



WITS NEWSLETTER

Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society

Autumn 2004, Volume 15, Number 3

AUTUMN AND CHANGES

Kenneth Barger, Federally Certified Interpreter and ATA
Certified Translator (Eng<>Sp)

This issue of the WITS Newsletter comes on the heels of the annual holiday potluck hosted by WITS, NOTIS, and SOMI. This year, we again gathered at the Waterfront Activities Center on the edge of Lake Washington. The gray, dreary day outside was contrasted by the festive, colorful atmosphere inside. There was plenty of food, good company, and conviviality.

Entertainment was provided by José Chávez and Michelle Dorr, two great salsa dancers who gave a spicy performance. This was followed by a brief salsa lesson, and lots of interpreters and translators shaking their stuff.

We heard remarks from Ann Macfarlane, executive director of NAJIT and former President of ATA; Sam Mattix, President of WITS; Renée Palermo, President of SOMI; and Scott Brennan, President of ATA. We were also joined by ATA's President-Elect, Marian Greenfield, so we had three generations of ATA presidents in the house! The Secret Service was not in attendance to my knowledge.

In Sam's remarks, he spoke, in his inimitable and warm fashion, of swans and alder trees as signs of the spring to come. As Sam pointed out, winter is a harbinger of change. (He didn't use the word *harbinger*, but it's such a swell word I couldn't resist.) This issue of our newsletter ushers in some changes as well.

First, the editors of Notisnews and the WITS Newsletter are pleased to announce that we have decided to merge our two publications, starting with our next issue. Our two societies have many shared interests, and many WITS members are also members of NOTIS. We see this as an opportunity to bring our respective societies and their memberships closer.

Additionally, I have assumed the duties of editor of the WITS Newsletter. Many thanks are due to our outgoing editor, Lourdes Pearce, whose hard work and talent brought us many a fine newsletter. I wish to personally thank Lourdes for her support as I take on these duties.

As always, the WITS Newsletter welcomes your contributions. Do you have news on the industry, or wish to share an opinion? Do you want to write a book review, a humor piece, or a report on a recent event? Do not hesitate to get in touch with me by e-mail or telephone.

In this edition of the WITS Newsletter, we present two perspectives on Harry Obst's presentation on diplomatic interpreting; a new interpreter's thoughts on a recent continuing education event on ethics; a thought-provoking opinion piece about the José Padilla case; and a fun interview with Amaury Pi-González, the Spanish voice of the Seattle Mariners. We hope you enjoy this edition!

ETHICS WORKSHOP

Gabriela de Castro, Washington State Certified Spanish Court
Interpreter

Although I've only been working as a court interpreter for a year, I constantly find myself in situations that call for a good ethical foundation. As we all know, in order to remain certified we need to complete a number of ethics credits every two years. For a lot of us this requirement is what drives us to attend ethics workshops. However, there's more to ethics workshops than just a few mandatory credits.

On November 16, I attended a WITS-sponsored ethics workshop held in Bellevue. King County Superior Court Judge Michael Spearman was generous enough to be the guest speaker that night. During his presentation Judge Spearman covered most points of the code of ethics that bind interpreters and shared a few documented situations in which interpreter ethics played a pivotal role. At the end of his presentation the audience was invited to ask questions. What followed, as in every interpreting workshop I've attended, was a very lively discussion. Some attendees shared their own ethical dilemmas; others recounted horror stories and a few more presented hypothetical situations to spark more debate. At the end of the discussion we couldn't reach a consensus on many points. However, it seems to me that to focus on that would only make us miss the importance of these workshops.

Aside from providing a place for us to share our experiences as interpreters with each other, ethics workshops are useful as they serve to remind us that not every situation can be dealt with by simply following the code of ethics. We can attend an endless number of classes and still face situations that are not addressed by this code. Our ability to make ethical decisions needs to be constantly improved and reaffirmed, the same way we constantly improve the technical aspect of our interpreting ability. In this profession we learn as we go and sometimes our judgment is the only thing we can trust.

As for our guest speaker, I only wish that more individuals involved in our court system shared Judge Spearman's sensibility and respect for our profession.

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YOU ARE A DIPLOMATIC FELLOW, HARRY

Steve Muzik, Ph.D.

Federal and State Court, LIST Medical, Social Certified

I must confess that occasionally some of us (never me, of course) have been disappointed by presenters. Sometimes they know much more than one does or vice versa. Either way we have a sneaky suspicion time is a-wasting. From time to time, however, we are fortunate enough to be able to attend professional presentations and workshops which leave indelible memories of excellence.

This time we were shown an unusual professional panorama, diplomatic interpreting. The presenter was Harry Obst, retired director of the State Department's Office of Language Services. Harry told many stories. He has interpreted for seven presidents and a myriad of lesser lights.

The stories were all funny (Harry is a virtual double for Victor Borge), and all the stories had a point. Don't get nervous about your interpreting, you're as smart (likely smarter) than the fellow who can't talk without help, and his main job is just to feed you the right lines for a wonderful speech. Don't fret about having your special chair usurped by a rival; let him/her do the work and go find something good to eat. Don't get flustered when called upon to interpret in a field outside your expertise. Your audience is more informed than you and will easily re-cast your desperate and slightly "off" renderings (airplane air pillow = air cushion; fruit tree leaf roller insect = apple peel roller insect). I often wondered why it was so much easier to interpret for educated discourse than for an uneducated audience. Harry suggests that less educated people have fewer alternatives available in which to cast their thoughts. If I happen not to select one they know, the interpretation fails.

The apple example leads me to the real core of Harry's presentation: you already have the necessary fluency in target and source languages, so it's not so much the words but the message you should focus on. And that means you are at your best when the source language is your first language. You will make far fewer mistakes because you will understand the true message better. We are detectives, hunting for clues. Inferential reasoning is easier the more clues you pick up on. Deductive reasoning is easier the more general knowledge you already have. Right on, Harry.

Harry's final salvo was in response to a query concerning Washington's interpreter court ethics and code of conduct. The questioner was concerned about Harry's freely shared and relaxed attitude of emphasis on the message rather than the precise content. Although Harry would be the first to admit he is unfamiliar with the Washington code of conduct, he courteously implied that some among us have failed to rightly understand the true meaning of the need to add or omit nothing. He insisted (rightly) that we are better off professionally if we give due consideration to variations in grammar, syntax, etc. Plainly, his understanding of "due" was

broader than his questioner's. Our primary responsibility thus becomes the delivery of meaning. We should insist on this in court. If pressed to give a word for word rendition, we may have to suffer fools, but (diplomatically) convey to the court that the cause of clarity and understanding has been harmed.

Harry, you were a breath of fresh air. Thanks for coming.

HARRY OBST AND THE CONSECUTIVE MODE

Betty Merino-Strawe, Washington State Certified Court
Interpreter and ATA Certified Translator (Sp>Eng)

On September 18, members of WITS, SOMI, and NOTIS met together at the Seattle Asian Art Museum to celebrate International Translation Day, sponsored by combined interpreter-translator organizations of Washington and Oregon. The keynote speaker was the renowned Harry Obst, formerly Director of the State Department's Office of Language Services and interpreter to many U.S. Presidents and diplomats.

He gave two excellent and pertinent dissertations on Diplomatic Interpreting and Consecutive Interpreting. I will comment on the second portion of his presentation, consecutive interpreting, which I feel most everyone who was present will agree was extremely stimulating and useful. I believe many of us find consecutive to be the most challenging of the three interpreting modes: simultaneous, consecutive and sight translation.

Some of the highlights of Mr. Obst's presentation are as follows. Consecutive interpreting, i.e., the interpretation from one language (source language) into another (target language) of speech passages approximately two to three phrases in length, has been around for a long time. Genghis Khan used an interpreter who whispered into his ear (no interpreting equipment back then), when meeting with foreign diplomats of his time. The concept was that knowledge was power, and he would then decide based on the interpreter's rendering to him, exactly which portions he would pass on to his constituents, or keep to himself.

A good interpreter interprets meanings, not words. Mr. Obst stressed that we should not get too hung up on words and terminology. He pointed out that, for example, if we were to pool all of the combined lexical knowledge of everyone present in the room that day, we would have only approximately five percent of the ever-changing words and terminology in English alone. However, as long as the interpreter manages to get across all the essential meanings in a consecutive passage faithfully, he or she will have accomplished the purpose of the interpreter, and the audience will understand.

Mr. Obst referred to interpreting work as "detective work." The job of the interpreter is to listen properly and

strategically to the word package presented, make useful and analytic notes where necessary, develop short-term memory, and make use of certain clues. These clues include the interpreter's own knowledge, reading and preparation, speech patterns of the speaker, knowledge of the audience, drawings and other visual tools, lip reading, body language and gestures.

Seventy to seventy-five percent of all basic phrases to be interpreted are action sentences. They use action verbs and break down into who did what where to whom, how and why. Another 25% are either descriptive sentences, which include no action verbs but rather the verbs "to be" or "to have," or fall into a small category of salutations, exclamations, etc.

A good interpreter will take notes vertically rather than horizontally. Mr. Obst stressed the use of "ideograms" rather than words in note taking. Ideograms are basically symbols and simple drawings or codes (kind of mini-pictures) that will trigger the interpreter's mind. For example, a diagonal line might signify time as referred to by the speaker. A stick drawn across the top of it would signify the future, near the middle the present and across the bottom, the past.

The concept is that these symbols are very individual and when the interpreter refers to his or her notes, he or she will recall instantly what the speaker has said.

The interpreter, in interpreting consecutively, should include in his or her notes, something from the beginning, the middle and the end of the passage spoken. It is preferable to take notes in the same language all the time, for example English, if that alphabet is being used. It is also possible to use letters from other alphabets, such as Greek, Russian, etc.

For those of us who have stage fright (and I'm sure all of us do at one time or another, particularly on the witness stand), Mr. Obst cited an experience of his in diplomatic interpreting which may also be of great use in consecutive interpreting. It occurred to him to utilize the concept that the speaker is "feeding" the speech to him, or helping him to deliver his speech, by giving him the words to deliver.

He also cited some interesting statistics during the question and answer period. For example, in the past in this country, approximately one-third of all interpreters in the Office of Language Services were native U.S. speakers and two-thirds were foreign naturalized speakers. Those statistics have not changed much over the years. However, originally two-thirds of interpreters were men and only one-third were women. Today it is just the opposite: one-third are men and two thirds are women.

In conclusion, I believe I can speak for all those present when I say that we all found this to be an entertaining and very applicable presentation full of useful tips and concepts for our consecutive court interpreting. .

AMAURY PI-GONZÁLEZ, SPANISH VOICE OF THE SEATTLE MARINERS

Interview and translation by Kenneth Barger

Amaury Pi-González has been a sports commentator for over 30 years, and has broadcast the Seattle Mariners home games on Spanish radio for the last two seasons. Mr. Pi-González provides play-by-play coverage with his partner Julio Cruz, ex-second baseman for the Mariners, who provides color commentary. He has kindly granted WITS the following interview, which appears in part. For the full interview in English or Spanish, visit www.witsnet.org.

W: How did you feel when you witnessed Ichiro's historic moment, when he got his 258th hit and broke Mr. Sisler's record?

P: Ichiro's 258th hit was one of the great moments of the Mariners franchise since they started playing in Seattle in 1977. I am thrilled to have been able to bring all the excitement to the Latino public through the Mariners Radio Network.

W: What did you think of the homage to Edgar Martinez, after he announced his retirement?

P: The homage to Edgar Martinez was 100% well-deserved. Edgar is perhaps the most famous and popular athlete to ever play for a professional team in the city of Seattle. Furthermore, he was not only a great player, he is an even better person and human being. Edgar has never forgotten his Latino roots, and to see the city of Seattle and the team make that tribute to him makes me feel very proud to be Latino too.

W: How do the Mariners look for next year?

P: It's tough to make a prediction for the 2005 Mariners. They need more power and offense. They need a first baseman and a third baseman with power, and greater depth in the pitching rotation. The Western Division of the American League is a very good one. The Mariners now have to contend with not only Anaheim and Oakland, but Texas is a very young and aggressive team, which has improved its pitching. For the Mariners to be contenders they need a lot more batting. I think that's the department that has to improve the most.

W: How have the fans responded to the broadcasts in Spanish?

P: The response of the fans to the Mariners broadcasts on the Mariners Radio Network (five stations in Washington State) has been excellent. The public sends us e-mails constantly, and many of them even come to the stadium wanting to greet us in our broadcast booth. The great thing about baseball is that there are lots of statistics and historical facts, and many people send us their questions. Julio gets a lot of letters from people who saw him play and want to greet him or request his autograph.

W:: How did you get started as a commentator?

P: Having been born in Cuba (where baseball is almost a religion), I've always been interested in this great sport called "the King of Sports," ever since my father Joaquin used to take me to the stadium in Havana, Cuba, where the Winter League of Cuban Professional Baseball was played every year. When I came to the US, I got interested in journalism, and it was through a great friend and mentor, Efrain Osorio, in Newark, New Jersey, that I was given the chance to write for several newspapers and cover baseball, and the rest is history. The first time I did radio commentary was in California in 1970.

W: I understand you have been a commentator in many other sports. Which ones, and which do you like the best?

P: In my career I've covered baseball, basketball, soccer, football, and ice hockey. I have narrated baseball on the radio for three decades, and for six years I was the Spanish Voice of the NBA Golden State Warriors. Also, during the World Cup (USA 1994), I covered Brazil's champion team for Northern California Telemundo, where I worked as a sports anchor on the evening news, and I also had sports programs with interviews and commentary. One of my best-known interviews was one I did with the great Edson Arantes do Nascimento (Pele), and other world soccer figures.

W: Did you used to play a sport?

P: As long as I can remember, I played baseball in Cuba, and then as a teenager in Miami in high school and the university. I played second base, and sometimes shortstop. I was an excellent fielder and a good batter, but I had trouble hitting the curve ball, like the character Serrano in the movie "Major League."

W: I know Ichiro has his own personal interpreter. Do the Mariners use interpretation and translation services much? For example, do they have Korean and Spanish interpreters? What do they do to find people qualified to do this work?

P: The Mariners only have Japanese interpreters. They don't have anyone (as far as I know) translating for the Latino players who have difficulty with the English language. I think the Japanese players themselves recommend the interpreters to the Seattle team, and then they get the chance to work for the team. There are Major League teams who do have Korean and Spanish interpreters, but the Mariners so far do not.

W: Do you want to say anything else to Washington's interpreters and translators?

P: I want to wish all the best to Washington State's interpreters and translators. It's very noble work, especially in the world we live in and the country we live in. The United States is a country that has grown generally due to the great contributions made by immigrants. Those who work in Washington State as interpreters should be very proud, because they not only have a great job, but they also perform very important work. We communicate through language, be it English, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or another language, and in the world we live in, with the internet and instant communication, the world has become smaller, and communication among all peoples is essential for mutual progress. Congratulations to all interpreters!

*Opinion***OPEN LETTER TO THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL NOMINEE**

Keo Capestany, Federally and Washington State
Certified Spanish Court Interpreter

Dear Mr. Alberto González:

It was great news that your predecessor resigned and you were nominated. It is said that you are better in every sense. Faint praise, but it gives us hope. It is said that you will have greater respect for our civil rights. This is why I am writing to you about the José Padilla case.

The Padilla case is important for every American citizen. We have always been taught that our homeland is great because our liberties are protected by the constitution, which guarantees us, among other due process rights, the presumption of innocence until an impartial jury finds us guilty.

José Padilla, an American citizen by birth, was arrested in Chicago and has been held illegally since June 9, 2002. Charges have not even been brought against him; he has not been allowed adequate access to his attorney; there are no plans to bring him to trial.

José Padilla may be a traitor and an abominable terrorist; he may deserve to be in prison forever; nonetheless, our constitution gives him the absolute right to have charges brought against him, to have effective legal assistance, to a speedy trial, and to have his guilt decided by an impartial jury.

Why were these rights respected for John Walter Lindh, captured with weapon in hand on the Taliban battlefield?

What makes Padilla different? That he is Hispanic?

Mr. Gonzalez, please ignore the deafening silence of the so-called leaders of our community and do what is right and legal for Padilla. I do not ask you to release him. Accuse him of a crime, or a thousand crimes, but accuse him, as provided by the constitution. I do not ask you to pardon him, but that you allow the law of the land to work, and an impartial jury to judge him.

This letter was sent to Mr. Gonzalez in Spanish. English translation by Kenneth Barger. So far, no response has been received.

Membership Report as of December 5, 2004

Individual Members	93
Institutional Members	9
Student Members	7
Supporting Members	2
Honorary Members	9
Total Membership	120

Membership by Location:

Washington	106
California	6
Arizona	1
Oregon	1
Texas	1

35 Languages Represented:

American Sign Language, Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Croatian, English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Ilocano, Ilongo, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Moldovan, Pangasinan, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Shanghainese, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

RENEWAL REMINDER

It's time to renew your WITS membership. Please take a moment to check your listing on www.witsnet.org for accuracy, and let us know any updates or corrections. To be listed you must be an individual or supporting member, indicate your desire to be listed, and indicate your language pairs. Prices are as follows: Individual, \$45; Student, \$15; Supporting, \$50; Institutional/Corporate, \$60. Make checks payable to WITS.

BOARD MEETINGS

December 9, 2004 telephonic meeting
January 22, 2005 – welcome & orientation for
new board members (location TBD)

WITS Bylaws - Article 9, pp 1 states: "The Board shall meet at least four times during the calendar year. Notice of the Meetings shall be posted on the Society's Website and provided to any member who asks. Members are encouraged to attend and may, with the President's permission, participate in the discussion of any issue."



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