This Festschrift volume of the Journal is in many ways an offbeat production. For one thing, the dedication of a publication to a staff member is something of a departure at the Museum. For another, the honored party's own essays seldom appear in a Festschrift, but the man we celebrate has been generating articles at such a rate—pieces of sterling merit, produced seemingly without effort—that we are able to include a full trio of them. We are pleased to publish a list of his writings here, compiled with the aid of Stuart Pyhrr, his successor in the Arms and Armor department. We also take the opportunity to mention some events that have shaped the life of this man and may account in some measure for the momentous contributions he has made.

Helmut Nickel first saw the light of day on March 24, 1924—and thus we have missed by a few months feting him on his actual birthday. His place of birth, Quohren, is a small village in the county of Dippoldiswalde in Saxony. His memory of the sights of the neighborhood is indelible; those who went to Dresden to prepare for The Splendor of Dresden exhibition held at the Museum in 1978–79 testify to the enraptured enthusiasm with which he revisited Pirna and other scenes of his boyhood. His parents were schoolteachers, booklovers who must have encouraged his passion for investigation. For a time he pursued the study of animals, a field that has never failed to fascinate him. It can only be expected that the move to Florida is now affording him acquaintance with several diverting New World species.

As a young man, having experienced the miseries of war, Helmut made his way westward and in 1950 enrolled in the Freie Universität in Berlin. Simultaneously, from 1951 through 1957, he was a lecturing guide in the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin, and it was in the middle of this period, in 1953, that he took the important step of marrying Hildegard Wese- mann. His university curriculum matched a broad appetite, balancing art history with studies in classical, Near Eastern, and Pre-Columbian archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology, and in medieval history and literature. In this he reflected the multiple interests of a cherished mentor, Edwin Redslob, co-founder and rector of the Freie Universität. His first publication, in 1955, was an article for Redslob's Festschrift, on the tomb of a Grand Commander of
A vignette from *Winnetou*, illustrated by Helmut Nickel for the Karl May comics: The young brave is sheltered by a tall pair of boots.

the Teutonic Knights, illustrated in the main by his own drawings. In 1958, Helmut took his doctorate magna cum laude from the university with a dissertation on medieval equestrian shields, subsequently published in serial form.

Helmut's gift for draughtsmanship may surprise readers unfamiliar with all facets of his career. His vivid style and ethnographic perceptions enabled him to support himself during his student years by producing a staggering number of drawings for adventure comic books. His unsigned drawings detailing the escapades of the Indian brave Winnetou, the swashbuckling Don Pedro, and the voyager Robinson entertained countless German children. He is to be found in *The World Encyclopedia of Comics* under the heading “Robinson.” The entry writer, “W. F.,” observes: “The anatomy of Nickel's figures is perfect, and the artist has a knack of adding a cartoony touch to some of the characters, thus providing the comic relief that so often is the frosting on the cake in adventure stories.” W. F. then laments that “Nickel, who dropped out of sight after a decade or so of comic book work, is sorely missed on the German comics scene.” That loss is the museum world's gain, but it would be wrong not to take this occasion to hint at the dramatic choice of viewpoint and the shifting play of blacks and whites in Helmut's best efforts. His unhesitating accuracy can also be attested by anyone who has watched him sketch an armorial shield. Indeed the draughtsman's informed, selective eye may help to account for the way in which many of Helmut's curatorial acquisitions linger in the mind as singularly strong images.

In 1958–59, Helmut worked as a curatorial assistant in the Lipperheidesche Kostümbibliotek in Berlin and in 1959–60 as a researcher for the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft in Berlin, preparing a survey of local manuscripts entitled *Schrifttum zur deutschen Kunst*. It was then that he came to the attention of James Rorimer, director of the Metropolitan Museum, as a candidate for an opening in the Arms and Armor department. Helmut arrived at the Museum as a curatorial assistant in 1960. English cannot have been much of a problem for this astonishing polyglot, and the Nickels took to New York immediately, although Hildegard recalls some trying experiences finding available housing. The hurly-burly of our ambitious, multifaceted institution must have been bracing, in any case, and it immediately engaged Helmut's talents for research and communication.

In his first years here Helmut gave little evidence of the zest for writing that would result eventually in a flood of publications. His first *Bulletin* article did not appear until 1965, but this was surely not a matter of writer's block. One factor that unquestionably slowed down his publications was the Museum's accelerating program of special exhibitions. There was no Department of Primitive Art in 1965, so it fell to Helmut to coordinate an exhibition of the Nathan Cummings collection of Pre Columbian pottery. So much value was placed on Helmut's breadth of knowledge and the harmonious working relationships he was able to establish that he was given the curatorial responsibility for such major exhibitions as *In the Presence of Kings* in 1967 and the aforementioned Dresden exhibition.

Once Helmut's articles began to appear, they flowed without cease from a pen never less than brilliant. We note with pleasure how many have appeared in the *Journal*. In fact, he has been its most regular contributor, starting with the first volume in 1968. Until his retirement last year, he was the only member of the original *Journal* board still serving, and he actually helped edit some of the articles for this volume, little knowing the issue was destined to be dedicated to him.
Helmut relates with relish how Thomas Hoving, then director, charged the newly formed *Journal* board to edit a yearly compilation of "dull, scholarly articles in the German *Jahrbuch* style." As those who have served on the board know full well, Helmut's patient tolerance of well-intentioned but "dull" authors is nearly as great as his liking for headier scholarship; that blue gaze of his is as kindly as it is keen. In any case, the word *dull* would never apply to one of his own manuscripts. Well-shaped gems they are, making all sorts of telling points while written with admirable economy, indeed rewriting aspects of history across the wide range of studies in medieval and Renaissance iconography, heraldry, and weaponry. Invariably his manuscripts are clearly thought through, a quality that has always endeared him to editors. We look forward to many more.

The list of Helmut's writings does not even touch upon a category in which he has always excelled, and that is the reporting of new accessions. His latest effort in this vein, for *Recent Acquisitions 1987-1988*, is a model of its sort, telling us what we need to know about a giant Bohemian ceremonial arrowhead of the fifteenth century. We learn along the way that it is one of only four of its size and type in existence and that two of these are already in the Museum's collection, having also been acquired during Helmut's tenure—but this fact is expressed with characteristic modesty. Only one familiar with the Museum's inventory numbering system would catch it. Equally modestly, the entry declines to mention that the new find constitutes an addition to Helmut's prior study of the subject, "Ceremonial Arrowheads from Bohemia," his first *Journal* article.

Speaking of Helmut's purchases, masterpieces spring readily to mind: a flintlock fowling piece made for Louis XIII, bought in 1972, or the Hever Castle Hispano-Moresque helmet, acquired in 1983. As for gifts, were not their majesties King Bhumidol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit of Thailand moved to commemorate his exhibition *In the Presence of Kings* by presenting a Siamese ceremonial sword? The collecting of objects rich in historical association is a tradition of the Arms and Armor department, a tradition never more stoutly upheld than under Helmut's guidance. John T. Schiff's gift of the ivory-stocked pistols

A Nickel illustration for *Robinson*: The hero, pursued by Tartars, leaps to safety.
of Catherine the Great provides but one reminder. And, most fittingly, our Chairman of the Board, Mr. Sulzberger, observed the occasion of Helmut’s retirement by giving in his honor the magnificent gold-handled sword of a Langobardic chieftain.

From a colleague’s day-to-day point of view, the main point to be made about Helmut Nickel does not concern acquisitions or publications. Put simply, it is his extreme generosity in sharing his vast reserves of information, a chivalrous habit that was regularly and memorably in evidence at our monthly *Journal* board meetings. A moment would typically arise when, the business at hand having been dealt with, Helmut would launch into a mesmerizing exposition of some topic, brief but laden with all manner of linguistic and ethnological relevance. That erudition and that liberality have prompted us to respond in the form of this Festschrift. Reasons of space have obliged us to limit the contributors to past and present Museum staff members, but we have no doubt that friends far and wide will echo our feelings of indebtedness and affectionate thanksgiving.

The correct way for a Museum professional to carry a sword, drawn by Helmut Nickel for *The Care and Handling of Art Objects* (New York, 1986)