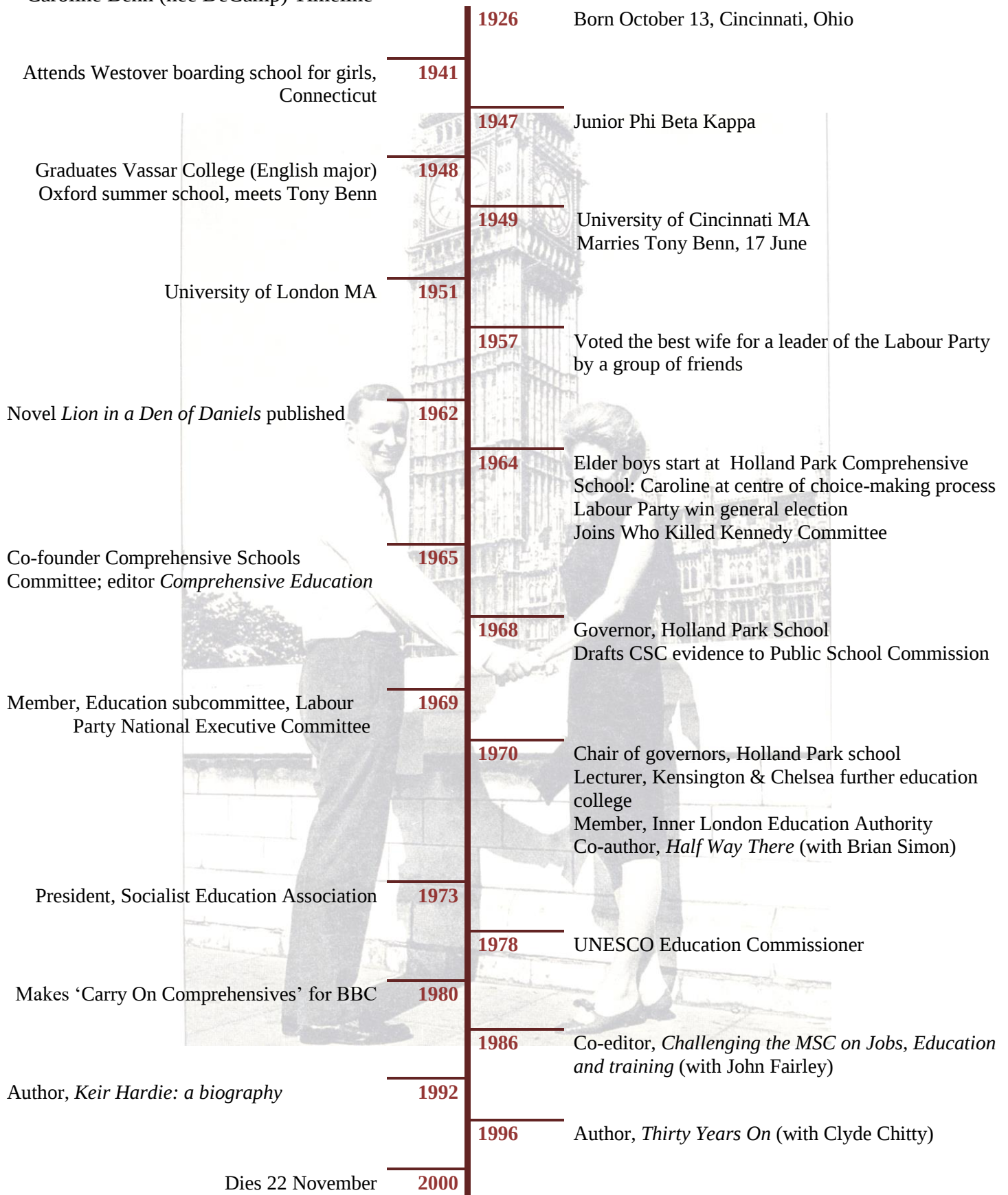


Caroline Benn and the Comprehensive Education Movement

Caroline Benn (née DeCamp) Timeline



Caroline Benn on Holland Park School, 1964

Asked why she and Tony chose the school, she said: 'For the same reason most parents, when given a choice, do send their children to any particular school; because they feel it is the best school... because we felt comprehensive education was the best kind of education... we believe that this kind of school, accepting all in its area without enquiry into their home circumstances, race, finances, religion or IQ is the kind of school we can respect.'¹

Comprehensive Schools Committee, 1965

Statement of Aims - We wish to see equality of opportunity in education achieved by:

- The elimination of selection, by examination or any other means, at the age of transfer to secondary education.
- The end of the segregation of children in different types of secondary school, and the rejection of the idea that separate but equal types of education can or should be provided.
- The exploration of different ways in which the comprehensive ideal may be realised.
- The rapid introduction of comprehensive education and the provision by the Government of the necessary resources.

Halfway There, 1970

'A comprehensive school is *not* a social experiment; it is an educational reform.'²

The London Interview, 1970

'A strong motive for newspapers wanting to interview Mrs Caroline Benn is that she is the attractive American wife of a British Cabinet Minister. But Mrs Benn deserves to be taken more seriously... When she talks about schools, Mrs Benn does not speak theoretically: her network of contacts allows her to spend days teaching in schools all over the country... In a way, Mrs Benn has been able to cross the gap between educationalists and those embroiled in the daily trials of the classroom.'³

CB to Brian Simon, 20 June 1977

'One thing I've learned in this business (of politics) just because something is a) right and b) true and c) inevitable, it does not mean you do not have to keep saying it over and over and over. Using every chance there is.'⁴

CB, 'The Right to a Comprehensive Education', *Comprehensive Education*, Winter 1981, p. 2.

'Only a change to a genuine comprehensive system can save the situation, including the conscious reinstatement of comprehensive values: that each child is entitled to the same resources, the same high expectations, the same teacher commitment, and the same educational experiences as all others in the age group, regardless of previous attainment, social background, race, sex or wealth.'

Mark Jackson, *Times Educational Supplement*, 1 December 2000

'May have influenced British society more than the members of the political dynasty into which she married.'

Jane Martin,

University of Birmingham. Email: j.martin@bham.ac.uk

¹ Caroline Benn answers to questions sent by *Where*, CB Box 33, Benn Papers, UCL Institute of Education.

² Caroline Benn and Brian Simon (1970) *Half Way There* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 110.

³ Denis Taylor, The London Interview, *The Times*, 8 June 1970.

⁴ DC/SIM/2/17, Simon Papers, UCL Institute of Education.