



## Louise W. Kiefer was a Baldwin-Wallace chairwoman, historian and more

Published: Tuesday, June 15, 2010, 2:33 PM Updated: Tuesday, June 15, 2010, 2:44 PM



**Grant Segall**

Olmsted Township -- Louise W. Kiefer flunked her grandson.

At 16, Daniel Kricheff took one of the Baldwin-Wallace University professor's touring courses in Europe for collegians and high schoolers, but spent more time sightseeing than studying.

"You got the grade that you deserved," she told him. "But I know you had a great learning experience, and that in itself is valuable."

Kiefer was a long-time professor of German, chairwoman of foreign languages and literatures, keeper of B-W's rich history and co-founder and registrar of its popular Institute for Learning in Retirement. She died June 5 at Fairview Hospital after a short illness. She was 89.



Colleagues said "Frau Kiefer" was warm, generous and demanding.

"She dotted every 'i' that I missed and crossed every 't' that I missed," said David Proctor, physics professor emeritus, who audited a Kiefer class.

"She was engaging," said Mark Himmelein, a former student and colleague, now chairman of foreign languages and cultures at Mount Union College. "It was never just a lecture... She made you speak and communicate."

Kiefer immersed students in German through literature, food, dances, movies and many summer tours of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She reportedly picked up the tabs of many travelers in need.

Kiefer was born on Christmas Day, like her mother and her only child. She was raised in a Cleveland household that spoke German. She graduated from West High School and, in 1942, Baldwin-Wallace. She promptly filled in at the Berea college as an instructor and taught German to Naval officer candidates preparing for Europe.

She met Harry John Kiefer Jr., a chemistry student there. The couple married and moved to Oregon State University for his doctorate. Back in Cleveland, she taught at Fenn College and Western Reserve University part-time while raising a daughter, then rejoined B-W full-time.

She gradually earned a master's degree and some doctoral credits during summers at Middlebury College, **Vermont**. She also spent two different years studying in Germany, once through a Fulbright scholarship.

In 1971, Kiefer became her department's first chairwoman. She helped fend off cutbacks and promote oral learning. She was won of the first faculty members chosen for B-W's Bechberger Award for helping students develop beyond the classroom.

She often dropped by the college historian's office to chat about a school with roots to 1845.

"I would go to visit for 10 minutes," she told The Plain Dealer in 2006, "and I wouldn't be out of there for an hour."

She retired in 1989 but kept teaching an advanced German literature class. When the part-time historian job opened up, she took that, too. She gathered and catalogued many documents and photographs, put them on line and answered questions from the public. She kept the job until her death.

In 1992, she helped found the Baldwin-Wallace Institute for Learning in Retirement, which serves about 2,200 people in Berea and Beachwood. She taught in the institute, publicized it and registered its students.

The Kiefers lived in Cleveland until 2002, then moved to the Renaissance in Olmsted Township. Harry died the next year.

### **Louise Bertha Weishaar Kiefer**

#### **1920-2010**

**Survivors:** Daughter, Adele Kricheff of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and three grandchildren.

**Funeral:** Already held.

**Contributions:** Baldwin-Wallace College, 275 Eastland Rd., Berea, OH 44017.

**Arrangements:** Baker, Osinski, Kensinger.

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