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HONORING FRIEDL: APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH PLAINS SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Gottfried Otto Lang, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Colorado – Boulder until his death in 2011, was one of the founders of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. Affectionately known as Friedl to friends and colleagues, he was born in Oberammergau, Bavaria. He fled Nazi Germany in 1937 and became a U.S. citizen in 1945. With an M.A. from the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Cornell University, he came from a post at The Catholic University to a post at the University of Colorado in 1966 to assume the position of Professor of Anthropology. In 1981 he became the first elected chairperson of the High Plains Regional Section of the Society for Applied Anthropology. Through the next decade he guided the fledgling organization's transition to independence as the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology (HPSfAA). This article is a tribute to Friedl and the importance of his role in the birth and development of HPSfAA, as well as to his influence on the field of applied anthropology.

KEY WORDS: Gottfried O. Lang, applied anthropology, High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology

INTRODUCTION

The birth of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology (HPSfAA) can be attributed in large part to the dedication of a small group of Colorado applied anthropologists that included Gottfried O. Lang. Affectionately known as Friedl to friends, family, students, and colleagues, this German-born anthropologist had an amazing journey from Oberammergau to Colorado where he became the first elected chairperson of the fledgling High Plains Regional Section of the Society for Applied Anthropology. In the words of one of his students and colleagues, he was an adventurer, a romantic, a humanist, and a scientist; he was Everyman whose friends in the 15th century morality play were Strength, Knowledge, Intelligence, and Good Deeds (Keller 2011a). This article begins with a brief biography of Friedl based on his résumé from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his obituary (Santa Fe New Mexican.com 2011) and moves into the importance of his role in the launching and nurturing of HPSfAA in its early years. Utilizing materials from the HPSfAA archives, it considers the influence that he had on the field of applied anthropology as summarized by his own published thoughts and those of his colleagues.

BIOGRAPHY

Friedl was born March 24, 1919, in Oberammergau, a world renowned village in Bavaria, Germany, steeped in the celebration of the Passion Play. In later life, he would return here to study the culture and traditions which made his home town so unusual. He attended grammar

school there from 1925 to 1930, then on to secondary school in Weilheim and Ettal, Bavaria from 1930 to 1935. He then attended flying schools in Dusseldorf, Karlsruhe, Munich, and Berlin from 1935 to 1937. Throughout the 1930s, Friedl became active in the Catholic Youth Movement (CYM), a group opposed to the Hitler Jugend. CYM was attractive to Friedl because of their emphasis on action; they did not just discuss issues, but had to "do" something as well. For Friedl, this was the origin of his interest in applied anthropology (Keller 2011b).

As the Nazi party rose to power, members of the CYM were targeted for suspicion, harassment, and arrest. Friedl escaped Germany in 1937 to fly for Catholic missions in the Hudson Bay area of Canada. In 1938, he attended post-graduate flying school at Parks Air College in East St. Louis, Illinois. Between 1940 and 1944, he attended Brown University and earned his bachelor's degree in engineering. He became a U.S. citizen in 1945. In 1948, he received a Master of Arts degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago, followed by a Ph.D. in anthropology from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York in 1953.

Friedl's professional career as an educator dated back to 1948-1951, the period between earning his M.A. and his Ph.D. degrees when he was an instructor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Utah. Upon completion of his doctorate, he accepted the position of assistant professor of anthropology at The Catholic University of America and was promoted to associate professor in 1958. Three years later he was awarded a Fulbright Professorship to the *Soziologisches Institut* at the

The Applied Anthropologist



CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD



Honoring Friedl...

University of Munich. The Catholic University then promoted him to full professor, a position he held from 1963 to 1966. In 1966 he moved to Colorado to assume the position of Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He taught initially at the Institute of Behavioral Science where he was Director of the Program of Research on Culture Change. He also served as Co-Chairman of the African and Middle Eastern Studies Program. Upon his retirement on May 31, 1986, he was appointed Professor Emeritus.

In his resume, Friedl identified his principal professional interests as social and cultural change, applied anthropology, theory and method, peasant societies (Europe), North American Indians, Africa (especially East Africa), and New Guinea (Irian Jaya, now called Papua). These interests are reflected in his grants, research and articles in scholarly publications. After his retirement, Friedl donated his collection of research notes, studies, and papers to the Archives of the University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries (Shurtz 2011). This rich collection includes his notes from field work among the Sukuma of Tanzania, Utes, Northern Utes, and the Asmat of New Guinea, as well as a national study on American Indian education.

Martha Lang, his wife, soul mate, and collaborator, shared his commitment to anthropology. They met at the University of Chicago and married in 1947 to begin a life-long partnership filled with family (eight children), research and devotion to their faith. At least three of his publications were co-authored with Martha. After Friedl's retirement, they moved to Santa Fe. Both were oblates of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert near Abiquiu, New Mexico. When HPSfAA members attended fall retreats at Ghost Ranch, Friedl invited friends and former students to join him at services at the monastery. After Martha passed away, Friedl moved to the monastery, spending the last years of life in prayer and peace, but still visited by HPSfAA members during our fall retreat.

SHAPING A NEW ORGANIZATION

According to Friedl (1981), the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) requested, in 1978, that regional committees be formed to study the feasibility of certifying applied anthropology programs and practicing anthropologists. The Colorado committee was composed of Deward Walker (chairperson), Omer Stewart, Michael Higgins, and Friedl. The committee met over the course of a year and reported back to the SfAA annual business meeting in Philadelphia in March 1979. Colorado concurred with other regional committees that accrediting programs and individuals was premature; the real interest lay in the development of regional societies. SfAA responded with a vote of approval for the formation of the High Plains Regional Section of the SfAA.

Deward Walker chaired an Ad Hoc Planning Committee to move forward with the mandate. The committee was composed of applied anthropologists with academic and nonacademic affiliations, specifically, Deward, Friedl, Omer Stewart, Jack Schultz, Julie Uhlmann, Peter Van Arsdale, and Michael Higgins. The Ad Hoc committee called for an organizational meeting at the next SfAA annual meeting held in Denver on March 22, 1980. About 50 people attended the meeting. Many were former students of Lang, Walker, Stewart, and Robert Hackenberg, all professors at the University of Colorado - Boulder. Others had moved into the region more recently and were working in a variety of applied positions; all had applied interests. Attendees decided to make it a regional organization, embracing the geographical areas represented by those present, states generally east of and within the region of the Rocky Mountains. Omer Stewart suggested, and all concurred, that the best geographical designation for the title was the High Plains Regional Section (HPRS) of the SfAA.

Following the SfAA annual meeting in 1980, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee met again to select pro-tem officers and establish several sub-committees: by-laws, membership, and annual meeting. The date for the annual meeting was set for February 20-22, 1981 at the Hilton Harvest House in Boulder with Michael Higgins as chair. The main purpose of this first annual meeting was formal and informal interchange of current information among High Plains applied anthropologists as well as further organizational planning. Harland Padfield from Oregon State University gave the keynote address. At the business meeting, attendees adopted the proposed bylaws and elected the following officers: Friedl Lang (Chairperson), Shirley Kurz-Jones (Vice-Chairperson), and Carla Littlefield, Secretary-Treasurer. Executive committee members at-large were chosen to represent the different geographical areas within the High Plains: Ruth Kornfield (North Area), Robert Hill (South Area), and Peter Morley (Central Area). Other executive committee members were: Deward Walker (past chairperson pro-tem), Peter Van Arsdale (newsletter) and Jack Schultz (nominations and elections).

Friedl hosted meetings of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee as well as meetings of the HPRS executive committee during the two years of his chairmanship, 1981-1983. He convened these meetings at his home in Boulder, a comfortable old house on a tree-lined street in the vicinity of the university. Ken Keller (2011b) recalled that Friedl and Martha had established an earlier, welcoming home atmosphere for students and colleagues when Friedl taught at The Catholic University of America. Visitors to the Lang home in Washington, D.C. included staff from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), professionals who had worked with Friedl in Africa. A Catholic



The Applied Anthropologist



CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD



Honoring Friedl...

University doctoral student, Elliot Liebow (1967), also frequented the Lang home as he worked under Friedl's guidance on his dissertation in the 1960s, focused on streetcorner African American men. Liebow recognized Friedl in his acknowledgments for *Tally's Corner*.

Deward Walker (2003) reminisced on the meetings at Friedl's Boulder home in the focus group convened by John van Willigen and Pamela Puntenney in 2003 at Estes Park. He described Friedl's home as a social center with food, wine, and cigars and convivial interactions with the large Lang family.

...Friedl was a very gentle, wonderful man, and still is, who had a wonderful and gentle and supportive wife and family. We all benefited tremendously from that, so we had this very warm foundation for what we were doing together, and he always helped maintain that atmosphere and made us want to come to his house to the meetings, made us want to be a part of it... be bathed in this wonderful warm light of the Lang household. Friedl became the first actual president elected and was instrumental in many of the moves that were necessary to get us going, in planning, and getting incorporated...his students...became his disciples and right arms in getting the society moving.

Friedl's leadership was critical to the success of the new organization. Early issues reflected in the minutes of the executive committee meetings were incorporation, annual meetings, and the inauguration of a newsletter. SfAA initially informed the group that it could incorporate as a regional section and this was set in motion. Russell Coberly agreed to chair the second annual meeting to be held again in Boulder at the Hilton Harvest House in February, 1982. In October, 1981, Peter Van Arsdale, newsletter editor, sent out the first edition to 87 members as well as to everyone who had attended the annual meeting that year and to all anthropology departments in the region. The first newsletter included highlights/abstracts of most of the sessions of the first annual meeting. The next newsletter in January, 1982, carried the preliminary program for the second annual meeting. Under Peter's direction, the newsletter was on its way to becoming "an effective voice of and for applied anthropologists in the High Plains/Rocky Mountain region" (Van Arsdale 1981).

Friedl (1981) laid out his vision for the new organization in the first newsletter. The lead article was titled, "HPRS a Viable Reality: Introductory Letter from Friedl Lang, Chairperson." Friedl stated:

Our prime purpose is to reach as many practicing anthropologists in our region as possible. By practicing anthropologists we mean not only those who have degrees in anthropology (B.A., M.A., Ph.D.), but all those who, no matter what their disciplinary

and academic background may have been, find the anthropological approach of help in solving the technical, environmental, organizational and other human problems they must deal with in their work. That is, they see their work as being part of a cultural matrix or context; they see problems to be solved in a systemic and holistic manner, sometimes of a cross-cultural nature. These practicing anthropologists are concerned about the social consequences of their actions and the programs they work with. They subscribe to the "Statement on Professional and Ethical Responsibilities" of the SfAA.

In the same article, Friedl advocated for a sense of community among the region's practicing anthropologists, recognizing that many had little opportunity to share experiences, both successes and failures. He promoted the society's annual meetings as a place where members could get to know each other, exchange information on problems and solutions, and learn from one another. In Friedl's words:

This can add to our knowledge of the application of anthropological principles...It will also help us overcome the feelings of isolation working in environments where we may be the only ones who have human concerns in mind. Forming such a society will also help us to help each other. It is important for us to identify imaginative opportunities for applied research and to help locate those people who can fill such jobs when they rise.

In this spirit of community, HPSfAA members turned out annually for meetings held initially at hotels in the Denver-Boulder area. Through the efforts of Peter Van Arsdale and Larry Van Horn, proceedings of the annual meeting sessions were printed in the society's early publications, another effort to disseminate information and promote communication among the members. The character of the annual meetings gradually changed between 1981 and 1985. We initially modeled our format after the national anthropology societies and convened at hotels. By the third year, members were asking for more opportunity for informal discussion and interaction and less expense. In 1984, former Friedl students Ken Keller and Arthur Campa of Metropolitan State College of Denver invited the group to meet at the Auraria Higher Education Center there. From 1985 to 1992, the High Plains Society found a more permanent location for its annual meetings at the Bethlehem Center, a rural retreat center in Broomfield, in the northern suburbs of metropolitan Denver. The center appealed to the members' need for a relaxed, informal, come-as-you-are atmosphere where they could renew friendships, applaud what colleagues were doing, and welcome new members.

HPSfAA ADDRESSES ISSUES OF THE EARLY 1980s

Applied anthropology in the early 1980s was taught



The Applied Anthropologist



CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD



Honoring Friedl...

and practiced within the historical backdrop being experienced by the nation. In November of 1980, Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter and became the 40th president of the U.S. He would be elected for a second term in 1984. A deep recession hit the country between 1981 and 1983 with the highest unemployment rate (10.4%) reported since 1940. Politicians took a hard line against welfare and related social programs. There was a backlash against illegal aliens supposedly taking jobs and utilizing health resources without paying taxes. The federal budget director proposed "trickle down" economics, essentially decreasing taxes for the rich to enable them to invest and trickle down benefits to average Americans (Holland 1995). For applied anthropologists, there were myriad opportunities in areas of advocacy, action research, and policy development.

Both academic and practicing applied anthropologists reported on their efforts at our annual meetings. The theme for the 1981 meeting was "Applied Anthropology in the High Plains Region." Sessions addressed such issues as teaching applied anthropology, women and development, understanding health practices, and participating in the marketplace as applied anthropologists. In 1982, the theme was "Government and Anthropology: Mediation, Advocacy, Brokerage," with emphasis on government funding structures and parallels between public and private sectors. Sessions included women in boomtowns (chaired by former Friedl student Carla Littlefield); cultural resource management; anthropological-governmental interface in first and third world development projects; role problems for anthropologists in international development work (chaired by Friedl's colleague from FAO, Darwin Solomon); and implications of federal budget cuts for applied social science. The theme for the 1983 meeting was the "Anthropology of Crisis and Crisis Management." The opening session focused on a crisis in higher education, specifically on proposed funding cuts for the anthropology program at the University of Northern Colorado where Michael Higgins was a faculty member. Another session focused on the crisis in cultural resource management, also attributed to funding cuts. Other sessions included the crises of both individuals and families with mental health problems in different cultures. Colby Hatfield, former Friedl student, contributed insights from his field work among the Maasai in Tanzania. (Hatfield's contribution covering this can be found elsewhere in this issue.) Omer Stewart, CU Professor Emeritus and a founder of HPSfAA, delivered the keynote address on Japanese relocation.

In 1984, the annual meeting's theme was Human Rights, and at least two of Friedl's former students chaired sessions: "Rights of Migrant Farmworkers" (Carla Littlefield) and "International Law and Human Rights" (David Stephenson), both practicing applied anthropologists in professional po-

sitions. Ted Downing, President-Elect of SfAA, presented the keynote address, "Human Rights and the Future of Anthropology." In 1985, Colby Hatfield chaired the annual meeting that was held at the Bethlehem Center for the first time. The theme was "Communities," and an innovative format departed from the formal presentation of papers to concentrate on group discussions with facilitators and key discussants. The informal sessions included consideration of conceptual models of community, such as professional community and political community, as well as agents and agencies involved with communities. In 1986, HPSfAA co-sponsored the SfAA annual meeting in Reno, Nevada. Friedl attended the meeting and was a visible, supportive presence at sessions organized by HPSfAA members or which included papers presented by our members. HPSfAA had attained national recognition.

MOVING HPSfAA FORWARD INTO INDEPENDENCE

Friedl's term as chairperson ended in 1983, but he remained on the executive committee as "past chairperson" for another two years. In late 1983, the SfAA informed the High Plains Society that, because of IRS regulations, it could no longer be a regional section of the SfAA. The issue was the subject of a session led by Reed Riner, Chairperson, at our 1984 annual meeting. Members pondered and discussed whether we had the critical mass, the collective numbers, the commitment and opportunity for interaction sufficient for independent success (Knop 1984). Discussion continued at a fall retreat at the Broken Arrow Ranch in October. With Friedl's influence and Reed Riner's leadership, by 1985 the High Plains Regional Section of SfAA had officially become the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. Members approved the revised bylaws that changed the name of the organization and changed the title of chairperson to president and vice-chairperson to president-elect. Revised articles of incorporation with these changes were submitted to the Colorado Secretary of State's Office in 1985.

The transition of the Society to independence was reflected in the publications of HPSfAA. Peter Van Arsdale was newsletter editor until 1984 when Ed Knop assumed the position and published it as a bulletin. In the fall, Ed introduced the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* in a journal-type, peer reviewed format that included much of the same content established by Peter: refereed articles, organizational news, programs for meetings, commentaries, brief communications, book reviews, and notices of upcoming events. The publication supported the mission of the Society, stated in the revised bylaws: its objective is "the study and application of the principles that explain the relations of human beings to one another, and the dissemination of this body of knowledge." Throughout its history,



The Applied Anthropologist



CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD



Honoring Friedl...

the journal has maintained the highest standards of journalism and also provides a valuable repository of information about HPSfAA.

Another service provided to members was the directory published in 1985 and 1988 by Lin Evans, directory editor/publisher. The directories served the purpose of improving communications among HPSfAA members and to link them with other applied anthropologists and members of other anthropology societies. In addition to the usual contact information, the directory identified each member's applied interests. The entry for Friedl in 1985 noted his interests as: agricultural development, community development, and cultural relations. He described his research in Bavaria as "cultural continuity and change in Alpine villages in relation to tourism." In 1988, he added technological change, medical anthropology, and educational anthropology to his interests. The description of his research was more focused: "Transformation of an Alpine village (Oberammergau) over past 350 years into tourist town, in the context of regional and state social, political, economic and religious changes."

During this early period, Friedl fostered the young organization, promoting the strengths that gave HPSfAA vitality. These strengths have been enumerated previously (Littlefield 2000). They included 1) a healthy mix of practitioners and academics, with generous support from the regional anthropology departments, especially the University of Colorado - Boulder and Metropolitan State College of Denver; 2) multidisciplinary diversity (sociologists, environmentalists, human service providers and others who fit Friedl's concept of membership, i.e., anyone who applies the anthropological approach in their work); 3) steady inflow and enthusiastic acceptance of students; 4) large enough geographical area to support a critical mass of members; 5) a relatively large core of committed members who have consistently taken on responsibilities and roles of leadership when called upon; 6) strong administrative structure spelled out in the bylaws; 7) fiscal responsibility with the designation of 501(c)3 status with the IRS and eligibility for charitable donations; 8) mutually supportive relationships with the two national applied anthropology organizations - SfAA and NAPA; 9) a nationally recognized journal; and 10) a tradition of annual meetings and retreats where members get renewed, share ideas, and confirm their commitment, vision, and community.

FRIEDL'S ROLE IN APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

Through his students and the organization he helped found, Friedl had a large impact on the field of applied anthropology, especially in the High Plains region. Robert Hackenberg (2006) recalled that he and Omer Stewart had been instrumental in recruiting Friedl to the University of Colorado in 1966. He and Friedl had been classmates at

Cornell University where they worked on their doctorates in anthropology in the 1950s. Hackenberg had a divided appointment with the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) at CU and the Department of Anthropology. When another divided position became available, Hackenberg recommended Friedl.

Omer Stewart, founder of the anthropology department at CU, respected Friedl's work among the Utes and wanted his expertise in the department. Friedl's appointment began in September 1966. After Omer Stewart retired, Friedl Lang, Robert Hackenberg, and Deward Walker became the source of applied research and dissertation supervision through the 1970s and into the 1980s. They initiated a curriculum built on four basic courses: applied, urban, medical and development anthropology. Area courses reflected the expertise of the faculty: Native Americans (Walker), Southeast Asia (Hackenberg), and East Africa (Lang). Between 1970 and 1975, they graduated ten PhDs; the applied program flourished (Hackenberg 2006).

Friedl published two articles on applied anthropology in the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* (1988; 1998). In 1988, he asked, "Does the application of anthropology to human problems have a future?" He noted the emergence of graduate programs in applied anthropology at several universities, probably related to the decline of jobs in academia. These new programs provided opportunities for solving "pressing" human problems. He urged anthropologists to be critical of "an oversimplified, 'so-called' rational scientific approach." Before embarking on a traditional research design, Friedl strongly advocated the process of participant observation and unstructured interviewing to discover the nature of the problem, what solutions had been applied, and to determine the workable, culturally acceptable solution. Local participation was critical. His own research, with Martha Lang in Oberammergau, reflected this orientation (Lang and Lang 1987).

In 1998, HPSfAA bestowed on Friedl the Omer C. Stewart Memorial Award in recognition for exemplary achievement. His acceptance speech was published in the *High Plains Applied Anthropologist* (1998). He recalled that, as a graduate student at the University of Chicago, he did field work with the Northern Utes in northeastern Utah in the summer of 1950. He saw his role as that of a scientist collecting objective data about a socio-cultural system. After establishing rapport, he was eventually asked for help in dealing with some tribal problems. Feeling inadequate, he wrote to Robert Redfield in Chicago for advice, but was disappointed when Redfield answered in a letter that he could not help him. Redfield referred Friedl to Sol Tax who was developing a course on action anthropology at the University of Chicago. The discipline was beginning to recognize the action or applied role of the anthropologist in



The Applied Anthropologist



CARLA N. LITTLEFIELD



Honoring Friedl...

helping communities identify and solve problems. Friedl found out later in his career that the scientific method, objectivity leading to abstractions, was not always the answer to human problems. He found that by applying anthropological principles, one could not only be objective, but also sympathetic and compassionate. Just as he had experienced the "action mandate" from the Catholic Youth Movement in the 1930s, in Bavaria, to "do" something, Friedl told us, "...we must not be innocent bystanders, but do our part to help in creatively finding solutions to old and new problems." This is his legacy to HPSfAA and to all of us who see ourselves as applied anthropologists.

Carla N. Littlefield holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Colorado - Boulder, awarded in 1981. She served as the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology's first secretary-treasurer from 1981 to 1986, is a past president of the society, and is the current archivist. She is a retired consultant and nurse educator. She may be reached at cnlittlefield@q.com.

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