



John D. Workman 1910–2005. Portrait (1967) by Harold Hone. Courtesy of University of Wisconsin Archives.

In memoriam: John D. Workman

John D. Workman, Professor Emeritus of German at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Editor of *Monatshefte* from 1952 to 1972, died in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, on May 14, 2005. Born in Lakewood, Ohio, in 1910, he entered the University of Wisconsin as a freshman in the fall of 1929, but went back to his native state to finish his B.A. degree at The Ohio State University (1933). He completed his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Madison (1935 and 1939), having also pursued graduate studies at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland and the University of Berlin. He held the positions of Instructor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (1938–42), Assistant Professor (1942–46), Associate Professor (1946–49), and Professor (1949–72). In 1952, when appointed to the position of National Teachers Seminary Professor of German, he took on responsibility for the German Department’s teaching assistants and pedagogical courses, and for the editing of *Monatshefte*. He was on leave of absence from his Madison assignments only twice: in 1944–45, to serve first as Language Coordinator at the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) Training Center in College Park, Maryland, and thereafter with the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey in Germany; and in the year 1954–55, to study in Munich as the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant.

When John Workman retired in 1972, his colleagues dedicated an issue of *Monatshefte* (volume 64, number 2) to him, stating: “Whether it was a problem of financing, of format, or of editorial policy, John Workman has been, in the last analysis, the one man responsible for the solutions and whatever success may have resulted from them. He has read *every* paper submitted before passing it on to the editorial board, and his judgment, in matters aesthetic and stylistic, is invariably reliable.”

Indeed, John Workman was the talent and the energy behind the entire *Monatshefte* operation. He ran the journal essentially without assistance, technical or otherwise. He used a typewriter rather than a computer; he had only limited clerical help rather than an editorial assistant; and he himself wrapped and mailed individual subscriber copies from his own office—for most of his tenure seven times per year.

During John Workman’s years as Editor, *Monatshefte* underwent substantial changes, maturing into the journal we know today. The average number of book reviews published annually more than doubled in these years; and the continuing shift away from pedagogical topics and toward topics of

German literature and culture—a shift some regretted—meant at least that *Monatshefte* was finding its own niche among German studies publications. The journal was clearly gaining prominence and attracting attention in wider circles. Beginning in 1966, in response to the journal's growth and success, the University of Wisconsin Press took over many of the business arrangements, including production management, marketing and distribution, and sales of advertising space. At the same time, despite its name, *Monatshefte* became a quarterly journal.

John Workman was far more than a gifted and devoted editor; he was also a teacher par excellence who shared his ability, knowledge, and love of his profession with generations of Wisconsin students and teachers. Year after year, he taught the first section of first-semester German in the fall and of second-semester German in the spring, classes that met five days per week at 7:45 a.m.; he claimed that this enabled him to stay in touch with the problems and concerns of teaching assistants. He described himself as a specialist in eighteenth-century German literature, but he taught a wide range of undergraduate and graduate literature courses spanning the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, as well as a heavy load of German language courses. His publications—*Monatshefte* articles on G. C. Lichtenberg, Joseph von Eichendorff, and Ernst Wiechert—were limited in number, but they bear witness to his analytic and stylistic skills, as well as to his broad interests.

John Workman proved his ability to live up to his own high standards through long hours of hard work, often even taking on extra duties when the need arose. But he was also a person of great modesty who found satisfaction in performing the tasks and playing the parts life gave to him. In his retirement he enjoyed painting, reading, and family, which included his sons Robert Workman and William Workman and their wives, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. He devoted himself to the care of his wife, Barbara E. Bates Workman (M.A. in German, University of Wisconsin, 1934), who died in 1994. The Wisconsin Department of German remembers him as an untiring and dedicated colleague and friend. For those of us who work with *Monatshefte*, he was a predecessor whose quiet success challenges us to persevere.