

Obituary: Earl Francis Beach (1912–2002)

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Earl Beach was born in 1912 in Chicago, one of four boys. Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Fort Erie, Ontario, his father's home town. Earl was a good student and attended Queen's University, where he excelled academically. He graduated in 1934 with an honours degree, the gold medal in economics, and the Prince of Wales Prize as the top Arts and Science graduand. He completed a PhD in economics at Harvard University, graduating in 1938; his thesis ('The Measurement of Real Capital'), under Joseph Schumpeter, was on capital theory applied to the railroads. While a graduate student, he taught part time at Radcliffe College, Harvard, and M.I.T. and worked during the summer at the Bank of Canada and at the Rowell-Sirois Commission in Ottawa, where he met Katharine MacAdam, an Ottawa native. They were married in 1938 and had two children—Elizabeth, who became a nurse and resides in Baltimore, and Charles, who is a professor of economics at Queen's University in Kingston. After graduating from Harvard, Earl taught for two years at City College of New York.

When war broke out, he and Katharine moved back to Canada and Earl joined the faculty of McGill University as acting director and then director of the School of Commerce (1940–46). During the war, he also worked as a dollar-a-day man at the Department of Finance in Ottawa, helping to fund the war effort. He became full professor in 1946 and moved to the Department of Economics and Political Science, where, after a year as a Guggenheim fellow at the University of Chicago in 1949–50, he became chairman of the department for 1951–54. From 1954 to 1961 he was a member of the Social Science Research Council of Canada, chairman of their Awards Committee at the time they started funding the development of the historical statistics of Canada, and chairman of the council itself for 1958–60. He also sat on or chaired numerous other statistics-related committees for

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S.S.R.C.C., C.P.S.A., and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics during this period. He served as McGill's representative on the N.B.E.R. for many years. He was visiting lecturer at the University of Minnesota (1956–57) and at Ohio State University (1966), member of the Glasco Commission on government organization (1961), and Canada Council fellow (1969–70, 1975–76). He retired in 1981 and became Bronfman professor of economics and statistics emeritus.

Katharine died in 1979, and Earl married Lila Willis in 1981. He continued to teach post retirement for several years until he and Lila moved to Kitchener, where they enjoyed a long and active retirement life, especially as members of the Westmount Golf and Country Club in Waterloo. Earl died on 17 May 2002, at age 90, and is survived by Lila, his wife, by Elizabeth and Charles, and by two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Earl Beach taught economics and statistics at McGill for 43 years. During that time, he was a distinguished scholar, a much respected teacher to thousands of students, and an admired leader in the university. In his early years, he was active in the reintegration of war veterans into society through McGill's special programs for veterans. In mid-career, he played an important role in the fight for and success in decentralizing McGill's decision-making processes. He participated in setting up the initial curriculum of the new CEGEPS created in Quebec as part of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. As a senior statesman, he mentored an entire generation of colleagues in the McGill culture. Many of his former students took up academic positions across the country, and a select group could claim him as a long-term colleague.

Earl was an author and researcher of international stature who did much to advance his discipline in econometrics, economic theory, and history of economic thought. He published over fifty papers or notes, in venues such as the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Review of Economic Studies*, *American Statistician*, *Economic Journal*, *Applied Economics*, *Indian Economic Journal*, *Journal of Economics*, *History of Political Economy*, *l'Actualité Économique*, *CJEPS*, *Canadian Banker*, and *Canadian Business*. He authored various book reviews for *CJEPS* and *JASA*, edited a volume of papers (with Jack Weldon), and post retirement published a book on technology. But he is perhaps best known as author of the textbook *Economic Models* (Wiley, 1957), which was translated into several languages and continued to sell for over twenty years (Earl used to call Wiley cheques his Christmas bonus). His main areas of research were the measurement of capital and productive capacity, estimating cost functions, the teaching of statistics, the market theory of Walras and Marshall, statics and dynamics of innovation, automation and employment, and Marshallian methodology.

In his emeritus laudation, Irving Brecher, then chairman of the Department of Economics at McGill, wrote: "No one is more deserving of the title

‘gentleman and scholar.’ Earl Beach is a ‘gentle man’ in the truest sense—kind, considerate, warm, decent; a person whose human qualities always shine through, and whose example consistently points the way to the countless friends he has made over the years.”

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