

## *Sidney Greenbaum in memoriam*

To us who saw Sidney Greenbaum as a keen and active participant at last year's ICAME conference in Stockholm, it came as a terrible shock to hear the news, only a few days later, that he had died on 28 May 1996, at the age of 66, while lecturing to a Russian audience in Moscow. ICAME meetings will never be the same without that portly, amiable figure with a stinking pipe or a fat cigar stuck between the lips of his grinning face.

I first met Sid in 1964 when he turned up at the Survey of English Usage, University College London, to discuss a medieval research topic with Randolph Quirk. While already in his mid-thirties when taking up the serious study of modern English, he succeeded in making an extraordinary contribution to this field of research during his next 30 years.

Sidney Zalman Greenbaum was born on 31 December 1929 into a poor and deeply devout Yiddish-speaking family in the East End of London. Sid was an orthodox Jew. I remember occasions on Friday afternoons when, as we in the Gang of Four were carrying on a heated discussion of some moot point of English grammar, Sid might just drop his pen, in mid-sentence, and retire to his Sabbath. No go for the grammar that weekend! He acquired a minister's diploma from Jews' College, London although he never practised as a rabbi and a teaching diploma from the Institute of Education. He became a teacher of Hebrew at the Hasmonean Boys School in Hendon but felt that the scope for teaching modern Hebrew was very limited in the mid-1950s and took up the teaching of English, while simultaneously studying for an Honours English degree at Birkbeck College.

After joining the Survey in the mid-sixties as a research assistant, he started work on his PhD thesis which was turned into his first book, *Studies in English Adverbial Usage* (1969), where he developed the technique of elicitation experiments with informants. After completing his doctorate Sid went west, to America: first to Oregon University from 1968 to 1969, then to Wisconsin-Milwaukee University from 1969 to 1983, interrupted briefly in the early seventies by a period at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In 1983 Sid, the Londoner, returned home to succeed Randolph Quirk as Quain Professor of English Language and Literature and Director of

the Survey of English Usage at University College London. Most of his corpus work will be familiar to readers of *ICAME Journal* and need not be described in detail here. Yet it is remarkable that, while not particularly computer-literate, Sid clearly saw the possibilities of the new techniques that were opening up in the 1980s with the advent of more efficient electronic tools, hard and soft. During the previous decade we had already started, at Lund University, the production of the electronic London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English, and Sid now took to transforming all the paper slips of the London-based Survey filing cabinets into computer readable data files. At this time he also launched *ICE, The International Corpus of English*, a global project which most appropriately was dreamt up at the Reform Club of which he was a fond member, in the footsteps of Phileas Fogg. *ICE* is a ground plan to collect a representative sample of different Englishes worldwide, and it is to Sid's great credit that he managed to engage academic colleagues in over twenty countries to take part in this effort. It is only to be hoped that this important project can be continued and brought to a successful conclusion by Bas Aarts, the new Director of the Survey of English Usage.

Just before Sid's death his *Oxford English Grammar* appeared, which was an unusual event in that it created media interest – a rare form of celebrity for a grammarian! He published some twenty books, including *Acceptability in Language* (1977, editor), *The English Language Today* (1985, editor), a revision of *Gower's Complete Plain Words* (1985, with Janet Whitcut), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985, co-author), *Good English and the Grammarian* (1988), *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (1990, with Randolph Quirk), *An Introduction to English Grammar* (1991). His last work, *Comparing English Worldwide*, was published posthumously in August 1996.

Sid continued his predecessor's achievement in maintaining the Survey's role as a centre of English corpus studies but also in keeping an open house policy to make Foster Court a place of pilgrimage for English language researchers from the outer and expanding circles. There are many of us, colleagues and students, who will remember with gratitude his generosity towards globetrotting scholars of English who landed at the Survey and were able to benefit from its corpus resources, the staff's professional expertise and his own personal friendship.

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