

---

IN MEMORIAM

---

Henry Kahane, 1902-1992

Henry Kahane spent his youth in Berlin. He was too young to be drafted in World War I, so he finished his "Gymnasium," a type of high school stressing Latin (nine years of it, at six days a week) and Greek (seven years, at six days a week), without interruption. At the University, his area was Romance linguistics. He finished his Ph.D. under Professor Gamillscheg, one of the best Romance linguists and etymologists of that time. Berlin of the 'twenties, during the Weimar Republic, was one of the cultural centers of Europe, frequently called "Athens on the Spree." Henry's father, Arthur Kahane, was literary advisor of one of the exuberantly innovative theaters for which Berlin was renowned. Life in this city, at that point of time and at that societal level, so immensely cultivated and indeed sophisticated, made Henry sensitive to cultural values to a degree that is not frequently met. His spirit was inquisitive and he loved to know about things and participate in happenings; that is probably why he seriously considered the career of a journalist and, therefore, spent a year as a correspondent for a German daily in Istanbul. However, Minerva won over Mercurius and Henry returned to the academic life. He became what is called in Germany "Assistent," the first step in the academic career, in Berlin. It was there that he met his future wife, Renée, née Toole (of Irish descent) who, accompanied by her mother, came from her home, the island of Cephalonia in Greece, to study in Berlin. Their marriage created one of the most remarkable cases of cooperation of two scholars: "Henry and Renée

## 46 Names 41.1 (March 1993)

Kahane<sup>®</sup> is the signature under at least 90 per cent of the hundreds of books, articles, and reviews produced by them. Both were Romance linguists and philologists, and both were Greek scholars; Renée even had the native Greek's education and knowledge of Byzantine sources and of Modern Greek language and literature. No wonder that the two researchers concentrated on the overlapping area of the Byzantine and Romance world in a way hardly anyone else could imitate.

Well understanding the horrifying tidings of the day, the whole Kahane family left Berlin soon after Germany was brought under Hitler's sway. Florence was their new home, where Henry became teacher and later principal of a school for the children of German refugees. There were a few quiet years there; however, when Mussolini fell into the orbit of Hitler's power, all immigrant Jews were preventively imprisoned for some weeks when Hitler was visiting Florence. Correctly interpreting this as a sample of what fate had in store, the Kahanes left Florence for Renée's home, Cephalonia. Emotionally, the decision to go to Greece is understandable; rationally, it was a mistake, because it brought them deeper into what soon afterwards became Hitler's short-lived but pernicious empire. When World War II started, the Kahanes with their by that time habitual power of anticipative prudence left for America before Italy invaded Greece. They were granted United States visas, so they were able to embark in Pireus; British ships were already patrolling the straits of Gibraltar, but the good luck of the two (yet) German citizens held and they reached New York safely. Henry's mother (his father was dead by that time) did not get a visa, so she had to go to what at that time was Palestine and wait there until the Kahanes established themselves in the US so that they could get her into the country. In the meantime, however, Europe was lost to Hitler, so Mrs. Kahane (at the age of some 70 years) had to cross Mesopotamia alone by car, take a ship in Basra and proceed via the Pacific (there was not yet war with the Japanese) to Los Angeles, where Henry and Renée came to meet her.

The family thus reunited spent some time in Los Angeles; however, in 1941 they arrived in Urbana, Illinois, and have never left it since, barring travel. Henry always maintained that Urbana had two advantages because of which it would be unreasonable to leave it: first, the superb library; second, that during his fifty

years there nothing whatsoever had ever happened. (He was right on both points, as I can testify; let us hope that Urbana will continue in the same style, although there is some legitimate doubt, on both scores).

The publications of the two scholars are too numerous to be enumerated. The readers of this journal will remember their articles on the names of winds derived from placenames (1957) and on the name of Desdemona (1987). More remarkable is their book on the Italian placenames in Greece (1940). As already mentioned, hardly anyone else has a combined knowledge of both Greek and Romance linguistics, so the scholarly value of their work is incalculable; however, remembering that Italy invaded Greece on October 28, 1940, the reader will appreciate the remarkable date of its publication.

Another book which could not have been written by anyone else but this pair of scholars was published already in Illinois (1965). The name of the Grail is derived from Greek *kratér* "bowl for mixing wine" and the meandering paths of the various names, words, and legends peregrinating between Byzance, the Levant, and mediaeval Europe are traced. In 1971, the two scholars investigated the ways in which the designation of a landmark develops into a toponym. The strength of the two scholars was in the explication of key words and notions, important in culture but obscure in their origin; many of their studies are permeated with observations on names and onomastic principles, although the title does not and cannot mention it. Such is, for instance, the article on the history of the word for "slave," inextricably connected with the name of the Slavic tribes and peoples (1962). One of the last works written by the unforgettable pair deals with foreign names that are not exonyms but names originally borrowed from another language and later domesticated (forthcoming). Their selected essays were reprinted in 1979, 1981, and 1986: a total of nearly 2,000 pages replete with interpretations, etymologies, and all the other paraphernalia of exquisite scholarship.

Henry was a man of remarkable agility. It was he who indefatigably and with great effort kept pestering several subsequent deans of the Liberal Arts and Sciences College in Urbana long enough finally to extract from the last of them the decision that the

## 48 Names 41.1 (March 1993)

Department of Linguistics be founded; then he helped the subsequent Heads, Prof. Robert Lees to lay the ground of it and Prof. B. Kachru to build it up. Not only when he was an active faculty member, but also after he had officially retired, he served as acting head in seven departments: the campus administration cherished him as a problem solver, a stop-gap, and a successful extinguisher of flames in precarious areas. Living within walking distance from the library, where they had an office, Henry and Renée could be seen four (and sometimes six) times a day on both weekdays and weekends making that walk at regular hours, with a complete disregard of and superb contempt for weather; only in the last year, they went there only once a day, continuing to include, however, all Saturdays and many Sundays. This pattern went on until a few days before Henry died. Renée has changed her residence since then, but let us hope that she will keep visiting some other office where she will complete all the manuscripts this *par nobile et incredibile maritorum* had no time to finish together. Our best memory goes to Henry and our best wishes to Renée. Urbana is not the same place without them.

### Works Cited

- Kahane, H. & R. *Italienische Ortsnamen in Griechenland*. Texte und Forschungen zur Byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie 36. Athens, 1940.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Toponyms as Anonymyms." *Names* 5(1957): 241-145.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Notes in the Linguistic History of *Sclavus*." *Studi in onore di Ettore LoGatto e Giovanni Maver*. Florence. 1962, 345-360.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Krater and the Grail: Hermetic Sources of the Parzival*. Illinois studies in Language and Literature, LVI. Urbana, 1965. (With Angelina Pietrangeli).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "From Landmark to Toponym". *Sprache und Gesellschaft (Harri Meier Testimonial)* Munich (253-258).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Graeca et Romanica: Scripta selecta* I, II, III. Amsterdam, 1979, 1981, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Desdemona: A Star-crossed Name," *Names* 35 (1987), 232-235.

\_\_\_\_\_. Foreign Placenames. *Handbuch der Namenkunde; Name Studies*, ed. L. Zgusta, et al. Berlin and New York (forthcoming).

Ladislav Zgusta  
University of Illinois, Urbana

## James Kinley Skipper, Jr., 1934-1993

James Kinley Skipper, Jr., an internationally renowned professor of sociology, died of cancer at his home in Burtonsville, Maryland on February 15, 1993 at the age of 58. Known as Skip, he moved to Maryland in March of 1992 where he finished writing his last book, *Baseball Nicknames: A Dictionary of Origins and Meanings*. The publication of this book culminated a twelve year research project. *Baseball Nicknames* was a long-time professional goal of Skip's which brought together two of his most passionate interests: nicknames and baseball. In the preface of the book he wrote:

I am a sociologist and a rabid baseball fan. In July of 1979 I read an article by Stan Grosshandler, "Where Have Those Grand Ole Nicknames Gone?" It appeared in the 1978 edition of the *Baseball Research Journal*, a publication of the Society for American Baseball Research. The gist of the article was that over time the number of major league players with nicknames had declined and the ones assigned in recent years lacked the color of those in the past. While Grosshandler provided some examples in support of his argument, the three page article was hardly a comprehensive study. I was aware that from time to time other writers had made the same point, but none had any hard evidence to back up their hypothesis. As a