

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
MILDRED V. BOYER**

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Mildred V. Boyer, Professor Emeritus, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.



Alan W. Friedman, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council
The University of Texas at Austin
Arthur J. Thaman and Wilhelmina Doré Thaman Professor of English and Comparative Literature

**IN MEMORIAM
MILDRED V. BOYER**

Mildred Vinson Boyer, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, died in Austin on May 22, 2015, at the age of eighty-eight.

She was born in Newport, Tennessee, on June 1, 1926, coincidentally the very day on which Marilyn Monroe was born. After graduating from high school in Newport, she attended Baylor University where she majored in Spanish, receiving her B.A. in 1947 and her M.A. in 1949. In 1949, she moved to The University of Texas at Austin to begin doctoral work. She spent the summer of 1947 studying at the University of Havana on a scholarship from the Institute of International Education. She studied at the University of Puerto Rico during the summer of 1950, and at Columbia University in the summer of 1951. She spent 1954-55 on a Fulbright in Italy and received her Ph.D. from the UT Austin's Department of Romance Languages in 1956. Her dissertation was a critical edition of the *Viaje del Parnaso, y descubrimientos nuevamente hechos en este monte y sus colonias*.

After she received her Ph.D., Mildred taught Spanish and Italian at the University of Illinois for two years (1956-58) and then for a year at the University of Arkansas (1958-59). Mildred, a supporter of civil rights, said she left Arkansas with a mixed sense of sadness and pride, because in good conscience she could not continue to serve a state governed by Orval Faubus, who during the 1957 Little Rock crisis stood against the Supreme Court decision that favored racial integration in schools. In the fall of 1959, she began working at the University of Texas at Austin as an assistant professor teaching Spanish and Italian. She advanced through the ranks to associate professor and professor before retiring in 1986.

As a full professor, Mildred was a woman of that rank among a conspicuously greater number of male professors. Her friend and colleague Lee Fontanella remembered that "Mildred defined herself as the voice of Reason when matters grew tumultuous. She was always quick to find compromise solutions within her large department of sometimes opposed views." He also recalled what took place on a grander scale, in the fall of 1974, when the UT Regents named Lorene Rogers as president, replacing Stephen Spurr, whom the Regents had fired. "A disturbed University faculty assembled in an emergency meeting in Hogg Auditorium, in the presence of President designate Rogers. Mildred stood boldly and eloquently amid her peers to state that, while she celebrated that a woman would be named to an august position, she felt that no one should accept such a post in the face of majority opposition such as that which she then sensed among the faculty."

It was in keeping, then, that Mildred's original area of research was the Spanish eighteenth century, one that prided itself on logical thinking and procedures. Mildred felt that somehow that characteristic could be applied to professional activity. But as her publications reveal, she had wide-ranging interests. Her earliest article, published in 1952 in the Cuban journal *Orígenes*, focused on Miguel de Unamuno's *Niebla*, while a 1959 article in *Hispania* addressed the eighteenth-century *seminarios de nobles* under the Jesuits. In 1981, she published an article on Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's abolitionist novel *Sab*. She worked with the poet Harold Moreland

on an English translation of Jorge Luis Borges's *Dreamtigers (El Hacedor)*, which was published by the University of Texas Press in 1964. Her most useful legacy to the field of eighteenth-century studies was her descriptive bibliography of the large collection (some 1100 items) of pre-1833 *comedias sueltas* held in the Harry Ransom Center here at the University of Texas at Austin. Her bibliography served as the basis for the eventual cataloging of the entire collection of over 15,000 items, which was completed in 2014 (to consult the collection, go to <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/books/holdings/sueltas/>). In fact, the bibliographic system that she devised for that publication has been adopted by others working in the same area. Following her death, her own collection of *comedias sueltas* and a number of eighteenth-century books were donated by her family to the Ransom Center. Her papers were given to the Briscoe Collection (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/03868/cah-03868.html>).

Mildred also had a deep and abiding interest in bilingual education, which she shared with her colleague Theodore Andersson. In 1970, they published the important two-volume book *Bilingual Schooling in the United States*; a second edition followed in 1978. Other contributions she made in this area include two articles: "Texas squanders non-English resources," which appeared in *Texas Foreign Language* in 1963, and "Poverty and the Mother Tongue," published in *The Educational Forum* in 1965.

In addition to teaching and publishing, Mildred was active in the profession. From 1968 to 1970, she was a member of the National Executive Council of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. From 1971 to 1973, she served on the Modern Language Association's National Advisory Board. She was a lifetime member of the Texas Foreign Language Association.

Mildred's nieces and nephews, who survive her, remember her adventurous spirit, her love of travel, her generosity, her piercing intellect, her ability to be both funny and serious, her love of gadgets, and how she loved to take her sailboat out on Lake Travis.

Mildred was also a poet: she published her poetry collection, *View Points*, in 2013, and was a lifetime member of the Austin Poetry Society along with an English Department colleague, Professor Neill Megaw, whose poetry she admired greatly. So, it seems fitting to close this memorial resolution with one of her poems, the last two lines of which are on her tombstone in Newport, Tennessee.

Fanfare for the Jubilee

When at last I'm finally free
 from whatever's stopping me,
 I'm moving to Oxford to be a don –
 in astrophysics, I think,
 or dodecaphonic tunes perhaps –
 and at night I'll read classical Greek.
 I'll build crossword puzzles in flawless Chinese,
 and not serve on a single committee.
 Not a one for the rest of my life.

And if, in time, that arrangement palls,
 I'm going to buy a Harley –
 roar off to Alaska with one true friend
 to homestead there in the wild.
 We'll build a snug cabin and watch for moose,
 and I'll be a basket weaver
 or maybe a potter— spend my time
 creating beautiful things
 (I know they'll be beautiful things).

But if I weary of that – (don't tell) –
 I'm going to be a poet.
 The trouble, of course, is the *awesome risk*

of investing in such a scheme:
it's so deadly obvious when you fail.
But a poet's what I plan to be
when, at last, I'm finally free
of whatever it is that's stopping me.

This memorial was prepared by a special committee consisting of Madeline C. Sutherland-Meier (chair), Jane Johnson, and Dale Koike with the generous assistance of Lee Fontanella.

Distributed to the dean of College of Liberal Arts on May 30, 2017, and posted under "Memorial Resolutions" at <https://wikis.utexas.edu/display/facultycouncil/Wiki+Home>.