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**WILLIAM RIEGEL SCHMALSTIEG  
(1929 10 03–2021 01 22)**

William Riegel Schmalstieg, Sparks Professor emeritus of Slavic and Baltic Linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University, passed away on January 22, 2021 at the age of 91. Born on October 3, 1929 in the town of Sayre, Pennsylvania, Bill had a peripatetic childhood, as his father, an Episcopal clergyman, accepted positions in various places. Of the many schools Bill attended, he has noted that the college-preparatory Breck School, near Minneapolis, Minnesota, instilled in him the rigorous standards that would come to serve him well in his academic career.

Bill received his B.A. degree in 1950 from the University of Minnesota, with a specialization in linguistics and Russian studies, and his Master's degree the following year at the University of Pennsylvania. It was here, at the Department of Baltic and Slavic Languages, that Bill's life-long interest in the Baltic languages began, with the study of Old Prussian under professor Antanas Salys; the textbook was Jan Endzelin's *Altpreußische Grammatik*. Bill's linguistic framework was shaped in large part at Columbia University under André Martinet, who introduced him to Prague School structuralism. It



was during his studies at Columbia that Bill met and married Emily Botdorf, to whom he was deeply devoted throughout his life (as reflected even in his e-mail address!). After some years of military service, Bill returned in 1954 to the University of Pennsylvania, where he continued his studies with Salys and others. He was awarded a Ph.D. in 1956, upon defending a dissertation, under the supervision of

Alfred Senn, on the influence of the Slavic languages on Lithuanian. After appointments at the University of Kentucky, the University of Minnesota, and elsewhere, Bill accepted a position in 1964 with the Department of Slavic Languages at the Pennsylvania State University, where he taught courses on Slavic linguistics, Russian, Old Church Slavic, and the Baltic languages until his retirement in 2002. In 1986, he spent four months as a Fulbright/IREX fellow in (then Soviet) Lithuania, working at the Lietuvių kalbos institutas on the manuscript for his *Lithuanian Historical Syntax*. In 1994, in acknowledgement of his extensive contributions to the field of Lithuanian linguistics, Bill was awarded an honorary doctorate by Vilnius University.

Bill Schmalstieg was an exceptionally productive scholar, with wide-ranging interests. A hallmark of his work is his precision, broad knowledge, and step-by-step thoroughness, often accompanied by unconventional solutions to challenging data (for example, his connecting the prefixal stress of certain Lithuanian preterits with an earlier stressed *e*-augment<sup>1</sup>). He is perhaps best known for his focus on the Baltic languages, in particular Lithuanian and Old Prussian. His major publications here begin with *Jānis*

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<sup>1</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, Did the Baltic verb have the augment?, *Linguistica Baltica* 2, 1993, 31-37.

*Endzelīns' Comparative Morphology and Phonology of the Baltic Languages* (1971),<sup>2</sup> a somewhat revised and annotated version of Endzelīns' 1948 *Baltu valodu skaņas un formas*. Bill's translation, which made an important but rather inaccessible work available to an English-speaking linguistic audience, was in fact based on the Lithuanian translation of this work: *Baltų kalbų garsai ir formos* (1957), and was checked against the Latvian original by Benjamiņš Jēgers of Northern Illinois University.

An enduring interest in Old Prussian, Bill's "first" Baltic language, is represented by two major works which are still invaluable in the field of Old Prussian studies: his *Old Prussian Grammar: The Phonology and Morphology of the Three Catechisms* (1974),<sup>3</sup> which is in fact far broader in scope than the title would suggest; and his comprehensive 1976 publication *Studies in Old Prussian: A Critical Review of the Relevant Literature in the Field since 1945*,<sup>4</sup> which, like the

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<sup>2</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, Benjamiņš Jēgers, *Jānis Endzelīns' Comparative Phonology and Morphology of the Baltic Languages*, The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *An Old Prussian Grammar: the Phonology and Morphology of the Three Catechisms*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *Studies in Old Prussian: a Critical Review of the*

grammar, is supplemented by a lengthy index verborum and an extensive bibliography. A subsequent edition of the work (2015)<sup>5</sup> reviews major contributions to the field of Old Prussian studies by a new generation of scholars. In the *Old Prussian Grammar*, one can detect the influence of his structuralist training in his attempts to establish the phonological system of Old Prussian despite a difficult and inconsistent orthographic representation. He notes (p. 8) that “Quite possibly one of the most serious mistakes in the analysis of Old Prussian documents is the assumption of a high degree of phonetic (or phonemic) accuracy in the transcription.”

A useful overview of the Baltic languages can be found in Bill’s contribution to *The Indo-European Languages* (1998).<sup>6</sup> Baltic (in particular, Lithuanian) morphology and syntax are the focus of two major publications: *A*

*Lithuanian Historical Syntax* (1988),<sup>7</sup> the first work of its kind in English, and *The Historical Morphology of the Baltic Verb* (2000).<sup>8</sup> As noted above, the *Lithuanian Historical Syntax* was prepared during a stay at the Lietuvių kalbos institutas, where Bill benefited from discussions with professors Algirdas Sabaliauskas and Vytautas Ambrazas, among others. The work presents a descriptive and historical treatment of Lithuanian participles, the case system (including the local cases), prepositions and their governance, and the definite adjective. Among his other publications are introductory works on several languages: *An Introduction to Old Church Slavic* (1976 and later editions),<sup>9</sup> *Beginning Hittite* (1988),<sup>10</sup> and, together with his colleagues Leonardas Dambriūnas and Antanas Klimas, *An Introduction to Modern Lithuanian* (1966 and later

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*Relevant Literature in the Field since 1945*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, edited by Pietro U. Dini, *Studies in Old Prussian: a critical review of the relevant literature in the field from 1975 until 2005*, Vilnius: Vaga, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, The Baltic languages, in Anna Giacalone Ramat, Paolo Ramat (eds.), *The Indo-European Languages*, London, New York: Routledge, 1998, 454–79.

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<sup>7</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *A Lithuanian Historical Syntax*, Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *The Historical Morphology of the Baltic Verb*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of Man, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *An Introduction to Old Church Slavic*, Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica Publishers, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Warren H. Held, Jr., William R. Schmalstieg, Janet E. Gertz, *Beginning Hittite*, Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1988.

editions),<sup>11</sup> which once served as a textbook for the author of these lines. In his *Indo-European Linguistics: A New Synthesis* (1980),<sup>12</sup> he puts forward an alternative view on the prehistory of Proto-Indo-European long vowels, rejecting the conventional wisdom of laryngeal theory in favor of an origin involving a monophthongization of diphthongs. The work also lays out his views on Indo-European morphology and syntax, with arguments for a split ergative structure for Proto-Indo-European. A bibliography of his publications from 1956 through 2004 can be found in *Studies in Baltic and Indo-European Languages*,<sup>13</sup> a Festschrift on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday.

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<sup>11</sup> Leonardas Dambriūnas, Antanas Klimas, William R. Schmalstieg, *An Introduction to Modern Lithuanian*, Brooklyn, N.Y.: Darbininkas, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *Indo-European Linguistics: a New Synthesis*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> William R. Schmalstieg, *Indo-European Linguistics: a New Synthesis*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980, xxiii-xlvi.

Bill was no less dynamic in his service to the profession. His various academic responsibilities included chairing the Department of Slavic Languages at the Pennsylvania State University from 1969 through 1991 and serving as editor of the journal *General Linguistics* from 1971 through 1991. He was on the editorial board of several journals, including, of course, *Baltistica*. And he was a past president (1982-84), among other offices, of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies.

Bill Schmalstieg will be especially remembered for his deep concern for the well-being of his colleagues, including the writer of these lines, who benefited from his advice on more than one occasion. He was an affable colleague and an engaging raconteur, with many good stories to share and a wry sense of humor. His unfailing generosity of spirit and his original thinking on various linguistic (in particular Baltic) issues will be deeply missed. *Amžina atmintis Jam.*

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