

ERICH KAMPER: IN MEMORIAM

Born 81 years ago in Mitterdorf/Mürztal, Austria (*22 June 1914), Erich Kamper passed away on 9 November 1995 in his hometown of Graz, Austria. The honorary president of the International Society of Olympic Historians (ISOH), and the guiding light behind their founding, he was the doyen of Olympic historians and statisticians. He is survived by his daughter, Ingrid, and several grandchildren; his wife, Margot, having died in 1987.

Erich Kamper spent his career as a sports journalist in Graz, serving as the chief sports editor of the daily newspaper, *Neue Zeit*, from 1946 until his retirement in 1979. A javelinist in his youth, Kamper became interested in the Olympic Games and started his research into the Olympics and track & field in the early 1930s. He was a correspondent for multiple track & field athletics magazines, including the German *Leichtathletik* since its first issue in 1950. In that year he also became one of the founding members of the Association of Track and Field Statisticians (ATFS).

In 1964, Kamper published his first book on Olympic history *Lexikon der Olympischen Winterspiele* (Stuttgart: Union Verlag, 1964). This was followed in 1972 by what some consider his *magnum opus*, *Enzyklopädie der Olympischen Spiele* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 1972)/*Encyclopaedia of the Olympic Games* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972). He twice wrote a “Who’s Who’s” of the Olympic athletes, with *Lexikon der 12,000 Olympioniken* in 1975 and *Lexikon der 14,000 Olympioniken* (Graz: Leykam Verlag, 1983) in 1983. In 1991, he collaborated with fellow Austrian Herbert Soucek on *Olympische Heroen* (Erkrath: Spiridon Verlags, 1991). In 1987, he was awarded the Olympic Order for his contributions to the Olympic Movement.

I first corresponded with Erich Kamper in 1979, and for the last 16 years, save for three years in the 1980’s, we traded letters once or twice a month. This led to our working together on *The Golden Book of the Olympic Games* (Milan: Vallardi & Associati, 1992). He was very proud of that book, which combined some of my research with the fruits of his 60 years of studying the Olympic Games.

I met Erich briefly in 1983, during a trip to Europe and Graz. It was an enjoyable few days, and we got on well, even if we had difficulty communicating because neither spoke the other’s language well. Shortly thereafter, I angered him in some way because of a correspondence and he would not answer my letters for several years. In 1987, he finally wrote after three years, to tell me his wife had just died. Shortly before her death, Margot had asked Erich to contact me again because we had been such good friends. We remained that way until I heard of his death last week.

Erich Kamper was my mentor in the field of researching the history of Olympics. I am proud to say that, and pleased to know that he will live on in our house for many years. In 1989, we obtained a wonderful Chocolate Labrador puppy which I originally burdened with an unseemly orthopaedic term for a name. The happiest dog my wife and I had ever seen, we quickly changed his name to his current one - “Happy Kamper.” Our dog, Kamper, remains eternally happy, and I hope that Erich is now, too.

- Bill Mallon