

THE VOICE

Fall-Winter 2004

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Dear Colleagues:

Toronto was an exhilarating experience! We have many people to be thankful to. Starting with Headquarters staff: Mary David, Walter Bacak, Terry Hanlen, Teresa Kelly, Jeff Sanfacon and Roshan Pokharel who helped from behind the scenes and made everything seem effortless. Thank you also to the many members who showed their support to the Division through presentations, whether giving them or organizing them for our collective benefit, as well as to the first-time attendees who had the courage to accept Steve's invitation to share some of their more unusual professional experiences with all of us.

I had the pleasure of meeting many of you and finally putting faces to the names I had already learned to recognize from the Yahoo! Groups. It was nice also to see "old" friends and feel welcome.

If you could not be in Toronto this time, we do hope to see you in Seattle. And if you were in Toronto, look for yourself in the pictures that grace this special issue of The Voice.

- Gio

Got Talent? Lend a Hand!

The Voice is looking for new editors and a DTP professional for its future editions. We are thankful and grateful to our past editors and to Cristina Padrón for the great job they did for us.

If you know of a colleague or even an outside individual who could assist us to keep our newsletter thriving, please let us know. Contact either Steve (stevenmines@yahoo.com) or Gio (translanguage@iname.com).

And don't forget to keep those articles and event notices coming! Photos and personal history are welcome too. We are looking forward to your comments and submissions.



From the Administrator's Desk:

Dear Fellow Interpreters:

The ATA 45th Annual Conference in Toronto was an inspiring and impressive lineup of the varied interpreting experiences present in our larger ATA family. We were privileged and humbled to share in the memories of a pioneer interpreter, Mr. Peter Less, who nearly 60 years ago interpreted at the first of the major war crime trials in Nuremberg as a young graduate of the Geneva School of Interpretation, and whose own family had tragically fallen victim to the Nazi regime. Hearing one of our profession's earliest practitioners recount the origins of simultaneous interpretation was a memorable encounter with History and Legacy. A warm and heartfelt thank you to Mr. Less and to our fellow division member, Ms. Tanya Gesse of Chicago, for proposing and bringing to fruition Mr. Less' participation at our Annual Conference.

Many others, too numerous to list, are also due our thanks for making Toronto a rich and multi-faceted learning opportunity. Among other valuable offerings, there were sessions on training interpreters in university and workshop settings, on medical interpretation, on the risks of the court interpreter's role being undermined and misunderstood by judges and jurors in particular, on the challenges associated with



conference assignments where an interpreter accepts to work into her non native language – ("B" rather than "A"), and agency administrators were briefed on how to best assure good working conditions and relationships with clients and interpreters.

For 2005, we are exploring the scheduling of some regional workshops focused on skill-building and assessment for interpreters. We welcome your suggestions as to locations and partners for this and other projects you would like to see us involved in.

You will be receiving under separate cover a request to complete a brief survey on your interpreting practice. Please give us the benefit of your input and profile and contribute suggestions and articles for the division website and newsletter.

Kind regards,

Steven Mines, Division Administrator
December 2004

Peter Less commands the audience's attention.



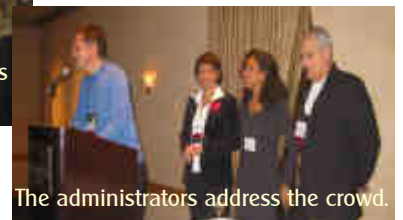
The networking event was a success.



CHIA & CCCS representatives at the joint reception.



The administrators address the crowd.



CHIA'S LANGUAGE ACCESS ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

By Katharine Allen, CHIA Board Member©

Providing healthcare to the Limited-English Proficient (LEP) patient is difficult and complex. Providing care that meets federal and State of California regulations, is cost-efficient and linguistically and culturally competent can seem like a Herculean task. Healthcare facility administrators today are faced with multiple laws and regulations, a medical interpreting and translation profession in its infancy, and an LEP population confronting multiple language and cultural barriers.

In the fall of 2003, with funding and technical support from The California Endowment and Molina Healthcare, Inc., the California Healthcare Interpreting Association (CHIA) launched the CHIA LISTEN Program (Language Interpreting Services & Training Evaluation Network). Its goal is to provide comprehensive language assessment services to hospitals and other healthcare providers to help them improve their services to LEP communities. The first step towards implementing this program was the development of CHIA's Organizational Assessment Tool for Linguistic Access, literally a "how-to" guide for assessing a healthcare facility's current linguistic access services and forming targeted recommendations for how to improve them. This article provides a brief overview of the tool and its intended application.

Organizational Assessment Tool for Linguistic Access
The Language Access Assessment tool is intended to guide a trained and knowledgeable evaluator through a four-phase assessment process designed to identify the steps individual facilities need to take to:

1. Improve compliance with state and federal regulations governing language access in healthcare.

2. Reduce the cost of providing services to LEP patients through improved service delivery and patient outcomes.
3. Improve access by LEP populations to health-care services.
4. Reduce risk in the provision of services to LEP persons.

The Organizational Assessment Tool includes components that: a) Outline the steps to be taken prior to assessment; b) List the typical health-care facility documents needed for the document-review phase; c) Organize compliance criteria into five separate modules, that allow facilities to target the assessment to the areas of greatest interest and/or need; and d) Outline steps to conduct the site survey of the healthcare facility using a trained and knowledgeable evaluator.

Finally, the assessment is carried out in four phases: 1) Pre-Assessment; 2) Document Review; 3) Site Survey; and 4) Implementation.

Achieving Compliance and Cost-Effi-

ciency

Providing competent language access services to LEP populations is an ever-present conundrum for health-care administrators: how can they balance compliance with federal and state equal access regulations while meeting tight budgets and the needs of the local LEP population? CHIA saw the need to balance these realities when designing its assessment tool. As it turned out, Federal Guidance on Title VI requirements for language access contains within it the way to find this balance.

The revised Federal Guidance provides a two-tiered model to providing language assistance services: one tier outlines the multiple components needed for an

Providing competent language access services to LEP populations is an ever-present conundrum for healthcare administrators

CHIA LANGUAGE ACCESS ASSESSMENT TOOL -2

effective Language Assistance Plan, and the second allows hospitals to narrow down which components they must include through a four-factor test. The CHIA LISTEN program mirrored this two-tiered approach in the design of its tool. The Assessment Criteria Checklist (tier 1) gathers together a comprehensive listing of regulatory compliance criteria from the Federal Guidance as well as other federal and State of California laws. Criteria are separated into five distinct categories. This checklist allows the evaluator to determine whether these criteria are met by the facility's current language assistance efforts.

Tier 2 is reflected in the Sight Survey Protocol, and is the heart of the tool. This protocol guides the evaluator through a series of interviews with targeted facility staff to tease out how LEP patients are served in all key departments, as well as observation of the physical plant. The information gathered highlights which departments and services are essential to LEP patients and where that need is less acute.

Pilot Phase

The assessment tool was piloted at two California healthcare facilities in the fall of 2003, a fairly large hospital and a small rural clinic. In the year since, it

has been applied at four additional hospitals, in and out of California. The tool has proved effective at identifying strengths and weaknesses in all programs, as well as generating a set of unique recommendations for each one. This fall, CHIA, again in collaboration with Molina Healthcare, Inc., is carrying out phase two of piloting the tool: training facility employees as internal evaluators to use the tool effectively in-house.

The goal is to create and support an internal mechanism for implementing and sustaining the changes identified by the evaluation, thus ensuring that the assessment report does not gather dust on someone's desk, but actually results in a measurable improvement to language access services.

4. NEXT STEPS

CHIA is currently working to refine the assessment process and expand its services to the many hospitals and facilities requesting help to improve their language access services. The next steps for the LISTEN program in-

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clude:

1. Standardizing the assessment process across a diverse range of healthcare settings.
2. Monitoring the short- and long-term results of the assessment in facilities where it has been applied.
3. Establishing a set curriculum for the internal evaluator training.



Katharine Allen is a community interpreter and translator in California, and the owner of Sierra Sky Interpreting and Translation. She has worked in social service settings for 15 years, both in the United States and Latin America, and works closely with the local immigrant community and public agencies. She has been a Board member for the California Healthcare Interpreters Association since September 2002. She also is a trainer for the Connecting Worlds Healthcare Interpreter curriculum. Katharine belongs to the ATA, NCTA, NCIHC, and is active in ATA di-

visions. Katharine works to improve language access issues, including bettering the quality of interpreting and translation locally.

Katharine Allen
1130 Swall Meadows Road
Swall Meadows, CA 93514

Phone/Fax: 760-387-2241
Cell Phone: 760-920-5259
Email: kallen@qnet.com

THE MAKINGS OF A PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETER

By Alicia Ernand©

The evolution of the interpreting profession has been a very slow one. In states with strict certification requirements, certified interpreters enjoy the benefits and recognition of having their certification. However, in states where certification is not a requirement, the degree of formal training, skill level and professionalism among the working interpreters varies drastically. This tends to hurt the profession, as well as the manner in which interpreters are perceived by the individuals who utilize their services.

I am an interpreter advocate. I love to see interpreters succeed, and every success story helps the profession. By the same token, every time an untrained, inexperienced bilingual individual accepts an interpreting assignment, he or she is directly contributing to the mistaken notion that a bilingual person is the same as a professional interpreter.

In my opinion, the best interpreters are those that combine excellent language skills with a very solid interpreter style. The acquisition of interpreter style comes with experience, and a very clear understanding of the typical challenges that come up in our line of work on a regular basis. For example, in deposi-

tions, the interpreter will most likely face at least one of the following scenarios: the interpretation is challenged, the deponent gets confused every time an objection is posed, the interpreter needs to seek clarification on a word used by the deponent, the depositing attorney speeds through documents that he or

she wants to enter into evidence, the plaintiff's attorney brings a bilingual employee to check on the interpreter's competency, the deponent insists on answering before the interpreter has finished interpreting. If the interpreter has a very prepared professional response to tackle these situations, then that interpreter will be able to proceed with the interpretation without getting defensive.

I look forward to addressing each one of the above mentioned issues in future articles. In closing, I will give you some food for thought. If you go to the book store right now, you will not see one single book titled, "Interpreting for Dummies!" Interpreters at work take into consideration syntax, culture, idiomatic expressions, nuances of meaning in speech, and range of registers. On top of that, interpreters develop stamina to cope under extremely stressful situations. All of these factors add up to a form of math that I call interpreter magic!

The acquisition of interpreter style comes with experience, and a very clear understanding of the typical challenges that come up in our line of work on a regular basis.



Alicia Ernand is a Spanish language California Court Certified interpreter (civil and criminal). In order to raise the awareness level as to the role of the interpreter in the judicial system, she developed instructional materials and services for interpreters of all languages. She conducts Court Interpreter Minimum Continuing Education Credit (CIMCE) workshops on a regular basis. In addition, she has developed a

Distance Learning Program to serve the needs of certified and registered interpreters.

Alicia Ernand
P. O. Box 802382
Santa Clarita CA
91380-2382

Office: 661-296-4682
Fax: 661-296-5864
Pager: 661-290-0822
E-mail: alinick@sbcglobal.net

<http://www.aliciaernand.com/index.htm>

JOINT RECEPTION OF THE
INTERPRETERS AND MEDICAL DIVISIONS
ATA'S 45TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
TORONTO - 2004



INTERPRETING NOW AND THEN: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

- By Gio Lester

None of the sessions I attended compared to the emotional and intellectual rush I felt when listening to Mr. Peter Less. Our colleague Tanya Gesse brought Mr. Less from Chicago to share with us his experiences at the Nuremberg Trials. We were not prepared for the response we received: there were people standing and sitting on the floor. No one complained.

I was lucky this year that I could attend two of the pre-conference seminars. One of them, pertinent to our Division, was Daniel Giglio's Basic Note-Taking Techniques for Practicing Interpreters. Our colleague Georganne Weller-Almeida had lead a workshop on the same subject a year ago in Miami, offered by the Florida Chapter of ATA, but as one of the organizers, I could not take full advantage of Georganne's expertise. However, what little I could apprehend whet my appetite for more.

This time I was ready: there was nothing to distract me and I knew what specific information I was looking for. Also, Daniel's style and personality made the experience easy and pleasant. He had loads of practical information and some theories to share. I came back with many pages full of notes that I am now organizing.

ASET International Services Corporation brought an interpreting booth for their presentation. Attendees had the opportunity to try both analog and digital equipment, and the setting was perfect for the active Q&A session the presentation turned into. I had never used personal interpreting devices before and was glad to learn about their differences, drawbacks, and advantages. I have colleagues who use one or the other type of equipment, but their personal accounts did no justice to my hands-on experience. I can also appreciate better the work that goes on behind the scenes for the agencies and technicians who make it all seem so easy.

Mr. Less's presentation was not chilling and gory. It was objectively and professionally delivered. We learned about the conditions, difficulties, and some personal moments experienced by him and his colleagues while staying at villas confiscated from top Nazi officials or segregated as guests in a castle, and as "honorary" members of the military corps.

Once I got home, I reread Tanya's interview with Mr. Less in the September issue of the Chronicle. This time I could hear their voices in my head as I read the questions and answers. It was almost like being in the City Hall room of the Sheraton again.

Reading what I have just written makes me feel as though I have traveled through time. Starting with the precarious conditions of Mr. Less's era, going through Daniel's note-taking techniques and practical advice, ASET's technological display, and ending with Dr. Erik Camayd-Freixas's presentation on Digital Voice Recorder-Assisted Consecutive Interpreting, a futuristic-looking trend that is reality for many colleagues now.



Giovanna Lester started working as a freelance translator and interpreter in 1980, in her native Brazil. She is the immediate past president of ATA's Florida Chapter-FLATA and currently is the Assistant Administrator of the Interpreters Division. Gio can be reached at translanguage@iname.com.

INTERPRETING MILESTONES: OUR STORIES

Personal accounts of what brought us to the industry and then keeps us here

HOW I GOT MY CALLING

By Fily Lerten©

I was born in Bolivia, attended British boarding schools in England and Chile. After passing the higher education entrance exams in Bolivia, I came to the U.S. to attend a Catholic University. I have earned degrees in Philosophy & Letters, and Foreign Relations. While I was a diplomat in Korea, with plenty of free time during the day, I went for training to become a Red Cross volunteer/worker - I come from a family that encourages volunteer work.

Years later and already living in the U.S, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Since I had never met a cancer patient and was a stay-at-home mom, I volunteered at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. There I became involved with several advocate organizations in the country. I also became Texas representative for The National Breast Cancer Coalition-NBCC.

That's when I saw the need to reach LEP patients and started to study medical terminology, cultural issues, and took the tests and training to become a professional translator/interpreter at one of the best cancer centers. I am trained in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, as a cultural broker, in regional forms of speech, written translation,s and on sight translations.

I prefer to work only with English and Spanish. I accept work only on weekends in a large hospital. During the week I work as P.R.N. (Per Request Needed) in a pediatric hospital and with private clients. I continue studying and working on my glossaries, because this is necessary when you work as a translator and interpreter in the medical field - it is an ever-changing science.

I've lived in the Far East, Middle East, Yemen, North Africa, Europe, etc. I have been exposed to different cultures, languages, and I love that I believe it is important to respect differences and make friends. My children and I are multilingual, but my husband speaks only English. My hobbies are reading, collecting out-of-print books, painting Chinese classic watercolors, and music.

I continue my work as an advocate for women suffering from cancer, working close to Senators and Congressmen and the National Breast Cancer Coalition. I love my profession!

Fily Lerten, Language ASST PRR II (Assistance Patient Relations Representative.), can be reached at TXBCC@HOTMAIL.com. She joined the Interpreters Division earlier this year, and this is her first contribution to our newsletter.

Have you got a story to share? This is your space, so please read the submissions guidelines available on our website:

www.ata-divisions.org/ID

TELEPHONE INTERPRETING: FROM INVISIBILITY TO STARDOM IN 5.8 SECONDS

By Nelson Laterman©

During the ATA conference held in Toronto, while hearing a colleague's story on how a "frozen semen" at a Beef Cattle Association conference was translated into French as "des matelots congelés," I realized I also had a couple of stories worth sharing, and that I could finally fulfil a promise to a colleague from ATA's Interpreters Division and write an article for the Interpreters' Voice.

Many years ago, I was contacted by a telephone interpreting company. They were small, and even though there were login and logout procedures, I believe I was among the very few Portuguese interpreters they had. We were getting calls at all times of the day and night. I regularly received a couple of calls in the wee hours—the calls were not long, but were far apart and enough to keep me awake for the remainder of the night. So this is the first tip for people coming into the field: when accepting the "graveyard shift," be sure you have enough calls to make it worth your while and that you are not doing anything much the next day. Believe it or not, translators/interpreters need to sleep, too!

Since then, that company has grown and I have been working with another company as well, in both cases as a backup interpreter. This means I get called only when there is nobody else logged in. I have to admit, telephone interpreting companies have always been very accommodating to my needs.

My main income derives from translation work, and there are calls that are just a nuisance. A five-minute call does not generate enough income to compensate for the half-hour interval it generates. How do five minutes become half-hour you ask? Well, you are extremely focused translating a document when, all of a sudden, you get the call. The call itself takes

only five minutes, but you have lost concentration, so you feel this is a good moment to go for a glass of water or to do a couple of things you have on your to-do list. When you get back to your translation work, you realize 30 minutes have elapsed. That is how!

Second tip: If your main income is something else and you have enough work, telephone interpreting should pay at least as much as your main work, otherwise you will be too anxious to hang up the phone.

I live in Vancouver, where there is not a lot of call for Portuguese interpreting. Telephone interpreting keeps me on the edge. You always have to be ready and you never know what is coming your way. I have had the opportunity to interpret in many different subjects: credit card support, insurance statements, computer software and hardware technical support, telecommunications, casinos, traffic court, health, and many more.

One of the calls that send you into a state of anxiety is a 911 call. More often than not, it is not a real emergency. It is common for somebody stuck on the road to call 911, even though it is not an emergency: the person really needs a tow, not an ambulance. Nevertheless, even this kind of call has an "urgency mode," as the operator tries to get rid of the caller to leave the lines open for a real emergency.

My experience with 911 dispatchers is that they are normally very well trained—and I am thankful for that. My first real emergency call:

(911) – Please ask what is happening...

(Interpreter) – My name is Nelson, I'm going to help you in this call. What's the matter?

(Caller) – My baby is blue; she is not breathing; please help me!

*One of the
calls that send
you into a state
of anxiety is a
911 call.*

TELEPHONIC INTERPRETING- 2

(Interpreter) – [SILENCE – and I tell you, I was frozen, speechless!]

(911) [After some five seconds of interpreter's silence] – We have a caller ID, we have her address on the computer screen and have already dispatched help.

[At this point I began to interpret again, told 911 the problem, and told the lady that help was on the way. I am pretty sure the comment about the caller ID was for my benefit and not for the caller's, at least that first time. Then routine took over as we confirmed the address and repeated the information. I do not know how everything ended, but we were on the line trying to keep the lady calm until the arrival of the paramedics. It did not take more than three minutes—the longest three minutes of my life. I could not do anything else for a while after the call.]

Emergency calls are not frequent, thankfully. So this is the third tip: Keep cool. Always. Regardless of the type of the call. Even with rude people. They are normally upset with the company and not with you or the attendant. It is not personal.

As in any other kind of interpretation, telephone interpreters are not supposed to take sides, but even if we do not do that explicitly, we do it in our minds. Once I got an interesting call to a gas company.

(Gas Co.) – How can I help you?

(Customer) – My bill is too high. It has never been that high. There is something wrong.

[Interpreter's thoughts]: C'mon, it is February. This bill is a January bill, middle of the

winter, lots of snow and very cold. Of course the gas company is right.]

(Gas Co.) – Madam, I have in my computer that this was a real reading and not an estimate. Your meter is less than one year old, so your bill is right. Please remember this January was one of the coldest of the last 20 years.

[Interpreter's thoughts]: I told you so!

(Customer – very upset) – You are lying! I saw your van last week. Yes, it was parked in front of my house, but there was a snowstorm and NOBODY came out of it to read the meter. I was at my window watching the van.

[Interpreter's thoughts]: Well, in Brazil, when it is 40C/104F, would a guy walk to every meter to read

it? I do not think so. So why would it be different in -40C/-40F? Yes, probably this is an estimate and not the real reading. The lady is right.]

(Gas Co.) – Our meters work with radio. To read a meter, all we have to do is to drive the van in front of your house.

[Interpreter's thoughts]: Wow! Here we go again... is this a roller coaster or what?

Among the languages spoken in more than one country, I understand that the Portuguese from Europe and Brazil are the furthest apart. Register and cross-contamination in the case of old immigrants add to the problem. For me, a Brazilian, interpreting for an old Portuguese immigrant in Massachusetts is a challenge. Brazilian soap operas have become popular in Portugal and are also broadcast via satellite to the U.S.; this seems to help the Portuguese to understand us, Brazilians, with some degree of ease, but that is not always the case.

*For me,
a Brazilian,
interpreting for an
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challenge.*

TELEPHONIC INTERPRETING- 3

(Utility co. to Interpreter) – Hi. We have a customer on-line, we need to get her name and account number.

(Interpreter to utility Co.) – No problem. I am ready.

-- The customer, a Portuguese lady, is now in the conference call --

(Interpreter to customer) – Good morning, my name is Nelson and I am a Portuguese inter-

preter. I am going to help you in this call. Could you please tell me your name?

(Customer on the background, screaming)
– JOÃO! COME HERE! This guy speaks like the soap operas; *you* understand them better!!!

As we say in São Paulo: “Nós ganha pouco, mas se diverte!” (Wages are low, but we have lots of fun!)

Nelson Laterman (www.necco.ca) is a freelance English-Portuguese translator and interpreter in Vancouver, Canada.

JOINT RECEPTION OF THE INTERPRETERS AND MEDICAL DIVISIONS.



RED CROSS LOOKS TO ATA-ID TO FIND QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERS

On October 14, 2004, Red Cross representatives Dee Hayward and Rosa Villoch met with Interpreters Division representa-

tives Steven Mines and Giovanna Lester, CHIA representatives Tom Ridley and Katherine Allen, Cross Cultural Communications Service, Inc. representatives Zarita

Araújo-Lane and Vonessa Phillips, and Medical Division representative Martine Dougé in Toronto, Canada.

The goal of that meeting was to better define the objectives of an initiative the Red Cross had approached ATA about in the beginning of 2004: the development of a volunteer force of interpreters to assist Red Cross Disaster Relief Teams across the nation. These volunteers would receive training - at no cost to them - directly from the Red Cross covering procedures, available resources, terminology specific to the Red Cross, documentation used by the Red Cross, etc. Further, through organizations such as CHIA and CCCS, Inc., more specialized training would also be available.

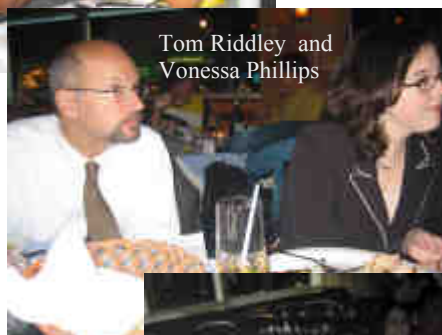
The ID's participation in this project will be to promote the program to its membership and the ATA in general, and to encourage participation. The ATA,

through its Interpreters Division, will also broadcast this effort beyond its membership.

Those who choose to participate in the program should be willing to attend training sessions and abide by the terms specified by the Red Cross. Volunteers would assist Disaster Relief Teams at disaster sites in different capacities: family service caseworkers, shelter teams, feeding operations teams, public relations, or at Red Cross Call Centers. Engagements would be for a minimum of two weeks, for which the Red Cross would provide standard training, insurance coverage, expenses for travel, lodging, and food. The Red Cross will take advantage of its existing network and create 1-2 Disaster Relief Teams per service area (there are 8 Service Areas) and 1-2 DRTs per Call Center (there are 3 CCs).

Currently the Red Cross is in the developmental stages of pilot programs that should go into operation by January 2005. There are two pilot pro-

grams on the drawing board: one for service areas and one for call centers, and they both target those regions mostly affected during the winter months in the northeastern U.S. Concurrently to the above, the Red Cross is also developing cross-cultural training for its personnel and volunteers, and specialized training for Disaster Relief Teams. Both training programs should be operational by the end of the year.



L-R: Tom Ridley, Vonessa Phillips, Rosa Villoch, Dee Hayward, Kat Allen, Zarita Araújo-Lane, Martine Dougé, Gio Lester, and Steven Mines.



THE INTERPRETER - A SHORT STORY

By Tony Beckwith

©TonyBeckwith/2003/tonyhbeckwith@cs.com

He'd been interpreting at depositions for years, almost as long as he'd been in Austin, and it had been a long time since he'd heard anything new at the hundreds of civil suits he'd attended.

Today's deposition was at the law offices of Brewster, McGillicuddy & Brewster, in their seventeenth-floor conference room. As was his custom, he'd arrived a little early and was gazing out the huge windows overlooking the city when the court reporter walked in. They introduced themselves. "The court reporter and the interpreter are always the first to arrive," he said, breaking the ice. "I like to be all set up before everyone else gets here," she answered. She had a sudden anxiety attack when she realized that she'd have to swear in the interpreter before she could swear in the deponent. She hadn't done that for ages. "Omgigod," she thought, "I hope I have the text of that oath somewhere in my bag!"

Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington was counsel for the defendant, an office cleaning service. She was a bright young attorney, a recent UT graduate, with pale cheeks and dark hair cut rather severely along her jaw line. Her eyes were sharp and sparkling as she worked through an interminable list of questions relating to an accident in which the plaintiff, a thirty-something lady from El Salvador who was sitting across from her at the conference table, had been injured. The interpreter sat to Sra. Lidia Dominguez de Salazar's right, and her attorney was on her left. Richard Henry Vargas had been representing Spanish-speaking clients for years. His parents were from Mexico and he spoke moderately good Spanish. He had once represented Sra. Dominguez's cousin, so Lidia called him the day she

was injured, right after she got home from the hospital, and they sued the cleaning company. Almost three years later the case was finally at the deposition stage, and after just over four hours of convoluted questions and answers Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington appeared to be at the end of her list. She was scrutinizing her sheaf of papers, all neatly stapled together.

The interpreter had not had a break at that stage and his mind was starting to wander. He was soon musing about how the court reporter and the interpreter are often the best dressed people at a deposition, though that was not entirely true today. He wore a blazer and a striped tie, a pair of tan slacks and polished brown loafers. The court reporter was stylish in a trim navy blue trouser suite over a cream colored turtleneck. Mr. Vargas, in jeans and a pale grey polo shirt, was in dressed-down-for-the-depo mode, looking even more relaxed than on casual Fridays. Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington, who was never casual about anything, wore a tailored black suit over a white blouse with ruffles at the throat. She exuded precision and efficiency. If she'd had a pencil on the table in front of her it would have been a full length, yellow,

number two pencil, freshly sharpened. She was the only one in the room who was taking the whole drama seriously. Even more seriously than Sra. Dominguez, who'd been skeptical from the beginning and only agreed to go through with it because her cousin got about twenty-five thousand dollars from his lawsuit, and he can walk pretty well these days. Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington felt proud to be representing Brewster, McGillicuddy & Brewster, one of the most prestigious law firms in the city. It's what all those years at college were about, she thought. All those long hours at the books, all that focus, all that money.

The court reporter was stylish in a trim navy blue trouser suite

THE INTERPRETER -2

she resented that today, feeling intimidated by her limited language skills. She admitted as much in her opening statement, saying almost apologetically that she'd learned some Spanish at school but none of it had stuck. The interpreter smiled and said, "Yes, it's like so many things: we use them or we lose them." She appreciated that and looked at him more closely. He seemed like a nice man. It was so weird to be talking through an interpreter. This was her first time and she was glad that he looked about her father's age. She hoped he'd make her look good on the record. She liked his smile and his accent. Where was he from, she wondered.

The court reporter, meanwhile, was thinking about how some interpreters take notes and others don't like waiters. And how some arrive early and others make everyone nervous by sliding in at the last minute. There seemed to be such a wide variety of types. Then she grinned inwardly and thought: like court reporters. "We all do it in our own way," she silently

But her education had not taught her any Spanish, and

philosophized, "which is one of the great attractions of this kind of work." That freedom also ensured a level of eccentricity among interpreters that she'd always enjoyed observing. Like those movies with secondary characters that create fascinating cameo roles in a courtroom drama.

The interpreter was now fantasizing about his role in the grand pageant of history. If this were a famous trial, he thought, artists would want to paint them all sitting around this table, and he'd be one of those characters in the background of a painting that would hang for centuries on museum walls. It occurred to him that this ritual they were enacting today represented the litigious aspect of modern civilization, and now he imagined himself as a character in a scene carved into the smooth marble base of a monument of some kind.

He put his hand up to his mouth to cover a slight yawn, and noticed a vague aroma of fish on his fingers. His mind panned back to the previous evening at home, and the dinner he and his wife had prepared: a beautiful cut of Copper River

*It
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WERE YOU THERE? DO YOU HAVE
PHOTOS TO SHARE?



THE INTERPRETER -3

angel hair pasta. He had skinned the fish and was now impressed that the smell was potent enough to have survived substantial hand washing *and* a shower and still be there the next day. Just then Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington spoke. "Have you answered all my questions truthfully and honestly, to the best of your ability?"

Sra. Dominguez replied that she had and went on to say that in the town she was from, lying was considered a sin. The interpreter repeated what Sra. Dominguez had said, but in English. He heard the word *pecado*, but somehow confused it with *pescado* and informed the attorney that where the Sra. Dominguez was from, lying was considered a fish. There was a sudden silence in the room. Everyone looked at the interpreter. "A fish?" asked Ms. Christine Walker-Lexington.

salmon, pan-seared and served over garlic spinach and

Mr. Vargas leaned forward, smiling broadly. "I think the interpreter means that it was considered a sin. The two words are very similar in Spanish." He flashed a highly amused smile at the interpreter who simply nodded and mouthed, "Thank you." The deposition came to an end with no further incident, and the interpreter shook hands all round and left the room. In the parking lot he started smiling. "It's a fish to tell a lie!" he sang as he got into his car. As he closed the door he burst out laughing, and it was several minutes before he was able to drive away.

This article first appeared in "The Letter" of the Austin Area Translators and Interpreter's Association.

Tony Beckwith can be reached at tonyhbeckwith@cs.com.



CONTACTS:

Administrator

Steven Mines
stevenmines@yahoo.com

Assistant Administrator

Giovanna L. Lester
translanguage@iname.com

Certification Committee

Izumi Suzuki
Izumi.suzuki@suzukimyrs.com

Webmaster

Margareta Ugander
Margareta@ugander.com

Organizer for this Special Edition

Giovanna L. Lester

Editors for the Special Edition

Special thanks to W.B., J.S. and M.D.

Your contributions are what keep the Voice ringing, so do send them to our Administrative Assistant and they will be forwarded to the right editor.

Visit our website at:
www.ata-divisions.org/ID.

THE VOICE *Interpreters*

Have you joined our Yahoo! Groups? Come and check it out:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/e-voice4ATA-ID/> or:

<http://tinyurl.com/4gdwt>

Mailing Address:

American Translators Association
225 Reineker Lane, suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 703-686-6100

Fax: 703-683-6122

E-mail: ata@atanet.org

Website: www.ata-divisions.org/ID

THE INTERPRETERS DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING AT THE 45TH ANNUAL ATA CONFERENCE - A REPORT

Toronto, Saturday, October 16 – Our meeting started at 1:45 PM. Steven Mines, Division Administrator, welcomed those present, introduced himself and the Assistant Administrator, Giovanna Lester.

There was active participation from the audience with attendees expressing their opinions and views of ATA's 45th Annual Conference. Some complained about the lack of practical activities and interpreting skills development sessions. Others expressed their appreciation to specific presenters, as well as the research and hands-on sessions covering techniques and equipment. It was also suggested that the ID collaborate with the Training and Pedagogy Division by offering pre-conference seminars on interpreting skills in future conferences. Other suggestions involved the formation of a forum for discussing the role of the interpreter as an advocate, particularly in the medical field, and the need for national standards.

Debbera "Dee" Hayward, Red Cross Senior Director of Corporate Diversity, introduced a project focused on the Red Cross's need for interpreting and translation support. According to Ms. Hayward, their need is for a variety of languages, not only Spanish and Asian languages. Thanks went to Giovanna Lester, the Division Assistant Administrator, for putting together a project proposal. It would take approximately 30-90 days to draft a partnership agreement and then a press release could be issued; concurrently, a pilot program is being developed to identify, train and deploy teams of volunteer interpreters for Jan-June 2005.

Covering the services provided by the Division, our website, listserv, newsletter and future plans were discussed. Margareta Ugander, our Webmaster, was unable to attend the meeting, but Gio Lester shared

the changes that have been made to the website and its future plans. Changes include a calendar of events, a link to the Division's newsletter archive and content updates. The Division Administration has discussed with HQ the feasibility of uploading voice samples to our existing profiles in the general ATA online membership directory. This marketing tool

would allow prospective customers to download and listen to an MP3 recording of an interpreter's voice. A link exchange between the listserv (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/e-voice4ATA-ID/>) and the ID's main website (<http://www.ata-divisions.org/ID>) was suggested. The cross-linking will increase traffic to and between the sites.

Work is on its way to produce a pamphlet covering interpreting services, on the same lines of "Translation: Getting It Right." An AIIIC representative spoke with Chris Durban, co-author of the translation pamphlet, requesting her assistance. In the meantime, Steven Mines suggested that maybe a series of booklets could be published on Court, Conference and Healthcare Interpreting, and a motion was

carried to contact the Board of Directors requesting financial support for the initiative.

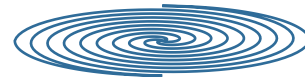
"The Interpreters Voice" needs new editors and layout professionals. The Administration asked for volunteers and offered to work closely with those involved in the newsletter. We also need current material for publication.

Financial constraints do not allow the ID to hold its own conference. However, we could co-sponsor or hold one-day seminars in order to build recognition and raise funds. The Administrator suggested that the ID could sponsor workshops and proposed the following format: an intensive 1- to 4-day language-specific workshop with highly qualified trainers in an academic setting (to keep lodging costs down), with a

Work is on its way to produce a pamphlet covering interpreting services, on the same lines of "Translation: Getting It Right."

ID ANNUAL MEETING - 2 maximum of 10 to 12 participants.

Steven, once again, asked for suggestions of reception locations and activities, as well as presentations for the 2005 Conference in Seattle. The joint Interpreters and Medical Division reception was very well received and an encore of the event is being planned for Seattle, possibly with the participation of other divisions. Also, a repeat of the presentation he did with Cristina Helmerichs was suggested, both in Seattle and in New Orleans, possibly longer and with expanded content. Another project in the works is to have interpreting booths available for the major presentations in Seattle.



Steven Mines and Giovanna Lester would like to thank Barbara Müller, a colleague from Germany, who volunteered to take notes during the meeting and whose work is the basis for this report.

CLOSING BANQUET

Right (l-r): Dr. Rafael Rivera, Gio Lester and Prof. Eric Camayd-Freixas.



Above, standing (l-r): Chris Durban, Alexandra Russel-Bitting, Neil Inglis, Gio Lester, Richard Grey. Sitting (l-r): Bob Killingsworth, Thereza D'Ávila Braga and Donna Sandin.

Right (l-r): Lyle Prescott, Gio Lester, Marian Greenfield, ATA President Elect, and Kevin Hendzel.



PETER LESS SPEAKS TO A FULL HOUSE



*The ID thanks
Tanya Gesse
for her hard
work and com-
mitment to
bring us this
unforgettable
experience.*





GALLERY: REGISTRATION, JOINT ID-MEDICAL DIVISIONS RECEPTION.



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THE *Interpreters* **VOICE**