

## Ralph Staiger Dies; Friend to SIG

**History of Reading News.** Vol.XXV No.2 (2002:Spring)

The SIG lost a good friend with the death of Ralph C. Staiger (1917-2002), who served as Executive Director of the International Reading Association from 1962 to 1984. It was Ralph to whom we turned in the spring of 1975 when we were trying to organize a group for IRA members interested in the history of reading. When asked for help by Richard Venezky, Ralph suggested a Special Interest Group as the best venue, and he found a room for us at the annual convention held that year in New York. It was there that we held our first organizing meeting. Ralph was a member of the SIG when he died on January 7, 2002.

Ralph was born in New York City. He received his undergraduate degree from Columbia University in 1939 and an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, three years later. In 1952 he was awarded a doctorate in the psychology of reading by Temple University. He became a supervising principal in Portland, Pennsylvania; a reading consultant for the Utica, New York, system; and eventually professor of psychology and director of the school's Reading Clinic at the University of Southern Mississippi. During his tenure as Executive Director of the IRA, the association grew from 12,000 to 80,000 members and more than 1,150 councils in 85 nations.

After his retirement, Dr. Staiger was elected president of the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY). He organized the first North American congress of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and was elected to its governing board in 1994. Among other honors, he was on the advisory board of the Center for the Book of the Library of Congress and at one time president of the Reading Hall of Fame. The author of over 80 publications on reading, he most recently published *Thomas Harriot, Science Pioneer*.

We are fortunate that Ralph shared his memories with us in two earlier issues of the History of Reading News. To hear his own voice, go to the fall issues of 1988 and 1989.

