PJ 8-17-2001 SAPOLSKY Steven



# Steven Sapolsky; probed Holocaust-corporate links

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE

PITTSBURGH — Steven Sapolsky, 53, a historian and social activist who specialized in labor issues and helped form a group that called German corporations to account for their use of slave labor during World War II, died Sunday.

Mr. Sapolsky is survived by his parents, Eva and Asher Sapolsky, and a sister, Wanda Needleman, all of Providence, and a brother, Walter of Brookline, Mass.

Police said Mr. Sapolsky jumped off Panther Hollow Bridge, and the coroner ruled it a suicide.

Friends and family said he had the mind of an academic, the heart of a radical, the soul of an artist, and the self-critical nature of a perfectionist.

He was to begin a new job this week as assistant director of undergraduate programs at the Carnegie Mellon University School of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

"He was the most original thinker I ever met," said Wendy Goldman, a history professor at Carnegie Mellon University and Mr. Sapolsky's colleague in the Working Class History Seminar. "You never knew what was going to come out of his mouth, and because of that, people really listened to him. But by his own high standards, he was never good enough."

Mr. Sapolsky spent 12 years as an academic adviser to University of Pittsburgh undergraduates in the College of General Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences. There he was known for guiding overwhelmed students through the maze of courses they would need to realize their aspirations.

Mr. Sapolsky researched the history of German corporations, particularly Bayer AG, parent company of the Pittsburgh-based Bayer USA, and their role in the Holocaust.

He could recite chapter and verse about the factories that ringed the Nazi death camps, their use of slave labor, their complicity in human experiments, and their current record on human rights and environmental pollution.

His research proved invaluable to the Committee for Appropriate Acknowledgment, a small group of Jewish academics in Pittsburgh who have pushed for German companies to compensate surviving slave laborers and open their archives to outside scholars.

"He was a bird dog," said David Rosenberg, an official of the committee. "He would hunt down any piece of information and not stop until he found it."

Mr. Sapolsky grew up in the working-class community of Pembrook, near Harrisburg, Pa. His mother, a homemaker, and his father, a Russian immigrant who became a chemist for the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, were old-line radicals who reared their children on politics and social justice.

He attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he studied with Noam Chomsky, organized campus protests against the Vietnam war, helped run the radical publication Root and Branch, and earned his bachelor's degree in history.

In 1970, he came to Pitt as a National Defense Education Act Title IV Fellow and studied with the eminent labor historian David Montgomery, completing his master's degree in history in 1973. He was a Mellon Fellow at Pitt for the next several years, a teaching Fellow until 1982, then a research associate at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, where he co-authored a history of Homewood-Brushton.

All the while, he researched his dissertation topic, an examination of the Chicago labor movements at the turn of the 20th century.

"He could easily have gotten his Ph.D. by narrowing his focus," said his wife, Ilene Glickman of Squirrel Hill, "but he wanted to write something extraordinary and illuminating about why we don't have socialism in this country today. In his mind, he always needed to check one more thing."

Funeral services were held Wednesday afternoon at Ralph Schugar Chapel, 5509 Centre Ave., Shadyside. Burial will be private.

PJ 8/14/01

**SAPOLSKY, Steven W.**

August 12, 2001. Beloved husband of Ilene Glickman. Son of Asher and Eva Sapolsky. Brother of Wanda Needleman, all of Providence, RI and Walter Sapolsky of Boston, MA. Uncle of Deborah Needleman - Armintor, Daniel Needleman, Daisy and Gabriel Sapolsky. Services at Ralph Schugar Chapel; Inc., 5509 Centre Ave., Pittsburgh, PA on Wednesday at 12:30 PM. Visitation 1 hour prior to services (11:30 AM-12:30 PM.) Interment private. Contributions may be made to Center for Science in the Public Interest, Suite 300, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington DC 20009-5728.