LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT UPDATE

DECEMBER 2015

50 YEARS OF LINGUISTICS AT SANTA CRUZ

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

On April 4, 2015, the Department of Linguistics joined the broader UC Santa Cruz community for '**Linguistics@SantaCruz: Theory and Practice**', an event at the Stevenson Fireside Lounge which celebrated the results of 50 years of linguistics at UC Santa Cruz. The occasion brought together current undergraduate and graduate students, alums, and faculty, both current and emeritus. All had a chance to talk about, and reflect on, the Department's achievements in research and teaching and what it could accomplish in the future. To an extent that surprised almost everyone there, the event was marked by the conjoined themes of continuity and innovation.

It was natural that this anniversary celebration focused on the late **Bill Shipley**—a pioneer UC Santa Cruz faculty member who was the Department's founder, and a linguist dedicated to the description and preservation of the indigenous languages of California. Shipley was an inspiring undergraduate teacher whose commitment to the Maidu language and its speakers was legendary. Alongside this backward look, however, the event highlighted what is happening in the department today and what could happen in the future.

Judith Aissen spoke about her long-term engagement with native-speaker linguists in Mayan communities, especially in Chiapas, Mexico. **Junko Ito** spoke about her work on the sound structure of loanwords in Japanese. **Maziar Toosarvandani** described his research with the Mono Lake community of Northern Paiute speakers, while Amy Rose Deal described her research on Nez Perce. **Matt Wagers** spoke about his and **Sandy Chung's project** to bring new experimental methodologies to the Chamorro language and its speakers in the **Northern Mariana Islands**. **Grant McGuire** spoke about his project with **Jaye Padgett** to draw theoretical insight from the phonetics of surviving dialects of Irish.

All of this research combines theory construction with detailed language documentation and community

involvement. In so doing, it continues Shipley's tradition, but in a new and changed context, one informed by the global threat of language endangerment on the one hand and by exciting technological advances on the other. And since a deep commitment to undergraduate mentoring informs every aspect of the department's life, undergraduate research assistants play key roles in these research projects— an experience from which they emerge with new skills, increased preparedness for the changing world of technology, and a deeper understanding of the importance of linguistic diversity. In its 50th year, the Department's continuing goal is to use research to educate our students to play meaningful roles in an ever-changing world. **A contribution from you** could make it possible for even more undergraduates to benefit from that experience.

FLASHBACK

How many people can you identify in these Linguistics Department photos from 1986 and 1988? Click here to send us your answers!

FOLLOW US