IN MEMORIAM: MARY R. HAAS

Mary Rosemond Haas, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics in the University of California at Berkeley, died in her home in Berkeley on May 17 after a long, lingering illness. She was eighty-six years old. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Stuart Haas, and by her stepmother, Dorothy Haas. Haas was born January 23, 1910, in Richmond, Indiana. Her undergraduate education was acquired at Earlham College in her home town, although she took a second bachelor's degree—in comparative philology—from the University of Chicago, where she first encountered Edward Sapir. She then joined the small band of graduate students whom Sapir trained at Yale in the 1930s, receiving her Ph.D. in 1935. Her dissertation was a grammar of Tunica, a linguistic isolate of Louisiana. In the years immediately following she did fieldwork on various other languages of the Southeast, including Natchez and several Muskhagean languages (Creek, Koasati, Choctaw, Alabama, and Hitchiti).

In 1940, as America's entry into the Second World War became imminent, Haas began work on Thai in order to prepare teaching materials for use by the Office of Strategic Services. In the fall of 1942 she began teaching Thai in the Anti-Specialized Language Program at Berkeley. This led to a Berkeley appointment as Research Associate and Lecturer in Siamese and Linguistics in the Department of Oriental Languages. Her appointment to an Assistant Professorship at Berkeley in 1947 marked a significant acceleration of her illustrious career. Together with her colleagues Murray Emeneau, Douglas Chretien, Madison Bejler, and Francis Whitfield, she set into motion a program, funded by the State Legislature, known as the Survey of California Indian Languages which provided resources for sending qualified graduate students to carry out in-depth fieldwork on surviving native languages of the state. The Survey starred as a pilot project in 1949 with one of Haas' graduate students, William Bright, who studied Karuk in northwestern California. In 1953 the survey became official and the Graduate Department of Linguistics was established at Berkeley.

During the 1950s and 60s Haas used the Survey to make possible extensive fieldwork on the aboriginal languages of California, and in later years on many other American Indian languages outside California. More than forty dissertations have been written under Survey sponsorship, and numerous careers in linguistics and ethnomelinguistics have resulted from the Survey. Besides its outstanding merit as an academic enterprise, the Survey has helped ensure the preservation of many Native California languages which would otherwise have been doomed to oblivion.

Haas's achievements were widely recognized. In 1963 she was elected President of the Linguistic Society of America. In 1964 she was appointed a Guggenheim Fellow. In 1974 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. After her retirement in 1977 she accepted several visiting professorships, both in the United States and abroad.

For her many students Mary Haas will always remain the quintessential scholar, a mentor of breathtaking stature, larger than life.

—William Shipley

A memorial for Mary R. Haas will be held at Berkeley on Friday, June 28, during the First Conference of the 1996 Hokan-Fugonian Conference. For further details, please contact Leanne Hinton, Dept. of Linguistics, UC-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720 (hinton@violet.berkeley.edu).

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