

HANS WIEGAND  
Exchange Student Okemos Track Star

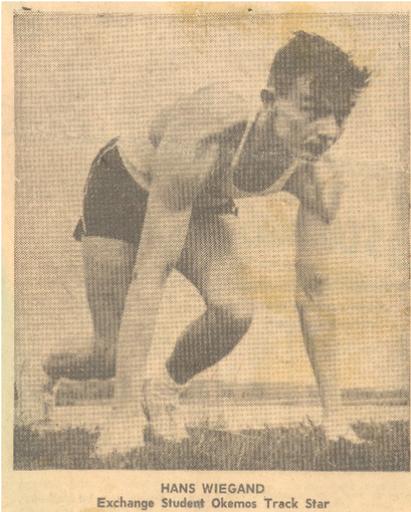
# THE EXCHANGE STUDENT SUPERSTAR

Sports . Classroom . Social

One Year OHS, Three Sports, Three Letters, School Record, Turkey Trot victory, All “A’s” and the unconfirmed record for “most dates”. A Student Exchange tradition that potentially will span three generations of the same host families.

By Rod Ellis '65

**Hans Gerd Wiegand Class  
of 1963**



## The Exchange Student:

### Track Superstar

from the Class of 1963

By Rod Ellis '65

Hans Wiegand not only never lost (until the injury), he was never even seriously challenged! I remember the whole track team lining up to watch Hans run the 100 and 220-yard dash. At about halfway, he would "float" and just keep his lead - you could actually see him relax and coast to the finish line! I got after him about not always pushing hard and I asked him if he didn't want to break the school record? \*(Dick Ewing 1953 10.0 in the 100 and 22.2 in the 220). He told me that "the risk of injury was too great and that he would only go faster to win". How fast was he capable of running? In Germany, he already clocked 11.0 in the 100m which would be equivalent to 10.1 or 10.0 in the 100-yard dash. I was amazed to realize that no competitor could beat him! He had recently run a 10.4 against Charlotte, but his best official time was 10.2 in the 100 and 22.9 in the 220 against several speedsters in a dual meet with Lansing Eastern. He didn't need those times to win, but he told me later that he wanted to discourage the Eastern sprinters from thinking they could win the 880-relay coming up.

1963 Tomahawk



HANS WIEGAND

The last event of that dual meet was the 880-yard relay. Four sprinters make three hand-offs of the baton, twice around the track. A short and very fast race since it is a 220-yard dash for each team member. No "floating" because it puts more pressure on the next sprinter on your team. A staggered start with Okemos on the inside lane meant that you start "behind" your competitor and stay in your lane to even out the distance at the curve. Coach Raymond chose to lead off with Hans. Raymond's strategy was psychological warfare: start Hans where he builds a huge lead after starting from "behind", which makes the other team think from the beginning of the race they cannot catch up and, at the same time our team with the lead will run like scared rabbits. It worked! Hans blew by his competitor and handed off to Jon Overholt '64 who stretched the lead and made a perfect exchange to Gary Sturk '64 who kept the lead and handed off to Lynn Van Sickler '64 who ran the sprint of his life...and won...a new school record at 1:34.4!

The whole Okemos Track team converged at the finish line to surround the jubilant track stars who were jumping up and down in celebration. Sprinters wore special track shoes only sold at Vandervorts in downtown Lansing. A very light shoe made from Kangaroo and long, fixed (not replaceable) spikes that they might even sharpen. Yep, Lynn Van Sickler got spiked during the celebration. As luck would have it, Willey Schultz's dad was at the meet and Dr. Schultz, a prominent Ophthalmologist and surgeon took Lynn to Sparrow Hospital a couple blocks away for lots of stiches down the side of his knee.

Van Sickler walked at practice for a few days, then light workouts on a stiff leg. The pressure was on the relay team to win the League and for the first time get Coach

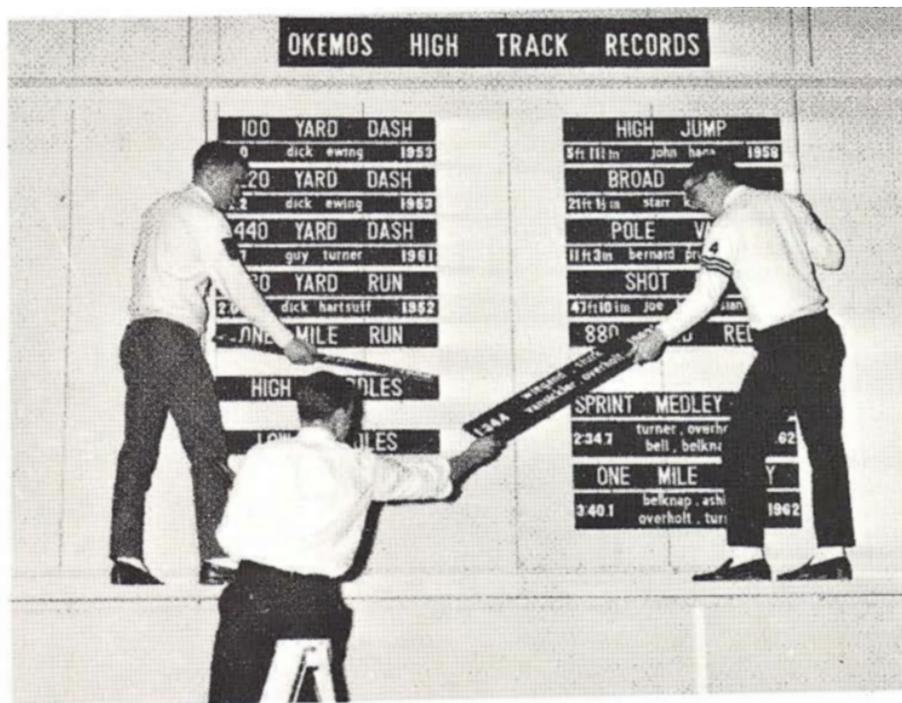
Raymond's team to the State finals. Then his worst fear happened...Hans pulled his ham-string muscle a week before the Capital Circuit League championship track meet. Coach Raymond took Hans out of class every day to Michigan State athletic department for treatments. The back of his leg turned black and he limped all week. He did everything he could, carefully following the instructions from the MSU trainers...walking, resting, cold packs, hot packs, special stretches.

It was a cold, wet evening for the League championship finals in the Spring of 1963. Hans stayed in the bus, pacing up and down the aisle, trying to get his leg warmed up. The 100-yard Dash was packed with top athletes, but all he had to do was to finish 3rd in order to advance to the finals. The gun went off and I could see Hans limping! He pushed it hard, but all he managed to do was to make the injury worse and came in 4th in a very tight race. The winning time in that heat was 10.9 seconds. Hans used to clock that time warming up in practice! Everyone was stunned - especially the competitors that Hans had blown away all season! It was a respectable time but was still not fast enough to have pushed him with his "just fast enough to win" philosophy, to an Okemos school record, if he had won...same for the finals which as I remember was 10.4. The 880 Relay team had to substitute and didn't make the finals. The whole team was shocked, and nothing was said on the bus heading home...except Coach Raymond asked me if our family had any plans for another exchange student the next year!

The track team won most of their meets that year, but with Hans out, placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Capital Circuit League championship. No new sprint records that year, but 880-yard Relay record held for several years.

In 1964, the Student Council funded a track record display that hung in the main gym on the north wall. Relay team member Gary Sturk is pictured hoisting the "new School Record".

Jon Overholt on the wall (left) putting up Jack Parisian's '63 High and Low Hurdle School Record's of 16.0 and 21.0 sec.



Jon Overholt, Gary Sturk and John Ruswinckel finish putting up the track record scoreboard.

The plaque reads:

880 YARD RELAY  
1:34.4 wiegand . sturk  
vansickler . overholt



## The Exchange Student: Cross-country Superstar

Who knows where the “Turkey Trot” tradition came from, but in late fall of 1962, the cross-country team challenged “any and all” high school students to the annual two-mile race on our home course. The race was “open” so everyone ran in one heat. It was usually a big event with the JV and Varsity CC team and entrants from many of the other sports. Coach Baker made the basketball team run; coach Brown had the football team so worn out in practice, they generally didn’t have the energy to run. The real challengers were the wrestlers! Even after months of training and competition, most of the cross-country team would be beaten by most of the wrestlers! Curiously, this year there were a lot of girls lining the course and packing the finish line. Three months into the school year, Hans was clearly the “Most Popular” and his fans turned out in droves!

Hans was a sprinter and didn’t like all the practice that went into long distance running. Nevertheless, he competed with the best at two miles. Kerry Byrnes and Hans were the only seniors and the team leaders were juniors and co-captains, Jon Overholt and Jim Somers who clocked the best time that season at 11 min and 12 seconds. Coach Bjorkquist liked to train the team using the Swedish technique (the Swedish didn’t translate very well and we died laughing asking Coach to repeat the name “fart lick”). It consisted of training at three interval speeds: jog, full run, sprint, jog, full run, sprint...for Hans, it was: jog, jog, sprint, jog, jog, sprint!

The gun went off and this great mass of runners charged forward. The cross-country team, experienced in running at big invitational races, sprinted ahead and took an early lead. By the one-mile mark, all the wrestlers had passed all the JV cross-country team! By 1 ½ miles, only a handful of Varsity Cross Country team, led by Kerry Byrnes, had a slight lead over the wrestling team led by Fred Stehman, Mike McGilliard, Randy Martin and Al Reynolds. I don’t remember what happened to Jim Somers and he may not have run that race.

In the last half mile, Kerry Byrnes took the lead and started to put some distance on the group. From my vantage point (way at the end of all the runners) it looked like Hans was hanging back with “the pack”.



First row: Mark VanDeventer, Pat Karslake, Fred Stehman, Randy Martin, Paul Crandell, Tim Tunks. Second row: Tom Riggs, manager; Neil Patterson, Eugene Brown, Dan Cope, Alvo Reynolds, Gary Ludwig, Al Reese. Third row: Charles

Grettenberger, David Williams, Larry Gobar, John Thomas, Grant Reynolds, Pete Georgiedy, Doug Willingham, Mike McGilliard.

With about 300 yards to go, and Kerry with a commanding lead, Hans lit on fire! No doubt encouraged by his cheering fans, he took off like a shot...



Cross country's most consistent runners, Hans Wiegand, Kerry Byrnes, Jim Allen, and Jim Somers run the course in preparation for the regional meet.

In his autobiography (published on OkemosAlumni.org), **Giants in Their Realms**, Kerry Byrnes '63 recounts his former teacher and cross country coach: "John Bjorkquist (biology and cross country) – Biology was not a favorite subject—and even less cutting into frogs—but Mr. Bjorkquist made the class tolerable and motivated me to be a better runner in cross county, resulting in taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the annual Turkey Trot, losing to a German xchange student (Hans) who sprinted past me in the last 100 yards."



First row: Kirk Campbell, Don Black, co-captain Jim Somers, co-captain Jon Overholt, Kerry Byrnes, Hans Wiegand, Jim Allen. Second row: John Bjorkquist, coach; Pete Georgiady,

Dave Parrish, Bill Breckenfeld, Greg Miller, John Gorden. Third row: John Ruswincki, Glen Gronseth, Lynn Van Sicker, Paul Chanel, Will Schultz, Brock Hotaling.

Odd, they skipped me (Rod Ellis) in the lineup captions...I guess not worth mentioning? I'm in the Second row, 6<sup>th</sup> down, between Miller and Gorden, directly behind Hans in the first row (Varsity).



## The Exchange Student: Basketball “Rock Star”

### Okemos High School Basketball Team 1962-1963



**First row:** Dick Ambrose, Bruce Gardner, Bill Hoskin, co-captain; Tom Shick, co-captain; Bill Brekenfeld, Al Hopkins.  
**Second row:** Bob Baker, coach; Lee Meadows, Jon Over-

holt, Howard Belknap, Jack Parisian. **Third row:** Bob Bratzler, manager; Hans Wiegand, Cary Hawkins, Ron Davis, Mike Baker, John Ruswinckel, manager.

The team was a good one that year, lead by Sophomore Bill Breckenfeld who would get even better the next two years. Hans got into half of the games, but when he shot, he was likely to score almost 64% of the time.

### OKEMOS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL STATISTICS 1962-63

Name	FG	FGA	PCT.	FT	FTA	PCT.	PF	G	PTS.	AVE.
Breckenfeld, Bill	83	198	41.9	34	54	63.0	47	15	200	13.32
Shick, Tom	63	137	45.9	64	94	68.1	37	15	190	12.69
Hoskin, Bill	49	136	36.0	12	30	40.0	22	15	110	7.34
Gardner, Bruce	31	80	38.8	15	31	48.4	33	15	77	5.14
Hopkins, Al	31	75	41.4	12	31	38.7	43	15	74	4.93
Meadows, Lee	21	50	42.0	10	17	58.9	16	13	52	4.00
Davis, Ron	8	21	38.1	1	2	50.0	7	5	17	3.40
Baker, Mike	17	48	35.4	15	26	57.7	30	15	49	3.27
Wiegand, Hans	7	11	63.6	2	2	100.0	8	7	16	2.29
Chanel, Paul	7	18	38.9	4	4	100.0	8	8	18	2.25
Overholt, Jon	1	1	100.0	0	0	0.0	0	1	2	2.00
Hawkins, Cary	11	30	36.7	7	16	43.8	11	15	29	1.93
Belknap, Howard	5	11	45.5	2	6	33.3	3	9	12	1.33
Ambrose, Dick	5	20	25.0	5	13	38.4	9	13	15	1.15
Parisian, Jack	2	5	40.0	0	3	0.0	2	5	4	0.83
TEAM	341	843	40.4	183	329	55.7	276	15	865	57.6
OPPONENTS	284	871	32.6	226	402	56.3	254	15	794	52.9

Basketball games are won on the most points scored. If points were earned by being “popular” instead of by baskets, Hans would have been the team leader.

There was excitement building when Okemos had a comfortable lead, not the anticipation of winning, rather the anticipation that Hans would get in the game!

50 years later, Cheerleader, Bev Smith saw Hans’ picture on the OkemosAlumni.org website and commented:

“Fun to see Hans as an adult. Still remember the standing ovation when Hans got into the basketball game off the bench.” Bev Smith Holt ‘65



First row: Bev Smith, Marilyn Cheney, Cindy Wang. Second row: Jacquie Caul, Janice Chiesa, Theo Wallin.

Bev remembered how popular Hans was...“he got a standing ovation from the fans when he got into the basketball game and the confused look on the opponents faces as they had no idea why everyone was cheering!”

In the Lansing State Journal April 24, 1963, Coach Raymond said:

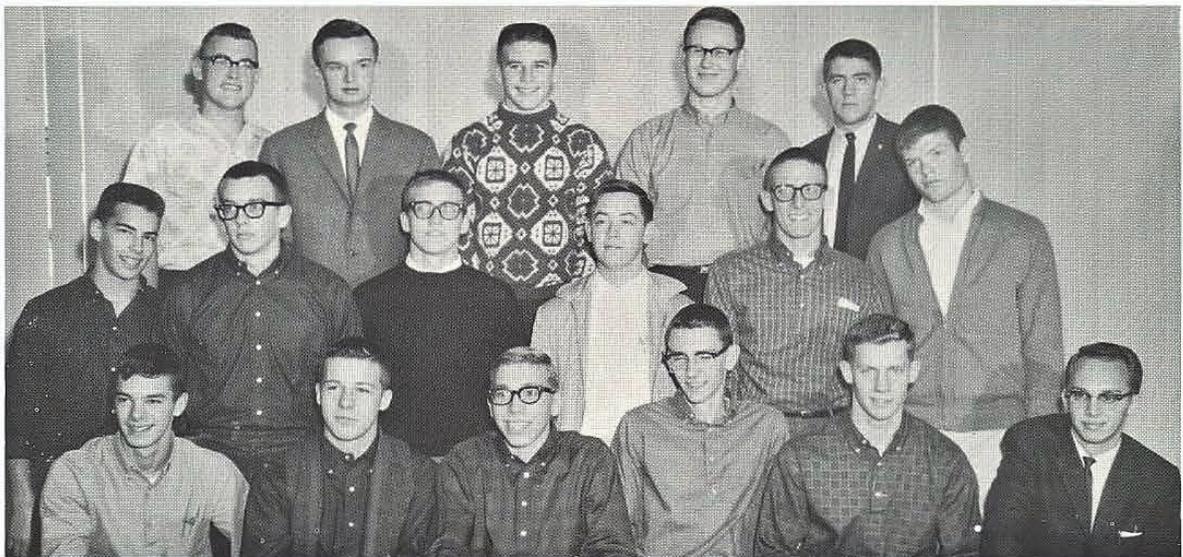
Hans played basketball on the varsity this past season and in one game Coach Bob Baker inserted him into the lineup. The student body stood and gave Hans a standing ovation.

“That’s what the students think of him,” Raymond said. “Hans is taking all prep courses which are hard but he’s a good student and is doing fine.”

### And In the Classroom...

From the perspective of performance and impact alone, I believe we will remember Hans Wiegand as the most accomplished athlete of the time. The excitement and expectation that he created in that one school year 1962/1963, will be with us forever. But to remember that one year in athletics would not tell the whole story of the impact he made on Okemos High School and why his story should be remembered and honored by all Okemos Alumni. Hans was not only a record holder for his “speed”, but was a record holder as a storied “student/athlete”.

## JETS Face Challenge of Science



First row: Tom Riggs, Dick Gilbert, vice president; Bill McCloud, president; Walter Willett, secretary; Bill Nothstine, treasurer; Mr. Bjoquist, sponsor. Second row: Fred Schultz, Greg Young, Chuck Gao, Ellery Cook, David Krause, Lee Meadows. Third row: Mark Johnson, Hans Wiegand, Bob Bratzlor, Milburn Amundsen, Chris Coburn.

From the 1963 Tomahawk "Senior Resume", (Note the "nice" editing of his name...HAND WIEGAND!), in one year was elected to Student Parliament, inducted into the Honor Society, joined four clubs and lettered in 3 sports (with one school record in Track, winner of the All School Turkey Trot and the only Basketball "sub" to get a standing ovation just for getting into the game!)

**HAND WIEGAND**  
Max-Planck-Gymnasium 1,2,3  
Student Parliament 4  
JETS 4  
Chess Club 4  
Varsity Club 4  
Senior Seminar 4  
Basketball 4  
Cross-country 4  
Track 4

Day.

Exchange student Hans Wiegand was guest speaker at a regular meeting. He talked about and showed slides on Germany. "The Pursuit of Excellence" was the topic for discussion at a series of meetings.

Guest speaker Hans Wiegand, Max-Planck-Gymnasium, Germany, speaks at FTA meeting.

## Girls Seek Knowledge of Teaching Field

During the year, the Okemos chapter of the Future Teachers of America strove to increase student interest and concern for educational programs. Exchange student Hans Wiegand discussed Germany's educational system at one of the FTA meetings. Other speakers included representatives from the Michigan School for the Blind and Mrs. Betty Goldstein, Okemos French teacher, who spoke on the use of language laboratories.

In recognition of American Education Week November 11-18, the FTA presented a panel discussion for the entire school. Members of the panel discussed schools in Japan, South Vietnam, Germany, and Algeria.

For a money-raising project, the FTA sponsored a chili supper. It was held in the cafeteria prior to the Okemos-Holt game February 1.



Sue Warner, Carol Connor, and Nancy Ellison discuss German education with Hans Wiegand.



**First row:** Marilyn Hotaling, Lynda Reed, Sue Jacoby, Dick Gilbert, SP representative; Hans Wiegand, Irene Conner, secretary; David Krause, vice president; Chris Coburn, president; Georgia Turner, treasurer; Sally Crafton, Carol Conner, Evelyn Wight. **Second row:** Mrs. Peterson, sponsor; Margaret Guertin, Betty Ann Schultz, Judy Johnson, Katie Johnson, Erna Hassell, Pat Vinge, Jill Ralston, Diane Laïtale, Jan

Coleman, Martha Travis, Janno Rutheford, Carol Reed, Barb Bartlett, Kuni Nuechterlein, Mr. Walbridge, sponsor. **Third row:** Mr. Raymond, sponsor; Cindy Kyle, Marilyn Gibler, Trisha Love, Anne Dahnke, Bob Bratzler, Bruce Champion, Walter Willett, Jon Overholt, Jack Parisian, John Ruswinckel, Don Black, Karl Boedecker.

## Honor Society Promotes High Goals, Values

The purpose of the National Honor Society according to its constitution is to, "create an enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote worthy leadership, and to encourage the development of character in students."

### The social life of a Superstar...

Hans was "our" Exchange Student. Our family was Emil and Doris Ellis, Melody (Class of '63), Rod '65 and Mary '67 and lived in Forest Hills. I can't remember what possessed my parents to take on another child. I had a good life going for me in 1962...the only boy in the family, my own room in the basement, Sophomore year coming up...and I lived next door to a cheerleader! And besides, "he" wasn't even in my grade! The Youth For Understanding representative came to our house in 1961 and showed us a binder of profiles and mug shots. Finally, my sister Mary picked him out because he was standing in front of some art. Mary figured it was a painting of his that he was showing off, so perfect, she wanted an artist.

Hans arrived in the summer of 1962, on Icelandic after a 20-hour transatlantic airplane (not jet!) flight from West Germany (remember "the Berlin Wall"). He was quiet at first,

not confident with his English. Mary showed him the “mug shot” the agency gave us to recognize him at the airport and he quickly dispelled the “artist” notion: “Nine...idst just hangs on der vall to make me look goot”. Everyone in our family played musical instruments and our dad used to be a band director...”do you play any musical instruments?”...”Ya, I play der radio!” We all laughed and laughed...I could picture this might be fun after all!

The Class of 1963 was unique in many ways. It was a small class of around 100 but they had a disproportionate number of science and academic students, hung out together in large groups and were very sociable. Melody wanted to introduce him to the class right away, so what better way than a “pool party”. Twenty years later, I asked Hans if he had any special recollections of events at Okemos (track, cross country, basketball meets, practice, the coaches, other team members, dances at the High School or the cheerleaders?).

1963 with Judy Diller at Prom



He recollected this first pool party at Jim Eichmerier's house! As the fun and foolishness ensued, Hans hit the bottom of the pool, cut his face above his eye. We took him to Dr. Breckenfeld's office at night and got him "sewed up"...without anesthetic! Hans said that for years, he “impressed the German girls” with his “dueling scar”! And 50 years later, he still has the perfect accent of a high school Senior from the Mid-West, when recollecting about that magical year at Okemos.



Last picture of his first time in America

A couple of years ago, I first thought about writing about Hans. I regret not starting the project when I thought about it since I wanted to interview Coach Baker and Coach

After watching Hans run in two meets, Coach Raymond wouldn't mind it at all if the community stepped up its program and started bringing exchange students in groups.

Raymond about their recollections of Hans. By now, we have lost them both, but their thoughts about Hans were recorded 54 years ago in the article below. Highlighted from that article are Coach Raymond's thoughts about Hans.

I think coach thought it was a good experience!

In the spring of 1963, Hans was interviewed by the Lansing newspaper Sportswriter. By then, the word was out that Okemos had an exceptional student/athlete "dropped-in-their-lap" and "the word" was being spread by his coaches. The Exchange Student Superstar had it all...academics, personality and athletics...this was headline material (well, ok, Section E, page 2, but headline, nevertheless). It's a great read and tells the tale of this great episode in Okemos High School history.

# German Exchange Student Boosts Track Title Hopes at Okemos High School

By BOB GROSS  
(Journal Sports Writer)

OKEMOS — Hans Wiegand, a 17-year-old exchange student from Germany, is one reason why Okemos High's track team is making a serious challenge to win the school's first Capital Circuit League championship in seven years.

Although the season is young

and the conference meet a good month away, Coach Gary Raymond is confident that his Chiefs, unbeaten after two triangular meets, could possibly win the crown.

Arriving at Okemos from Dortmund, Germany, as part of an exchange student program sponsored by this community, Wiegand was quick to let it be known he was a track man.

Coach Raymond was more than happy to fill the request of this young dash-whiz who wants very much to run the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds.

Hans, warmly accepted by the students and one of the more popular fellows in his senior class, wasn't the least bashful when he raced up to Raymond and said he ran track in his country.

Running track for his Gymnasium team, Hans did not win ribbons, pins or medals nor did his school get a trophy for any championships. "We never hear of these things back home," Hans said. "We have no cheerleaders or big crowds rooting us on. Our competition is real good and track is a growing sport, but we don't have the good facilities like they do in America."

Since Okemos doesn't have its own track, Hans couldn't say much about the facilities there, but he was referring to the equipment and general track conditions that he has seen since coming here at the start of the school year.

"In our country we have three track meets," Hans said. "There is a city, county and state meet which is like your conference, regional and state meet," he added.

"We have better competition, I think, because in Germany we have to work hard. If we don't—we fail. In America it's up to the individuals because there is more freedom," Hans added.

Hans competed in soccer and handball while attending his high school in addition to running track. "We run our dashes in meters. The 100-yard dash in America is 110 meters in Germany." (10 yards more than our distance).

"I'm working hard to make 10 seconds," Hans said. "So far I haven't really been pushed and ran 10.4 the other day in our track meet at Charlotte." The track was sloppy, after a day-long rain.

Hans has two sisters who live with his parents in Germany. "I have to go back home in July to finish my last year of high school," he said, "but some day I would like to come back here to attend college."

Track in Germany is run on the point system. The athlete who compiles the most points in the 100-meter, broadjump, shotput and the relays, is the winner. Hans has never won all of the events. "We have to compete in all four events and it is very difficult to become champion."

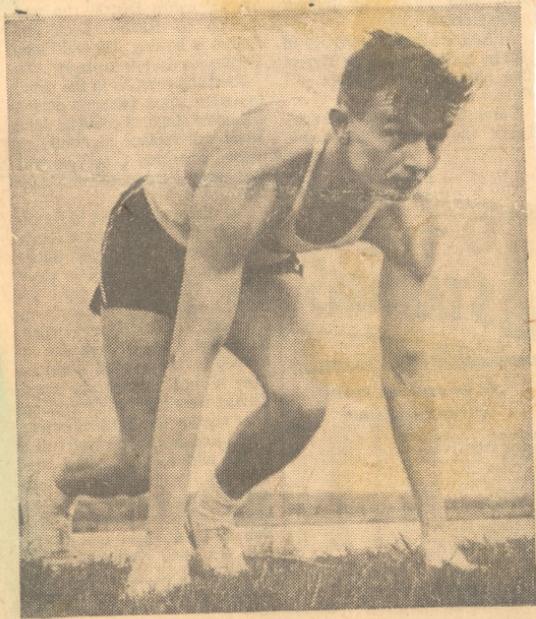
The reason why track is becoming more popular there is because there are more boys. The school Hans attends is an all-boy school in which there are 600 boys.

Hans played basketball on the varsity this past season and in one game Coach Bob Baker inserted him into the lineup. The student body stood and gave Hans a standing ovation.

"That's what the students think of him," Raymond said. "Hans is taking all prep courses which are hard but he's a good student and is doing fine."

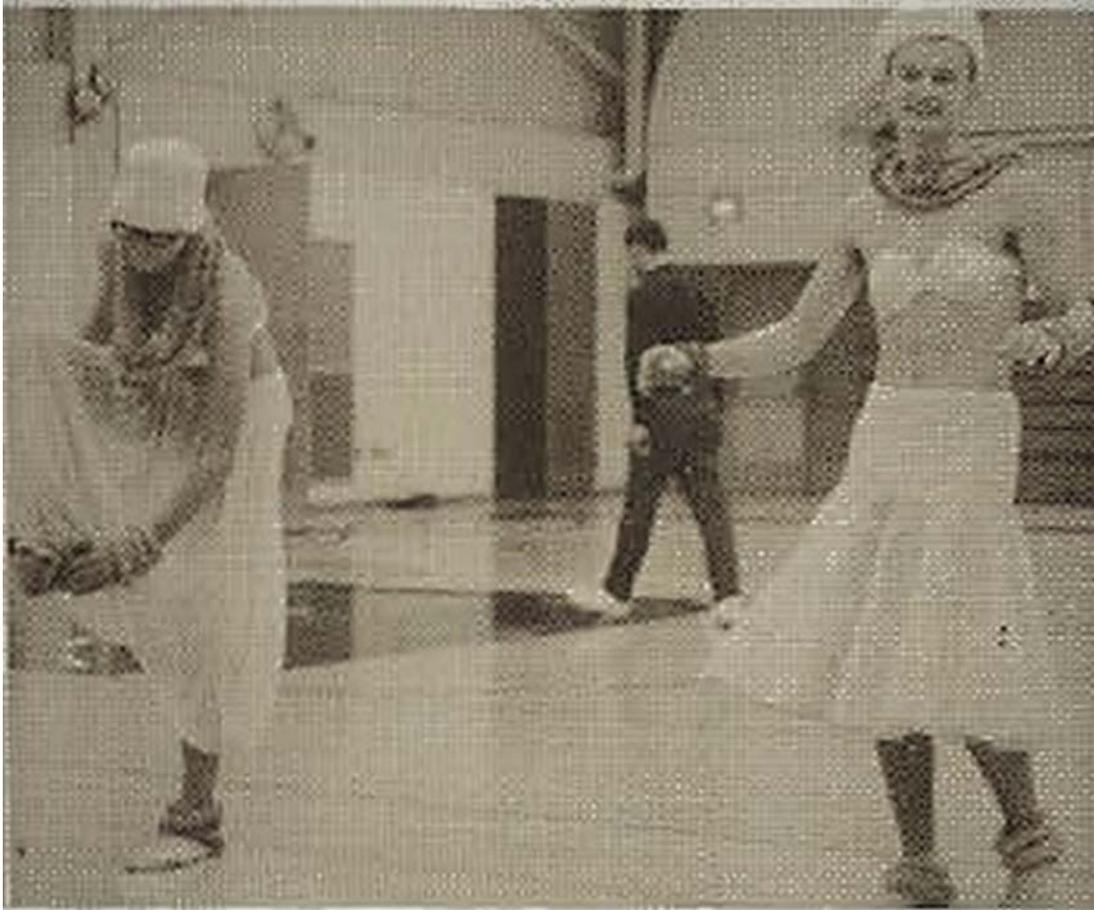
The exchange student program or "Youth for Understanding" project is popular in Okemos. There are several foreign students at the school and one Okemos girl is presently in Germany.

After watching Hans run in two meets, Coach Raymond wouldn't mind it at all if the community stepped up its program and started bringing exchange students in groups.



HANS WIEGAND  
Exchange Student Okemos Track Star

*1962 Hans and Tom Shick "going all out for a good cause"! Okemos High School gym.*



Hans Wiegand and Tom Shick portray Hula Girls in the senior skit for Community Services Day.

[Click to go to Hans' Profile and enter your comments and memories.](#)

## Epilog

Although Hans left in the summer of 1963, he has remained very close to his American family and classmates. Letters, phone calls and tape recordings were regular events



through each year. He (and later his family) often returned for holidays and us for weddings (we didn't miss any of his 3 children's weddings) and vacations (pictured is Cassie, our daughter Maggie, Hans and Madalena in Paris 1997). I figure that someone in our family has been with

someone in his family every year since High School! In 1990, Hans and family made one of their many trips to the States, pictured is Hans and daughter Suzanna at our cottage on Lake Michigan (Still waterskiing!). Classmates too, visited Hans...I think the first was Jon Overholt (from the relay team) who traveled to Dortmund in the summer 1965. In the summer of 1966, Melody, I and Bruce Gardner ('63) met up with Hans and for 10 weeks, toured Europe in a VW Beetle! That summer is a travelogue adventure worth writing about. Melody asked Bruce at their 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion in 2013, if he was up to redoing the trip, to which he responded that "he was ready!". I plan on putting my memories of that trip on paper and giving it to his kids...Bruce Gardner died in October, 2016.



Over all the years with Hans, I rarely and only briefly heard anything from him about his formative years in athletics and only casual mentions (usually in a letter) about his athletic activities after high school. So, "for the record", I recently posed some questions by phone and email, and after endless prodding, his wonderful wife, Madalena, sat him down, asked him questions and transcribed his answers. As it turned out, she was just as surprised as me to hear these wonderful recollections of his past. Always with, humor and self-deprecation, Hans filled in the gaps much better than I could if I was there when it happened...and at one of the following events, I was there!

## **Questionnaires for Okemos Alumni:**

(Hans Gerd Wiegand speaking with his wife, Madalena)

**February 11, 2017**

### **How was your “athletic life“? (Madalena poses the questions)**

#### **Hans, you’re born in 1944. Which were your first sport activities?**

As every little boy in Germany (also nowadays) I started playing soccer, in the Fifties of last century among the ruins of World War II – there was a lot of space, because the town of Dortmund, where we lived was heavily bombed.

#### **When did you become first member of a sports club?**

About the age of 10 I became member of a gymnastics club, because my older sisters went there, too. But I realized very quickly that I was much too heavy and tall to become a good gymnast. So, I started playing soccer in a club. It’s important to know that my birth town Dortmund is famous for its soccer club. At soccer, it was very important to be quick, run quick and to be able to stand when an opponent tries to hit you. At this time our coach realized my ability in running and jumping. Mostly I was faster than the opponent.

#### **Which other kind of sports did you practice at this time?**

Regarding my ability to run and jump I also joined at school our basketball team. That means at least two times a week I practiced - compared with my training time at Okemos this was very little.

#### **Can you tell me a story you still remember?**

I still remember a basketball game which took place in Reims (France). I was there as a member of the senior school team and we were playing against a French school team from a High School. First after our arrival (by bus about 600 km or so), the French boys gave us the possibility to visit the town, the famous cathedral, and last but not least we had a guided tour through the famous champagne cellars. They tried to make us drink a lot – which we did! -, hoping that we would lose the next day our match against them. But they were disappointed – we won!

#### **What else can you tell me from this time at school?**

Well, then I spent one year at Okemos High School – and you know already how I was doing there. I loved the special conditions there, which were much better than in Germany – it was really a great time! In Okemos I was lucky to be chosen as member of the senior basketball team, I ran cross country and won the yearly turkey trot.

#### **What did you do when you got back to Germany?**

First, I had to finish High School, then I had to do military service. As a soldier, I was one of the representatives of my unit for track competitions – and besides this, soldiers always had a lot of physical challenges, so that I didn’t lose my good physical condition.

**And after this time you began studying at the Technical University of Aachen, right?**

Yes, and there I had a lot of possibilities to try other kinds of sport as well – for instance sailing at the nearby Northern Sea in the Netherlands. I liked sailing very much, so I passed my sailing license at the Yachting Club at the Baltic Sea. After we were married a few years and our two first children were born, we rented a boat for summer vacation and showed the kids how much fun it is to be on the sea in a sailboat.

**Were there other new activities as well?**

Yes, I learned how to ski, because at university I had friends from Austria, who practiced skiing since childhood. We went places in Austria and Switzerland – but I never learned how to ski like them; I was fast and went straight downhill, but without much of technique. That one winter I fell and broke my thumb. Fortunately, we were in Switzerland, where surgeons have great experience in treating these ski-accidents. After this treatment, I was some years really wealthy, because they implanted a platinum plate in my thumb – this was at that time “state of the art” and could only be done in Switzerland.

As a student at Aachen, I also played tennis and continued track, but it was more like a hobby without competitions.

**After graduation from Aachen, you started to work for a company in Nuernberg. Was this the end of your sport activities?**

No, it was not. As with many companies in Germany, they had a soccer team. I joined the team and we used to play soccer once a week after work. Also, I started jogging with a colleague from the company. As our family grew, we took bike tours during vacation. Until the age of 50, I had passed the “Sports Badge” every year. When we moved to Weinheim (near Heidelberg), I had less time for sports. So, instead of playing soccer, which can be very dangerous for “old boys” who like to attack the opponent, I started to play basketball again – until I learned, that this also is dangerous. One evening I got home and my wife (Madalena) had to drive me to the hospital because my thumb (the second one!) was broken. This was the end of my career as a basketball player.

**Did you find a replacement for track, soccer and basketball?**

Indeed, I did. During 12 years, Madalena and I made long distance bike rides along the rivers in Germany. There are good bike trails along these rivers and no hills! In the evening, we used to stop in a hotel somewhere in a nice city, the luggage was safely on our bikes – we just needed our credit cards to spend wonderful vacations!

**What was the longest distance you made by bike?**

In 2003 we started in front of our house and rode up the Rhine Valley all the way to the Northern Sea, about 500 km (310 miles).



**Where there other vacations as well with sport activities?** Yes, for instance, in 2012, a boat and bike tour on the Danube River with our American friends Rod ('65) and Cassie Ellis! We spent a great time on a boat going from Passau to Vienna, with the possibility to accompany the boat by biking. It was great fun!

**Hans, now at the age of 72, which kind of sport do you still practice?**

Unfortunately, I'm suffering from a Lewy-Body-Disease, and therefore we had to finish the biking. I still go to a Health Club twice a week, where I join a so-called "Cycle-Well-Group". I like walking in the forest near our home, but that's it.

Sounds like a "too good to be true" movie...

Little Hansie, grows up in the ashes of war, in his youth, he matures in a rebuilding nation then comes to America and electrifies his Senior Class with his wit, intelligence and athletic skills. After setting records, winning trophies, making lifelong friends (and don't forget, dating all the girls!), returns to his native land, earns his doctorate and climbs the global corporate world...with his wit, intelligence and athletic skills.

Hans Gerd Wiegand, "Superstar" Okemos High School Class of 1963

Rod and Cassie Ellis, Madalena and Hans Wiegand, Sunset on the beach, Bordeaux, France  
2001



*2012 Hans and Madalena dancing with their Grand Children in Germany*





Hans and Madalena  
Weinheim, Germany  
2002



Hans and Rod Ellis in Hourtin, France 2001

**Hans Gerd Wiegand and Rod Ellis**  
**Weinheim, Germany June 29, 2018**



Mein geliebter Mann,  
unser liebevoller Papa, Schwiegervater und Opa

## Prof. Dr. Gerd Wiegand

14. 08. 1944 - 15. 12. 2018

wurde von seiner Krankheit erlöst und durfte sanft entschlafen.  
In unseren Herzen lebt er weiter:

In Liebe und Dankbarkeit  
Madalena Wiegand  
Niklas und Meike Wiegand mit Pauline und Charlotte  
Britta und Dr. Tilmann Gruhlke mit Jonathan, Jasper  
und Jesko  
Susanne Wiegand

Nun aber bleiben,  
Glaube, Hoffnung,  
Liebe, diese drei;  
aber die Liebe ist die  
Größte unter ihnen.

*1. Kor. 13,13*

Wir nehmen Abschied am 22.12.2018, 10.30 Uhr in der Johanniskirche in 69469 Weinheim, Hauptstraße 127.  
Anschließend findet um 11.30 Uhr die Beisetzung auf dem Hauptfriedhof Weinheim statt.  
Von Blumenspenden bitten wir abzusehen; wer möchte, kann mit einer Kondolenzspende die Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e. V. unterstützen. IBAN: De19 3702 0500 0008 0634 00 - Stichwort: Wiegand - Lewy Body Demenz

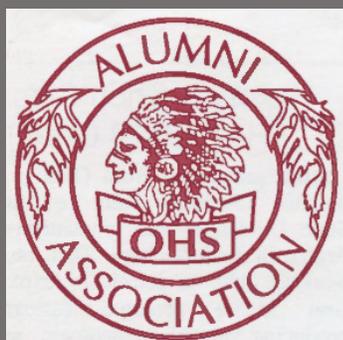


Hans Gerd Wiegand, August 14, 1944 to December 15, 2018

German Exchange Student, August 1962 to July 1963

Okemos High School, September 1962 to June 1963

Okemos Class of 1963



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