

Herbert J. Carlin

May 1, 1917 – February 9, 2009

Herbert J. Carlin, the J. Preston Levis Professor of Engineering Emeritus, died on February 9th, 2009, in Walnut Creek, California. He was 91 years old. He is survived by his wife of 35 years Mariann, two sons from an earlier marriage to Esther Beth: Seth Carlin, Professor of Music at Washington University, St. Louis, and Elliot Carlin, attorney in New York City; two daughters-in-law Maryse and Marianne, his wife Mariann's two daughters: Andrea Szentirmai of Kansas City, Missouri, and Susan Olikier and her husband Scott of Danville, California, and four grandchildren: Daniel, Tova and Annie Carlin, and Jacob Olikier.

Carlin was born in New York City and grew up in the Bronx. He received a B.S. degree and an M.S. degree in Electrical Engineering from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. degree from The Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn where he subsequently became chairman of the Department of Electrophysics.

An eminent authority in the fields of wideband circuit design and network theory, Carlin was invited to the Cornell faculty in 1966 to serve as Director of the School of Electrical Engineering. The period from 1966-75 during which Herbert held that position, widely referred to as “the Carlin years,” was a time of unprecedented growth and progress in the School of Electrical Engineering. The faculty expanded by more than 50 percent, as did the number of undergraduate majors. Similarly, the Master of Engineering program almost doubled in size and the MS/PhD program flourished, characterized by growth both in the research budget and in the international breadth of its graduate students and professors.

Professor Carlin was sought after worldwide as a lecturer and researcher. He spent a year as a Senior Research Fellow at the Physics Laboratory of the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1964-65, and another as a Visiting Scientist at the National Center for Telecommunication Research in Issy-les-Moulineaux in 1979-80. He was a Visiting Professor at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts 1972-73, at Tianjin University in China the summer of 1983, and at both University College Dublin and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne in 1991. He also delivered invited lectures in Italy, Great Britain, Hungary, Turkey and Japan. Carlin served as Chairman of the IEEE Professional Group on Circuit Theory and received the IEEE Centennial Medal in 1984. He published numerous articles and was senior author of the books *Network Theory* (Prentice Hall, 1964, with Anthony Giordano) and *Wideband Circuit Design* (CRC Press, 1997, with Pier Paolo Civalleri).

Soon after arriving in Ithaca in 1966, Herbert made friends with a number of remarkable faculty members from various departments across several disciplines. They would meet at the then Rathskeller Faculty Club for lunch to discuss a variety of subjects. He was a member of a distinguished group of Cornell faculty who helped the University through its great political crisis in April 1969. He later made a recording that narrated in detail the events of those troubled days in a manner that was meticulously fair to all parties involved. One of us recalls Herbert's advice, offered during the lengthy deliberations that April, of the need for, in his word, "sitzfleisch."

Herbert Carlin's great love of music permeated his entire life. He regularly listened to an eclectic selection of classical music, and was also passionate about jazz and blues, the best musicals and popular songs. He played the flute and for many years participated in a weekly chamber music group. He always had a grand piano in his house on which he played in the evenings or enjoyed his pianist son Seth and other musician friends. For many years he was on the Faculty Committee on Music, influencing which international orchestral and solo artists should be invited to the Bailey Hall Concert Series. Many of his closest friends were members of the Music Department; he was also a faithful member of the Barnes Hall audience.

Carlin remained forever a New Yorker through and through, reading the *New York Times* daily and *The New Yorker* often cover to cover. Yet, he was also a Francophile, spending two sabbatical leaves in Paris. He enjoyed every aspect of that city with all its offerings, including good food and wine. Herbert was proud of the fine red wines he would offer his guests to accompany his wife Mariann's wonderful French/Hungarian cooking. Italy was likewise high on the list of his favorite places; he spent many memorable holidays and professional visits there. He often remarked that his stay as a Visiting Professor at Tianjin University in China was one of the highpoints of his life.

Herbert was extremely well read, mostly non-fiction on a broad variety of subjects (history, science, music, literary criticism), yet loved great fiction as well. In his late eighties, he was rereading James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In 1967, he wrote a collection of book reviews in the "Readers Report" as part of the Olin Library Bookmark Series; his writing style was lucid and easily approachable.

Herbert Carlin was appropriately described at his 70th birthday celebration as a "quintessential intellectual." There was, moreover, an active athletic facet to his life – playing tennis with his sons and friends, rooting rabidly for Giants and later Mets baseball, fencing while a student at Columbia, and piloting a small sailboat he kept for many years at the Ithaca Yacht Club. One of Herbert's favorite pastimes was slide photography; he had a beautiful collection featuring both his various trips and the Cornell campus in every season.

Carlin was passionately involved in politics, possessing a prodigious memory of seemingly everything he had ever heard or read. Coupled with his fervent and pronounced likes and dislikes, this enabled him to enrich conversations on a vast number of subjects. Somehow he also always found time for his students, his colleagues, his friends, his family, and his beloved wife, Mariann.

Herbert Carlin loved America and he loved Cornell.

Toby Berger, Chairperson; Malcolm Bilson, Terrence L. Fine, C. Richard Johnson, Jr.