

## **IN MEMORIAM**

**DAVID DECAMP**  
(1927-1979)

On October 17, 1979, The University of Texas at Austin suffered the sudden and tragic loss of one of the scholars who have contributed greatly to building a program of research and teaching in linguistics at Austin that is distinguished throughout the nation and the world. David DeCamp would normally have been just entering his most fruitful and productive years, since he was only 52. His death is a tragic waste, the more so since he maintained unusually warm relations with students from many countries.

DeCamp was born in Traverse City, Michigan, in 1927, -and took his BA in 1948 (magna cum laude) at Hillsdale College in his home state. Thereafter he received an MA from the University of New Mexico in 1949, and a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley in 1953. It was at that institution that his scholarly interests took the direction from which they never departed--the study of language, and its varieties. The story of how it came about is told by Martin Joos, in an obituary of another famous language scholar, Bernard Bloch. Bloch was at Berkeley in the summer of 1951, as a member of the faculty of the Linguistic Society's Summer Institute. DeCamp was a student there, described by Joos as "nibbling" at a dissertation subject on pronunciations in California. DeCamp met Bloch in the halls, and impulsively showed him what he had in his hands--a Linguistic Atlas record of New England from twenty years before, in Bloch's meticulous phonetic transcription. Bloch, somewhat taken aback, remarked "As you are now, so was I then," and invited the neophyte to a social gathering of senior linguists. DeCamp said later that he was a linguist from that hour.

His career developed from then on into more and more expertise in the forms of speech, first in the dissertation subject he had discussed with Bloch, and then into a very fruitful period of study of Pidgins and Creoles, during a two-year Fulbright Research Fellowship in Jamaica. Later he 'served as director of a joint University of Texas-Taiwan Normal University project in teaching,

English in Taipei. Later still, he served for two years as Associate Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D. C. His responsibilities there were for organization and administration of international activities, primarily in the Arab world.

DeCamp came to The University of Texas in 1959, and served there first as Associate Professor, and then as Professor, His teaching here was in the fields of English language, English as a second language, and linguistics, and in all these fields his extensive periods of service abroad contributed greatly to his classes. He carried his knowledge and experience in teaching and research both here and abroad to the meetings and journals of such groups of scholars as the National Council of Teacher of English and the Linguistic Society of America. One of his last and most successful activities at Austin was the organization and completion of a successful seminar on traditional English grammar and grammarians, for one of the NEH summer study programs for teachers. In the last months of his life he received notification of appointment to head a second seminar on a similar subject; the loss of this second seminar is one of the irreparable deprivations to scholarship brought about by his death.

Dave is survived by his wife Sally Dodd, whom he married in 1947. There are four children, Lane, Dodd, Jennifer, and Martin. As all who know the family can testify, it was an active, close, and loving group. It is touching that the last child, Martin, witnesses by his first and his second (Bagby) to Dave's admiration of two older linguists, Martin Joos of the University of Wisconsin, and Bagby Atwood of Texas. It is not every one who can combine family and profession in such a symbolic fashion. This union sprang from the remarkable human warmth that kept Dave young in heart, and close to his teachers and his students in ways beyond the expected teacher-pupil relationship. It was typical of him that as a teacher of linguistics he was also an eager learner of languages, always willing to experiment with using exotic tongues, even when the results were comic. And when he made mistakes in Arabic or Chinese, he always used them as a means to establish communication.

One of the most moving tributes to Dave's teaching comes from Professor John J. Figueroa, of Bradford College in Yorkshire. Figueroa says, in part,

When I was Head of the Department of Education at the University of the West Indies, David was good enough to express a desire to work with me...[though] not many academics respected the kind of work we were doing in preparing teachers... He worked with us for a year... It was wonderful to have his intellectual stimulation as well as human warmth.

When I spent part of my Guggenheim fellowship at Indiana University... David kindly invited me to Austin to help in the preparation of Peace Corps teachers ... I need hardly tell you that he was the soul of hospitality...

There are other testimonials to David's intellectual stimulation and human warmth. One was the Memorial Meeting arranged for him at UT, which was jam-packed with students, undergraduate and graduate, and with faculty. A second testimony is that one of his articles (see bibliography) with the humorous subtitle "Was James Thurber the first Transformational Grammarian?" was felt by his friends at the Center for Applied Linguistics as the best representation of his personality, and was accordingly reprinted as a memorial in the Linguistic Reporter. A final word is that students who use the Linguistics Department library (and there are many) will have cause to remember him for many years, as they study from the books that he bequeathed.

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Archibald A. Hill (chairman), Stanley Peters, Joseph Moldenhauer.

Distributed to members of the General Faculty on October 31, 1980.