

Lea Pearson, 1942-1995

LEA PEARSON'S many friends and colleagues have been shocked and grieving at her untimely and sudden death on 4 April 1995, at the age of 53. Although Lea had not been well for a couple of years and had taken early retirement last summer 1994, those who had seen her recently had attested to her optimistic plans and good spirits.

Her passing robs the rest of us of a dedicated psychologist who made a truly significant contribution to the profession of educational psychology in particular and psychology in general and who became a President of the Society. We are deprived of a loyal friend and colleague who rarely failed to be well-informed, astute, cognitively razor-sharp, challenging, witty, ironic - and

kind and generous to friends, old and new colleagues.

Lea read philosophy and psychology at the University of Hull, then trained as a teacher. She moved, with her daughter Alwen, to Birmingham to teach for a short while, then moved to Manchester University to join the research team in the development of the **British Ability Scales**. Later, after qualifying as an educational psychologist on the Manchester EP training course, she took up her first post as an EP in Preston; after a short while she moved to become Principal Educational Psychologist in Bury LEA where, with John Quinn, she developed the **Bury Checklist**, which continues to sell steadily to LEAs and schools.

Lea's next career move was to become Chief Educational Psychologist for Birmingham City Council in 1980. Over the ensuing years her role was to prove demanding as services for children in that city were to be no less immune from politically inspired changes than any other part of the UK. Nevertheless, she relished the challenge of sustaining and invigorating one of the largest teams of educational psychologists, of extending the work of psychologists in the Social Services Department and maintaining mutually beneficial links between Birmingham University's training course for educational psychologists and the City Service. She became directly involved in a movement to bring Conductive Education (the Hungarian treatment of cerebral palsy) to the UK and to apply it within hypothesis-testing parameters.

Lea's next challenge within Birmingham was to combine some elements of a Chief EP post with the Inspector-level post of Assessment and Monitoring Officer, a particularly crucial post with the advent of the National Curriculum and SATs, the national school-based assessment system. Indeed, in view of Lea's

acknowledged expertise in and national reputation for assessment she was asked to act as one of the advisors to the Government-appointed Schools Examination and Assessment Council.

Lea outstandingly combined a number of academic and professional activities which were concurrent with and related to her role as an applied psychologist. She was an effective member, and Chair of various Society committees, including Council, DECP, the Parliamentary Group and the Steering Committee on Test Standards. She became a Fellow of the Society in 1981, and her devoted and long-standing commitment to the Society and all it stands for culminated in her becoming President from 1987-1988. She was only the second educational psychologist and one of very few women to hold that office.

In 1988 a special professorship of applied psychology was conferred upon her by Nottingham University where she provided substantial teaching inputs, in recognition of her by then significant professional and academic achievements. Lea's publications include a co-authored book, book chapters and innumerable articles. She was renowned as much for the clarity and precision of her writing as for the solidity and worth of its content.

Lea's love of life, of convivial company over good wine and good food was endearing to all of us who had the privilege of knowing her as a friend and/or colleague. Our thoughts have been with her daughter Alwen at this sad time.

We miss Lea greatly and British psychology is the poorer for her passing.

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