Amos Leslie Willson Jr., past president of ATA, died on December 28, 2007 in Austin, Texas.

Leslie was born on June 14, 1923 in Texhoma, Oklahoma. With his parents, Amos Leslie Willson and Richie Hobgood Willson, and sister, Patricia Mae Willson, Leslie moved from town to town within the Texas panhandle during the Great Depression before settling in Amarillo, where he graduated from Amarillo High School. He was a voracious reader and, contemplating a writing career, entered the University of Texas at Austin to pursue a journalism degree. World War II interrupted his education, and Leslie joined the army, where he discovered a talent for the German language, in which he quickly became fluent.

Toward the end of his three-year military service, Leslie was assigned, along with other German-speaking soldiers, to a top secret operation at Fort Hunt, Virginia, known only as P.O. Box 1142, an operation only recently declassified. He and the other men of P.O. Box 1142 lived with and interrogated high-level prisoners of war who had knowledge of Germany’s submarine and rocket technology.

After the war, Leslie returned to the University of Texas at Austin, but changed his major to Germanic languages. While attending graduate school there, he met Margaret Jeanne Redrow, of Cincinnati, Ohio, a fellow graduate student in German. Jeanne and Leslie were married in 1950 in Cincinnati. They moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where Leslie attended graduate school. After receiving his Ph.D., Leslie taught briefly at Wesleyan College in Connecticut and Northwestern University in Illinois before returning to Austin to accept a teaching position at the University of Texas. Leslie then taught at Duke University and Pennsylvania State University before settling again in Austin in 1966 as a full professor at the University of Texas. He served as chairman of the university’s German department for eight years.

Leslie became a highly respected educator and translator of contemporary German literature, befriending many top German writers along the way, including Günter Grass. From 1968 to 1994, he was the editor of Dimension, a bilingual literary magazine dedicated to the presentation of contemporary German-language authors. Leslie was the co-founder of the American Literary Translators Association, and served as the association’s president from 1978 to 1979. Leslie was recognized for his scholarly work with awards from the Goethe-Institut in Munich and the German government. He retired as professor emeritus in 1992.

Leslie was a member of ATA from 1974 to 2003. During this time, he served as a member of ATA’s Board of Directors from 1985 to 1988. He was the association’s president-elect from 1989 to November 1991, after which he served as ATA president from 1991 to 1993. Leslie continued to stay active in the association, serving as a member of the editorial board of The ATA Chronicle from 1993 to 2003. He was also a member of the Austin Area Translators and Interpreters Association.

Leslie is survived by his three children, Brian, Juliet, and Kevin, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. His wife Jeanne died on May 11, 2006. Leslie’s memorial service was held on January 5, 2008 at Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home in Austin. The family requests that memorial contributions be made to the Central Texas SPCA, P.O. Box 98, Cedar Park, TX 78630.