

EDMUND SPEVACK (1963–2001)

The field of German–American history has lost a promising young scholar, Dr. Edmund Spevack, a former research fellow at the GHI, who died on July 2, 2001, in Münster, Germany, after having been diagnosed with brain cancer in 1999.

The son of a German mother and an American father, Edmund was a citizen of two worlds, the Old and the New. He was educated on both sides of the Atlantic and was fluent in English and German. After German preparatory school he majored in history and literature at Harvard University and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1986. He began his graduate studies at the University of Münster but returned to his adopted country, this time to Johns Hopkins University, from which he received his M.A. in 1989 and his Ph.D. in 1992. As a visiting assistant professor he taught American studies at the University of Stuttgart (1992–3) and he lectured in history and literature at Harvard University (1993–6). Thereafter, he joined the staff of the GHI, turning down other offers, including a prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship. During his first year in Washington he was a Volkswagen Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the GHI with a joint appointment at the American Institute of Contemporary German Studies. The following year he became a fully fledged GHI research fellow. During his tenure at the GHI he co-authored *The German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C.: Ten Year Report, 1987–1997* (with Detlef Junker and Thomas Goebel) and served as a GHI representative at cultural leadership meetings.

If it is true that historical research reflects autobiographical elements, it may be particularly true for Edmund and his commitment to the field of German–American relations. His dissertation on *Charles Follen's Search for Nationality and Freedom: Germany and America, 1796–1840* (published by Harvard University Press in 1997), mirrors Edmund's own search for a deeper understanding of German and American intellectual and political culture.

During his four years at the Institute (1996–9) Edmund worked on his second book, a major study of American influences on the West German constitution, the Grundgesetz. He concluded that Americans had been much more deeply involved in the shaping of the Grundgesetz than had been acknowledged to date. The 700-page book *Allied Control and German Freedom: American Political and Ideological Influences on the Shaping of the West German Constitution, 1948–1949* will be published by LitVerlag Münster in the fall of 2001.

Edmund was a learned yet very modest man, a scholar with wide-ranging interests in international relations, economics, and culture who possessed an excellent memory, even for trivia. If the rest of us could not recall the name of some obscure contemporary politician, Edmund was sure to have the answer and spared us many a visit to the reference library.

Edmund was an extremely meticulous, some might say obsessive, scholar and researcher. But when he socialized with GHI friends and colleagues, he could cut loose. He was without a doubt a very gifted mimic and raconteur, never resorting to “bitterness or cynicism, but to a liberating sense of humor,” as one of his friends put it. Over lunch he would show his talent for inventing characters and scenes, highlighting the absurdity of everyday academic American life; and often he reduced his friends and colleagues to tears of laughter.

Edmund maintained his strong interest in the world around him and in other people, almost to the day he died. His untimely death is hard to accept; his enriching scholarly life and his humanity sustain us. Edmund is sorely missed.

Christof Mauch