

In Memoriam

Rudolf Rühle Tribute

by Bruce Whitehill

The world's preeminent historian on the games of Germany died in November at age 88. Rudolf Rühle was an AGPC member in the late 1990s. Then, in 2000, he, along with a few of Germany's prominent game researchers and collectors, co-founded the Europäische Spielesammlergilde (ESG, The European Game Collectors Guild) at the 2000 Toy Fair in Nuremberg, Germany. The ESG became the European counterpart of what had been the AGCA (American Game Collectors Association) before enthusiasts of jigsaw puzzles and mechanical puzzles were added to form our present AGPI.

Dutch AGPI member Geert Bekkering (Europe's premiere researcher/historian on jigsaw puzzles) and I met Rudolf together in 1997 during a self-driven games and puzzles tour of the Netherlands and Germany. We got a chance to see his extensive collection in his home in Bonn—games from floor to ceiling. Geert told me recently he remembered how Rudolf, to save space, would pack smaller games into large game boxes, sometimes “up to five games within the largest game.” Over the years that collection grew to more than 25,000 games and 1,200 books and magazines, which eventually were given to the German Games Museum (Deutsches SPIELemuseum) in Chemnitz, a city in the former GDR (German Democratic Republic) in Eastern Germany.


Rudolf became the authority on games of the GDR, culminating in a book, *Lexikon: Die deutsche Spieleproduktion in der DDR und der SBZ*, which detailed the games made in the German Democratic Republic from 1949 to 1990 and in the SBZ, that same part of Germany that had been occupied by the Soviet Union from 1945 to 1949. He delighted in sharing his information with others and encouraged them to collect games and research game history. And to play. He was a strong proponent of games as a cultural asset.

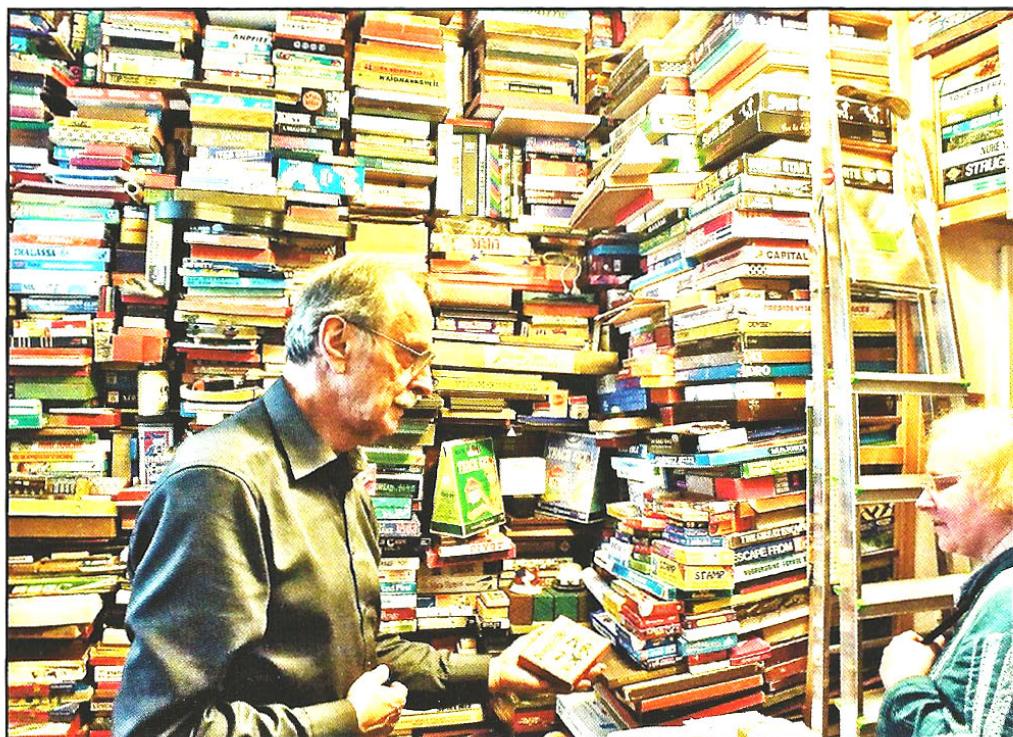
Rudolf was a gentle man and a gentleman, and a great host. He was the first chairman of the ESG and then became its honorary chairperson. He frequently hosted the exhibitions held every year at the SPIEL, the game fair in Essen, encouraging visitors from worldwide to view and learn about games, especially the games of Germany that, like those of the US and UK, represented the beginnings of what is now called the world of table games. He was responsible for other exhibitions throughout Germany and numerous print articles, and he developed a games database (as Rick Tucker has done for the AGPI) listing about 3000 games from the former GDR, most of which were in his formidable collection. For many years, he wrote for a German journal about gameplay and contributed a regular column about antique games to *spielbox* magazine (*German company titles often use lower case*).

Geert describes Rudolf as “a studious man who helped me a lot with my book on German puzzles.” He helped and encouraged a lot of collectors and researchers. Rudolf Rühle's work will live on for a long time, and this personable friend and colleague will leave a memory not soon forgotten.

... and by Rick Tucker

Rudolf started corresponding with me by aerogrammes around the mid-1990s, and later by email. For around ten years or so, he would buy games from the German eBay site for me, since the sellers wouldn't mail to the USA; he periodically would send them to me. He purchased around 44 items for me. I'd occasionally buy things for him in the USA and mail them to him in Germany.

Though I never met Rudolf in person, I do have an autographed copy of his 2014 *Lexikon* book. 



Rudolf shows a game to Sybille Whitehill at his home in Bonn in 2012. Photo by Bruce Whitehill.