

## Farewell to a true linguist

Bengt Henningsson has passed away at the age of 85 years.

For 38 years, Bengt was treasurer of the Swedish Modern Language Teachers' Society (today called Språklärarnas Riksförbund). He was also treasurer for many years of the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes, FIPLV, a non-governmental organisation affiliated to UNESCO.

Therefore one might suppose that Bengt's greatest interest lay in the field of accounting. However the main theme in his life was his love of languages and this determined the path he would take.

Bengt was born in Tollered, a small industrial village where almost everyone had some connection to the Nääs textile mill. Already as a small boy, Bengt showed his interest and skill in things technical and electrical, when he spent time in the Nääs workshop with his inventions.

Perhaps it was already then that his interest in language came about, since he wrote vocabularies to help refugees from the Baltic countries who had settled in the village.

After moving to Göteborg to attend grammar school, his career in languages began with German and English at the University of Göteborg. He combined his studies with music, belonging to a madrigal choir, and also took part in student theatre performances while working as a travel guide in his spare time.

He spent a term at a German university where he met his future wife from England who, like him, was studying German there.

Back in Göteborg, Bengt started work organising language courses abroad for Swedish students. Thereafter he taught languages at Rya school, continuing to organise study trips abroad for his pupils.

Bengt's interest in technical innovations came in useful when he initiated and led a pioneer project in the use of audiovisual equipment at a number of schools in Gothenburg. His pupils had confidence in his authority and the regular study trips abroad provided happy memories, both for them and for his fellow members of staff, who saw him as their mentor.

Later, as Vice-president of FIPLV, Bengt started and led "*Ways of creating contacts between young people in order to further international relations*", a project where exchange study trips for young people were put into a global perspective.

Bengt continued to teach at Rya school until he retired. Of course, his curiosity and great interest in language –learning did not stop there. Indeed, he took up

learning Portugese, later also Korean, in which he was to make a speech for the Korean guests at his younger son's wedding.

Right up until he passed away, Bengt did the proof-reading for the language teaching journal "Lingua". His sharp-eyed perusal of texts pre-publication earned him the title "Hawk-eye" amongst his fellows in the society. This "hawk-eye" came in useful too for his interest in wood-working. The treasured wooden dinghy did not deserve to lie upturned ashore all summer! Bengt bought the necessary wood, then rebuilt and repaired it successfully.

We remember Bengt as kind, cheerful and intelligent. Quite simply, he was good company to be in, with his puns and word jokes, together with an unshakeable integrity and straightforward views on a variety of different topics. Bengt is irreplaceable. Long live Bengt !

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*Published in Göteborgs-Posten May 3, 2020*