

Mary L. Clayton

Professor Mary Clayton joined the Indiana University faculty in the fall of 1971. Three years later, after receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Texas, she became director of the Hispanic Linguistics Program in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, a position she has held, off and on, until her retirement in December 2006. Before her Ph.D., which was in the field of general linguistics, Professor Clayton had earned a B.A. in Latin and Spanish from the University of South Florida (1964) and an M.A. in linguistics from Texas in 1968. In our department Mary Clayton has taught courses in Spanish phonology, historical grammar, and Latin American dialectology. As director of the linguistics program, she was an advocate both for her students and for the field of Spanish linguistics, making sure that the program provided thorough and balanced preparation in all of the basic areas of Spanish linguistics, including some knowledge of the other Romance languages of the Iberian peninsula.

She recalls with pleasure that among the many students who have successfully completed Spanish phonetics have been some who have dived into it with particular relish: for example, the student who undertook a required short paper by casting the entire project in the form of a short story; or a recent undergraduate who was led to discover that Ladino, one of the languages of the Jewish diaspora, had in fact much in common with sixteenth-century Spanish. The following semester Mary directed a reading course for the student, and the two of them set about exploring the language that left with the Jews after they were expelled from Spain in 1492. The independent study was, Mary says, one of her most rewarding teaching experiences.

As a researcher, Mary Clayton began her career putting together phonetic data from Latin and Spanish and studying them within linguistic theories of phonology and morphology. Her work appeared in *Language*, the premier journal in the linguistics field; she also served for three years as one of that journal's associate editors. Later in her career her interests branched out to include the study of Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs still spoken today in central Mexico. Nahuatl was taught at IU by R. Joe Campbell, whom Mary had married in 1978. Their attention was called to an anonymous manuscript from the Newberry Library in Chicago: a dictionary of Spanish, Latin, and Nahuatl. She has described the discovery of this manuscript as a truly life-changing event. Despite its importance, the manuscript had never received serious scholarly attention, and this led to Mary's recent work: a paleographic transcription of the text, a morphological analysis of its Nahuatl words, the alphabetization of the entries in this language (the manuscript is alphabetized by Spanish), and a thorough study of the manuscript and possible authorship. Needing the tools of paleography and historical knowledge of ancient and colonial Mexico, she acknowledges that the project felt "like going back to graduate school." She received a National Endowment for the Humanities Research Grant (\$83,000) to undertake this project. Her work continues to the present, though some preliminary findings have been published in the *International Journal of American Linguistics* and the *International Journal of Lexicography*.

Much has changed since Mary Clayton came to IU 35 years ago. In particular, she recalls purchasing her first calculator (at a cost of \$54, a substantial sum at a time when the salaries of assistant professors were less than current AI salaries) so she could enter her grades, which at the time had to be added and averaged without benefit of a grading program. Assistant professors taught nine to thirteen hours rather than the current six. Copies were made with carbon paper or ditto masters, and errors were corrected with an eraser, or a razor blade in the case of the dittoes. On the other hand, there was no spam or junk e-mail, and far less administrative red tape.

Thinking about her retirement, Mary writes: "For the first time since I was five years old, I will be able to just live in the world without responsibilities defined by others—though this is a bit of an overstatement, since one never retires from the job of

homemaker." She looks forward to devoting more time to gardening (the department has often received summer gifts from Mary's overflowing bounty) and to renewing her interest in bird-watching, nature photography, and piano music. Still she is determined to devote most of her time to the Nahuatl dictionary project. This coming July she will be participating in the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's workshop on "European and New World Forms of Knowledge in Colonial Spanish America," to be held at the Newberry in Chicago.

She writes: "I certainly will not be retiring from linguistics, but simply from teaching and departmental service. Recently I sat down at the computer to make a list of interesting research topics for exploration and came up with an even dozen before moving my hands from the keyboard, and I've added a few others since then. I suspect there may not be much time for bird-watching after all."

Josep Miquel Sobrer