

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

DOROTHY ALLISON HUNTINGTON

(1920 - 1993)

Dorothy Allison Huntington, Professor of Linguistics Emerita, died on October 25th 1993 at Stanford Hospital of lymphoma. She had been a member of the Stanford faculty for thirty-six years, and served as the Chair of the Department of Linguistics from 1985 to 1988.

Dorothy was born in Colorado and her heart never left it. Even as a six-year-old, when her family moved to Illinois, she resisted the move. Every summer of her life from then on, she spent all the time she could in the mountains. She returned to Colorado to do her undergraduate work, earning a B.A. in 1943 and an M.A. the following year at the University of Colorado at Boulder, both degrees in English with a minor in Speech. Her studies in Shakespearean drama and her interest in her father's work in civil engineering led to her appointment as Technical Director in the theater there during her degree programs.

World War II interrupted her academic work, and Dorothy served for two years in the American Red Cross in Italy. Nearly blinded after a jeep accident, she was returned to the United States for a long recuperation in the mountains in Colorado, gradually regaining her strength and sight through manual labor and the pursuit of avocational interests like hiking, geology, and the "belly-button botany" so familiar to those who study the flora of the tundra high above timberline.

By 1947 she had returned to academia, at the University of Illinois in the graduate program in Speech Pathology and Audiology. There she earned an M.S. in Speech Pathology, and produced her first scholarly work on child language development – a paper based on observation of her much younger sister. She was the first woman admitted to the doctoral program in Experimental Phonetics and Speech Science at the University of Illinois. Upon receiving her Ph.D. in 1952, she declined a post-doctoral fellowship to accept an appointment in the School of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford in the Division of Speech Pathology and Audiology (then a part of the Department of Speech and Drama). She had accepted a challenge rare to first-year faculty members, an opportunity to develop her own doctoral program in Speech and Hearing Sciences and to create her own experimental phonetics laboratory. At that time, she was the only experimental phonetician on the West Coast, far from the nearest laboratory and from other specialists in her field.

Efforts over the next few years to obtain the space and funds to build a laboratory within the School of Humanities and Sciences were unsuccessful, but by that time the School of Medicine was committed to moving from San Francisco to Stanford and welcomed the inclusion of academic programs in the paramedical sciences to help strengthen its ties with the University. The Division of Speech Pathology and Audiology was transferred to the Medical School, and by 1959 Dorothy had supervised the design, construction and equipping of an anechoic chamber and associated acoustic laboratory for the analysis of speech and hearing.

Dorothy's professional interests were wide-ranging and her laboratory in the Medical School was available to all students and faculty throughout the University. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines and institutions took advantage of it and of her help in using it in interpreting their data. She served as a consultant to colleagues at ITT, SRI, and at two Bay Area VA Hospitals. She spent a sabbatical year as Senior Scientist at the Haskins Laboratories in New York City and another period as visiting professor at the University of Colorado. Her influence as a teacher and scholar was recognized by the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association, to which she was elected Fellow.

Dorothy was one of the early leaders in emphasizing the critical importance of experimental phonetics to surgical and clinical intervention practices in the treatment of speech and hearing disorders, to understanding the processes of child language acquisition, and to the linguistic analysis of the sound systems of human language. In the earlier years of her association with the Medical School, her research and teaching contributed to one of the best national training programs of its time in Speech Pathology and Audiology. In her later years there, she participated in major studies related to cochlear implant prostheses. Her experimental studies had significant implications for therapy.

One important source of personal satisfaction from her Medical School tenure was the opportunity to serve as the elected chair of the Professional Women at Stanford Medical School in the early 1970s when that group mounted a successful effort to achieve appropriate University appointments for three of its most distinguished Senior Scientists.

As the Medical School grew and prospered in its academic setting, the pressures of core medical and surgical needs for additional space and funds began to intensify. Those pressures inexorably bore upon the paramedical programs, most of which were closed. However, basic science in hearing and speech was retained in affiliation with the Division of Otolaryngology in the Department of Surgery. In 1985 the Program in Hearing and Speech Sciences was also terminated.

When Dorothy came to Stanford in 1952, one of her first responsibilities had been to develop a unified program of English instruction for foreign students. She organized a program of English instruction based on principles of second-language learning and emphasizing the pragmatic aspects of understanding idiomatic English and learning to

speak it intelligibly. The program she established in the mid-50s has retained that basic philosophy and is now recognized as among the nation's best.

Also during the fifties, Dorothy was one of a small group of Stanford faculty who were energetic and vocal advocates of linguistics. She helped found the Committee on Linguistics, which later provided the basis for the Department. She was active in the push to make the first round of major senior appointments in Linguistics and also participated in some of the earliest sponsored research projects in the subject at Stanford. An early contribution was the design and implementation of the novel data-collection procedures used by Ruth Hirsch Weir in her 1962 classic on child language development: Language in the Crib. One major linguistic research project that she found especially satisfying was the Child Phonology Project (1967-1992), which was largely funded by the National Science Foundation. For some of the Project's studies, she was co-Principal Investigator with Charles Ferguson, and co-author of the ensuing technical reports. The Child Phonology Project was a cross-linguistic cognitive science project aimed at contributing to an understanding of the extent to which language acquisition is influenced by adult input, by motor development and experimentation on the part of the child, and by internal learning mechanisms.

By 1985, when the program in Hearing and Speech Science was terminated, the situation on campus had reversed because of the rise of the Department of Linguistics. The School of Humanities and Sciences now needed an experimental phonetics laboratory for its academic programs and could now provide the funds and space for it. Dorothy Huntington was appointed Professor of Linguistics and Chair of the Department. Her service to the University came full circle as she played a major role in the development of the Linguistics Laboratory. Located in the basement of Jordan Hall, this facility is now the main resource for phonetic research on campus.

Dorothy Huntington was personally modest and unassuming, but she was a valued and trusted colleague. A scholar of the highest standards, she was tough-minded, but always even-handed. Her ingenuity in solving the practical problems indigenous to a working phonetics laboratory was widely known. She always gave unstintingly of her time to novice and professional alike, and many generations of students and faculty in both the Medical School and in Humanities and Sciences benefited from her enormous knowledge of experimental phonetics and her remarkable patience. She was, in the words of one student, "the kind of teacher one does not forget."

Dorothy is survived by her sister Ruth Huntington Williams of Lyons, Colorado, and by a niece and two nephews.

Clara N. Bush
Eve V. Clark
Charles A. Ferguson
Elizabeth C. Traugott (Chair)