

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

LIONEL PEARSON (1908 – 1988)

Professor Lionel Pearson, Professor Emeritus of Classics, died in Palo Alto on September 18, 1988. In late July he had attended the Triennial Classical Conference in Oxford, but fell ill after his return with pancreatic cancer. During his short illness the proofs of his last book, a text of Aristoxenus' *On Rhythm* with translation and commentary, arrived from Oxford University Press, and he was able to assist with the corrections.

Born in England on January 30, 1908, he graduated from Trinity College, Oxford, in 1930, and taught briefly at the University of Glasgow and at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. He then studied at Yale, receiving his PhD in 1939. In the same year he published his first book, *Early Ionian Historians*, in which he already demonstrated a major characteristic of his later scholarship, the flair for analysis and interpretation of the fragmentary surviving quotations from Greek historians whose works are lost. It was later said of him: "He always recognizes the limitations of historical inquiry, and his ability to tease out useful information from recalcitrant texts is the more illuminating because it is matched by exemplary caution."

He came to Stanford as Assistant Professor of Classics in 1940, joining a department which included Raymond Harriman, who remained chairman for many years; the Stanford graduate Hazel Hanson, a distinguished Greek archaeologist and art historian; Hermann Frinkel, who had arrived in 1935, forced by his Jewish origin to abandon his position in Göttingen; and Philip Harsh, whose major interests were in Greek and Roman drama. The Department offered a rich undergraduate program, in which Pearson's particular teaching responsibility was Greek and Roman history. By the time he was promoted to Associate Professor he had published another book (*The Local Historians of Attica*, which appeared in 1942), ten full-length articles, and six reviews.

The Second World War interrupted his life at Stanford, and Pearson served for three and a half years in the British Army Intelligence Corps. For over a year of this he was working with the Ultra Secret Project at Bletchley in England, together with his later Stanford colleague T. B. L. Webster and other well-known classicists. In Pearson's own words: "This was where intercepted German radio messages in cipher were decoded by a highly secret machine, but sometimes the decipherment was incomplete or partly incorrect, and some imagination was needed in interpreting the message. A number of classical scholars were employed there because their skill at making sense out of corrupt Greek and Latin texts made them competent at understanding and explaining these corrupt German messages. A classical education, it seems, had some practical value after all."

Ten years or so after his return to Stanford, in the late fifties, the Department, now headed by Brooks Otis, began its PhD program, and new appointments in Greek and Roman history allowed Pearson to devote more attention to his major interests, historians and orators. In 1957-58 he held a Guggenheim Fellowship, and he continued to publish works of enduring scholarship: *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (1960), *Popular Ethics in Ancient Greece* (1962), *Plutarch: On the Malice of Herodotus* (1965), and *Demosthenes: Six Private Speeches* (1972).

In 1968 he spent a year teaching at the University of Sydney, and after his retirement in 1973 he taught for a year at Yale. He always maintained a strong association with his colleagues, giving an occasional colloquium (usually on Greek music or meter), attending department parties in the departmental library (which had been named after him), and sharing with colleagues and students the results of his ongoing research. Further books appeared: *The Art of Demosthenes* (1976), *Didymi in Demosthenem commenta* (with S. Stephens, 1983), and *The Greek Historians of the West: Timaeus and his Predecessors* (1987). A selection of his articles and reviews was edited in 1983 by his former students Donald Lateiner and Susan A. Stephens.

In other directions too his contributions to his profession continued, and even intensified. He had always been a loyal supporter of the Philological Association of the Pacific Coast, serving as its President in 1964, and had also been President of the Stanford Chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America. In addition, he was an active member of the California Classical Association and an assiduous visitor to high school Latin classes in northern California. During his later years he was a Director of the classicists' national organization, the American Philological Association, and also served as a Financial Trustee and on various committees. He made a generous financial contribution to assist the Association in its plans for the publication of textbooks, and shortly before his death he made a major gift to set up a new fellowship program within the Association to enable American students to study for a year in Britain.

Conspicuous among his services to the classical profession, and one of his enduring monuments, was his chairmanship, during its formative years from 1973-79, of the American Philological Association's Advisory Committee on the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, the project for the entry of all Greek literature into a computerized database which is being carried out by his former student, Professor T. Brunner at UC Irvine. Pearson brought together a group of distinguished scholars to select the texts to be entered, and deserves much of the credit for the very high quality of the resulting material. The database is now largely complete, and (thanks to another former student Dr. David W. Packard) is available on a compact disk; it has already proved itself an invaluable resource for classical research.

Pearson was an enthusiastic teacher, especially noted for teaching both undergraduate and graduate students the proper way to read Greek and Latin. His gifts to Stanford included a large anonymous gift for the provision of undergraduate scholarships in classics. He was a splendid colleague, working hard in departmental committees and giving devoted care to building up the classical book collections in the main and departmental libraries.

For nearly forty years Lionel Pearson was an important figure in the Stanford Classics Department, to the outer world one of its best-known scholars and in our domestic affairs a living reminder of our long tradition of good scholarship and a force for wisdom, good taste and common sense. He was a totally honorable man, who fully accepted the responsibility laid upon him by his talents and by his position, who never failed in his respect for others and for himself, and who represented in his personal and in his scholarly life the highest ideals of both. Students, colleagues, and friends will remember him with warm affection, and be grateful for his unstinted labors for the good of classical studies and for the example of productive scholarship and devoted service he set for us all.

Susan A. Stephens
Mark W. Edwards, Chairman