison to the Interdisciplinary Center for Gerontological Studies which was housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, as well as, being participating faculty and serving for a number of years on the Center's Steering Committee.

One of Hannelore's professional concerns centered around children's and adolescents' encounters with death, including dying, grieving, suicide, lethal violence, and the portrayal of death in entertainment media. She promoted clinical and educational programs designed to prepare professionals and parents to help children and adolescents cope with these encounters and to transcend them. Hannelore advocated for integrating the subjects of death, grief, suicide, as well as, violence prevention and integration into school curricula. Dr. Wass published ten books, and over 100 articles and contributing chapters , in addition to being the Consulting Editor for Death Education, Aging and Health Care with 45 published titles during her

editorship which report on research findings and give guidelines for practical applications for death education and counseling.

Memorial Services will be held on Monday, April 29, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist church, reception to follow. Inurnment will be at Forest Meadows Memorial Park Central, 4100 N.W. 39th Ave.

# Tribute Wall

JC

“ Ich erinnere mich an Dr. Wass, als ich 1977-1978 U of F besuchte. Ich erhielt ein Zertifikat in Gerontologie, das ich bei ihr studierte, zusammen mit meinem M.A.. Sie war eine wundervolle Person. Ich habe es genossen, mit ihr Deutsch zu sprechen.

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**JAMES CONNOLLY** - December 17, 2020 at 05:01 PM

SP

“ Hannelore Wass was especially kind and understanding to me. She had an uncanny ability to draw out people's problems, their old hurts, their deeply held wounds and more. She was my professor for Death and Dying and it was a deeply touching experience for which I truly thank her.

*To all her family and friends, Thank you for sharing this time with us and please accept my heartfelt condolences.*

Sue

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**Susan Schillinger, Ph.D.** - April 30, 2013 at 05:22 AM

JS

“ Hannelore was a wise mentor, a model to other professionals and a dear friend. She was truly the mother of the death awareness movement in the U.S. And will be sorely missed by those lucky enough to have known her across many years.

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**Judith Stillion** - April 24, 2013 at 12:28 PM

GM

“ It is difficult to put into words the immense affection and respect I feel for Hannelore. In 1988 I took her graduate level class, "Children and Death."

*The subject matter was difficult, often so emotionally intense that we passed around a large box of tissues she always had on hand. She held the class at her lovely home in Spring Forest, and we ate dinner together afterwards. She set it up this way to allow us time to decompress from profoundly sad issues, and to recover before leaving to go our separate ways. Most of us hoped some day to have careers in teaching or counseling. We could not have asked for a finer role model. For me she remains the best teacher I ever had.*

*Over twenty years later I reconnected with Hannelore. Our roles were somewhat reversed by then, but she continued to demonstrate the noblest of human attributes--wisdom, kindness, compassion, intellectual rigor, and courage in the face of physical decline. At one point she shared with me several essays she had written about the end of her childhood in Germany, which coincided with, was hastened by the violent end of the war. I've read them many times over and still am moved by all that young Hannelore endured. With each re-reading I marvel at how she emerged from such devastation to become the wonderful, generous person that I knew her to be. My condolences to her family and her many colleagues around the world.*

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**Greg McGann** - April 22, 2013 at 04:52 PM

CS

“ Hannelore was an incredible mentor, colleague, and friend to many over the years. She will be greatly missed and will be remembered fondly next week at the annual conference of the Association for Death Education and Counseling.

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**Carla Sofka** - April 17, 2013 at 09:08 PM

KE

“ To the Wass and Sisler family,  
What a great loss for you and us all. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this sad time. Your mother will always have a special place in our hearts. John 5:28 shows that Jesus promised of a resurrection in the future for our loved ones. I hope this brings you some comfort at this difficult time.

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**Kelly** - April 17, 2013 at 07:48 PM

MP

“ Hannelore was my mentor for a research project on Aging and Dying Well, and she became a good friend and supporter over the years. I cherished our stimulating conversations about work, research, and everything. I will miss her.

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**Monika Ardelt, PhD** - April 17, 2013 at 04:18 PM

JM

“ My relationship with Hannelore dates back to 1977 when as a Junior in College I attended the 2nd FORUM for Death Education and Counseling conference in Orlando Florida. Hannelore introduced herself to me and allowed me to ask her many questions and graciously responded -- she was amazing. I had to write a paper about the experience of meeting all these leaders in the death and dying field. Throughout the years, she continued to mentor me and became my friend through all of years with WIT (Women in Thanatology) and ADEC (Association of Death education and Counseling).

*She will be remembered with joy and for her wisdom which she so freely shared - in her writings, presentations and relationships*

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**Jeanne M Harper, MPS** - April 16, 2013 at 05:29 PM