

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR RAYMOND A. HARRIS

Professor Ray Harris was born in Birmingham, UK, on 13 July 1953; he died on 4 May 2009, after a brief and sudden illness. He was internationally recognized for his research in Spanish historical linguistics and was loved and revered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as an exceptional colleague, teacher, mentor and friend.

Professor Harris received his BA in Spanish and romance linguistics, with first class distinction, from the University of Birmingham (UK) in 1975, followed by the PhD from the same institution in 1985, with the thesis entitled *The Notion of Generative Historical Linguistics: Weakening Processes in the History of Spanish*, directed by Professor Suzanne Romaine of the University of Oxford. Before coming to the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1989, Professor Harris taught as profesor no-numerario in the Department of English at the University of Oviedo (Spain) from 1977-87 and as profesor asociado in the Departamento de Filología Anglogermánica y Francesa at the same institution from 1987-89. Upon his arrival at the UW-Madison, Professor Harris was promoted to the rank of associate professor with tenure in 1993 and then to full professor in 2000. Among the many awards Professor Harris received, and titles held, during his years at Madison, he was awarded the Vilas Associate award from 2002-04 and was co-principal investigator on a three-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1999-2002 for the *Léxico hispanoamericano*, a research tool published on CD-Rom in 2003. Publishing under the name Harris-Northall, he was the author of various scholarly publications: the 1990 monograph published by Routledge, *Weakening Processes in the History of Spanish Consonants*; the 1992 volume of essays co-edited with Thomas D. Cravens of the UW-Madison, *Linguistic Studies in Medieval Spanish*, published by the Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies; a semi-paleographic publication of the *Text and Concordances of the "Gran Conquista de Ultramar," BNM R-518, R-519* (1994); and the *Manual of Manuscript Transcription for the Dictionary of the Old Spanish Language* (1997). In 2007 he again co-edited a volume of essays titled *Medieval Iberia: Changing Societies and Cultures in Contact and Transition*, published by Boydell and Brewer. At the time of his death, he was working on two major publications: a co-authored phonetics text with Fernando Tejedo-Herrero and Donald N. Tuten, both his former PhD students: *La pronunciación del español: Normas y variación*; and a single-authored monograph, *A History of Linguistic Standardization in Spain*. He was author of 24 articles and as many scholarly papers and lectures read at various professional conferences and inviting institutions, as well as 12 reviews and review articles and the annual Hispanic Linguistics bibliography for the *Comparative Romance Linguistics Newsletter* since 1993.

Professor Harris' service to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese was constant and impeccable. Among the many and time-consuming duties that he undertook in the department were: associate chair from 1994-97 and 1998-99; director of graduate studies from 2006-09; chair and member of numerous faculty search committees, in which his judgment and interview abilities were of unequalled service to the department; and perhaps one of his greatest services, although least recognized outside the department, was his enormous work mentoring probationary faculty, for which he was nominated by Diana Frantzen for the Doris Slesinger Award for Excellence in Mentoring, and his membership on numerous probationary-faculty oversight committees, in addition to his steadfast dedication to guiding masters and PhD graduate students through all stages of their careers.

His service to the College of Letters and Science and to the university at large was no less extraordinary than that to the department. To name only some of Ray Harris' service activities: he was an essential and dedicated member of the Arts and Humanities Divisional Executive Committee from 2005-08, serving as

(continued)

that body's vice-chair from 2007-08 as well as a member of the Interdivisional Conference Committee from 2007-08. He also served on the Nave Visiting Scholar/Artist Committee of the Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies program from 2004-09 and was a member of the UW-TAA Negotiating Committee from 2000-02. Moreover, he was an essential member of the Committee on Romance Philology and Linguistics Program since 1989. Within the profession, again to mention only a few of the honors and associations that he held, Professor Harris was a member of the Linguistic Advisory Board for Public Broadcasting System and Televisión Española from 1990-91 and a member of the Modern Language Association of America's Steering Committee on Comparative Romance Linguistics from 1992-95. He had also been as a member of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) since 1985 as well as a member of the *Société de Linguistique Romane* (France) since 1991.

Professor Harris was a valued and excellent teacher. He was nominated by the department for university teaching awards and was the director of seven completed dissertations at UW-Madison, with four in progress at the time of his death. Graduate and undergraduate students alike, as well as his colleagues, remember his classes and his extraordinary wit and sense of humor with great fondness. The knowledge he imparted to all, in and outside of the classroom, was vast and incomparable.

Ray loved music (from rock to opera; *zarzuela* to *fado*), good cuisine and was schooled in picking a fine wine, especially a Spanish or Portuguese one. Many of his colleagues and graduate students in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, as well as those who worked with him on various committees outside the department, remember his culinary talent, his ability to make the preparation of extraordinary meals seem effortless and simple. As a gracious host, as well as scholar, he was unsurpassed.

Professor Harris was preceded in death by his father, William, in 2004 and is survived by his mother, Ivy, and his siblings, William, Ivy, and Kevin. He left a legacy of selfless service to the department, college, university, and to the profession at large; unparalleled dedication to teaching and mentoring students at the undergraduate and graduate levels; and an internationally recognized reputation for excellence in research. Ray Harris was respected and loved by all. He was a cherished, generous friend and colleague: the backbone of the department. Professor Harris said that he had been lucky to have met and known so many wonderful people: his family, extended Spanish family, and friends. In the end, however, it is we who were the lucky ones. Acquaintance with Ray Harris made us better for having known him. He will be sorely missed and never forgotten.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Ivy A. Corfis, chair

Diana L. Frantzen

Catherine A. Stafford