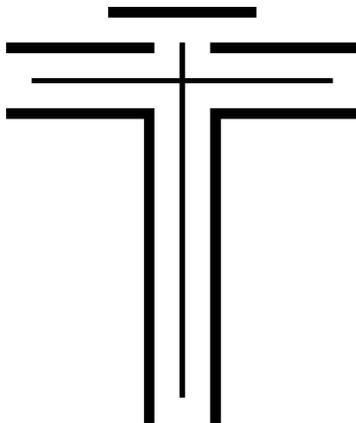


Dietrich Paul Ruff Memorial Service

In the Templar Community Chapel Bayswater
Tributes in English and in German

1 December 2004



Lasst uns wahrhaftig sein in der Liebe

Im Gedenken an Dieter Ruff

Peter Lange, Temple Society President, in *Warte des Tempels* January 2005

Ein herbstlich gestaltetes Blumen- und Pflanzengebinde stand neben einem Bild von ihm auf dem Flügel im Gemeindesaal, als die Stuttgarter Templer in einer Gedenkfeier am 5. Dezember letzten Abschied nahmen von ihrem guten Freund und früheren Tempelvorsteher Dietrich Paul Ruff, der am 25. November in Melbourne im Alter von 80 Jahren verstorben ist. Unter großer Beteiligung hat am 1. Dezember in der Gemeindegemeindekapelle in Bayswater eine Trauerfeier für ihn stattgefunden, in dem Gebäude, dessen Planungsphase noch in seine Amtszeit zurück reicht.



Peter Lange

Dieter Ruff, wie ihn alle nannten, war viele Jahre Gemeindeältester der Tempelgesellschaft Australien gewesen sowie ihr Gebietsleiter von 1977 bis 1981 und ein zweites Mal von 1986 bis 1988. Im Jahr 1988 folgte er nach einer gemeinsamen Entscheidung von TSA und TGD Dr. Richard Hoffmann im Amt des Tempelvorstehers nach, das er bis 2001 ausübte. In dieser Funktion war er auch mehrere Male zu längeren Aufenthalten in Stuttgart und hat dabei die meisten der in Deutschland lebenden Tempelmitglieder kennen gelernt. Durch sein offenes und aufgeschlossenes Wesen und durch seine feste und überzeugende Glaubenshaltung hat er von überall her Hochachtung und Wertschätzung erfahren. Sein Tod berührt auch uns in Deutschland tief und wir trauern um ihn mit seiner Ehefrau Isolde und seinen Kindern Karin, Tilman und Manfred und deren Angehörigen, sowie mit allen Templerefreunden in Australien.

Am 19. April 1924 in Tiberias am See Genezareth geboren, hat Dieter Ruff seine ersten 17 Lebensjahre noch in den Tempelsiedlungen in Palästina verbracht, bis er mit seiner Familie 1941 auf dem Deportierten-Schiff "Queen Elizabeth" in das Interniertenlager Tatura in Australien kam. In der dortigen deutschen Lagerschule hat er sein Abitur gemacht und nach seiner Freilassung ein Ingenieursstudium an der Universität von Melbourne begonnen, das er als Bachelor abschließen konnte. Sein Beruf führte ihn in den Dienst eines Ministeriums der Commonwealth-Regierung. 1984 trat er in den beruflichen Ruhestand.

Wenn einer dem andern die Hand reicht,
öffnet sich das Tor zu Gottes Reich.
(Aus Dieter Ruffs Spruchsammlung)

1960 traf ihn ein harter Schicksalsschlag, als seine junge Ehefrau Irene durch einen unverschuldeten Autounfall ums Leben kam und drei kleine Kinder hinterließ (das jüngste erst 8 Monate alt). Trotz des schmerzlichen Verlustes fand er die Kraft, diese Prüfung seines Lebens zu bestehen und einige Jahre später mit einer Schulfreundin aus Haifa, Isolde Frank, eine zweite Ehe einzugehen, die ihm innere Bereicherung und Erfüllung brachte. Ohne diese treue Lebensgefährtin hätte er so manche Aufgabe nicht meistern können, die ihn im weiteren Leben erwartete.



Isolde & Dieter Ruff at the TSA 'Thank-You Fest' in Bentleigh, May 2001

Der Schwerpunkt seines Lebens lag in seinem Einsatz und seiner Aufbauarbeit für die Tempelgesellschaft. Und diese Arbeit war vielfältig. Ich habe ihn erlebt, wie er sich um die Ausrichtung von Ferienfreizeiten der Jugendlichen kümmerte; ich habe ihn unzählige Male am Rednerpult in den Gemeindehäusern stehen sehen; er hat Trauungen gehalten, Konfirmandenstunden gegeben, junge Mitglieder zur Mitarbeit in Gemeinde und Gottesdienst motiviert; er war mit Redaktionsarbeit befasst und hat Kontakte zu anderen Kirchen seiner Umgebung gepflegt. Die Aufzählung seiner Tätigkeiten für die Gemeinschaft muss notgedrungen unvollständig bleiben, keiner von uns kann wirklich ermessen, was Dieter Ruff in den vielen Jahren im "Dienst am Nächsten" alles ausgeführt hat.

Er sah, dass wir Menschen ein großes Potenzial in uns tragen und viel erreichen können, wenn wir bereit sind, *zusammenzuwirken*. Er ist deshalb unermüdlich dafür eingetreten, dass unser Verständnis füreinander und unser Aufeinander-Eingehen ständig neu erprobt wird. Er hat dies auch selber vorgelebt, indem er für jeden ein offenes Ohr hatte und seinen jeweiligen Gesprächspartner ernst nahm, indem er

Ruhe und Gelassenheit ausstrahlte und nicht dazu beitrug, dass Emotionen die Oberhand gewannen.

Schlägt dir die Hoffnung fehl,
nie fehle dir das Hoffen.
Ein Tor ist zugetan,
doch t a u s e n d stehn noch offen.

(Aus Dieter Ruffs Spruchsammlung)

Zwei Schwerpunkte seiner Arbeit der letzten fünf Jahre verdienen, besonders hervorgehoben zu werden: die Arbeit und sachkundige Gestaltung einer neuen *Bibeltextauswahl* für die Tempelgemeinden und die Abfassung einer *Gemeinsamen Erklärung von TSA und TGD zum Glauben der Tempel*. Er hatte den unschätzbaren Vorteil, dass er Deutsch und Englisch gleich gut beherrschte und damit sprachliche Verständnisschwierigkeiten zwischen den weit auseinander lebenden Templern vermeiden oder aber ausgleichen konnte. Auch anderes Schrifttum, das in der TSA in seiner Amtszeit entstand, wie zum Beispiel das neue *Templer Hymnbook*, ist von seinem Geist und seiner Lebenseinstellung durchdrungen gewesen.

Eine große Wichtigkeit hatte für ihn die Frage, wie eine Verbindung zwischen den beiden Tempelgebieten auf Dauer ermöglicht werden könnte. Er war der Überzeugung, dass diese Verbindung nur durch ein Einander-Kennenlernen und einen persönlichen Erfahrungsaustausch gewährleistet würde, und wurde damit der Auslöser dafür, dass jetzt regelmäßig finanziell unterstützte gegenseitige Besuchsreisen von Ältesten und Gemeindeverantwortlichen zwischen TSA und TGD stattfinden.

Doch die Bedeutung seines Lebens ist vielleicht nicht so sehr daran zu messen, was er im Einzelnen getan hat, sondern was er seinen Mitmenschen war. So wie ich ihn kannte, ging es ihm stets darum, dass man das, was man als wahr erkannt und empfunden hat, auch im Reden und Handeln zum Ausdruck bringt. Und er hat selbst danach gelebt. Ich denke, dass jeder von uns diese *Wahrhaftigkeit* in seinem Leben wahrnehmen konnte. Es bestand keine Kluft zwischen dem, was er dachte, und dem, was er tat. Immer ist er mit seiner ganzen Persönlichkeit hinter dem gestanden, was er sagte. Für mich war er *das leuchtende Vorbild eines wahrhaftigen Menschen*. Und so ist auch das Wort aus dem Epheserbrief (4,15) als Leitmotiv über der Stuttgarter Gedenkfeier gestanden: *Lasst uns wahrhaftig sein in der Liebe*.

Auf andere Menschen konnte er immer auf eine Weise einwirken, dass sie sich ernst genommen, verstanden und beraten gefühlt haben. Das gilt besonders für sein Einwirken auf Jüngere in der Gemeinde. Mark Herrmann, Geschäftsführer der TSA, sagte in seiner Traueransprache, dass Dieter für ihn der wahre Lehrmeister gewesen sei. Er habe ihm Lebenshilfe gegeben und Vertrauen in ihn gesetzt. Sicher können

das auch viele andere seiner Altersstufe für sich sagen. Ich denke, wir alle haben ihm viel zu verdanken.

In vielen Nachrufen ist das *Wesentliche* der Persönlichkeit von Dieter Ruff hervorgehoben worden. Der Gebietsleiter der TSA, Rolf Beilharz, urteilte, dass Dieter immer mit *innerer Autorität* gesprochen habe, er habe – biblisch ausgedrückt – "mit Vollmacht" gelehrt. Um Probleme anzugehen, habe er *Vernunft* eingesetzt, und um sie zu lösen, *Weisheit*. Er sei ruhig und selbstgenügsam gewesen, habe sich nie in den Vordergrund gedrängt oder mit seiner Stimme Eindruck machen wollen. Er sei "der vollkommenste Templer" gewesen, den er gekannt habe.

Wenn ich das Wesen von Dieter Ruff nochmals zusammenfassend charakterisieren wollte, dann vielleicht so: er war ein aufrechter, ehrlicher, geduldiger, bescheidener, selbstloser und gütiger, im Ganzen gesehen ein absolut integerer Mensch. Mit ihm verliert unsere Gemeinschaft eine große Führerpersönlichkeit. Er hat uns in seiner jederzeit hilfsbereiten Art gezeigt, was es heißt, ein Templer zu sein. Er hat sich um den Tempel verdient gemacht.

Bei unserer Gedenkfeier im Degerlocher Gemeindesaal haben wir das Lied gesungen:

"Aus deiner Hand, Vater, nehm ich diesen Tag
und danke dir, dass du ihn gibst.
Du bist bei mir, was immer kommen mag.
Du trägst und hältst, weil du mich liebst."

Wenn ich davon ausgehe, dass wir mit diesen Worten nicht nur für einen einzelnen Tag, sondern auch für unser ganzes Leben Dankbarkeit empfinden können, dann glaube ich, dass auch Dieter Ruff mit vollem Herzen in diese Liedverse eingestimmt hätte. □



Dieter loved the bush and native flowers

The Day of the Funeral Service in the Community Chapel – Bayswater - 1 December 2004

Introductory music: CD – ‘Da Pacem Domine’ (Give Peace, Lord)

Mark Herrmann, Elder of the Temple Society Australia

Special music for a special man on a special occasion.

The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears.

Good afternoon. On behalf of the family, I welcome you, in honouring the memory of Dieter Ruff, to reflect on his full and faithful, sincere and selfless life and service. As an Elder of the Temple Society Australia, I, Mark Herrmann, stand before you today with deep respect for the man who assisted and guided me, showed and taught me so much, was a trusted confidant and was prepared to reciprocally place great faith in me, who always had or would make time for me. Dieter was a true mentor to me and many of my generation, not just because of what he achieved – although this was immense – but, significantly, due to the fashion in which he carried himself and undertook his multitude of tasks and challenges.

This memorial service will comprise personal reflections, contributions from the family and the Templer Choir, and words from the TSA Regional Head in representing both regions of the Temple Society. With so much material at hand and so much we all want to say and share, it has been more a matter of what can we afford to leave out, rather than what should we include.

It is said that in the end these things matter most: How well did you love? How fully did you live? How deeply did you learn to let go?

We are gathered today in the bonds of true community spirit to offer our love, comfort and support to you, Isolde, Dieter's loyal and caring wife; their children: Karin with husband Thomas and sons Sasha and Linden; Tilman with wife Charlotte and children Ingrid and Kristian; and Manfred with wife Anna and son Arion. Manfred is presently in Thailand and unable to be with us today. A few weeks ago, during a short return visit to Australia, Manfred said his final goodbyes to his father. Granddaughter Ingrid is also in Asia as part of her university medical course. Our sympathies reach and envelop them both at their time of loss. Our thoughts also extend to Dieter's older sister Elfriede and her family, as well as the wider circle of relatives and friends.

Hymn: ‘Befiehl du deine Wege’ ‘Commit whatever grieves you’

Please remain seated and feel free to sing in either German or English. It is number 15 in the Templer Hymnbook and we shall sing verses 1,2,3,4 and 8.

As a contemplation of Dieter's lifespan I would like to take you on his journey. It is a fruitful, rewarding and fascinating journey. In this spirit we can look back on this full life of endeavour and accomplishment, of special times and occasions, and smile, nod knowingly, give thanks and, above all, celebrate. As a celebration of a full 80 years of life, there will need to be gaps (simply for reasons of time), but I am sure that

you will all have your own reminiscences to complement what will be mentioned today.

Familiar names will appear and reappear as the respective life paths regularly meet, intersect or run in parallel, like the different coloured threads of a large tapestry contributing to create a beautiful work. The bonds of friendship are strong and enduring. I am appreciative of the time given by family members and friends in providing me with their thoughts and memories.

Dieterich (Dieter) Ruff was born on the 19th of April 1924 in Tiberias (on the shores of the Sea of Galilee) as the second child of Alfred Ruff and Anna née Kraiss. His sister Elfriede (Friedel) was already 8 years old.



Elisabeth Wagner at the piano, with Mark Herrmann

Members of the Temple Society, a Christian group with origins in southern Germany, had migrated to Palestine from the late 1860s to establish communities of like-minded people living an active Christianity in striving for the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

Dieter was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed baby and I suspect the eyes already sparkled then. Friedel attended a private German school in Nazareth and she therefore looked forward to holidays with the family immensely. Alfred Ruff and his sister Frieda managed the Hotel Tiberias after the death of Frieda's husband, Richard Grossmann. Dieter naturally spent considerable time in the hotel, able to utilise it (not as a drinker) to provide a balance to the general seclusion Tiberias felt from the other Templer colonies.

At age 6 Dieter was ready to begin his schooling. The school at Nazareth having been disbanded because there were insufficient children, the family moved to Haifa at Anna's insistence. Their second house was built at the foot of Mount Carmel. The family of Felix Haar were neighbours, thus establishing a lifelong association with his first cousin. Dieter attended the Templer school for eight years, being an industrious

and good student. His nickname was 'Nimmer', Arabic for tiger. Together with good friend Erwin Pfänder, Dieter played Tarzan – all the rage at the time – beating chests and climbing trees. I'm not sure about actually swinging from tree to tree with the aid of a vine. A further year at the secondary school in Jerusalem, to complete his leaving certificate, necessitated him leaving home to board at the Pension Schmidt with other Templer boys of similar age, including Sieger Hahn, Theo Wagner and Otto Löbert.

Dieter returned home in 1939 and was ready to embark on a career. His interest was in automobile mechanics, although he first wanted to learn more of the world. He took up a position at a travel agency. On just his second day of work he and his father, now working at the Haifa bank, found the roads leading from the colony blocked by the English military – the Second World War had begun. Palestine had become a British mandate after the First World War. Dieter and his family were interned in Bethlehem at the home of Karl and Hilde Krockenberger. This Templer settlement, like most others, was enclosed with barbed wire and guarded by English officers. This provided Dieter's first contact with Oskar Krockenberger. Rolf Beilharz, his mother, sister and brother were similarly accommodated at the Krockenberger home. Dieter was rostered to help at the cheese and butter factory at Waldheim near Bethlehem. According to Oskar, Dieter viewed this period of his life as totally wasted. Dieter had fixed plans, had set himself goals and was ready to begin accomplishing them. All of this was now frustratingly on hold.

Transportation out of Palestine of most Templers took place in July 1941. With little warning from the British authorities, they were all told to pack their most necessary items according to certain weight and luggage restrictions. Forced to abandon their homeland, the Templers' ultimate destination was not disclosed to them. Oskar, as a 15-year-old boy, recalled the three-week sea voyage under guard as a childhood adventure, not seeing his parents at all for at least the first few days. Dieter, although only two years older, saw the experience through the eyes of a young man. During the permissible times on a higher deck, he would walk up and down for hours, maintaining a strict twice-daily routine, frequently in regular conversation with Otto Löbert.

Arrival at Sydney Harbour was followed by train passage to the internment camps at Tatura in northern Victoria in August of 1941. Single men over the age of 18 were subsequently transferred to the Loveday camp in South Australia in 1943. At both camps Dieter was responsible for organising the daily exercise program. He was a good athlete – running, jumping and gymnastics – but not so good at soccer or tennis. He earned the nickname *Eisen Gustav*; I suspect more for his iron will than any discipline imposed. It is difficult for me to accurately fathom the effects and impact of the internment camps – positive and negative – on such young people at the thresholds of their adult lives. Apparently Dieter was influential in building cohesion among his friends and acquaintances.

From September 1946, those who could show they had a job and place to live were able to leave the camps. Dieter left on the same day as Otto, taking up shared accommodation in Kew and Hawthorn arranged through the YMCA. Together with Hugo Messerle, employment at a small metalworking firm (Luke) and then a small engineering company (Ritter) was found. Once the German matriculation, completed during the camp years, was officially recognised, entrance to the Engineering Faculty at the University of Melbourne was achieved. In 1947 Dieter, Otto and Hugo all undertook their first year of study at the campus in Mildura. The following years were completed in Melbourne, living in a boarding house in St Kilda. Dieter's sister Friedel had married Gustav Reichert in 1947 and they also had a room nearby. Dieter generally came over to share the evening meal. Nephew Bernhard Reichert wouldn't go to sleep until his uncle (the tiger) had played with the little lion for a while.

After leaving camp to serve as caretakers at the Ritter holiday house in Healesville, as arranged by Dieter, his parents moved to Glen Waverley in rental accommodation. Dieter joined them in 1949. Dieter's father worked as a builder for the Housing Commission of Victoria and was able to bring off-cuts home for use in the house he and Anna were building in Mount Street. Dieter completed his Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering superbly in 1950. After graduating, he found there was a lot of work for skilled workers. He decided on a job with the Commonwealth Department of Works, as the tasks were varied, beginning at the Melbourne city office before transferring to a new building in Hawthorn.

At the wedding of Theo and Hulda Wagner in Sydney in 1948 he first met Theo's younger sister, Irene. They were married in 1951. In 1953, a work promotion resulted in the young couple relocating to Adelaide. Over the next seven years the children were born – Karin in 1954, Tilman in 1955 and Manfred in 1960 – and the young family blossomed.

However, this idyllic life was cruelly shattered when, in November 1960 with Manfred less than eight months old, Irene died in a motor vehicle accident involving the runaway wheel from another car. She was only 32. Dieter, at age 36, was left with his young children. Oskar Krockenberger remarked on Dieter's near-perfect control of his emotions at this devastating and deeply distressing time of his life.

Irene's older sister Margrit assisted through this demanding period. After two difficult years Dieter had the good fortune to find a mature, able and loving woman, who mastered the complex task of becoming the young children's second mother. In June 1963 Dieter married Isolde Frank, a friend from schooldays in Haifa.



Back in Melbourne following a work transfer, Dieter continued his involvement with the Templer Community. Rolf Beilharz will focus on this important aspect and how it developed in more detail, later. Of course, Dieter's personal life and his long-serving contribution to the TSA are difficult to separate; like a left shoe and right shoe they made a well-fitting pair, snug and effective they danced well together. Dieter was fortunate to have an understanding boss, himself a church man, who was prepared to give Dieter the time necessary to meet his various commitments.

The children attended State and Secondary Schools in Glen Waverley, and all completed their tertiary studies at Monash University. They married in reverse order to their age – Manfred first, then Tilman, with Karin last – and all within the space of 18 months in the early 1980s. Karin told me that through the five grandchildren, her father became a boy again, taking an active interest in all they said and did. Karin recalled that as she and her brothers were growing up, Dieter was not over-protective and would allow them to learn from their own mistakes.

Dieter loved nature, taking a keen interest in bushwalking, bird watching and photography. He would have liked to devote more time to these hobbies, but sufficient spare time was at a premium. Manfred and Anna's property at Nagambie, a haven for wildlife and bordering on a State Park, was a real attraction for Dieter, and Friedel too. Visits to plant trees, to go for long walks and to relax were regularly enjoyed. Similarly, Tilman and Charlotte's rural property offered so much. A row boat was purchased to allow some fishing trips on the bay or at Tidal River. Perhaps it gave a connection back to Lake Galilee and memories of a carefree childhood of boating and swimming. Bushwalking at Wilson's Promontory was a popular undertaking, Dieter setting off for the distant lighthouse and returning the same day, with little more than an apple or two in his pockets.

The home at 3 Mount Street, Glen Waverley, has served four generations of Ruffs, beginning with Alfred and Anna. The neighbouring house at number 7 was built and moved into in 1964. I can remember my first visit to Dieter and Isolde's not so many years ago and being quite surprised by its simple but functional furnishings. What it deliberately lacked in luxury and trappings was more than made up for by the welcome given and the radiating warmth.

They say that joy comes not through possession or ownership but through a wise and loving heart.

Dieter seldom visited a dentist or doctor. As a result of high cholesterol, a hereditary condition, he suffered severe angina over many years. This instilled in Dieter a strict diet and exercise regimen. During our time together at the Office he walked for lengthy periods every day and produced these sandwiches for lunch, which were no doubt very healthy, but looked rather daunting. Isolde also began to have health problems mainly with severe shoulder and neck restriction and pain. So the domestic chores were shared as in a true partnership.

Living next door, Karin was able to observe the light in her parent's lounge room burning late on many a night. This was Dieter working and writing, with Isolde often sitting up with him to keep him company and support him. This is where the innumerable services for Sundays, weddings and funerals and the countless letters of office were hatched. This is where the drafts for articles, translations and so many different projects originated. Much of Dieter's work was therefore largely unseen; we were simply left to marvel at the fine end product.

Dieter and Isolde's trips overseas – once to the land of their birth and many to Germany – were almost always tied to an official purpose. Dieter could not justify any Templer money being spent on anything other than his position. I am sure that this resulted in Dieter and Isolde always being the TSA ambassadors well ahead of being able to enjoy themselves as holiday makers or tourists.

Retirement from his one employer, the Commonwealth Department of Works, did not slow Dieter down. On the contrary, he was able to devote even more of his time to the TSA. Final retirement only occurred after his 77th birthday (in 2001) and was marked by a function in the Bentleigh Hall attended by over 300 people. As then, we have come today to offer our thanks.

The book I am currently reading makes a beautiful relationship analogy in describing a mother and daughter, although it could apply to any particular family connection: (quote) "They were as close as could be. Like the two hands of a clock; one was the hour, the other the minute. Off in different directions a lot of the time, but joined together at the centre, where it mattered" (unquote). The heart of the family maintains its rhythmic beat and sense of connectedness.

With the passing of a close family member – a spouse, parent, grandparent or sibling – a little part of us is transferred to a memory. We shall now hear from various members of Dieter's immediate and extended family.



The Ruff Family in 1970: Tilman, Dieter, Manfred, Isolde, Karin

Contribution to the Memorial Service

In celebration of Dieter

Tilman A. Ruff

The last time Dieter visited our farm in northeast Victoria was last summer. He told me he wanted to be there again and enjoy the place and the feeling in that beautiful valley, that he wanted to come while he could, and that it may well be the last time. He was very definite about coming, and didn't feel the need to ask, which I was pleased about. He insisted on driving there himself. He was in pain but he walked remarkable distances up steep slopes and through the forest around the farm. He enjoyed the views and the changing light over the valley; ate well as he usually did; and enjoyed talking and catching up with Shaun and our other neighbours on the farm.



The last 5 years were really tough for Dieter; a succession of major illnesses, each of which several decades ago would have killed him in a few weeks or months. He suffered much, especially from the relentless bone pain of widespread metastatic prostate cancer. But I am grateful that he had 75 years of excellent health, punctuated only by a few episodes of acute back pain and a couple of prostatic reboces, rites of passage really for the ageing male of the species. During the last years he received excellent medical care from a number of people to whom I am grateful, including Tony Korman, Douglas Lo, Jim Tatoulis, Paul Sparks, Andrew Hui, G. Lowe and Peter Dohrmann. On behalf of all the family I would like to express deepest thanks to his oncologist Rowan Doig, and to Gerhard Wagner, whose dedicated, constant, attentive, and wonderful care kept him as well as possible at home for as long as possible. I'm grateful that the good care he got at Epworth for his last illness meant that the end to his suffering came peacefully.

There was a fair bit of the *Schwäbische Bauer* in my father. He tended to be practical, earthy, hard-working, stubborn, somewhat obsessional, liked familiar consistency, was substantially unaffected by fashions and fads, thrifty, wasted almost nothing, and enjoyed food, preferably with plenty of onion and always *mit Sosse*. He genuinely liked an aged *Riebel*, preferably with old cheese. He's the only person I know to have claimed to enjoy peanut butter and vegemite sandwiches.

He played a straight bat; and as far as this son knows, he always played it straight.

He looked after things like no one else I've ever heard of and everything of his lasted. Even camping gear would be in pristine condition in its original cardboard box decades later. It was sometimes frustrating to take a medical history from him – the simple symptoms which one was after always transmuted by physical, mechanical, engineering explanations. A couple of years ago I asked him to keep a simple twice daily record of his temperature. He faxed me a meticulous graphical chart on 1968 revision Commonwealth Dept. of Works Computation Sheet.

I liked him best when the language was *Schwäbisch* with a bit of Arabic mixed in, bringing out his humour. I liked him best relaxed on long summer days, eating lots of summer fruit, with a holiday beard which I could never persuade him to keep. I loved his hands. He was open to different cultures and people. I had trouble understanding the occasions when he voted for the Liberal Party. After growing up a German in Palestine and years here behind barbed wire, he embraced Australia. He had a deep love of the land, and valued all the creatures living in and under and on it. He loved the beach and the sea and body-surfing, and walking. My, he could walk. I never did manage to get his feet off the ground on to skis or a horse or a surfboard.

I'm grateful for learning from him about deeply listening to and appreciating music, about the importance of solitude, and about the closeness that could exist by being with someone, without words. As a young adolescent he encouraged me to learn about various religious traditions and practices, especially Buddhism and meditation. He told me of the powerful influence the story and words of the Shawnee chief Tecumseh had been for him.

When I was 15 I wanted to join one of the big Moratorium marches protesting against the Vietnam war. He did something I am profoundly grateful for. He wrote a letter to the school principal, saying that, although he didn't necessarily agree with me, he knew I felt strongly about this and that he would be grateful if I could be excused from school that day. Being on the streets of Melbourne with 100,000 people, some of them quite brave, and the power of wise leadership and collective humanity to change the course of history for the better that I experienced that day, with



Dieter and Irene's engagement in 1950

my father's blessing, was one of the seminal experiences of my growing up.

Dieter was able to go on after the sudden death of his beloved Irene, through no fault of his own, in the car that he was driving, in the days before seat belts. It was their first night out together after the birth of Manfred, then just 7 months old. I'm not sure Dieter was ever able to grieve fully; but that he was able, after that terrible loss, to engage and love and give, is a tribute to him.

On Sunday a dear friend from Japan phoned, who first came to visit over 30 years ago. He talked about how remarkable a thing memory is, how he remembers Dieter as a deeply decent and fine person, and how for him memories of my father are triggered even now by such things as washing the car, or seeing a really clean kitchen or other room. He reminded me how DNA is living memory; Dieter's DNA is half of mine and a quarter of that of my children.

In the wonderful North American Indian book 'Touch the Earth', there is an Eskimo song:

The great sea
has set me adrift
It moves me
As the weed in a great river
Earth and the great weather
Move me
Have carried me away
And move my inward parts with joy

Kristian Laemmle-Ruff playing the guitar in honour of his grandfather.



Annette Wagner-Hesse

I feel honoured to speak about my uncle, Dieter Ruff. He was a very fine man. In some ways I guess, as a niece, I didn't know as well as his peers or work colleagues might, but I certainly appreciated the sides of him which I did come to know and respect. He was in every way a gentleman – a *gentle* man, but that's not to say he wasn't a strong man. He seemed to have the inner strength of conviction, faith, wisdom and life experience. His words were measured, calm and always well considered. Whenever I approached Dieter, whether as a young Elder trying to learn the ropes, or in my work with the choir, he was able to give guidance and advice – thoughtful support.



When Dieter spoke at the Golden Wedding celebration of my parents in an autumnal setting in Healesville in 1998, he said: We might be in the autumn of our days, and at this stage of life we may not have so many more days or projects to look forward to, but then it becomes even more important to treasure the moments we are currently living and to celebrate the bonds of friendship and family which have formed us.

Since that Golden Wedding celebration we've lost my father and his older sister, Lilo, Dieter's brother-in-law and sister-in-law. Now his passing is a timely reminder that our days are numbered too, even if we think we have forever and a day. Forever and a day to do what is important, to fix those things that aren't in order, to celebrate, to live, to plan for the future, to work and to love. We humans don't have forever and a day to spend time with our loved ones, to do what we know in our hearts is right and real and important, and yet we still become distracted, influenced by our desires, our egos, by society. There comes a time when we have to take stock of the things that are important in both our private and our public lives.

Dieter took his commitment to the Templer Choir very seriously. He always let me know if he couldn't make it to a rehearsal and was an extremely loyal, conscientious participant in our activities. I knew I could always rely on him to give me advice if there were decisions to be made or differences of opinion to be settled. He was touched when the choir members all signed a card to wish him good health on one occasion and his thankyou to us was even more touching. All the members of the choir join with me in expressing our sadness that he won't be singing with us any more, but we are glad to be able to sing for him later in this service.

At services and at the more significant family gatherings, Dieter often spoke about the inner voice that we all have and about the Templer vision of working towards the realization of God's kingdom on earth. It always struck a chord with me – we have

such positive potential within us and we can achieve so much when we all work together.

While Dieter is gone and we will certainly miss his wisdom, his knowledge, his calm supportive manner, his insight and integrity, we must all try to keep his legacy alive within us. Dieter believed so wholly in the Templar goals of loving one's neighbour as oneself and becoming building stones in a greater "humane" humanity that we owe it to him to continue the work he embraced and perhaps in some ways follow the example he set.

Auf Wiedersehen, Onkel Dieter. Ich habe dich immer sehr geschätzt und gemocht und ich werde dich vermissen!

Karin Ruff

I would like to tell you about the happiest hours my father and I spent together in the last month. As he found reading too difficult, but wanted to continue learning and

thinking about issues important to him, he finally accepted my offer to read to him. So he lay comfortably on our sofa, looking out at all the spring flowers, and I read first a chapter from Hugh McKay's book "Right and Wrong", which we then discussed before I read from a novel. This novel is a very human and gently humorous story of a woman in Botswana who helps others with their problems, and he delighted in the characters and in wondering how she, with her very practical wisdom, would approach the



problems.

Both books indicate Dieter's ongoing interest in thinking deeply about one's values, behaviour and attitude to others and in coming to a decision of what is right for all concerned. These hours brought us so much pleasure, that he felt free to ask regularly, and I read to him the last 2 days he was at home. These close hours are now a great consolation to me.

Mark Herrmann

We would do well to follow in the footsteps of a fine man with fine qualities, whether through the benefit of inheritance, example, correctness or effort. Thank you

If I was the left shoe concentrating on Dieter's personal life, then it is time to hear from my right shoe partner, Rolf.

Dr Rolf Beilharz, Regional Head of the Temple Society Australia

Dear family of Dieter Ruff, dear Templers and friends, we have lost a wonderful man!

[Recognise and welcome Templers from Sydney and South Australia, and Australian friends from Tatura Historic Society, Glen Eira South Ministers Association, Knox Interfaith, Australian German Welfare Society, TTHA, and German Consulate].



Vyrna and Rolf Beilharz in the Choir

Peter Lange, the current Templer President and Dieter's successor, sent us the following message on the news of Dieter's death.

Dieter Ruff, our good friend and companion on our journey, has gone from us. I am finding it hard to put into words the many thoughts that spring to my mind at the news of his death. I can still see his face which, when we spent time together six months ago, radiated a sense of calm and composure despite his illness. I can still hear his voice as I heard it over the telephone five weeks ago, sounding firm and confident. It hurts no end to realize that that was my last conversation with him in this life. With his family and with all Templers, I mourn for this good and upright man.

In his unassuming and always helpful way, Dieter Ruff showed us what it means to be a Templer. I always appreciated the way he took seriously whomever he was with, the way he gave his attention to that person and his or her concerns, and the way he was prepared to listen to everyone who approached him. In this, he will remain a shining example for us all, including our younger members.

It was with good reason that [in 1988] he was elected President, the highest office in the Temple Society. In carrying out his duties, he did not shy away from also undertaking strenuous trips to the Templers in Germany to do what he could for community life in the TGD. He met and spoke with many members there and advised them where necessary.

He knew about the current problems in our Temple Society, but was aware of how valuable our particular view of religion is, and therefore looked confidently to the future. He firmly believed that we will overcome these problems.

Dieter Ruff held high the Templar torch and thus provided a fine example, also for me as his successor. In truth, I can say that he rendered outstanding service to the Temple Society. Our community has lost a true leader. We miss him very much.

Also from Germany comes a tribute from **Dr Brigitte Hoffmann**, Regional Head of the Temple Society in Germany:

On behalf of all Templers in Germany I want to express our deep sorrow at the death of Dieter Ruff. While he was President of the Temple Society, he not only stood for the unity of the two regions, he personified it in the way he conducted his official duties. He came to Germany regularly every few years, stayed for several months and devoted most of his time to us Templers, exchanging opinions about our common goals and problems, getting to know every one of us better and furthering mutual understanding. He always made us, the much smaller community, feel that we were equal. If opinions sometimes differed, he always took ours seriously and helped to find solutions - establishing consensus was one of his outstanding talents.

*He had many others, but Peter Lange has already named the most important ones. To me, Dieter Ruff was the embodiment of what in German is called *gütig*: kind, understanding and wise.*

We will miss him very much. But most of all, we want to thank him for all his engagement and understanding.



Dr Brigitte Hoffmann and Dieter Ruff at the Opening of the Community Chapel in Bayswater, November 2002

Rolf continues:

My task today is to express Dieter's importance to the Temple Society. I hope my short summary of his activities, after what you have heard already from Germany, gives you some idea of his great influence. **Dieter Ruff was the most complete Templar I have known.** He was quiet and self-sufficient. He neither pushed himself forward nor raised his voice. When he spoke he used reason to explain, and wisdom to resolve, problems. His evident integrity and the common sense of what he said impressed his hearers and helped them find the necessary solutions. The words that come to mind are *he spoke with authority*. As soon as I wrote this word, my mind jumped to similar words in the bible. The Sermon on the Mount ends like this. *'When Jesus had finished this discourse the people were amazed at his teaching; unlike their scribes he taught with a note of authority.'* I had never seen the situation like this before. But it does describe well Dieter Ruff's authority through his words.

Dear Isolde, when we spoke with you last Saturday, you mentioned the Apostle Paul's praise of love, in chapter 13 of his first letter to the Corinthians. This praise of love also describes Dieter well from another aspect. Paul wrote:

I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I have no love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging symbol. I may have the gift of prophecy and the knowledge of every hidden truth; I may have faith enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give all I possess to the needy, I may give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I gain nothing by it.

Love is patient and kind. Love envies no one, is never boastful, never conceited, never rude; love is never selfish, never quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance.

Love will never come to an end. Prophecies will cease, tongues of ecstasy will fall silent; knowledge will vanish.

Then Paul says that at present our knowledge is incomplete, like that of a child. In future, understanding will become complete, like God's knowledge of us. He continues: *There are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of the three is love.*

You, the family, experienced Dieter's love in your many family interactions. Positive love, overriding all negative tendencies, also explains why Dieter got on well with all people, and why all members of the Temple Society felt comfortable with him, wherever they may have met. You, Dieter's family, will be hit hard by the loss of your husband, father and grandfather. All of us here are affected by the loss of Dieter. And we want to stand with you in your loss.

But, let us look at Dieter's passing in another way. **Were we not lucky that we shared life with Dieter?** What would our lives have been without him? Let's turn

from sadness to thanking God, the creator of our universe. Dieter was a rare person from whom we all learned, and whose company we all enjoyed.

After World War 2, I was aware of Dieter's presence sometimes among us Sydney Templers. I knew he married Irene Wagner and that they lived in South Australia. Dieter became an elder for the South Australian Templers. In a fitting conclusion to Dieter's formal elder's activities, he gave his last Templer service a good year ago in South Australia where he had started. Uli Asenstorfer from the South Australian community asked me to stress that Dieter always made them feel an important part of the whole Temple Society despite their small numbers.

When settling into Melbourne for my job at Melbourne University in 1965, we had the good fortune to be included in the informal young Templer couples' discussion group. It met roughly every two months, in different peoples' homes. Here Vyrna and I came to know many of the younger Templers who had the future of the TS at heart and initiated various impulses for the future of the TSA. Dieter and Isolde were in this group. Over the years this group filled the leadership positions in the TSA. I remember Dieter as a long-serving deputy to Dr Hoffmann, the first Australian regional head. Dieter was also one of the TSA's first four marriage celebrants and started many young couples on the road to married life.

When Dr Hoffmann resigned as regional head in 1977 because he had been elected the first post-war Templer President, Dieter was the obvious person to replace him. Dieter carried out his responsibility for all Australian Templers very conscientiously while at the same time holding important positions in the Commonwealth Department of Works. His employment took him to Canberra in 1981. He resigned as regional head and Felix Haar was elected to the position. While in Canberra, Dieter did elders' duties for the Sydney community. After his retirement in 1984, the Ruffs came back to Melbourne and Dieter was reelected as regional head in 1986.

Again, Dieter was the obvious replacement for Dr Richard Hoffmann when the Doctor retired as Templer President. Dieter was elected President in May 1988. Later that year he stood down as TSA regional head. From 1988 until 2001 Dieter's presidency took him and Isolde to Germany on many occasions, as you heard. He was now responsible for the faith of all Templers.

Dieter influenced every Templer community in Australia as elder and marriage celebrant: As President he also cared for Templers in Germany. He worked hard towards making the Templer Religion understood by others (as well as by us). He initiated literature, one example being our gold booklet, *TSA Religious Perspective*, where the essence of the Templer faith is presented in simple language. The high regard in which he stood among German Templers also extended to their Free Christian friends. In Australia, Dieter has quietly cooperated with organisations outside the TSA. Two of these are the Tatura Historical Society and the Glen Eira South Ministers Association, for which Dieter was secretary for several years. The high esteem in which such organisations held him was shown recently, when Mark

Herrmann proposed nominating Dieter for Senior Australian of the Year. As it happened, we could not proceed with the nomination, but Mark received responses of strong support very quickly. Just two short quotes from **Reverend Ian Porter**, formerly at the Bentleigh Uniting Church: 'When it came to the several ecumenical events fostered by the Association each year, Dieter was always very dependable, and quick to take leadership or cooperate with others ...' Secondly, about visits between members of his church and our Bentleigh Community 'On these occasions we shared each other's ideas of Christian responsibility, and my people were left with real admiration for Dieter and the Society.'

Here, in this Bayswater community we now have a similar input into the Knox Interfaith group. Several of us have been delighted by how ready other groups are to have Templers working with them towards better understanding among religions. Continuing to open the TSA to the wider Australian community will be one way we can honour Dieter's great contribution to the Society and to the wider community in Australia. May the Temple Society grow and interact with the wider community through its very practical religion and its other services. This is a simple way for each of us to keep alive the spirit of Dieter Ruff and to thank him for the wonderful contribution he made to all of us.



Native Flowers at the Service

Mark Herrmann

If we recognise a treasure in the Temple Society, then let us be prepared to share this treasure.

My sister, Anita, one of many who sought Dieter's services as a marriage celebrant, simply described him as one-in-a-million. His determined and strong character displayed no harshness, but rather was coupled with a warm and genuine interest in and compassion for all.

My personal association with Dieter, through a shared service at Sommerfest in 1981, ironically began when I moved away from Melbourne. I can well remember his patience, sincerity and gentle encouragement. With my first teaching appointment in far-off Kaniva (think South Australian border), I was also able to accompany Dieter and Isolde to the Barossa Valley for occasional services. This ultimately led to some solo performances on my part. In more recent times, when preparing to conduct my first funeral service, it was Dieter who provided the material and ongoing support. And, after dropping hints over many years about the importance of personal contact and a close connection with Germany, it was Dieter again who helped me prepare for my adventure of discovery to the Templers in Stuttgart in 2002.

There are so many elements I could relate about my connection with Dieter, but I'd like to focus on just one – the word. When writing, Dieter was like a top quality pastry cook making a cake; he would assemble all the necessary ingredients and then mix them in just the right order, in just the right quantities, for just the right time and in just the right fashion, to produce his splendid works of art. They were like a magnificent symphony, with each note meticulously selected and placed to produce the perfect sound for our listening pleasure. Of course he welcomed suggested improvements to his drafts, but you couldn't just get away with changing the odd word here or there. This would have disturbed the harmony, the balance and the intricate structures behind the words.

At Dieter's retirement function in 2001 I said: acknowledging in words the work of someone who uses each and every word, whether in written or spoken form, in English or in German, so thoughtfully, so carefully, so appropriately, so meaningfully, so methodically ... it certainly puts the pressure on. We try to do our best ... It was author Lewis Carroll (with the character of Humpty Dumpty) in 'Through the Looking Glass' who wrote: "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." In precision with and economy of word use, Dieter was our Humpty Dumpty – but scornful he was not!

However, if words were a strong point, then placement of punctuation from his laptop computer was, in my opinion, not. Dieter seemed to want to put a space after the end of every word and before the full stop or comma, producing sentences that frankly looked a little drawn out. I tried, but couldn't convince him to change this to a more conventional form.

Still, in Dieter's case, it was more than just words, no matter how well chosen or expressed they were. Dieter's words exuded a strong conviction, always coupled with and complemented by his actions. His ability to listen, to absorb, to analyse, to respond in offering an opinion with all people he came into contact with – young and old – was truly remarkable. This was but one of Dieter's gifts, which we have all been the grateful recipient of for our optimal benefit and that of our community. Isolde's role as loving wife, home-maker, intelligent companion and caring partner cannot be underestimated. She skilfully and competently provided the necessary understanding, support and assistance to enable Dieter to do his job even better. I look at so much Temple Society material now, with input from many, yet behind the words I can recognise Dieter's mark and style as the architect.

It is therefore appropriate to conclude that happiness comes when your work and words are of benefit to yourself and others.

We know that our life on earth is fragile, that it inevitably comes to an end. For Dieter, that final breath came last week, late on Thursday afternoon, surrounded by family members. Life is given; ours is the task to respond to it. Dieter, in thought and in deed, certainly responded in the best way possible. We are all the richer for having known him.

At the conclusion of this service, light refreshments will be served in the adjacent Community Hall. Please move there directly using the central exit. There will be opportunity to offer your personal condolences to the family in the Hall. For those unable to stay, you can offer your condolences straight away by exiting using the doors on this side. Please assist us and the family with these arrangements. For anyone wishing to attend, there will be a short committal service in the Renowden Chapel of the Springvale Crematorium at 4:30 pm. Donations to the Epworth Cancer unit can be left in the envelopes at the table in the foyer.

Choir: 'Heilige Nacht' and the Lord's Prayer (*Vater Unser*)



Annette Wagner-Hesse conducting the TSA Choir

If it is not too difficult, please stand as we pray:

From Psalm 36: Verses 5-7

Lord, your constant love reaches the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the skies. Your righteousness is towering like the mountains; your justice is like the depths of the sea. Men and animals are in your care. How precious, O God, is your constant love! We find protection under the shadow of your wings.

Lord, we are thankful for and have appreciated the long and full life granted Dieter Ruff. What he has given others has been valued and will be treasured. The circle of his earthly life journey is now complete and we entrust his soul to your care. We cannot be sure of what comes after death, but our faith and belief can provide comfort to help overcome our uncertainty. Dieter Ruff was an important building stone, a cornerstone, in our community. We ask that he may now find rest and peace, safe in your house.

We stand in the presence of God and from our hearts we say:

Farewell Dietrich Paul Ruff: may the Lord bless you and take care of you
may the Lord be kind and gracious to you
may the Lord's love and peace be with you.

Amen

CD – 'Die Himmel rühmen' (Ludwig van Beethoven)



Pallbearers Sasha, Arion, Thomas, Kristian, Linden and Tilman

At Springvale Crematorium (Renowden Chapel)

CD music – Beethoven

Mark Herrmann

Isolde, you rang me last Wednesday night to inform me Dieter was dying. Even being aware of Dieter's situation did not shield me from the body blow. I went outside to gather my thoughts under an almost cloudless early-night sky. At that time the moon was approaching fullness and shone brightly, unimpeded, with one particular distant star towards the south beckoning defiantly and durably. Throughout the night more and more stars would appear surrounding the lone original in a carpet of love and support. It was complete.

Der Pilger aus der Ferne
Zieht seiner Heimat zu,
Dort leuchten seine Sterne,
Dort hat er seine Ruh.

Having celebrated and reflected on a full and fulfilled life we have now arrived at this peaceful place to bid our final farewells. Water has been a constant in Dieter's journey: beginning at Tiberias, Palestine on Lake Galilee, to Haifa's port on the Mediterranean Sea, through the Suez Canal and across the oceans to Australia – first Fremantle then Sydney Harbour and overland to the Waranga Basin – and thus establishing an enduring home on this island continent of ours – water surrounds us. Its essential life-sustaining quality is as the blood that flows through our bodies.

In our row boat the waves of life bring peaks and troughs for us to glide over or struggle through. We chart our course and the movement of the oars against that of the tides will measure our progress.

If God is the creator of a beautiful tapestry, an intricate work of art, drawing together threads of different lengths and colours to make up an inspiring picture, then I am sure that Dieter had faith his particular life thread would serve in the way best suited to God's grand plan. Looking at the tapestry from underneath, from our vantage point in life, the hodge-podge of many threads, some short and some long, some smooth and some cut and knotted, some going off in different directions, God's pattern seems rather untidy, incomplete and without structure. However, I am sure that Dieter had faith in God's work – his tapestry – for the betterment of man.

From the teachings of Buddha and those meditation masters who have followed the Buddha's path of happiness: (quote) "Everything that has a beginning has an ending. Make your peace with that and all will be well." (unquote)

And now comes the time we must say farewell to a loving and much loved husband, father, brother, Opa and valued community leader. We are indeed blessed and so grateful to have been associated with and had our lives touched by Dieter.

Please rise as we pray:

To this point we have accompanied you, Dieter, on your life journey, or had the good fortune to share in it. But the time has come to bid a last, loving goodbye, as you stand at the final step of your earthly existence. We offer this blessing in farewell:

Dietch Paul Ruff, may the Lord bless you and take care of you,
may the Lord be kind and gracious to you,
may the Lord's love and peace be with you.

Please join with me:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us when in temptation and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours forever.

Amen

CD music – Beethoven



In memoriam Dieter Ruff

Dr Brigitte Hoffmann, Regional Head in Germany, in *Warte* January 2005.

Dies ist ein sehr subjektiver Nachruf von einer, die eigentlich nicht dazu berufen ist: ich habe Dieter Ruff erst kennen gelernt, als er zum erstenmal als Tempelvorsteher nach Deutschland kam, dann bin ich ihm privat und "dienstlich" jedesmal begegnet, wenn er zu Besuch hier war und habe ihn noch einmal in Australien besucht, als er schon schwer krank war. Aber auch in diesen wenigen Begegnungen hat er mir einen unauslöschlichen Eindruck gemacht.



Isolde and Dieter Ruff at the 'Thankyou Fest' in Bentleigh, 27 May 2001, when Dieter retired as Temple Society President.
Karin and Jörg Klingbeil hand over the TGD's present.

Auf einen ganz einfachen Nenner gebracht: es war jedesmal eine Freude, mit ihm zusammen zu sein; ich wäre sehr enttäuscht gewesen, wenn er einmal für den immer anvisierten gemeinsamen Tag keine Zeit gehabt hätte. Und ich weiß, dass es vielen anderen ebenso erging.

Seine hervorstechendste Eigenschaft war wohl seine Fähigkeit und Bereitschaft, zu verstehen, nicht nur zuzuhören, sondern auf den andern einzugehen. Ich werde nie vergessen, wie wir zusammen die "Gemeinsame Erklärung" (von TSA und TGD zu Glaube und Selbstverständnis der Templer) ausgearbeitet haben. Ausgangspunkt waren die jeweiligen Entwürfe der beiden Tempelgebiete, und die lagen – zwar nicht

im Grundsätzlichen, aber in Aufbau, Akzentsetzung und Formulierung – weit auseinander. Er war der Ältere, der Tempelvorsteher, mir an Lebens- und Tempelerfahrung weit überlegen, aber er ging auf jeden meiner Vorschläge und Einwände ein und nahm sie ernst, und kein einziges Mal kam es zu Spannungen zwischen uns. Der endgültige Text lag schließlich näher bei unserem Entwurf, und ich hatte Bedenken, ob das nicht zu Schwierigkeiten in Australien führen würde. Dieter hatte sie nicht, und es gab auch keine.

Das mag mit daran gelegen haben, dass Templer (meist) verträgliche Menschen sind, aber ich denke, es lag zu einem guten Teil an Dieter: er konnte ausgleichen, widerstreitende Meinungen so darstellen, dass das Gemeinsame deutlich wurde, und Lösungen finden, in denen beide Partner sich wiederfinden konnten.

Er konnte mit Menschen umgehen, nicht primär deshalb, weil er Kommunikationsmethoden beherrschte, sondern weil er Anteil an ihnen nahm. Er hat sich, neben seinem Hauptberuf, auch in der Telefonseelsorge [Lifeline] engagiert. Ich weiß nicht, wie lange, aber ich kann mir vorstellen, dass er dafür prädestiniert war, nicht nur, weil er zuhören und sich einfühlen konnte, sondern weil seine eigene Einstellung zum Leben so positiv war, dass das – sicher auch am Telefon – auf andere ausstrahlte.

Das trug auch dazu bei, das Zusammensein mit ihm und Isolde so beglückend zu machen. Sie interessierten sich und freuten sich an allem, was man mit ihnen unternahm, mit ihnen beredete, ihnen zeigte. Sie zeigten ihre Freude, und man freute sich mit ihnen. Und das Sahnehäubchen obendrauf war Dieters Humor. Noch mit achtzig konnte er spitzbübisch und ansteckend grinsen wie ein Schuljunge.

Dieses bewusste Ja zum Leben hat ihn auch getragen in den letzten schlimmen Jahren. Er war schwer krank, und er wusste, dass es keine Heilung gab. Er hat selbst gesagt, dass es Phasen gab – wenn die Schmerzen zu groß wurden – wo er ungeduldig und niedergeschlagen war – wie hätte es anders sein können.

Erlebt habe ich ihn auch in dieser Zeit anders: immer noch interessiert und offen, dankbar für alles, was er noch tun und erleben konnte. Er hat auch dieses Schicksal angenommen und war bis zum Ende bestrebt, so viel Gutes wie möglich daraus zu gewinnen und zu machen. Stark ein Jahr vor seinem Tod hat er in Adelaide vor den dortigen Templern einen letzten Saal gehalten.

Was für alle Toten gilt, gilt für ihn ganz besonders: "Wir sollen nicht trauern, dass wir die Toten verloren haben, sondern dankbar sein dafür, dass wir sie gehabt haben." (Hieronymus)

Sein Wirken und seine Person werden bei uns weiterleben – auch wenn wir dabei gar nicht immer bewusst an ihn denken. Wir danken ihm dafür.

Brigitte Hoffmann

"Persönlich bin ich überzeugt, dass es über absehbare Zeit weitergehen wird mit der Tempelgesellschaft. Ihre Glaubensperspektive und ihr Gedankengut sind ansprechend und einleuchtend. Sie bieten meines Erachtens einen gangbaren Weg zur praktischen Mitarbeit am Reich Gottes auf Erden als dem wesentlichen Kern der Botschaft Jesu.

Ob auch der TG einmal der Weg alles Vergänglichen beschieden ist, steht in Gottes Hand. Über die Zeit ihres Bestehens war sie jedenfalls vielen Menschen ein starker Halt und hat sie dem Göttlichen näher gebracht. Sie hat weit über ihren verhältnismäßig kleinen Mitgliederkreis hinaus Gutes bewirkt und das Mosaik der Religionen bereichert. Das tut die TG auch in der Gegenwart. Es ist eine Aufgabe, die uns als ganze Menschen fordert."

Dieter Ruff, in einem Brief vom 27. Mai 2004



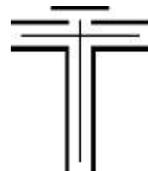
Floral tributes from the Templers in Germany

Dietrich (Dieter) Ruff

Dieter passed away on 25th November 2004, aged 80 years, after a brave and prolonged battle with cancer. As a community leader to the Temple Society – in Australia and Germany – over many decades, he was an inspiring and devoted contributor for and with the members of our Christian community. Dieter was always held in the highest regard and will be remembered with great affection. Our thoughts are with Isolde, his loyal and caring wife, children Karin, Tilman and Manfred and their families, and with Dieter's sister Elfriede and her family.

A memorial service reflecting on Dieter's full life and faithful service will take place at the Temple Society Community Chapel – Elizabeth Street, Bayswater – on Wednesday 1st December beginning at 1:00 pm. A cremation at Springvale (Renowden Chapel) will follow.

In God's care



Temple Society

And a THANKYOU to Isolde

The support of an understanding – and often self-sacrificing – partner and helpmate is of inestimable value if a man, a person, is to perform well the demanding duties a leadership position imposes. Our Society has been blessed by having many supportive Templer partners, none more so than Isolde Ruff. Her contribution was often invisible, often taken for granted or overlooked.



She was Dieter's sounding board. When Dieter discussed his Templer work with her, he did not always welcome Isolde's suggestions straight away, but he considered them and often incorporated them in his services or funerals.

One intensely hot day at a graveside, Isolde quietly stepped forward and held an umbrella to shade Dieter while he officiated.

Over the last year, Isolde was Dieter's rock and refuge more than ever, with her love, support and constant, dedicated care.

She, too, deserves our heartfelt thanks.

H.U

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