



Stanford Report, September 10, 2003

Bernard Siegel dies; founded anthropology department

BY LISA TREI

Bernard J. Siegel, a cultural anthropologist who helped found the university's anthropology department in 1948, died of heart failure Aug. 19 at the Stanford Medical Center. He was 85.

Siegel, an expert on patterns of migrations from rural to urban settings, did extensive fieldwork and published papers on research in Brazil, Portugal, Italy, Japan and New Mexico.

"He was an interesting man; unlike most anthropologists, he worked in many parts of the world," said Arthur Wolf, chair of the Department of Anthropological Sciences. "He was a good teacher in small groups."

Siegel was born Oct. 26, 1917, in Superior, Wis. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1939 and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Chicago in 1941 and 1943, respectively. Siegel was fluent in Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, French, German, Hebrew and the language of the Ancient Sumerians. During World War II, he worked for the Strategic Index of Latin America at Yale translating documents from Portuguese.

In 1959, Siegel established and edited the *Biennial Review of Anthropology*, published by Stanford University Press. The publication, which was issued annually beginning in 1972, collected peer-reviewed, groundbreaking research from scholars worldwide that enhanced interdisciplinary understanding of complex cultures and peoples. The first edition, for example, offered a critical review of trends in Soviet anthropology.

William Durham, the Bing Professor of Human Biology, took over editing the review from Siegel in 1993. Durham said his mentor's lasting contribution to the field was in "pulling together the people, resources and publisher's interest" to create and maintain the review. "It came at a time when there was no synthetic updating of anthropology," Durham said. "He had an eclectic vision of anthropology. He tried to make [the review] ecumenical. It was an effective sounding board. He set a holistic course for anthropology."

Bernard Joseph Siegel
Submitted by Karen Alpert Entous
Jun 22, 2020

Durham also recalled Siegel as a congenial, likable man. "He had a great sense of humor and laughed at himself and everyone else," he said. "He recognized the frailties and foibles of human behavior" regardless of one's origins.

Siegel first came to Stanford in 1947 after Professor Felix Keesing heard him present a paper at an annual meeting of anthropologists in Chicago. Keesing offered Siegel a two-year grant to explore the feasibility of establishing an anthropology department at Stanford. The effort was successful, and in 1948 the field appeared alongside sociology in the Stanford Bulletin's *Announcement of Courses*. It became a separate department during the 1956 academic year. Siegel, a former department chairman and director of the Center for Latin American Studies, was a faculty member for 41 years. He retired in 1988.

When the department split into Anthropological Sciences and Cultural and Social Anthropology in 1998, Siegel told the *Stanford Review* that he appreciated developments in each of anthropology's four fields: physical/biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology and linguistics. "Even though I specialize in one and know more about it, I still know a significant amount [about] all fields of anthropology and enjoy having them around me," he said.

Siegel is survived by Charlotte, his wife of 61 years, who lives on campus, and his children Eve Siegel of Berkeley and Paul Siegel of Mountain View.

Services have been held. The family suggests that donations in honor of Siegel be made to the Pathways Hospice Foundation in Mountain View or the Alzheimer's Foundation.

<https://news.stanford.edu/news/2003/september10/obitsiegel-910.html>

Anthropologist, Hillel devotee Bernard Siegel dies at 85

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BY **ALIX WALL** | AUGUST 29, 2003

Bernard Joseph Siegel
Submitted by Karen Alpert Entous
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Bernard Siegel was a founder of Stanford University's anthropology department. Perhaps it's fitting, then, that he made his spiritual home at the university as well — at Stanford Hillel.

"We felt that religiously and spiritually, Hillel was where we wanted to attach ourselves," said Charlotte Siegel, who served on the Hillel board and was married to the anthropology professor for 61 years.

Bernard Siegel died on Aug. 19 in Stanford. He was 85.

Born to immigrant parents in Superior, Wis., Siegel showed an early proficiency for languages and piano. He graduated from Harvard University and got his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Siegel was fluent in Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, French, German and Hebrew, as well as the language of the ancient Sumerians. During World War II, this got him a special assignment doing research and Portuguese translations at Yale University from 1942 to 1944.

He taught at Brooklyn College and the University of Wyoming at Laramie before being asked to interview at Stanford in 1947. That brought the Siegels to the Bay Area.

At the time, there was no congregation in the Palo Alto-Los Altos area, said Charlotte Siegel, and a group got together to talk about founding a temple. Congregation Beth Am was the result, and the Siegels were among the Reform temple's first members.

After their children left home, the couple became more involved in Hillel. Siegel had grown up Orthodox, and though he did not remain so, he preferred a service that was mostly in Hebrew.

"When we went to services here on campus, he preferred to be in the Conservative service because he was so strongly accustomed to the Hebrew, and he felt most comfortable and at home there," said his wife.

In 1981, the Siegels took a group of Stanford students to Israel, where they did an exchange with the University of Haifa. At that time, "the whole world of Israel opened up for us," said his wife.

He remained in the anthropology department at Stanford for 41 years and continued to research and write once he was emeritus. He specialized in cultures of Brazil, Portugal, Italy, Japan and Picuris pueblo of New Mexico.

Siegel and his wife were supporters of the S.F.-based Jewish Community Federation, and active with the New Israel Fund.

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In addition to his wife, Siegel is survived by daughter Eve of Berkeley and son Paul of Mountain View.

A service was held Aug. 22 in Los Altos.

Donations can be made to the Pathways Hospice Foundation, 201 San Antonio Circle, No. 104, Mountain View, CA 94040.

<https://www.jweekly.com/2003/08/29/anthropologist-hillel-devotee-bernard-siegel-dies-at-85/>

