

## IPA NEWS

IN MEMORIAM  
BEVERLEY SIMEON COLLINS (1938–2014)

‘Bev’ Collins died suddenly from a heart attack on the 12th of June 2014 at the age of 75. He was born in Cardiff on the 27th of December 1938. When only ten years old, he lost his father, a 53-year-old ex-serviceman whose Jewish parents had come to Britain from Ukraine as refugees from the pogroms. Bev liked to quote amusing sayings of his Yiddish-speaking grandmother’s sometimes, one suspected, apocryphally. A linguistic idiosyncrasy he had was his Hebraic habit of using the word *sheva* rather than *schwa*. Five years after his father had died he also suffered the loss of his mother. One of his teachers at Whitchurch Grammar School Cardiff, Malcolm Stevens, and his wife Joan, kindly invited Bev to live with them and he happily shared their home for the remaining years of his education, but often spending time, when he could, with his much loved married elder sister Beryl at Bristol.

At Cardiff he graduated in English in 1960, gaining a teaching diploma the following year. Latterly he had received the distinction of being made editor of the University newspaper. After his marriage in 1961 to fellow student Maidie Llewellyn, he became a lecturer in English at Erith Technical College in Northwest Kent, close to London. Their daughter Rachel was born in 1963 and son Philip in 1965. Later he moved to Thurrock Technical College in East Essex, where he came to work chiefly with francophonic African teachers of English. During that stage he enrolled as a part-time student at the Department of Phonetics of UCL (University College London) and his career in phonetics was launched. After a first course leading to a Certificate in Phonetics in 1966, he proceeded to various post-graduate courses in phonetics and linguistics not only at UCL but also at the School of Oriental and African Studies.

In these years he became tutor to, and latterly director of, the annual re-training courses for teachers of English run each summer at Lomé in West Africa by the UK Ministry of Overseas Development. By 1969 he arrived at the post of Lecturer in Phonetics in the Department of English at the University of Lancaster, where he set up the laboratory of what later became its Department of Linguistics. Over the period from 1969 to 1974, with characteristic energy, he included in his schedules activities as tutor to various in-service courses for teachers of English organised jointly by the Dutch Ministry of Education and the British Council. An outcome of these was an invitation he accepted in 1973 to move to the Netherlands, to the Utrecht Institute for Teacher Training. In 1975 he took up his final full-time lectureship to specialise in phonetics in the Department of English at the University of Leiden, a position which he held until he retired in 2003. In 1988 he received a doctorate from the Phonetics Institute of Utrecht University for a thesis on the early life and work of the great British phonetician Daniel Jones (Collins 1988).

During the years 1989–2003 he found time to fit in visits to the universities of Newcastle-on-Tyne (UK), Catania (Italy), Galway (Ireland) and Ljubljana (Slovenia), and to hold visiting lectureships for short periods at the universities of Cardiff, Ghent and Valladolid. From 1993 to 1999 he was a lecturer, tutor and joint organiser in Spain of the annual English Phonetics Summer School of the University of Murcia. He taught on other summer courses – in London in 1968 for the British Council, at Lancaster University in 1972 and at the University of Wrocław in Poland in 1998. On his retirement he became an Associate Member of the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics, and continued to teach and publish prolifically. In 2003 he indefatigably continued to work accepting a part-time lectureship at the Université Catholique de Lille from 2003 to 2008 and a Visiting Professorship at Ghent University from 2005 to 2007. He was responsible at Ghent for all the undergraduate teaching of English phonetics. Over the years, he acted as co-supervisor or external examiner for a number of doctorates at the universities of Ghent, Leiden, Newcastle and Utrecht.

By 1999, in collaboration with a colleague whose doctoral thesis he had supervised, Dr Inger Mees, he had expanded his own doctoral thesis into a superb complete biography, the highly praised *The Real Professor Higgins: The Life and Career of Daniel Jones* (Collins & Mees 1999). He published numerous other books and articles. Almost all of them were also written jointly with Dr Mees, in a remarkably successful authorial partnership of thirty-five years. Their publications ranged over a wide variety of aspects of phonetics among which were articulatory settings, historiography of linguistics, sociolinguistics, the phonetics of Cardiff English, glottalisation in English, pronouncing dictionaries and pronunciation training. Especially notable was their fine book *The Phonetics of English and Dutch* (Collins & Mees 1996), which took its final form in 1996. Their textbook on British English, *Practical Phonetics and Phonology* (Collins & Mees 2003a), is unrivalled for its abundance of descriptive and practice materials, and its outstanding provision of illustrative diagrams and maps. In 2003 they began editing, and supplying perceptive accompanying commentaries upon, three unique series of re-publications of works of notable significance in the history of phonetics. These began with the eight volumes of *Daniel Jones: Selected Works* (Collins & Mees 2003b). This was followed by the seven volumes of selected articles and book chapters which constituted the *Phonetics of English in the 19th Century* (Collins & Mees 2005). In 2013 they produced, with the assistance of Paul Carley, their last such set, a six-volume collection *English Phonetics: Twentieth Century Developments* (Collins & Mees with Carley 2013), which reprinted various articles and booklets and even several whole books.

The audio recordings of Bev's interviews with prominent British linguists who had close contacts with Daniel Jones received the recognition of being incorporated into the British Library Sound Archives. In 1992 he was awarded a research grant to enable him to set up the official University College Library Daniel Jones Archive. He was an enthusiastic member of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas to whose publications he contributed.

In time he and his wife Maidie grew out of harmony. She returned to England and they became formally separated. From 1988 for the rest of his life Bev was happily married to Sandra Fyfe, the distinguished Scottish author and lecturer on the staff of the Central Netherlands Polytechnic. They celebrated their silver wedding in 2013.

Easy though his manner was, his presentations were the fruits of prolonged perfectionist preparations. The last series he gave, from 2007 to 2013, was as a principal lecturer and tutor on the annual Summer Course in English Phonetics at UCL. With his lively mind and keen sense of humour, Bev was great company. His passing is a hugely grievous loss but he has certainly left behind a published legacy that will be highly valued for a long time to come and, just as surely, memories of him that his many friends will cherish for the rest of their lives.

## References

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