

Memorial Resolution for Bernd-Wolfgang Hoffmann

October 8, 1947–July 12, 2016

Wolfgang Hoffmann, who chronicled the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences through his movies and photographs for nearly half a century, passed away in his home on Tuesday, July 12, 2016. He was 68 years old.

Born and raised in Schwarzenbach An Der Saale, Bavaria, Germany, Wolfgang was recruited to come to the United States in 1970 to take a position at UW-Madison as a filmmaker and photographer in the Department of Agricultural Journalism (now the Department of Life Sciences Communication). Always up for an adventure, he traveled via ocean-going freighter across the Atlantic and through the Great Lakes to his new home. He immersed himself in his new, very busy life. He spent countless hours on the road, behind the camera and at the editing console, but he still found time to continue his education. He earned a B.S. degree in 1975 and an M.S. in 1979, both in Agricultural Journalism.

Wolfgang was involved in the making of at least 33 movies that explained the science of agriculture, natural resources, community economic development and other topics to K-12 students, industry professionals and the general public. He also taught classes that introduced hundreds of UW-Madison students to the art and science of photography. And he took tens of thousands of photos to illustrate the research and educational efforts of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. He valued and respected his colleagues in the CALS communication program and took great pride in the work they were able to do collaboratively. He continued this role after his retirement in 2006, carrying out photo assignments for the university and private clients up until the last day of his life.

Wolfgang went at his work like a reporter. He had a great eye and he was a technical perfectionist, but he also spent a lot of time talking to the researchers to learn the science behind what they were doing in order to come up with the best photographic approach. He created wonderful images that told complicated stories. His work earned more than 70 professional awards, but the one he valued most was the college's first-ever Academic Staff Award for Excellence in Service.

Wolfgang was awed and fascinated by the natural world, from the tiniest of microbes to the vastness of the boreal forest. He loved Wisconsin and was always striving to find new ways to portray its beauty. He was happiest when he was outside, when he was working and on his free time.

Wolfgang leaves behind his wife Katharine Driftmier Miller Hoffmann; son Matthew (Bethany) Hoffmann; stepson Daniel Miller; grandsons Lex and Andrew; sister Ulricka (Hajo) Schwerin; brother Martin Hoffmann; niece Jana and nephew Martin Hoffmann, Jr.; and Ruger, his devoted Rottweiler.

Wolfgang produced wonderful films and photos that conveyed stories in beautiful ways. At the same time, he was a warm human being who made friends easily and kept them for a lifetime. We are fortunate to have had him as a colleague and, even more, as a great friend.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Doering, Senior Artist, CALS Office of External Relations