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Those devoted to Celtic studies are far from alone in mourning the passing of Eric Hamp, the Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Chicago, who died 17 February 2019 at the age of 98. Eric was one of the pre-eminent historical linguists of the second half of the twentieth century, and his scholarship involved many languages and influenced not only linguists, but those working in literature, culture, and history, as well. Eric's legacy also includes the Celtic Studies Association of North America, in whose formation he had an active role.

Of equal importance to his impressive academic accomplishments were the kindnesses and generosity of spirit he amply displayed, providing friendship and encouragement to generations of younger scholars. His warmth of personality, often adorned with a twinkle in his eye and an impish smile, always created a welcoming environment wherever he went.

Eric's scholarly output extended over nearly seven decades. According to the bibliography in the Celtic studies *Festschrift* edited by A. T. E. Matonis and Daniel F. Melia (1990: 345–415)—one of six volumes of *Festschriften* dedicated to Eric's long career¹—his first scholarly publications appeared in 1951, including the still influential article 'Morphophonemes of the Keltic mutations' in the journal *Language* (Hamp 1951). His final publication, on the proto-Indo-European augment in Albanian, appeared earlier this year shortly after his death (Hamp 2019).

To summarize Eric's scholarship is an impossible task, due not only to the length of his career, but also to his unrivaled breadth of knowledge and to his manner of publication. Although best known for his examinations of Celtic and Albanian, Eric worked in all fields of Indo-European linguistics, as well as in Native American languages and in linguistic aspects of Braille. By necessity, this obituary will focus upon Eric's work as a Celticist, both because of the relevance of this area to the readership of this journal, and because my own contact with Eric, from my days as a master's student in European history at the University of Chicago, was concentrated in matters Celtic. But readers should keep in mind that the picture that I am drawing of Eric's extensive life and career is an

¹ The other five volumes of *Festschriften* are Aronson & Darden 1981; Silverstein 1985; Adams 1997 (two volumes); and Belluscio & Mendicino 2010.

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incomplete one, at best, and those in other fields—especially his colleagues in Balkan studies—will be aware of facets of which I am ignorant.²

According to his Wikipedia entry—and those of us who knew of his lack of computing skills are well aware that Eric himself could never have written it—he composed more than 3,500 articles and reviews in the course of his career.³ This number at first seems mind-boggling, but it probably is not far from the truth.⁴ The bibliography in the 1990 Celtic studies Festschrift, which was prepared from Eric's own records, has 960 numbered, individual items published from 1951 to 1988, though at least 100 more unnumbered items, which presumably were not in Eric's records, are included at the end of that list. And what was published in 1990 covered only half of his publication career, missing the particularly productive years immediately after his retirement from teaching in 1991.

Furthermore, Eric published everywhere: not only in prestigious, well-established journals, but also in smaller journals both in major, industrialized countries and in far-flung corners of the world—and some of these journals have probably never been indexed. And Eric published in conference proceedings, edited volumes, Festschriften, and even obscure academic societies' newsletters.

Eric's articles were themselves not particularly long—only a few pages—but they were dense. A typical example of his scholarly writing is this paragraph excerpt from his contribution to the Festschrift for D. Ellis Evans (Hamp 1995):

GPC 2293 gives us the opportunity to assemble an interesting paradigm: *ma*¹, *-fa* must continue the nom.-acc. **mages*. As I have already argued (1985), *mae*¹ (GPC 2304) reflects the short clause **mages=est*, which contains the old endingless locative. It is not at all anomalous for the locative to survive in such a noun; we may recall Lat. *humī*, *rurī*, and the names of towns. Gk. *oīkoī* also comes to mind, and in Arbëresh I have recorded *ndë-špit* 'at home, a casa', with the archaic locative in *-t* of *špi* < *štëpī* 'a house'.

Starting with an entry in the Welsh-language dictionary *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, Eric proceeds to compare another entry from that dictionary that he had discussed in an earlier article (Hamp 1985), along with examples from Latin and Greek, and, finally, from Eric's own field work in Arbëresh, the Albanian dialects spoken in southern Italy—with an Italian translation of the Albanian phrase thrown in for good measure.

This style of writing also matched the style of his public lectures. His handouts were legendary. Handwritten, with notations in the International Phonetic Alphabet generally crammed into every available space on the sheet of paper, a lecture handout from Eric

² I would like to thank the scholars, both in Celtic studies and other fields, who shared information about Eric as I prepared this obituary, as well as, and especially, Eric's daughter, Julijana Hamp Love.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_P._Hamp (accessed 11 May 2019).

⁴ Victor A. Friedman, one of Eric's students and later one of his successors in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago, and Brian Joseph, a Professor of Linguistics at Ohio State University, are currently helping to prepare a definitive bibliography of Eric's publications. In the obituary for Eric that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, Friedman said Eric had more than 3,000 publications (Megan 2019).

required someone of Eric's own genius (of which there was only Eric) to decipher. And the deciphering was masterful, with hidden aspects of history and culture often revealed through comparison with exempla from the far-flung panoply of Indo-European languages both living and extinct.

Kathryn A. Klar, who has taught for many years at the University of California—Berkeley, recalls a conversation some three decades ago with Patrick K. Ford, when Ford was still teaching at UCLA, after one of Eric's lectures at a California Celtic Colloquium. Klar and Ford discussed how useful it would be to have a reference work listing all of the etymologies Eric proposed over the years. Such a work would, indeed, be quite useful, though compiling the work would be a herculean task. Not only are there the etymologies in his published work, but Eric also made important suggestions in his personal notes and those legendary lecture handouts. Indeed, some of his handouts have already become the subject of published scholarly research (Hamp 2013).

Furthermore, Eric annotated his copies of the publications of other scholars with suggestions of his own. This was a habit he continued into his final years. I remember seeing such notes in his copy of the book of essays from Proinsias Mac Cana that was posthumously published in 2011, when Eric was already in his 90s. Eric's books and papers are to be donated to Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago, and proper curation of them should permit future generations of scholars to benefit from Eric's massive knowledge.

Although Eric seemed the quintessential university professor, he did not come from an academic family. Eric Pratt Hamp was born in London on 16 November 1920. His father was an official with the Silver Line, one of the major shipping companies that was part of the British Merchant Navy. Eric's father became the Silver Line's New York representative in 1925, and the family moved to East Orange, New Jersey, where Eric grew up. At the age of 14, Eric was sent to the Tome School, a boarding school in Maryland, finishing the graduation requirements two years later.

Eric's father did not believe that Eric, at 16, was old enough to attend college, so he spent another year after graduation at the Tome School receiving additional tutoring. He had also, from the age of 12, occasionally worked as an apprentice on Silver Line ships traveling up and down the Atlantic coast, and that was where he discovered his love of languages. Some of the crews on the ships were Chinese and Malay, and Eric enjoyed picking up the ability to converse with them in their native tongues.

But a career as a linguist was certainly not in his mind when he entered Amherst College in the fall of 1938. His father wanted Eric to become an attorney specializing in maritime law, and it would have been easy to arrange employment with the Silver Line. Eric was not necessarily opposed to his father's expectations, but he did not embrace them, either. Like most college freshmen, he wanted the freedom to find out what in life would interest him. He ended up majoring in Greek and Latin.

By the beginning of his sophomore year at Amherst, World War II had broken out in Europe, and by the time of his graduation in the spring of 1942, the United States had officially entered the war. Eric was still a British subject, and he wanted to join the

RAF. But it was not possible for him, being in the United States, to travel under war-time restrictions to a location where the RAF was operating. So instead, Eric took a job in Washington, DC, as a purchasing agent for Union of South Africa under Lend-Lease, which provided U.S. war materiel to the Allies. He soon ended up supervising the entire program for South Africa.

It was also during the war that Eric made the decision to become a U.S. citizen. Eric had spent nearly all of his life in the United States, so he did not have a particularly strong personal bond with the land of his birth, and the disruption to maritime trade during the war made a future with the Silver Line less certain. But he was also coming to the idea that what he wanted to do in life was to study languages, and that his future would be within the academic environment in America.

Upon becoming a citizen, Eric was drafted and served in the U.S. Army, leaving the service as a sergeant. He then entered Harvard University in the fall of 1947 to study in the Department of Comparative Philology, which would be renamed the Department of Linguistics in 1951. It was there where Eric was introduced to Celtic.

At Harvard, Eric studied the Celtic languages with Joshua Whatmough and Kenneth Jackson, who himself had recently returned to Harvard after his own service in World War II. Eric earned the M.A. in 1948, and he took his Ph.D. oral exams as an Indo-Europeanist in the fields of Celtic, Balto-Slavic, and Sanskrit. In typical Eric fashion, he learned about the Baltic languages on his own, memorizing August Leskien's *Litauisches Lesebuch* and visiting the Lithuanian church in Boston to listen to native speakers.

Eric became interested in Albanian, but the only safe place at that time for American graduate students to experience communities of native speakers was in southern Italy, where Albanians had settled fleeing Ottoman control of the Balkans in the late medieval and early modern period. Eric went to Italy to do field work in advance of writing his dissertation, and it was there, in 1950, that he received a letter offering him a lectureship at the University of Chicago. Eric took the appointment, and he remained an active member of the Chicago faculty for more than four decades. Eric was appointed a tenure-track Assistant Professor in 1953—a year before he submitted his dissertation, which was titled *Vaccarizzo Albanese phonology. The sound-system of a Calabro-Albanian dialect*. Eric was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 1958 and Full Professor in 1962. He was chair of the Department of Linguistics from 1966 to 1969, and was president of the Linguistic Society of America in 1971.

It was early on in his time at the University of Chicago that he met Margot Faust, an instructor in art education in the Department of Art. They happened to be dining at the same table one day at the Quadrangle Club, which functions as the university's faculty club. Eric noticed that Margot pulled something out of her purse to pour on her salad. He asked her what it was, and she told him it was her own olive oil-and-vinegar dressing. (One must remember that in 1950, olive oil was a rather exotic substance to most Americans and would not have been seen in restaurants, save those serving an ethnic Mediterranean cuisine.) Familiar with olive oil from his time in Italy, Eric asked Margot if

he could try the dressing. The couple married in Chicago in 1951. They had two children, a daughter, Julijana (known as Juli), and a son, Alex.

As a faculty member at the University of Chicago, Eric's teaching style was not all that different from his public lectures. He was a master of the digression. Indeed, one digression often led to another, and a class that was ostensibly an introduction to Old Irish might make many detours through Sanskrit, Thracian, and Tocharian before returning to the section of Rudolf Thurneysen's *Grammar of Old Irish* under immediate consideration. And Eric often put his mimicry skills on display to demonstrate the development of sound changes in a language, or how phonemic values may be transferred when a community shifts from speaking one language to speaking another. His classes were always enlightening and entertaining, though students who wanted merely to acquire basic competence in a language might be bewildered by the information overload.

He was deeply devoted to his students and always welcomed hearing from them. He was frustrated at how the academic job market—which was never easy for those working in less-widely taught languages—had, by his final teaching years, become almost impossible to navigate successfully. Eric regularly put in good words about his students to others in the profession, often without the student knowing this had happened. I found out years later that Eric had touted my competence to various scholars in Celtic studies, a rather generous evaluation given that I am properly a historian and not a linguist.

And this devotion included fulfilling his teaching assignments, which was not crimped either by his frequent attendance at academic conferences or even by personal illness. When I was studying Old Irish with Eric, he suffered a bout of sciatica—something that occasionally affected him in his later years—but that did not stop him from lecturing. He had his students come to the Hamps' home, a corner townhouse on South Greenwood Avenue at 52nd Street just a few blocks from the University of Chicago campus. The first floor of the home was filled with books and papers everywhere, and in the center of the living room was a cot, on which Eric was lying completely flat, head facing the ceiling. Margot had arranged chairs around the cot, and once all the students were present, Eric began lecturing, his head facing the ceiling the entire time because turning his head would aggravate his pain. And he lectured as he always did, for several hours at a time, though we students had the advantage of Margot's hospitality, as she brought out beverages and snacks for us to enjoy while Eric lectured.

Although Eric really was of his generation, even to contemporaries he seemed like a figure of an earlier era. Some of this was due to his specialization in historical linguistics, though he was fully cognizant of the theoretical models that came to the fore in the discipline beginning in the late 1950s. Eric's slow and rather formal manner of speaking, coupled with the glorious mustache that became a permanent feature on Eric's face after his retirement—younger scholars may not know that Eric was clean-shaven during his teaching career—certainly made him stand out at any gathering.

But what really set Eric apart from most of his contemporaries, including many Indo-Europeanists, was his grounding in field work, which remained his greatest passion.

While Eric did employ audio recording in his interviews with native speakers of a language—sometimes it was Margot operating the tape recorder—he was also able to transcribe on the fly what he was hearing, so he was not necessarily constrained by having what, in his era, could be somewhat intrusive recording equipment present. This often allowed Eric to get a more natural presentation of language out of his subjects. And that naturalness was key to ensuring that what a subject was reporting represented an authentic language tradition.

Eric was always on guard to keep, as much as possible, what a subject was reporting free from corruption. Take, for example, the importance of Lachlan MacDonald to the study of St. Kilda Gaelic. MacDonald was 20 years old when he was evacuated from St. Kilda with the rest of the island's inhabitants in 1930, and he never received advanced formal education. Nor did he converse much with Gaelic speakers in Scotland. Eric interviewed MacDonald in the 1950s and again in the 1980s for the Gaelic Linguistic Survey.⁵ There were others of roughly MacDonald's age who were also evacuated from St. Kilda, but their subsequent education or extensive contact with other Gaelic speakers made them less reliable reporters of what made St. Kilda Gaelic different.

Eric certainly did not want an understanding of St. Kilda Gaelic to experience what he viewed as problematic distortions in the understanding of Manx due to the celebrity of Ned Maddrell, who was widely touted as the last native speaker of Manx when Maddrell died in 1974. But Maddrell's background and his own stories about his language acquisition and maintenance made him a highly unreliable reporter. 'If (Carl) Marstrander were alive (in the 1970s)', Eric once told me, 'he simply would have said, "This is not a speaker of Manx. This is a speaker of Manx gibberish"'.

Summers were primarily devoted to field work and followed a regular pattern. After classes ended at Chicago, Eric and Margot flew to London and made their way to Aberystwyth to stay with Geraint and Luned Gruffydd. Eric kept a car at a garage in nearby Penrhynoch. For many years, that vehicle was a red Fiat 128 estate, which, despite its rather diminutive size, managed to hold the Hamps' clothing and other needs for a three-month sojourn. The Fiat was purchased around 1970 and for decades was a familiar sight to those who encountered Eric in Europe during the summer. The car was registered in Wales, and when the vehicle was 25 years old, Eric went to the registrar and insisted that its historic status be marked, in Welsh, on the registration.

The Fiat became Eric and Margot's mode of transportation as they made their way, with stops to visit friends and attend conferences, to southern Italy, where Eric continued to do field work on the Albanian dialects of the region. Around mid-August, Eric and Margot began their return to Britain—always with stops to visit friends—and once back, they usually traveled to Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland, where Eric might do some additional work for the Gaelic Linguistic Survey. By the end of September, they were back

⁵ Gaelic Linguistic Survey, folder 32A, St. Kilda, Gaelic Questionnaire, District Gigha & Lismore, 23–29 July 1957, collected by Eric Hamp, with additions collected from Lachlan MacDonald of St. Kilda from 1984–1986, in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.

in Aberystwyth with the Gruffydds, putting the Fiat into storage and preparing for their return to Chicago and the upcoming academic year.

If Eric did not have teaching duties in Spring or Autumn quarter—and, of course, after Eric retired from teaching in 1991—the summer sojourn was extended by a few weeks either or both ways as available, so that at its greatest extent it could begin in mid-May and end in late October. This allowed Eric to attend more conferences—quite a prodigious conference attendee during his teaching days, he seemed to be everywhere in the 1990s—and for the Hamps to visit more friends. The Fiat eventually gave up the ghost on a hot summer day not long into the new millennium, and Eric had to buy a new Skoda, which, while a safer and roomier vehicle, lacked the Fiat's charms. Eric often expressed great affection for the Fiat after its demise.

Eric's role in the establishment of the Celtic Studies Association of North America was a supporting one, but of significance. Eric was a generation older than the group of recent Harvard Celtic Ph.D.s and graduate students who, dissatisfied with the Modern Language Association's annual meeting, began organizing panels on Celtic languages and literatures at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference beginning in 1977. Eric enthusiastically supported their efforts to transform a rather ad hoc group into a fully fledged academic society, and he hosted at Chicago the first independent conference by the group in 1983. At that meeting, the group—which had been using the name Celtic Studies Association—was formally transformed into the Celtic Studies Association of North America that continues to this day and sponsors this very journal. And Eric urged his students and others working on Celtic topics to join CSANA, helping to expand the group beyond its original core of Harvard graduates.

For someone of Eric's eminence, he was unusually open to chatting with anyone and everyone at academic conferences, or, indeed, wherever he might have been, such as shops, restaurants, hotels, and airports. In fact, he often sought out the neglected, not only because of his welcoming nature, but also because he was drawn to those who experienced life in what he viewed as an authentic way, free from the artificiality of high academe. The interest in authenticity that was central to his field work was also central to his life.

I remember that, at the International Congress of Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth in 2003, Eric came up to me and said I had to join him for dinner to experience authentic fish and chips. So that evening, Eric drove the Skoda (which he had at the time) with me, Margot, and Hannah Rosén of Hebrew University to Borth, a seaside village about seven miles north of Aberystwyth, for fish and chips at a pub restaurant. Was it the best meal that I have ever eaten? No. Was it the best fish that I have ever eaten? Again, no. But to Eric, the food was wonderful, undoubtedly aided by the authenticity of the experience, and that authenticity counted for more than any expectations of exceptional cuisine.

Eric's final years presented challenges that eventually ended his presence at scholarly meetings. When Eric and Margot were in their mid-80s, Margot began to show signs of Alzheimer's disease. Margot had enabled Eric to accomplish the amazing amount of scholarship that he produced because she was there to assist him with everything. Eric

certainly could not take care of himself, let alone care for Margot. Juli and her husband, Butch, stepped in, putting an addition onto their house in northern Michigan and moving Juli's parents in with them.

Eric was deeply affected by the progression of Margot's disease. As his vibrant, intellectual partner in so many travels and adventures slowly slipped away, he himself became depressed. Margot's situation became a topic he would not talk about and did not want to face. Eventually, Juli was unable to continue to care for Margot at home, and Eric became a virtual widower.

Eric's mobility was also in decline. He had been using a cane for several years, and, after moving in with Juli and her family, he continued to travel by bus and plane to attend conferences and visit friends. But by the time he was 90, travel on his own was no longer feasible. He was, by this time, using a walker.

Eric's last major trip was to Edinburgh in December 2012 at age 92 to receive an honorary doctorate from the university. Juli accompanied him on the trip, which, due to Eric's mobility issues, was a major production to pull off, but Eric immensely enjoyed the opportunity to see old friends and to be, once again, in a place with memories of his activities in field work.

Even in his 90s, Eric remained a productive scholar. His books and papers moved with him to northern Michigan, and Juli became his secretary, helping him with his materials. She also brought him into the computer age, enabling him, in a way, to communicate via e-mail. Previously, one contacted Eric by post or phone, but in Michigan, it was possible to send an e-mail message to Juli, which she printed out and delivered to Eric. Eric then handwrote a reply, which Juli scanned and sent as an e-mail attachment back to the sender.

Eric also received visitors. A few students, scholars, and other old friends occasionally made the trek to northern Michigan to see Eric and ask his views on various academic problems.

The increasing fragility of Eric's health required that he receive more extensive care than Juli was able to provide, and his last three years were spent in a quite wonderful facility in Traverse City, about half an hour from Juli's home. Juli brought Eric the journals and other mail that continued to arrive for him at her house, and he was particularly pleased to see the first issue of this journal, a special copy of which I delivered to him in person in the Spring of 2017. Without his books and papers, and without the stamina for extensive concentration, Eric's scholarly production came to an end, but the move did allow him to reunite with Margot, to whose condition he had become reconciled and with whom he eventually shared a room at the facility. She was in the room with him, along with Juli and other family members, when he died.

Plans are for the eventual burial of Eric's remains in a cemetery in southern Italy in a community of Albanian speakers among whom Eric spent so many of his summers.

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