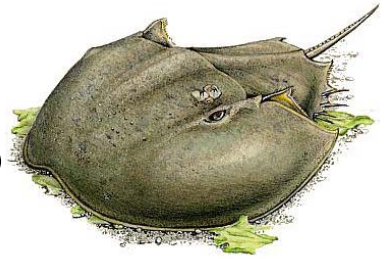


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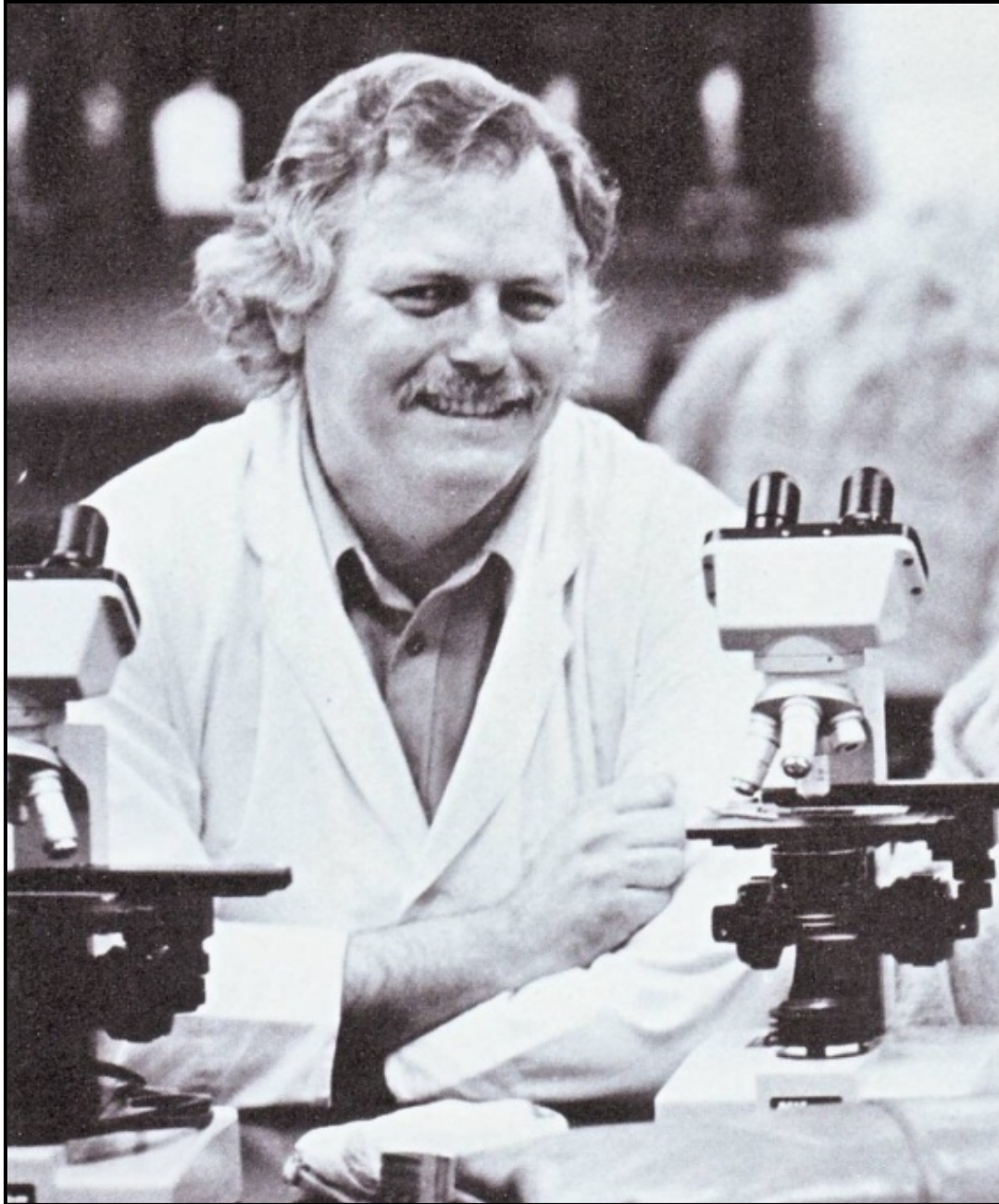
NEWSLETTER

Department of Biological Sciences, Wagner College, Staten Island, NY

Volume 2009, Issue Fall-03

WALTER KANZLER

September, 2009



"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled." Plutarch





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On the 30th of June, Joe Romano sent the following e-mail to the Wagner Community:

Dr. Walter Kanzler, who served as a member of Wagner's faculty from 1966 until 2001, most recently as professor of biology, passed away on Friday. His obituary listing is posted below:

DR. WALTER KANZLER JERSEY CITY Dr. Walter Kanzler, 70, a lifelong resident of Jersey City, passed away peacefully at his home on Friday, June 26, 2009. He was a professor for 40 years, of which 35 years was teaching at Wagner College, Staten Island, NY, retiring in 2000. He held a bachelor's degree in biology, a Masters degree in counseling psychology, a Masters degree in zoology, and a Ph.D. in animal behavior. Dr. Kanzler was highly skilled in his field and named a NASA fellow, a National Science fund grantee from the University of California at Davis, and a senior research assistant at the National Center for Bioethics at Drew University. Dr. Kanzler had a love for knowledge and a passion for sharing with others. He never considered teaching work and contributed his life experiences to his ability to communicate to his students in and out of the classroom. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and parishioners of St. John's Lutheran Church, Jersey City. He is survived by his loving sister-in-law Gerdi Kanzler, dear cousins Ute and Ingo Hass and relatives in Germany.

The current special issue of the LIMULUS tries to commemorate Dr. Walter Kanzler

Dr. Horst Onken

The Editor

FINETTE RUSSACK GOES WAY BACK WITH WALTER



Walter and I go way back. To 1974 when I entered campus, filled with trepidation and excited expectation. He was the first professor I approached, and was met with twinkling eyes and a warm smile. I absolutely adored his classes. He employed the 2 things I've taught to future educators as imperative to engage students: a firm grasp of the subject matter and an honest

interest, curiosity and enjoyment for the subject as well. Simple formula to be a great teacher - Knowledge of topic plus emotional connection and enthusiasm.

He did have an annoying quirk: he was a stickler for fair grading. If he set the cut off for an "A" at 90 percent you could not meet with him to argue that a 89.9 was "close enough". Not even 89.999! Well, you could try, but you wouldn't get anywhere. He was big on meeting expectations and felt that a student should expect to get the grade he earned .period. And that if he moved the grading scale to suit circumstance it would erode those expectations.

Those that so thoroughly enjoyed his classes would take every class they could, that he taught. Through the years those of us who fit in nearly every class offered became known as "Kanzler groupies". Some of us even earned a "diploma". The title was "Kanzler University Diploma" and the degree granted was "Official Kanzler Groupie" As a testament to his being humble about being a favorite, and ability to laugh at his popularity, he had his cat 'sign' the diploma as registrar, whose degree was F.D. (*Felis domesticus*).

He also enjoyed the nickname many used - but only after being around long enough and earning his permission - W2. Simple enough - his name - Walter W Kanzler - the W2 stood for his first 2 initials since his signature was "WW Kanzler".

Because he was not an easy grader, and each grade was laboriously worked for, the very many groupies through the years are a testament to his ability and who he was as a person, an educator. I was honored to have known him first as my teacher, then as my mentor and later as a colleague; but my most treasured role he held was my "friend".

I returned to Wagner, holding a fresh and quickly earned Masters Degree from NYU in hand, and he welcomed me back into the department. I was an instructor (one of the youngest ever hired) as well as Greenhouse Coordinator, Walter made sure I also became proficient handling students by putting me in charge of student lab assistants - training and keeping tabs on them. Some were even a year or two older than I was and that intimidated me - until Walter (who would have none of that) taught me the "power of the grade book". And he handed me one from the storeroom. I carried the "grade book" around and it was my talisman of confidence. I left to start my family and he was there to help celebrate many of my children's birthdays despite many gaps in the years, decades, almost a lifetime that we remained in touch.

When I again returned to grad school (for PhD work at Rutgers University), soon after I became pregnant with my third child and Walter was concerned for me. When I contracted Lyme Disease in my 8th month it was phone calls from him that kept me steady and insisting that the doctors leave no stone unturned while they misdiagnosed one after the other illness.

Ultimately, I managed to accumulate enough classes to be abd (all but dissertation) but with my health still in a severe decline, I was unable to complete the Doctorate; instead I turned to teacher training and science curriculum content writing for grades k-12. This was in part due to the encouragement of Walter and his gripe sessions lamenting that the students in his bio labs were now so woefully unprepared, and his comments about how dismal science education had become. For the many years we kept up correspondence and visits and he made sure to share the milestones - birthdays, graduations, Bar Mitzvahs.

In the last several years as his own health declined, and he lost family members as well as friends, he seemed to be resolute about his shortened future. My biggest regret is never having told him how much his friendship through the years meant to me and I am grateful that I did have the chance just after my oldest son's Bar Mitzvah 13 years ago to explain to him how our evolving relationship helped shape my own career and





even my life's perspectives. He was amazed that he had so much of an effect upon my life. I remarked that he probably then, was unaware of the effect on so many others' lives too. And he looked out from the by then white and bushy beard and smiled with that twinkle in his eyes and said "you know, I hope so, but all I was doing was teaching the best I knew how and trying to spark some interest in subjects I found fascinating." Humble man, unaware of his own effect on others.

When I learned of his passing I hadn't spoken to him in a little more than a year - the longest we had gone without a note or phone call. (He had another quirk - he wouldn't ever and I mean NEVER be the first to call or write - he assumed that if you wanted to hear from him, you'd initiate the contact). I had suffered my own health challenges and also I was trying to care for my youngest who had been gravely ill for the past 5 years due to gestational Lyme disease wreaking damages for more than a decade until his body could no longer hide it. I was by then in a wheelchair and sent home by several specialists from several hospitals with a very poor prognosis and 2 saying I would not in fact be alive for too much longer. And so I didn't want to call him. I knew he would be worried about me. And with his own battles with Parkinsonism draining him I didn't, couldn't, add to his worries and stress. And so I told myself that as soon as I could feel a bit better, I'd call him.

I had started to improve and had written a note in my planner to phone Walter. And then before the week had gone by I received the call that he had passed. And so I was not able to hear his voice again. Nor tell him I was doing a bit better, so not to worry. Or that I had missed our long conversations about all things science as well as political.

I will miss him terribly; and take comfort in knowing that what he taught me I have passed on to several classes of future scientists and teachers. I have passed it along to dozens of classes of current teachers. All of whom will then influence countless future students. And this humble, skilled educator who was amazed that anyone would have been so influenced and so benefitted by having had him as a professor; will live on a little, in the hearts and minds of those others; who may even, perhaps, pass his ideas and ideals along to untold future generations of students.

I hope so! Finette Russak.

WALTER KANZLER THROUGH DIANE'S EYES

I first met Dr. Walter Kanzler as a freshman biology major at Wagner College in September 1971. As I wandered down the fourth floor hallway of Megerle, confused and slightly lost, Dr. Kanzler stepped out of his office, and asked if he could help me. I stepped back about two steps and he immediately responded with "Hmmm, your 'critical distance' is about 4 feet. That means you're a friendly person". Probably looking more confused than I already was, he proceeded to give me an impromptu lecture on the meaning of critical distance. That was my first impression of Dr. Kanzler: friendly, "in your face" but always the teacher.



I went on to take Animal Behavior and Bioethics with Dr. Kanzler or WWII as we affectionately called him. He was always respectful of everyone's opinions and idiosyncrasies and he never missed the opportunity to relate our various behaviors to animal behaviors. For example, one day a young woman in the class was wearing a yellow shirt and black pants. Dr. Kanzler quickly pointed out that she would frighten young suitors away since "black and yellow were the animal



world's warning signs of danger or poison."

I cite these encounters as examples of Dr. Kanzler's persona: humorous, down to earth, respectful, able to pull diverse concepts together in a logical order and above all, a person, who was kind and caring enough to put whatever he was doing aside if a student came to him with a question or

concern. He loved to teach above all else, and his enthusiasm for teaching was quite evident. He always "left an impression."

Over the years, I spoke to Dr. Kanzler many times via telephone and he never ended a conversation without reminding me that "teaching is the noblest profession." I will never forget his conversation ender nor will I ever forget Dr. Kanzler.

"The only thing you take with you when you're gone is what you leave behind" John Alston

Diane Berato Pane, MPA, PA-C
BS-Biology-Wagner 1975
Academic Coordinator
Wagner College Physician Assistant Program

HAROLD KOZAK REMEMBERS



I was a student in Dr. Kanzler's invertebrate zoology class in 1967. He was always very friendly with his students and liked raising his two pet spiders in his office. He enjoyed teaching, and often told me how

he began his career teaching at the high school level in Jersey City. I enjoyed hearing about his experiences, because I also began my career teaching at the high school level as well. One of the things that I remember about his course, is that he always drew diagrams of the various invertebrates he was lecturing about.

I began teaching at Wagner in 1994, and was amazed that Dr. Kanzler remembered me as one of his students. I often enjoyed visiting him at his office as his colleague. We often talked about the "good old days at Wagner," especially thinking about how all the science classes were in the main



hall. In addition, we often shared memories about the old Hawk's Nest as well. Walter was a very unique person, and a good instructor. He will be missed by his students and colleagues.

Harold Kozak, Chemistry and Physics

MY FRIEND AND COLEAGUE



I knew Walter for almost thirty years, from the day I came for a job interview at Wagner to the day he died. After his retirement from Wagner for health reasons, I saw him only when he came to Wagner for some special function, but we kept in touch over the phone. The memory of meeting this tall gentleman, in a white lab coat, with a twinkle in his eyes, sort of

looking like Kenny Rogers is still vivid in my mind. He had a way of making people feel comfortable around him and he was the one who walked me down to the Union Building to meet with the President. He told me how much he enjoyed my lecture and let me know that I was his number one choice for the position. His honesty and candid conversation about the school in general and the department in particular made me feel very comfortable and we became good friends from that day on. As our friendship grew and he became a mentor to me, we talked about being first generation immigrants to this country and the absence of family in this country. He treated me like a little sister that he never had and I, who was missing all my big brothers, welcomed having a big brother on campus.

Over the years Walter and I served in various committees together, taught different sections of General Biology lecture and labs, taught in the IDS and MDS programs, served as faculty advisors for the Biology Club and the Tri-Beta Honor society, attended faculty network summer programs at NYU, seminars at Rutgers University, the MACUB meetings, and other conferences. We also spent countless hours on the fourth floor of the Science Building chatting, learning new things and of course teaching. We respected each other's judgment, and occasionally decided to agree to disagree and still be friends. There are only very few people that I know about whom I can make the same statement.

In the late nineties Walter developed Parkinson's symptoms. He started having problem walking and started losing his coordination and had problem speaking clearly. His mind was alert and his thinking still very clear. His body was not listening to his will and refused to do things that he wanted to do. He was frustrated and one day told me that a good working mind in a nonfunctioning body is much worse than a non functioning mind in a good body. People with the latter affliction would not know what is happening to them and this ignorance can be bliss.

Here are some observations, incidents and anecdotes related to Walter that I want to share with you, his students, colleagues and friends. Teaching came naturally to him and he was a keen observer of human nature. He had tremendous patience, he was very good at story telling and he was a good listener. Students trusted him and flocked to the courses he taught. When Walter introduced a course in Bioethics, he had close to 150 students sign up for his course that semester and he taught them all in Spiro 2. He never pretended to be anything more than what he was, a caring and compassionate teacher.

The first semester I was at Wagner, one evening late in October I saw Walter and his students cutting out flying-bird patterns from construction paper and sticking them on the glass windows in the Science Hall. Asked for a logical explanation for this strange behavior, Walter gave me a big lecture on how this simple feat by him and his students saves a number of migrating birds from hitting against the glass windows and killing themselves. To this day we in the Biology Department try to do this. Being on an elected committee with Walter was always a learning experience. At times in committee meetings he would look like he was asleep with his eyes closed but most of the time that was not the case at all. He was concentrating on the conversation and arguments that are going on to decoct the main points and discard everything else. As a record keeping secretary, his writings were always precise, concise and to the point. I always admired this skill in Walter.

Walter made a deep impression on many of his students. Dr. Judith Goodenough, Professor of Behavior at Amherst University in Massachusetts dedicated her text book to Walter with these words "To Dr. Walter Kanzler: You must have said something in my introductory class that sparked my interest. I wonder how many other students you have inspired." I am sure there are countless students out there who feel the same way as Judith does. Walter was so proud when he got a copy of this book from Judith with the written statement. He went around showing this book to all of us. For a dedicated and gifted teacher like Walter and others like him the biggest reward that there is, is to know that you inspired your students. On a more personal front my daughter Meena who was only three years old when I joined Wagner often came with me to Wagner and Walter soon became her BIG friend. He let her play with all his Smurfs (he had a great collection), gave her some of his plastic animals, doodled with her on the black board with colored chalks and once in a while took her to his class. Uncle Walter became her buddy and when she started sending out Valentine cards in first grade, she gave one to Walter. Walter had stopped in, in my house on his way to visit his brother in Rutgers. Meena and Walter kept in touch with occasional Phone calls. In 2002, when she was in Medical college they met again, Walter in his wheelchair and Meena a young woman with a boy friend. Walter jokingly told her that he still has her Valentine card and they both laughed. This ability to connect with people and remember events was something that came naturally to Walter.

I can go on and on remembering things but let me stop now and bid farewell to my colleague and good friend Walter Kanzler. Walter in many ways lived up to his potential, with a





heart capable of caring deeply and a mind that engaged in intellectual, spiritual and artistic pursuits and in the time he was here he touched many lives and made a positive impact on many of us. I will always cherish the memories and be grateful to have known him for so many years.

Ammini Moorthy, Biology



WALTER KANZLER WAS AN INSPIRATION



Walter Kanzler was an inspiration to numbers of students and a friend to many. He taught Animal Behavior and Exploring Biology, as well as ornithology and mammalogy. His office was filled with pictures and mementos. He told his students to give him some small item he could keep to remember them. This led to a tiny menagerie of gorillas, lions and all sorts of animals as well

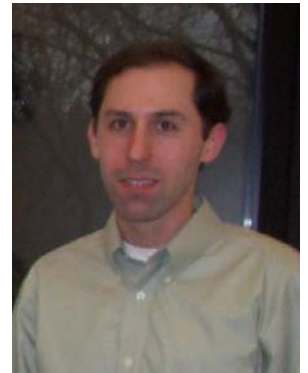
as Smurfs and other chachkas filling his desk. Even years later he was able to relay the story of the student associated with each one. If he really liked you he gave you a diploma from "Kanzler University." He would not miss a MACUB conference and free breakfast! He was known for his white lab coat although his labs involved neither chemicals nor dissections. He once did research with Giant hissing cockroaches some of which are rumored to still reside in the Science building. He enjoyed Wagner plays and other campus events. He was here when I graduated in '73 and still here when I returned to work at Wagner in 1993, unmistakable in his white lab coat and nature man beard. He was a member of the Biology Department and our colleague for thirty years. Unfortunately Parkinson's disease led him to an early retirement. We miss his good conversation, interesting opinions, kind advice and warm presence.

Linda Rath, Biology



MEMORIES OF WALTER

I was hired in 2001 as the faculty member to replace Walter Kanzler after his retirement. Although he was no longer teaching at Wagner College, I was lucky to interact with him. On a couple of occasions I transported him to campus and back to his house so that he could sort through and collect books from his office. I very much enjoyed the conversations I had with him – a product of both his pleasant personality and sense of humor and our shared interest in animal behavior, ecology, and evolutionary biology. By this time his Parkinson's symptoms were quite severe. Just getting him in and out of my car was a major undertaking requiring more than one person to lift him. It was very sad to see someone with such an active mind trapped in a body that no longer worked and largely restricted to lying in bed in a single room.



In Walter's will, he donated his enormous collection of books to the Department of Biological Sciences. The sheer number of books in his small house was incredible and demonstrated his love of learning. An eclectic mix of books lined the walls and often floors of every room. We did not come close to taking every book present, yet needed 35 boxes divided between two college vans. We estimate that 600 books were transported to Wagner, many of them the same books I had helped him bring home a few years earlier. The books have been distributed to faculty in the department (given our common interests, I benefitted the most), the department library and field guide collection, and the Wagner College library.

I attended a memorial service at Walter's church and it was wonderful to hear the parishioners and neighbors speak of how Walter had touched their lives. I wish that I had had the opportunity to get to know him better.

Brian Palestis, Chair, Department of Biological Sciences

AN ANECDOTE

I live in south Jersey. Last summer I went to a local facility for dental care, for the first time. I completed the usual paperwork as a new patient, waited a bit, and then was taken to a room for cleaning and for a dental examination. The dentist and I engaged in some conversation, which is when I learned that he was an alumnus of Wagner College. I further learned that he had taken courses with Walter years before I began working at Wagner College. In fact, he was





Walter's dentist for several years before moving to south Jersey and running his own facility. There was clearly a connection between the dentist and Walter that went beyond a student-teacher relationship: Walter helped prepare the student for life and for service in the community, and the student later provided that service to Walter and others. This seems to me to be honorable testimony to what Walter professed: to kindle fires instead of simply filling vessels. Walter did not think of teaching as only the dissemination of information; he cared more about the fire he tried to instill in students during his time with them. This encounter with the dentist illustrates what he meant by that lofty notion.

Don Stearns, Biology

MEETING WALTER KANZLER

I have met Walter Kanzler, although I never met him. What a strange sentence, but it is still true. I should explain this in a little more detail for your entertainment.

I have never met Dr. Kanzler. He retired from Wagner College in 2001 and, thus, long before I came to Wagner College in 2006. Walter Kanzler never came to Wagner College while I was here, and I did never even see a photograph of him. Evidently Dr. Kanzler and I never met.

This summer while I was in Washington State for my summer research I received an e-mail, saying that Walter Kanzler had passed away. The only thing that rang a bell was the note that Dr. Kanzler had been, like I am, a faculty member of the Department of Biological Sciences at Wagner College. When I returned to the college in the middle of August, Professor Linda Rath told me that Walter Kanzler, a former, now retired member of our department had died during the summer and that there were some books in Science Hall, Room 402, which he had given to the college. "Look whether you can find something of interest for you, before we get the Library to pick up the rest," Linda said. I kind of postponed it from day to day. I had too much to do to prepare my teaching for the fall semester. I love books, but I thought there is a box with maybe 20-30 more or less uninteresting books of somebody to whom I cannot relate. Who, the heck, was Walter Kanzler, and what, the heck, do I have to do with him? Finally, on a Friday afternoon, the last day to look at Walter Kanzler's books, I went to Room 402 to have at least a short glimpse.

Believe it or not, but when I entered Science Hall 402 on that day I met Walter Kanzler. There were not 30 books. There were more than 500 books. I was stunned, especially because I had heard that this was only a minor fraction of the books that were piled up in his house. Looking through the many boxes of Walter Kanzler's books, I got myself again and again thinking: "I got this book" or "I would have gotten that book." The latter kind of book I squeezed under my arm. Very soon I got a bunch of books under my arm. When I could not hold them any longer, I got a box. The box was filled up with a selection of Walter's books in approximately 10 minutes, although I had inspected only the first few of Walter's book piles. Finally, I hauled four big boxes of books over to my office. One of them I even took home.

As I could easily guess from some of his books, Walter was evidently of Southern German origin. I am German. If I see a German copy of Goethe's "Faust", I think back to my High School times. Walter had an old copy, approximately from 1925. Apart of during high school times, I had seen copies of German classics in the attic of my home, remnants of my grandparents and their nine children. These old copies are not like the recently printed versions, like my high school copy: Old gothic letters ...the smell of mold ... the kind of sticky, humid touch of the pages. I was back home on the attic for a while.

Walter Kanzler was evidently a naturalist with interests in all flavors that biology has to offer. Just through watching his books I can see him creeping through brushes to catch an insect here, collect a leaf there. I can see him walking on the beach at Great Kills; head down to see what has been flooded to the shore. I am sure he was not just an academic biologist. Walter Kanzler was a "real" biologist. He was somebody with eyes and ears, with smell and taste. He was somebody who had the ability to touch his way through the natural world.

As I had heard, Walter severely suffered from Parkinson's disease during his post retirement years. Again, something pops up in some edge of my brain. My dad, who died in '91, suffered from this disease. So, I can relate, and I see my dad, a professional gardener and a naturalist of a different kind, and Walter holding hands in the space where their souls are hovering now: In our memories.

Writing these lines, I am reminded of Conrad Aiken and his grave stone in Savannah which I once visited. It is a bench for visitors to have a seat and enjoy a drink of Madeira, as Aiken



Horst Onken, Biology

had wished. The bench is engraved with "Give my love to the world" and "Cosmos Mariner - Direction Unknown." That is the direction where we all are ultimately heading, I guess. Fare well, Walter, I met you in Science Hall, Room 402, and I will meet you again sometime somewhere on our ways across the universes. For the time being you are well kept in my and many others' memories.





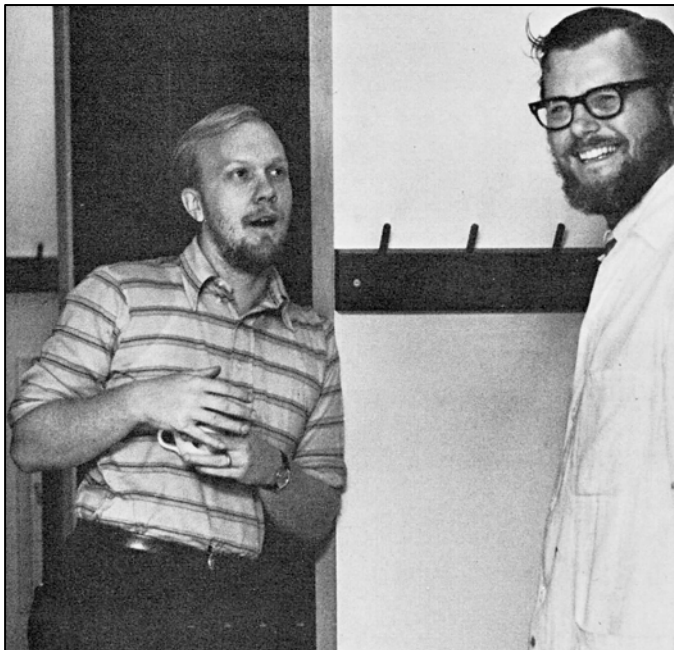
A BRIEF HISTORY OF WALTER'S WAGNER TIME

Accompany me on a brief journey through time – the time of Walter Kanzler at Wagner College. You might recognize Walter on the following photographs from the different yearbooks. Some may think of a particular photograph, “Yes, that is Walter when I was in his class.” Let’s make our memories fly. Let’s think of his looks, his smile, his voice, his laughter...

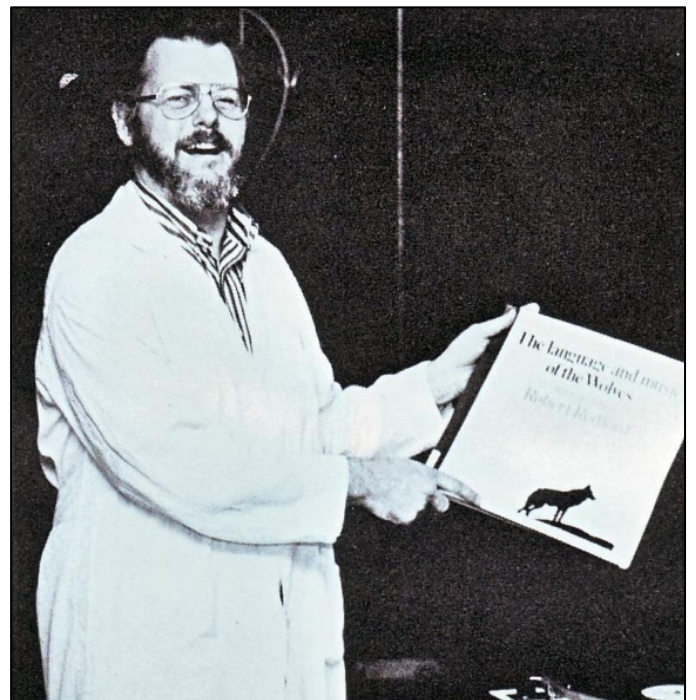
Let’s keep Walter Kanzler alive in our memories.



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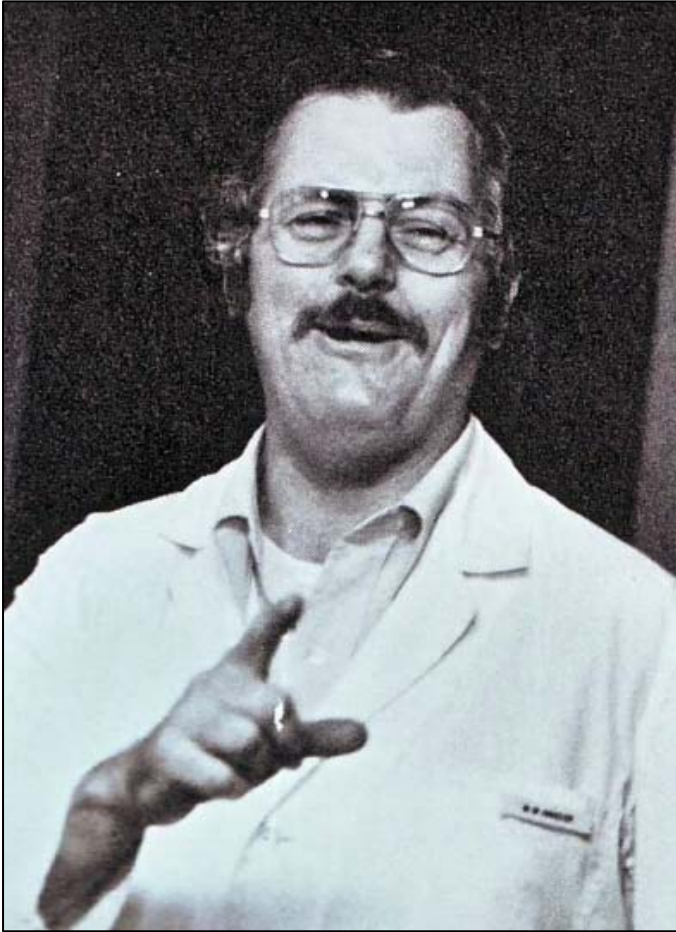


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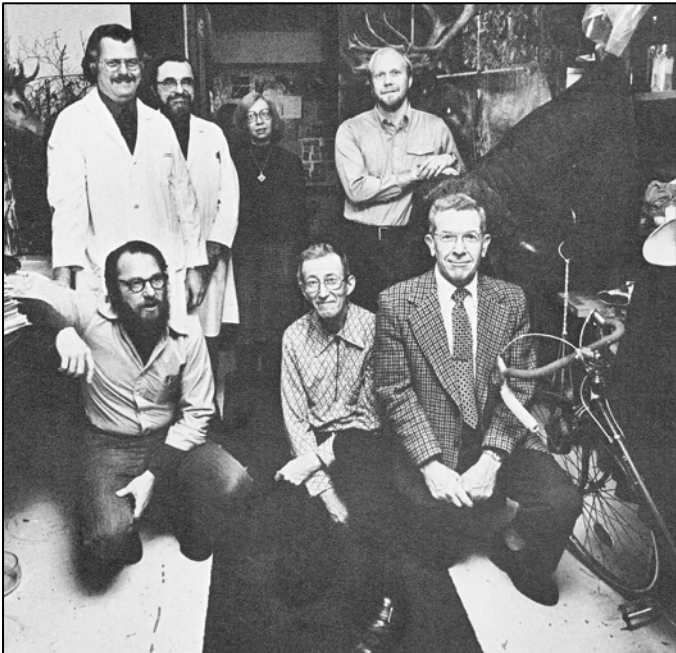




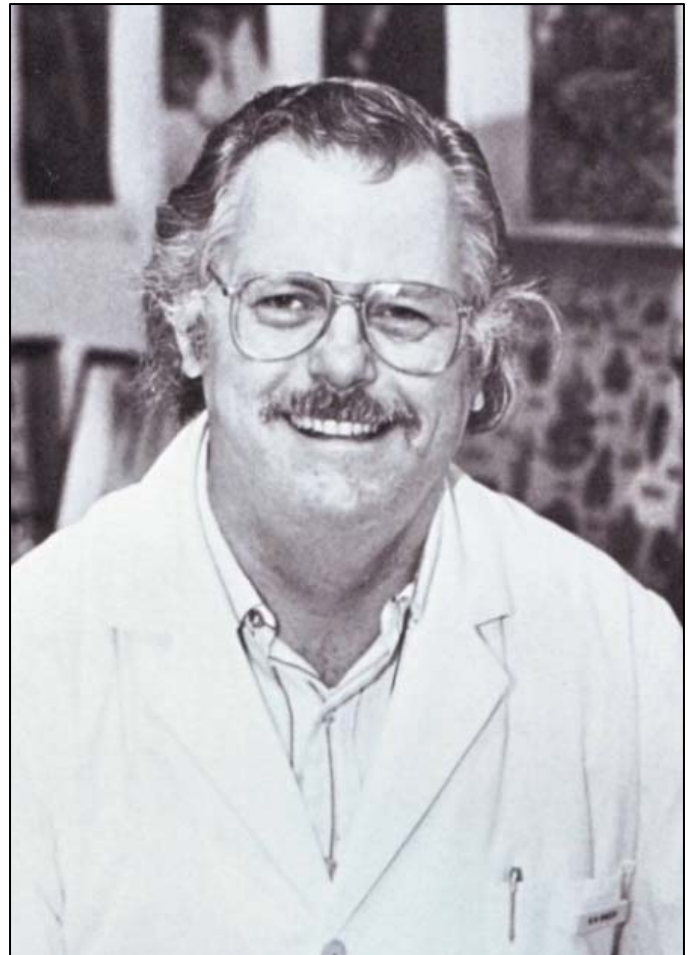
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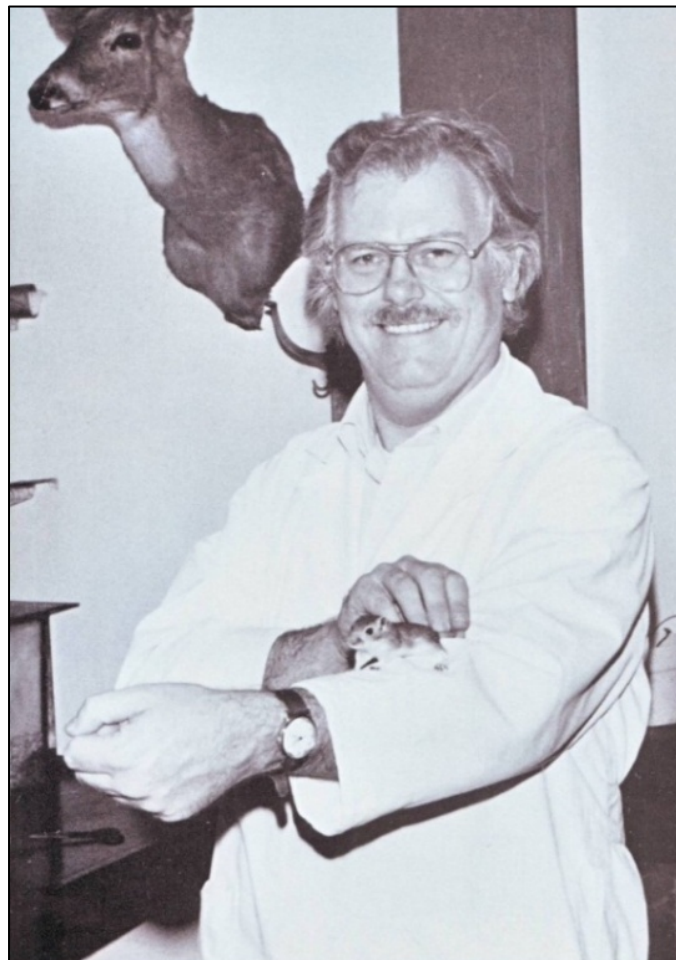


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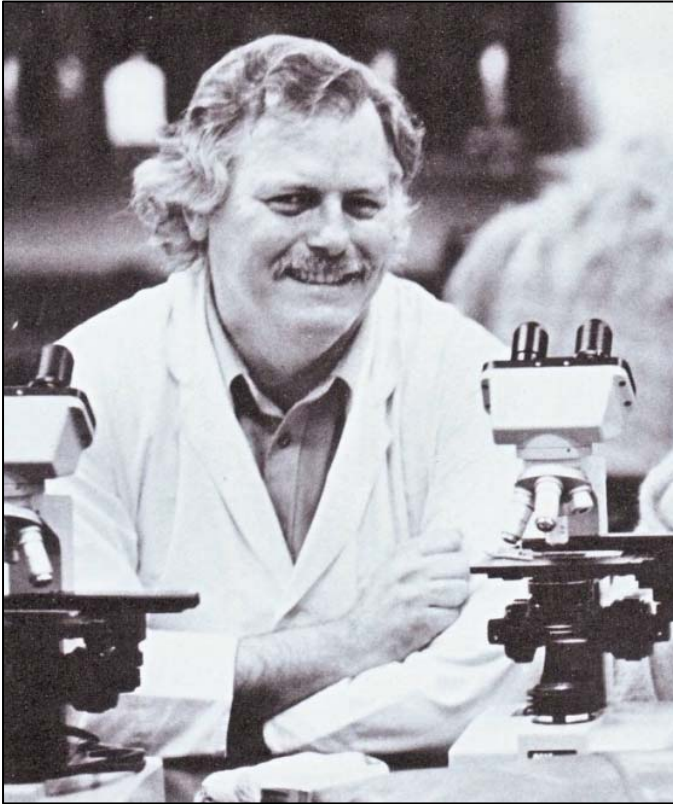


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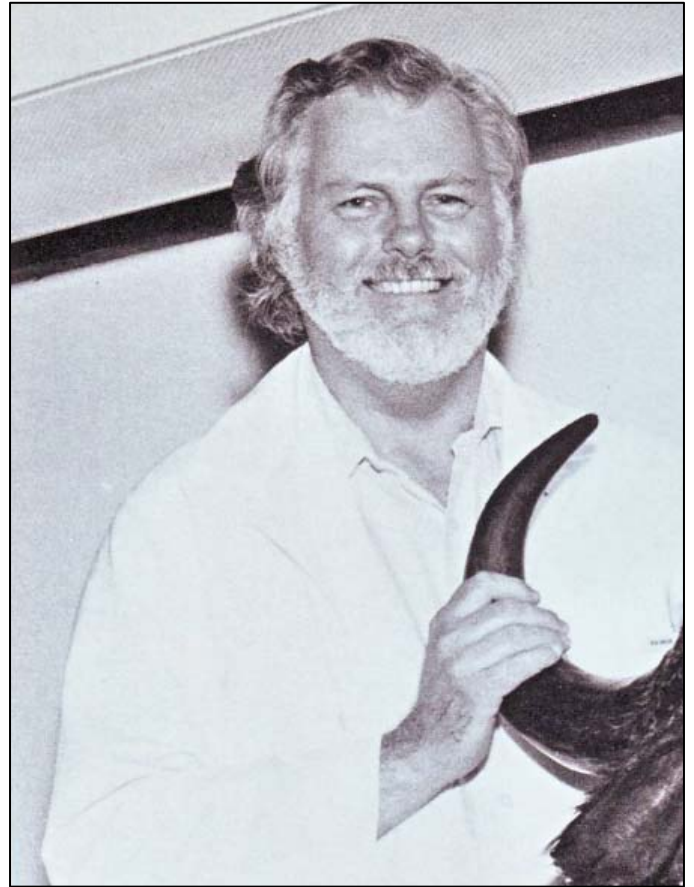


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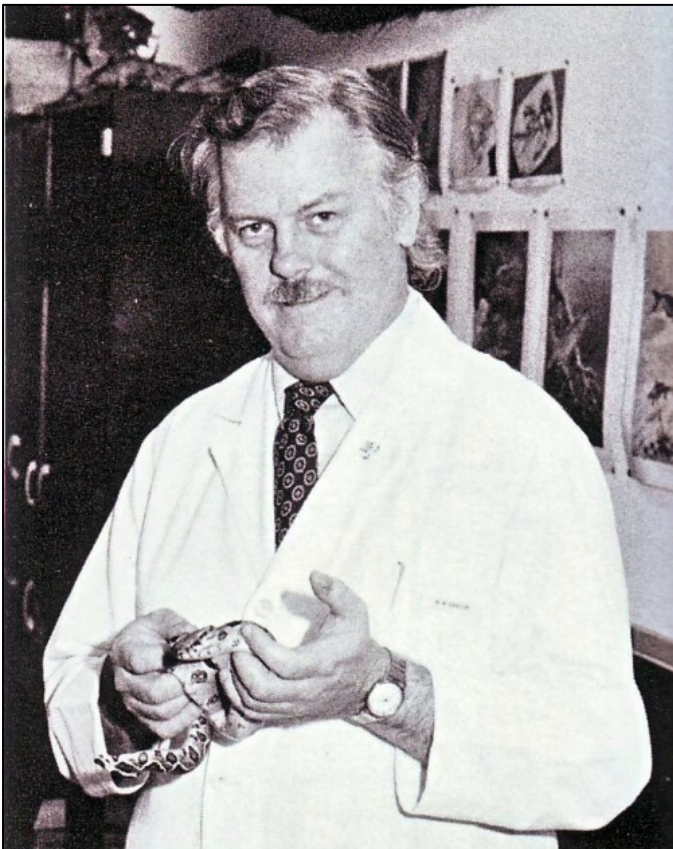




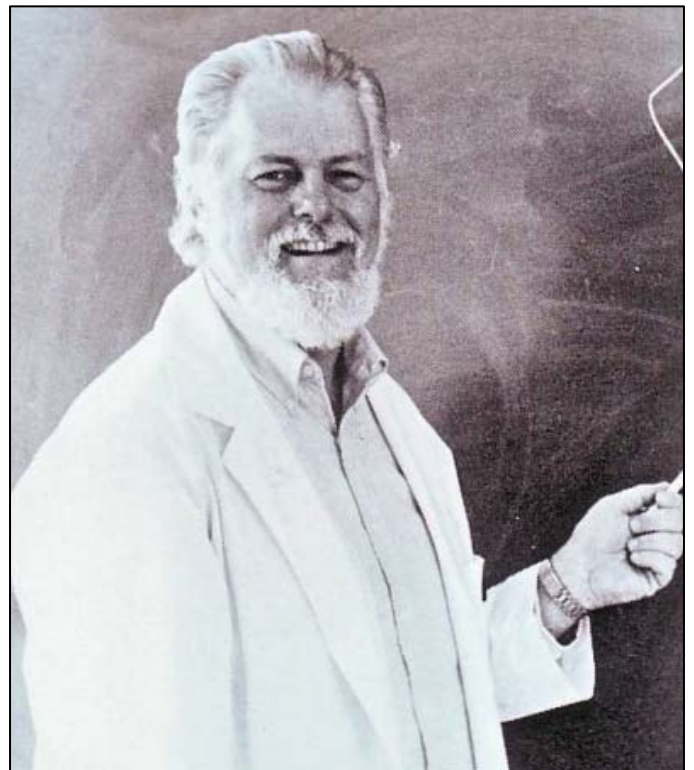
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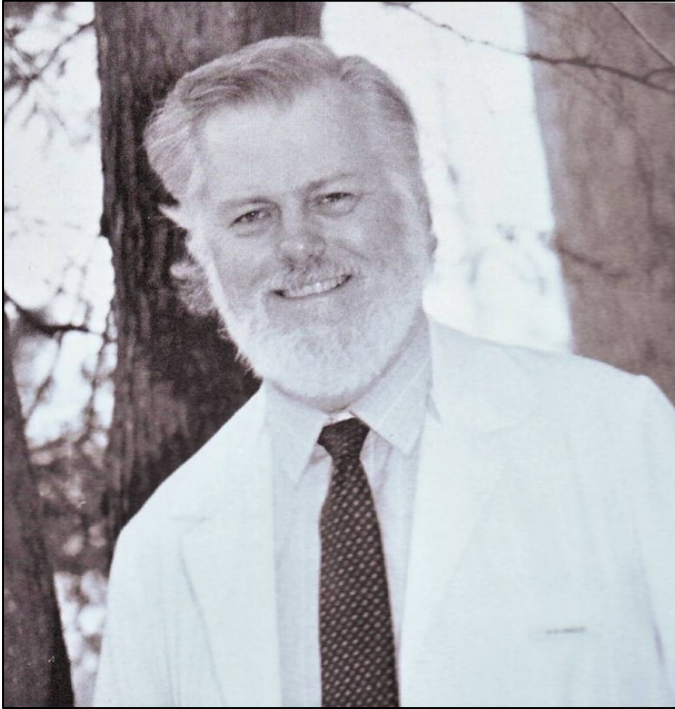


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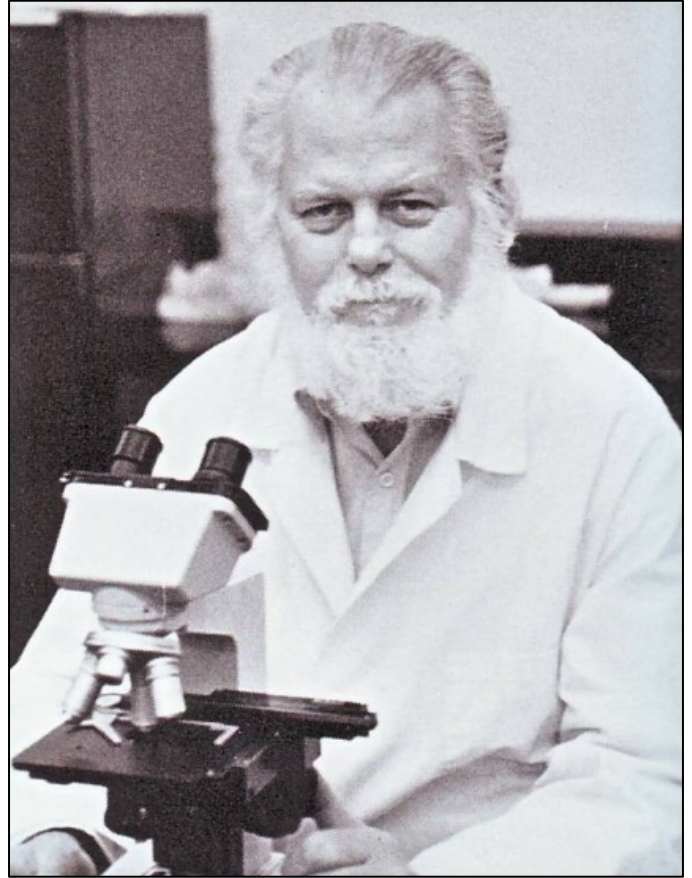


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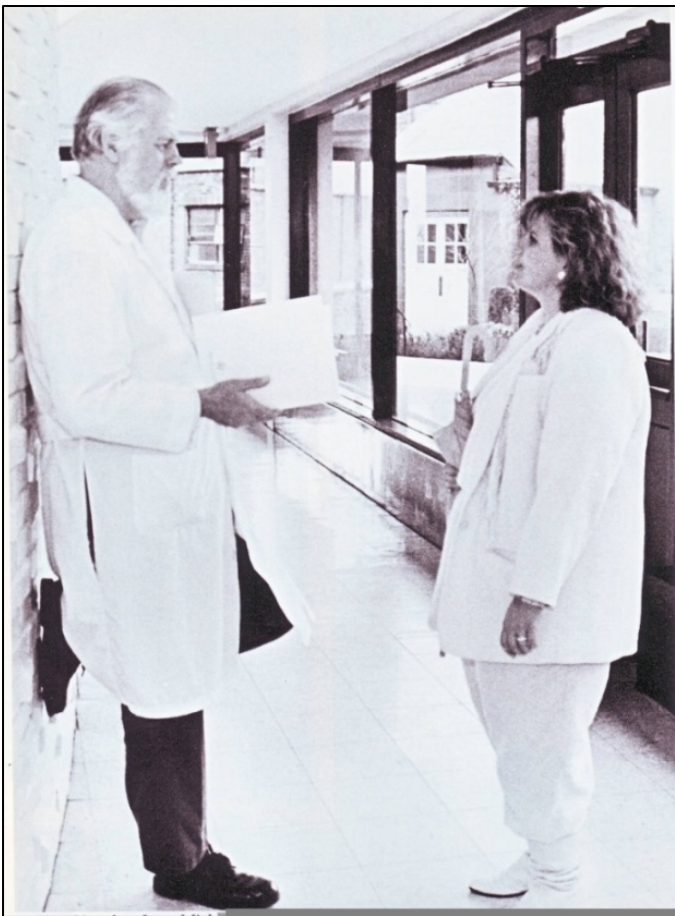




Early 90s



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1993



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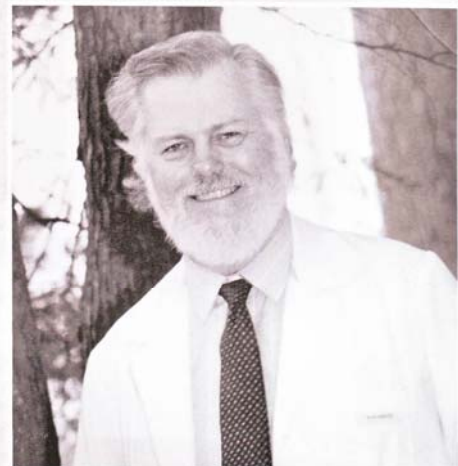


The current faculty and staff of the Department of Biology is planning to dedicate one of the trees on the northwest side of the Megerle Science Building to their former colleague and friend, Dr. Walter Kanzler. Like the “Dr. Anthony Pfister-Tree,” the “Dr. Walter Kanzler-Tree” will be marked with a circular border and a plaque commemorating Walter.





Dedication of the Yearbook 2001 to Dr. Walter Kanzler

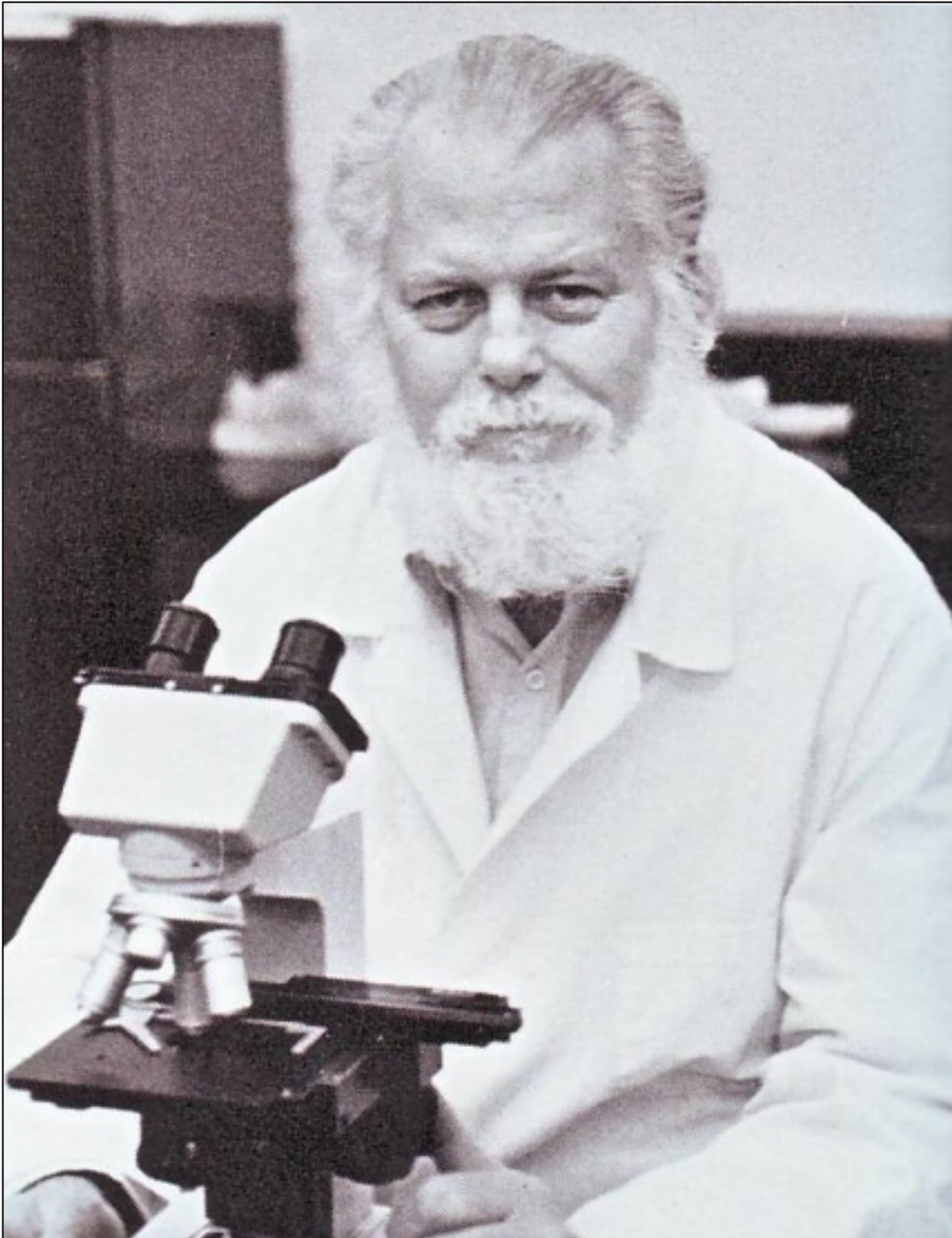


The Kallista Yearbook staff would like to dedicate this year's book to Dr. Walter Kanzler. For the past 36 years he has been an inspiration to many students by making teaching his main purpose in life. Even after being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, he continued to push himself to the limits for best interests of his students.

Dr. Kanzler, a professor of Zoology, has taught many students over the years and they all say the same thing about him – he was one of the nicest professors they had at Wagner. Dr. Kanzler challenged his students to question everything they have been taught. He would never force the students to dissect an animal, but would have them observe the animal's behavior.

Dr. Kanzler is quoted saying "I appreciated my students, some of whom became close friends." He also leaves the students with the advice that teaching is the most important profession and that a good teacher will pass on the knowledge to the next generation. His leaving Wagner truly leaves a void in all of our hearts and he will be sincerely missed.





The Editorial Board:

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Assistant Editor: Stephanie Rollizo, Dept. Secretary

Student Assistant Editor: Nidhi Khanna (Biology major)

Student Assistant Editor: N.N.

