

Paul Valois 1946 - 2014

Paul Valois died, suddenly, in May 2014. He was only 68, but if you live alone, and something happens, there may be nobody to go for help.

Paul was a lifelong enthusiast and worker for chess composition. Apart from a few early two-movers, one of which gained third prize in one of the British Chess Problem Society's McWilliam Tournaments (sponsored by the late Bob McWilliam to encourage young composers, and restricted to those below the age of 21), he first came into prominence during 1965-68, when he was General Editor of the first thirteen issues of the then newly founded endgame study magazine *EG*. He also did translations from Russian for the benefit of *EG*, in particular of an important article "The technique of study composition" by G. M. Kasparian which appeared in *EG* 6. I don't think he ever composed a study - there appears to be nothing by him in Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database IV" - but they remained a strong interest, and for many years up to his death he presented a regular selection of recent studies in the BCPS's magazine *The Problemist*. These selections show his tastes to have been quite different from mine, but there was plenty of room for both of us.*

In the problem field, his main loves were the selfmate and the reflexmate. Again, he was primarily a connoisseur and collector and not a composer, but he ran the "Selfmates" column in *The Problemist* for perhaps thirty years, and when he visited the BCPS Library, which he regularly did on his way to London to attend an exhibition (he was a man of wide intellectual interests), his primary purpose always appeared to be to add new reflexmates and perhaps selfmates to his collections.

But above all, he was a massive worker. In the 1980s, he took on both the treasurership of the BCPS and the even more demanding task of editing *The Problemist*, all this on top of a full-time job in the Brotherton Library of Leeds University. Such a pace could not be maintained, and even though he passed on the treasurership in the early 1990s the workload finally overwhelmed him. More recently, now in retirement and no longer editing *The Problemist*, he again took on the treasurership. And during the most recent ten or a dozen years he did a significant part of the work involved in running the annual British Chess Solving Championship: sending out the starter announcement, fielding the replies, banking the entry cheques, and sending out the postal rounds. When this championship started, it was sponsored by Lloyds Bank, who provided not just cash but also someone to do the administrative work. Since the sponsorship by Lloyds ceased, the BCPS has had to provide this administrative effort itself.

One particular incident sticks in the mind. In 1989, the annual international problemists' meeting was held in Bournemouth, and Paul did much of the behind-the-scenes administrative work. Typically, he did more than just meet the bare bones of the requirement (one characteristically imaginative touch was to hire a couple of beach huts for the week so that the ladies had somewhere to go while their men were struggling with the competitions), and when he was called up at the prize-giving to receive a token of appreciation for his hard work, the applause was long, loud, and richly deserved.

He will be greatly missed.

* Michal Dragoun reminds me that there was a joint composition by Michal Hlinka and Paul in issue 73 (December 2010) of the Slovak magazine *Pat a mat*. "Endgame study database IV" had already appeared by then.