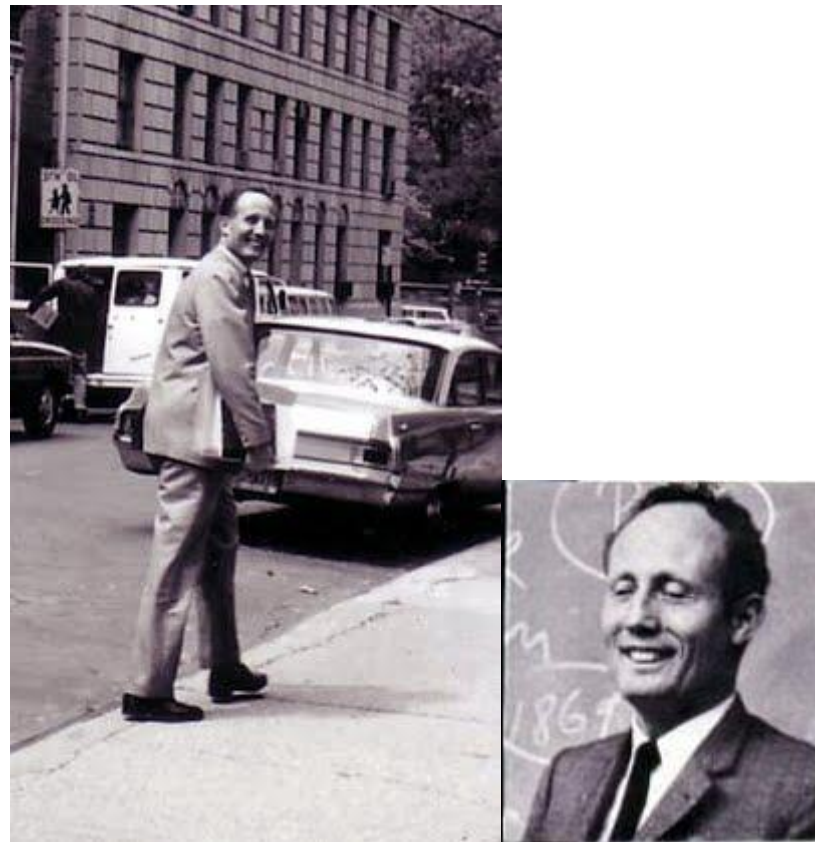




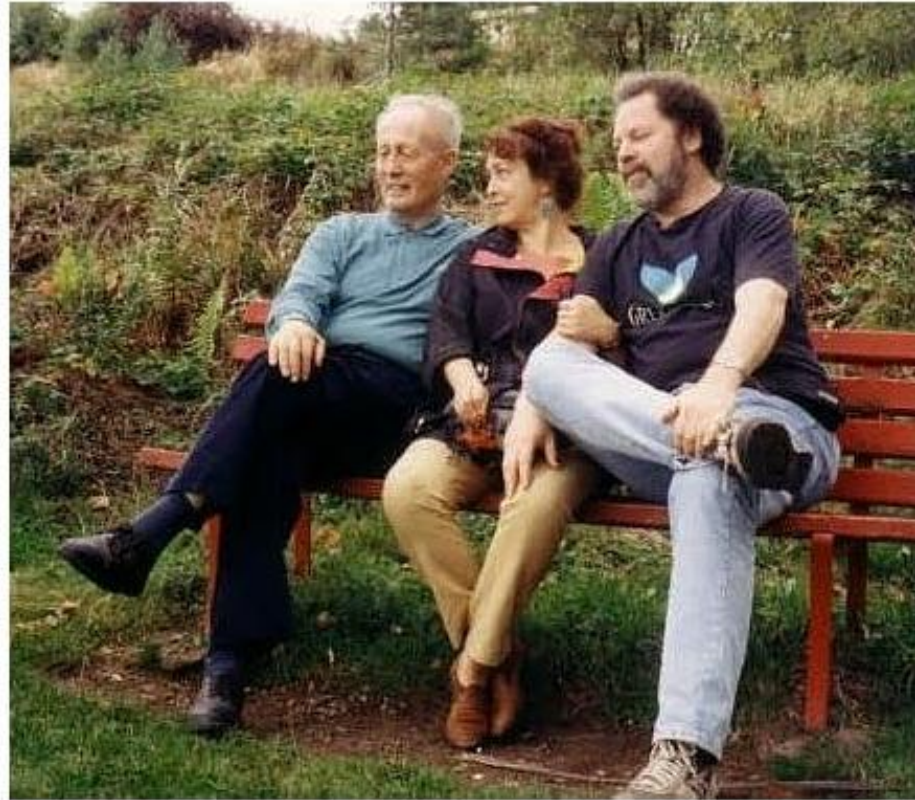
In Memoriam: Prof. Martin Kieffer

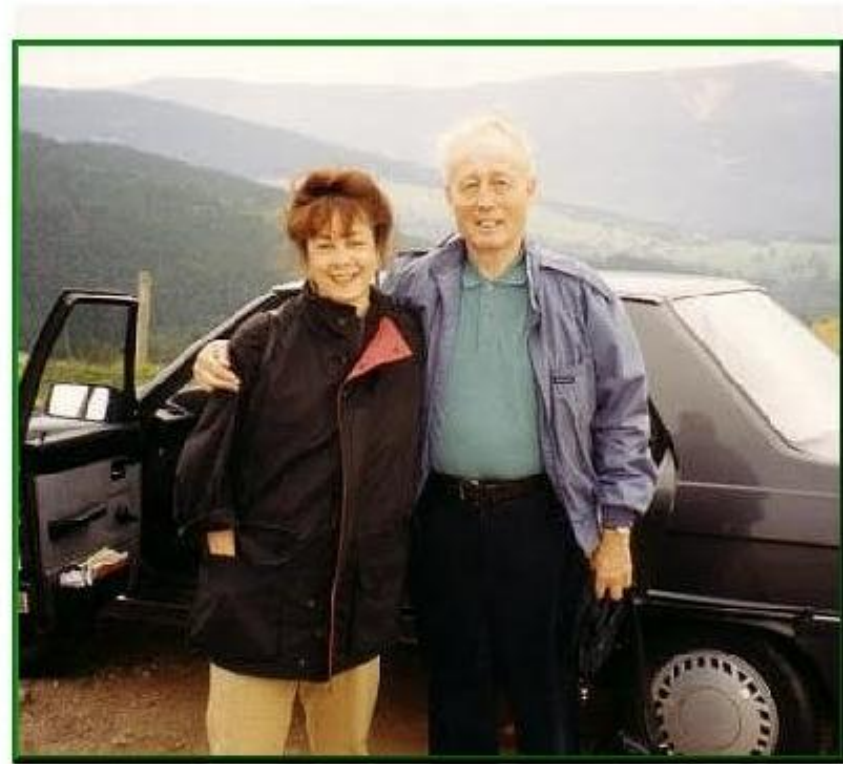
Prof. d'histoire & de géographie, de 1956 à 1986 († 1998)



M. Martin Kieffer, in front of LFNY and in class, May 1968

ALSACE, 1994: In 1994, two *anciens élèves*, Renée Marton ('65) and Roger Liwer ('68) visited M. Kieffer in Alsace, near Colmar, where he lived after he retired, and where the photos below were taken.





LETTERS TO M.KIEFFER: In early 1998, M. Kieffer was hospitalized for acute kidney failure. The LFNY Alumni Association sent an email to all its members (a short list indeed --at that time less than 200 email addresses) informing them of the situation. Letters from his *anciens élèves* were then written and collected, and sent to M. Kieffer at the hospital. We were told by a lady who was with him during his final days that he read each letter several times, and then taped them all to the wall of his room. These are excerpts from our letters to him.

April 13, 1998

TO: Elizabeth Galy, Sandra (Kremintzer) Mintz, Michele deMilly, Gerard Lamarche, Marie-Alice Berard-Leclercq, Marie-Claire Courmand, Zoe Cozon, Florence (Amar) Thomas, Diane Rivers, Michael Barmache, Viviane (Hanania) Kurzweil, Andre Cappon, Chris Kende, Renee Marton, Chris Kende, Jean-Francois Galy, Raymond Morini, Jacqueline Morini, Michael Sauvage, Michael Cox

FROM : Roger Liwer **RE:** Martin Kieffer **VIA:** E-Mail or Postal Service

Dear friends and fellow Lycee Alumni:

Just a brief note to thank all of you for participating in the "let's write a 'get well' letter to Mr. Kieffer" campaign. I sent the letters (20 of them) enclosed in one of those large 'get well' cards to him today, via FedEx overnight delivery. The letters included everything from get well cards and hand written notes, to mutli-page typewritten missives. They all expressed wishes for a speedy recovery, most included expressions of gratitude or appreciation for what he did for us at the Lycee, and many gave him an update on what we are doing in our lives. I am certain he will really enjoy them.

The latest news is that he was recently released from the hospital, after what appears to be a several week stay, and that he is now recuperating at home. However, according to some close friends of his who live in Lake Placid, NY, he is not answering his phone. (Renee and I have been trying unsuccessfully to reach him for some time now.) So, I would venture that this package should help to lift his spirits.

Once again, thank you so very much for participating. Knowing Mr. Kieffer, I'd bet that he will respond to each of you individually, but if he sends me something for everyone, rest assured that I will forward it on immediately.

In the meantime, I thought you might like to hear a few things that some of you said in your letters (without attribution, of course.)

"...nor is it any wonder that I and so many other students have described Martin Kieffer as fun, adorable, lively, and enlightening...."

"..J'espere de tout coeur que les prochaines nouvelles que nous recevrons de vous seront tres bonnes. Je vous embrasse tres affectueusement."

“...Of all the teachers at the Lycee, I remember you most vividly and with great affection. You have a wonderful style of teaching.”

“...I reminisced upon how much I enjoyed you as a teacher, and how you exemplified everything we enjoyed about, and we still retain from, the Lycee.....You should never underestimate the effect you've had on so many hundreds of children.”

“J'apprends avec tristesse que vous etes souffrant....Je pense souvent a vous comme du 'premier jogger de NY' et le 'premier health nut.' “

“...Meilleurs voeux a mon prof de geo le plus prefere...Il ne me reste que des heureux souvenirs de nos rencontres en classe et sur le terrain de football.”

“...I will never forget the energy and enthusiasm with which you taught us geography....I wanted you to know how grateful I am for the dedication and energy you put into teaching me the basics. I owe you much.....”

“...I thank you for being such a wonderful and inspirational teacher all those years, and wish you a speedy recovery..”

“...Parmi les quelques professeurs auxquels je portais un attachement, vous en particulier, Monsieur Kieffer, figurez surement dans les premieres places..”

“De tout mon coeur je vous souhaite un prompt retablissement et j'espere vous revoir en pleine forme tres bientot.”

“...Whenever I talk to my Lycee friends about our school experience, there is general agreement that you were special. You seem to have inspired the most love of any of our teachers, without exaggeration.....you were absolutely fascinating in class..I hope you can feel some pride in what you did for me, and others like me....”

RESPONSE FROM M. KIEFFER: This is the letter M. Kieffer wrote when he received ours. (It has been slightly edited to remove references to the people to whom he sent the letter.) M. Kieffer passed away in late 1998.

COLMAR, Friday morn APRIL 17, '98

Dearest FRIEND

You are wonderful, extraordinary, overwhelming, heaven-sent: cannot find enough words to express my deep emotion, my profound and lasting THANKFULNESS!.....

[.....] how you managed to contact me so soon and so fast remains a stunning, humbling mystery of modern technology and warm-hearted, truly sincere friendship!

And then, and then this very morn: had just risen out of bed at about 6^{30 a.m.} local time, when a kind of express mailman delivered your intriguing **FED EX**-^{FAX} The World on Time-LETTER with its precious content = ancient élèves. One WONDER after another - LIFE can be so sweet indeed!

2 Your two newsy letters, Roger and Rende, the sweet letters of Jacqueline MORINI, Florence Amar THOMAS, the de MILLY sisters, Sandra C. Kremnitzer MINTZ (1er prix de Géographie), Viviane Hanania KURZWEIL with her irresistible smile I'm only mentioning girls so far because I was so fond of them, BUT I can't help remembering also your "sidekick" Michael BARMACHE, Roger, trying unsuccessfully to muscle his way into a Washington D.C. topless bar - some nerve! Remember?

Do tell all the gals and all the fellows that I deeply appreciate their friendly message, their spontaneous expression of History in the making (sic).

Let me not forget Marie-Claire Courmand and Elisabeth GAY and Diane RIVERS for their kind words.

It's to you, embrassable Renée, that goes my warmest MERCI, though, when you state, "you will certainly have enough reading material (and what material!) to last you a while..."

(Have dabbed my eyes repeatedly while writing this)

3

I am indeed going to be most pleasantly busy for the next few weeks to come, and I'll do my level best to write to each ancien élève who is thinking of me.

My thoughts are flying over to Manhattan, to the Lycée, to Central Park and its beloved tennis courts, to anciens élèves scattered throughout the States while proving themselves to be important and productive members of our rapidly changing Society — for better or worse.

Shall of course write you a longer, more ^{sedate or} complete letter in the near future. No long then for the time being. Excuse my emotional outpouring (my romantic soul, despite appearances). Be well, enjoy the Big Apple's spring blossoming. My very fondest, warmest greetings, Martin

Hope this will be on route still today!

RECENT TRIBUTES: Over the years, many people have mentioned M. Kieffer in their correspondence with the LFNY Alumni Association. This is the most recent tribute we have received (June 17, 2017):

Serge Danielson François, ('87)

In 1986, during my junior year and what would be his retirement year at the Lycée, Mr. Kieffer turned his back to the class and asked who would like to be a teacher. When he turned around, he and I were both surprised to see my sole hand raised. He invited me to lunch (some burger joint maybe three or four blocks south of the Lycee on Madison) and he shared with me what he loved about the profession. Two years later, when I was selected as a Mellon fellow at Swarthmore, I had the honor of inviting him to speak as my guest. The Mellon Foundation asked us to name the intellectual or activist who had the most profound impact on us. Mr. Kieffer accepted my invitation and traveled from NY. I met him at 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. We rode together to the college guest house where he dropped off his valise. We had dinner in the Sharples, the dining hall. He gave an incredible speech on the power and meaning of history that evening in Trotter, our social sciences hall. I failed to stay in touch him as college and life progressed into career and married life. I regret it to this day. I remember the day my mother phoned to let me know that he had passed. I have never forgotten the passion with which Mr. Kieffer related the world. His passionate stories gave me a sense of the grand shared adventure. It is the same grand shared adventure to which I have been a witness and a guide for nearly a quarter century as an educator. Thank you for inviting me to remember a great and good man.

REMEMBRANCES: In 2003, the LFNY sent a survey to its alumni, asking them to nominate their favorite teacher. On February 6, 2004, the results were announced at the Lycee's "2004 Gala Dinner." Chris Kende ('66) accepted the posthumous award for M. Kieffer and gave the acceptance speech, which we are proud to present to you here. We know how beloved and respected a teacher M. Kieffer was, and we are sure that Chris' words reflect the entire alumni community's feelings. Diana Henry ('66) and Patricia Lane ('77) also wrote touching pieces.

Christopher Kende ('66)

I am greatly honored and deeply touched to accept the Teacher Recognition Award for M. Martin Kieffer. It is an even greater honor to be invited to say a few words about him in this company. There are many more than "a few words" which could be used to describe Martin: Dedicated, enthusiastic, committed, vital, caring, energetic, inspirational, all come to mind.

Martin was a "teacher's teacher", beloved by his students and totally committed to learning. I had Martin in history and geography from about 6eme to Terminale. I never tired of his energy and bravado in class. He would insist that we speak loudly, with confidence and self assuredness. He expected great things of his students and always brought out the best in all of us, even the timid ones!

He was tireless and very much ahead of his time, years before physical fitness became a buzz-word. One student wrote in a letter to him several years ago "Je pense a vous comme du 'premier jogger' de New York et le premier 'health nut.'" Woe to the students on Faculty-Student soccer day!!

When he passed away in his very simple surroundings in Colmar, a great loss was felt among all alumni and friends who knew him. I recall speaking at his memorial at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and feeling the overwhelming sense that a great light in the world of teaching had gone out. This Honor is more than deserved. It has been earned through a lifetime of inspiring and challenging young minds.

When he was ill in his last days, a letter writing campaign was organized by several alumni who knew him. One quote, kindly provided to me by Roger Liwer, summed it all up:

"Whenever I talk to my Lycee friends about our school experience, there is general agreement that you were special. You seem to have inspired the most love of any of our teachers, without exaggeration... you were absolutely fascinating in class. I hope you can feel some pride in what you did for me and others like me"

Martin, I know you are listening and smiling, thinking to yourself: "This is very nice but now I have to go for a run." Thank you Board of Trustees and Alumni for honoring the lifetime achievement of a great teacher, scholar, friend and extraordinary human being.

Diana Henry ('66)

Regarding Martin Kieffer, I remember him jumping on his desk and enacting the French Revolution of 1870: "To the barricades!" Unforgettable. I also remember him saying that if anyone just perused an atlas for 15 minutes a day, they would be a cultured person. How true. After I became a teacher (at the Lycee) I tried to follow his example and write lengthy, carefully composed and reasoned assessments of various passages in my students' essays. I couldn't believe, once I tried doing it, how generous he had been with his time to do this for us for so many years.

I went to France one year toward the end of his life and couldn't make it to Colmar. He, however, took the train to Besançon to meet me and my daughter who was four at the time. He was amazed that I was letting her travel in her 'jammies. But he was always so kind, so his disapproval was veiled in concern. I know he visited his anciens in the US after he retired, he spoke fondly of them to me, and after he was no longer able to travel, I am happy to hear that many kept up with him to the end.

Patricia Lane ('77)

Comment fait-on pour avoir des nouvelles de nos anciens profs ? Il y en a qui nous ont tellement marqués qu'un petit « merci » après tout ce temps leur ferait certainement plaisir.

Il y en avait un bien sur, comme pour beaucoup je suis sûre, qui était le *nec plus ultra* de la profession.

J'avais appris, il y a plusieurs années, le décès de M. Kieffer. Cela m'avait profondément attristée, j'en avais versé quelques larmes silencieuses au téléphone quand Odile me l'avait annoncé ex post facto. J'avais tant regretté ne pas avoir su comment rester en contact.

Sept ans, il fut mon professeur ! Quelle énergie, quelle passion pour son métier, il faisait trembler les tableaux (on savait qui enseignait dans la salle d'à côté !!) et prenait un temps fou pour corriger nos copies avec commentaires à la louche (en ROUGE !).

Une âme solitaire, ou plutôt seule – ce n'est pas pareil – en revanche malgré son côté résolument extraverti. Je me souviens un jour, je devais avoir environ 14 ans (et très fleur bleue !), il me demandait des conseils pour courtiser une femme de laquelle il s'était amourachée — mais elle n'avait pas l'air de partager l'intérêt.

Et les vols Air France, les charters du Lycée, partagés tous les ans dans les deux sens quand lui, il rentrait en Alsace, nous en Lorraine – les cours d'histoire ne faisaient jamais pose, le temps du voyage passait vite !

Comme certains, je n'ai pas que des bons souvenirs du Lycée – it did have in a way a tendency to squish certain spirits – mais M. Kieffer a été une constante pendant des années pour moi, pour nous, un des rares qui se focalisait énormément sur le développement des élèves, leur confiance en eux-même itout. Nous lui devons beaucoup. Si la question existentielle fondamentale que l'on peut se poser est «à quoi servons-nous, que voulons-nous laisser de notre passage sur terre», M. Kieffer doit être fier de ce qu'il a accompli avec diligence, amour, et passion. Enough said. Personne d'autre n'arrive à sa cheville parmi les profs que j'ai eu au Lycée.