

**Then and Now:
MFLA Through the Ages**

Sarah J. Banks

**Historian, Mississippi Foreign Language Association
Professor of Spanish, Jackson State University**

Introduction

When the Mississippi Foreign Language Association held its regularly scheduled annual meeting at Lake Tiak-O'Khata on November 10-11, 2000, the organization had been in existence for 66 years. Given the very precarious position of foreign languages in the State of Mississippi our continued survival is nothing short of miraculous. It becomes even more so when we describe the many accomplishments which we have achieved despite our small numbers and tenuous circumstances. It is time to celebrate our achievements and our struggles as we count our losses.

The Mississippi Foreign Language Association's existence can be documented from 1934 when a chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French was established by Dr. Colley F. Sparkman of Belhaven College.¹ Although the name of the organization implies that it was composed of only French teachers, that was evidently not the case as the minutes from the 1939 meeting clearly state, "The Spanish teachers comprising considerable

¹ Letter dated March 14, 1953, from Edmond de Jaive, Head, Romance Languages Department, Gulf Park College, to Dr. Margie C. Morris, Mississippi State College for Women, in files in possession of Historian.

number of those present, requested that their needs and interests be considered in planning the program."²

The concerns of the chapter as described in the minutes reflect wider professional perspectives and illustrate that from the very beginning foreign language educators were aware of and accepted the very special obligations that underlie our specific teaching responsibilities.

"The rest of the time was devoted to general discussion which the president [Dr. E. H. Price of State College] opened with his message concerning the status of the teaching of French, at present, its importance as assurance against narrow and provincial culture, and our obligation to help others realize this."³

In a letter dated October 28, 1954, written by President Nydegger and sent to Dr. Donald D. Walsh, Associate Secretary of the Modern Language Association, the organization tried to develop constructive influence in the following areas:

1. Requesting representation on the board of text book selection for high schools by one of its members or some well qualified person.
2. Increasing requirements with reference to the certification of language teachers for secondary schools.

² Minutes of the 1939 Meeting of the Mississippi Chapter American Association of Teachers of French, prepared by Claribel Drake, December, 1939.

³ *Ibid.*

3. The establishment of a placement bureau, which was also to seek to determine the state need for teachers. This precluded a state survey to determine where languages were taught and what languages.
4. A study of the college core curriculum for language majors who plan to teach.⁴

These same concerns are addressed in Board meetings held during the 1990s reflecting the continuing concerns of the organization.

In 1945-46 the American Association of Teachers of French ratified a constitution and officially changed its name to the Mississippi Modern Language Association. The president's term of office was extended to two years.⁵ The Presidents of the American Association of Teachers of French and the Mississippi Modern Foreign Language Association, which later became the Mississippi Foreign Language Association, are as follows⁶:

*Presidents of the
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF FRENCH*

⁴Letter from President Nydegger to Dr. Donald D. Walsh, dated October 28, 1954 in files of Historian.

⁵ Constitution adopted March 16, 1950; in possession of Historian.

⁶ Several handwritten lists of officers in possession of Historian plus copies of Programs and *MFL Crusader*. In two instances resort was made to the collective memories of key officers.

1934	Dr. Edmond de Jaive of the Gulf Park College, aided by Dr. Colley F. Sparkman
1934-35	Dr. Colley F. Sparkman, Belhaven College
1935-36	Dr. A. J. Sanders, Millsaps College
1936-37	Dr. Ruby Caulfield, Mississippi State College for Women
1937-38 ⁷	--
1938-39	Dr. E.H. Price
1939-40	Miss Margaret Tribble
1940-41	Dr. Ruby Caulfield, Mississippi State College for Women
1941-42	Dr. Irvin S. Price, Mississippi State College
1942-43	Ms. Margie C. Morris, Mississippi State College for Women
1943-44	Mr. Thomas Banks, Aberdeen, Mississippi Left state early in year and Ms. Margie C. Morris was asked to serve.
1944-45	Dr. Irvin S. Price, Mississippi State College Heavily involved in government teaching program and Ms. Margie C. Morris was asked to serve again.

⁷ No name for this period appears on any of the lists.

*MISSISSIPPI MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE
ASSOCIATION*

1945-46 Ms. Margie C. Morris, Mississippi State
College for Women
1946-48 Ms. Harriet Jackson, Mississippi
Southern College
1948-50 Dr. Melvin J. Nydegger, Mississippi
Southern College
1950-52 Mr. Robert P. Webb, Jones Junior
College
1952-54 Dr. R.W. Tinsley, University of
Mississippi
1954-56 Ms. Elizabeth Polk, Laurel High School
1956-58 Ms. Susie Cooley, Perkinston Junior
College
1958-60 Dr. Benjamin I. Harrison, University of
Mississippi
1960-62 Ms. Ida L. Simpson, Meridian Junior
College
1962-64 Ms. T. E. Cotton, Quitman High School
1964-68 Dr. William Eickhorst, University of
Mississippi
1968-70 Dr. James Chatham, Mississippi State
University
1970-72 Ms. Gladys Berry, Natchez-Adams High
School
1972-74 Ms. Betty Watson, Mississippi Delta
Junior College
1974-76 Dr. Roger Johnson, University of
Southern Mississippi
1976-78 Ms. Helen Currie, St. Stanislaus School

1978-80 Mr. Ricardo Calderón, Meridian Junior
College

*Presidents of the
MISSISSIPPI FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION*

1980-82 Dr. Robert Kahn, Millsaps College
1982-84 Ms. Gail Buzhardt, St. Andrew's
Episcopal School
1984-86 Dr. Jack Davis Brown, University of
Mississippi
1986-88 Dr. Ben Blaney, Mississippi State
University
1988-90 Ms. Lilianne Baker, South Jones High
School
1990-92 Dr. Elaine Coney, South Pike High
School
1992-94 Ms. Peggy Williams, Oak Grove Middle
School
1994-96 Dr. Barbara C. Dease, University of
Southern Mississippi
1996-98 Ms. Lauren Bearden, Columbus High
School
1998-2000 Dr. Rafael Sánchez, University of
Southern Mississippi
2000-2002 Dr. Martha Dow, Petal High School

Beginning with Ms. Irene Getchell, who singlehandedly piloted the Mississippi Foreign Language Association through the very lean years up to her retirement on March 13, 1979, the Secretary-Treasurer has been the key officer of the Executive Board. The office has continued to be filled by

extraordinarily capable individuals who have been largely responsible for the functioning of the organization. In 1994 the title was changed to Executive Director to better reflect the responsibilities of the office. The remarkable individuals who have labored so diligently are

- 1979 Ms. Irene Getchell, University of Mississippi
- 1979-82 Dr. Carmen McClendon, Mississippi State University
- 1982-88 Ms. Elizabeth Anglin, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1988-1995 Dr. Teresa Arrington, University of Mississippi
- 1995-2000 Ms. Brenda Batey, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- 2000- Ms. Lauren Bearden, Columbus High School

Constitutions

The first Constitution was written prior to 11/25/48(sic). It carries a penciled note indicating changes to be approved at the 1949 meeting, together with the date. The name of the organization is given as the Mississippi Modern Language Association. The purpose "shall be the advancement of the study and teaching of the modern foreign languages in school and colleges with its area."⁸

⁸ Constitution with penciled note and date.

The officers were composed of a President and two Vice Presidents elected for two-year terms. The Secretary-Treasurer was to be elected for one year. There were to be three members at large, one to be the out-going president, who was to have a one year term. The other two were to be elected for two-year terms. The fiscal year and the terms for all officers were to begin April 1. The association was to meet annually in conjunction with the Mississippi Education Association. The dues were \$1.⁹

This Constitution was revised and adopted March 16, 1950. The term of office of the past president as member at large was extended to two years. This constitution remained in force until March 13, 1979. At that time the name of the organization was changed to the Mississippi Foreign Language Association to incorporate the classicists. Article II, "the Purpose," remained the same, as did Article III, "Members." In Article IV, "Officers," a clause was added which stated that the Presidents and the two Vice-Presidents were not eligible to succeed themselves. The Executive Secretary-Treasurer was given an indefinite term of office.

Under Article V, "Executive Board," the Board was expanded to nine members, which included the four officers mentioned above, the historian, the editor of the *Mississippi Language Crusader*, the outgoing president, the president of the college section, and the presidents of the elementary and secondary sections. The historian and editor were to be appointed by the Board. The fiscal year was now to run from September 1 to September 1. Membership dues were raised

⁹ Constitution adopted March 16, 1950.

to \$3. The annual meeting continued to coincide with the Mississippi Association of Educators Meeting.¹⁰

The Constitution was revised on November 9, 1985, and again on November 5, 1994. Only relatively minor changes were made. The name, purpose, members and officers sections remained the same. The annual Mississippi Foreign Language meeting was officially separated from the Mississippi Education Association meeting in the spring. Many MFLA members had been using spring break to take students on language-related trips.¹¹

Under Article VII, "Annual Meeting," the Constitution reads, "the Association shall meet annually at the time and place designated by the Executive Board."¹² The meetings were moved to the fall, the first or second weekend in November. In the beginning the meetings were held at the Gulf Park Campus of the University of Southern Mississippi. MFLA members have many cherished memories of "all you can eat shrimp boils" with bonfires and language songfests on the beach. In 1988 the annual meetings moved to Lake Tiak-O'Khata at Louisville in northern Mississippi in response to complaints from those foreign language professionals who had to make the long drive to the coast. With one exception MFLA has continued to meet there. The Lake Tiak-O'Khata Resort offers a perfect

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ MFLA Constitution adopted March 16, 1950 (revised March 13, 1979; November 9, 1985; November 5, 1994).

¹² *Ibid.*

intimate environment that promotes friendship and camaraderie with little or no competing distractions.

The title of Secretary-Treasurer was changed to Executive Director, as mentioned earlier. The membership dues were also changed to "members shall pay dues yearly in advance, as assessed by the members."¹³

Special Projects

The Mississippi Foreign Language Association needs to celebrate more than just its existence and annual meetings. Through the years with minimal support and very little encouragement projects have been initiated that surely bring distinction to this small group of hardworking foreign language professionals. Six particular projects come to mind—the Foreign Language Fair, Mississippi's participation in the Collaborative Movement of Dr. Claire Gaudiani, the various foreign language statewide curricula, the Foreign Language Frill or Foundation? Forums, the National Endowment for the Humanities teacher institute grant and finally our Distinguished Service Awards.

*Foreign Language Fair*¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Sarah J. Banks. 1991. "Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho. Come to the Fair. Mississippi's Statewide Foreign Language Fair," *Mississippi Foreign Language Crusader*, February, pp. 12-21.

Originally a local project of the Department of Modern Foreign Languages of the University of Southern Mississippi, the Foreign Language Fair has grown into a statewide event which actively involves the faculties of four of the senior state institutions of higher learning—Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi, and the University of Southern Mississippi. The Fair has been an annual event since 1972. Until 1976 it was held on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

In the spring of 1974 the faculty of the Department of Modern Foreign Languages of the University of Southern Mississippi, then under the chairmanship of Dr. Roger Johnson, invited the faculty of Jackson State University to an all-day conference. During the conference Dr. Johnson generously suggested that the Fair become a cooperative venture involving Jackson State University, the University of Mississippi, and the University of Southern Mississippi, and that the Fair be rotated from campus to campus to promote maximum involvement. In previous years the Fair had belonged solely to the University of Southern Mississippi. As Dr. Johnson so bluntly stated, "we can fight to the death over the very few good language students who are graduating from Mississippi secondary schools and all die or we can work together to increase the quality and quantity of students so that we can all survive." He said that the choice was ours.

The 1975 Fair marked the beginning of this new cooperative spirit among the different universities. Faculty from the University of Mississippi, Jackson State University, and William Carey College participated as judges. Also, the

statewide foreign language association, the Mississippi Modern Language Association (now the Mississippi Foreign Language Association) became involved for the first time. The Board of the Mississippi Foreign Language Association became the governing board of the Foreign Language Fair. It provides the initial seed money if needed, which consists of the profits received from the previous Fair, and publishes the results in the *Crusader*, its quarterly publication.

The Fair directors through the years have been tireless, unpaid, and for the most part unrecognized foreign language professionals. The honor roll of Fair Directors follows:

- 1975 Dr. Roger Johnson, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1976 Dr. Sarah J. Banks, Jackson State University
- 1977 Dr. Jack Davis Brown, University of Mississippi
- 1978 Dr. Thomas Lott, William Carey College
- 1979 Dr. Sarah J. Banks, Jackson State University
- 1980 Dr. Jack Davis Brown, University of Mississippi
- 1981 Dr. George Buehler, Mississippi State University
- 1982 Dr. William Odom, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1983 Dr. Sarah J. Banks, Jackson State University
- 1984 Dr. Melvin Arrington, University of Mississippi
- 1985 Dr. Ben Blaney, Mississippi State University
- 1986 Dr. Roger Johnson, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1987 Dr. Sarah J. Banks and Dr. Barbara C. Dease,

- Jackson State University
- 1988 Dr. Santo Arico, University of Mississippi
- 1989 Dr. Ben Blaney, Mississippi State University
- 1990 Dr. Giovanni Fontecchio and Ms. Elizabeth Anglin, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1991 Ms. Carol Schweitzer, Jackson State University
- 1992 Dr. Donald L. Dyer, University of Mississippi
- 1993 Dr. Ann Wiltrout, Mississippi State University
- 1994 Dr. Barbara C. Dease, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1995 Ms. Carol Schweitzer, Jackson State University
- 1996 Dr. Luanne Buchanan, University of Mississippi
- 1997 Dr. David Eddington, Mississippi State University
- 1998 Ms. Rosalba Scott, University of Southern Mississippi
- 1999 Mr. Mauricio Alegría, Jackson State University
- 2000 Mr. Larry Dilley, University of Mississippi
- 2001 Dr. Edmond Emplaincourt, Mississippi State University

As mentioned previously, the Foreign Language Fair is administered by the Executive Board of the Mississippi Foreign Language Association, the overall sponsor. During the fall Board meeting a decision is made as to which

university or college will host that year's fair, although a rotational system has remained constant through the years. The director is also named at that time. It is understood that the faculty of those colleges and universities not hosting the fair for that year will pitch in wherever needed. The directors of the previous years' fairs serve as unofficial contact persons throughout the year. Copies of previous budgets and schedules are provided.

The 1978 fall Board meeting reflected a basic change in the direction of the fair in order to provide a more or less unified structure. A committee for rules and regulations was named. The members of the committee were Chair: Dr. Barbara C. Dease, Head, Department of Modern Foreign Languages, Jackson State University; Director, 1979 Fair: Dr. Sarah Banks, Associate Professor of Modern Foreign Languages, Jackson State University, and the following Jackson area high school teachers who had participated in previous fairs, Ms. Gail Buzhardt of St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Ms. Jane Bender of Provine High School, Ms. Donna Dorset of Jim Hill High School, Ms. Eva Prater of Murrah High School, and Ms. Judy W. Watts of Florence High School.

State high school and university language teachers were asked for suggestions and comments. Some investigation was done of other state language fairs. Great attention was paid to suggestions and comments given concerning previous fairs. Certain basic decisions were made concerning participation, categories, prizes, and also the functioning of the state foreign language clubs that were incorporated directly into the Foreign Language Fair. A list of rules and regulations was compiled and submitted for

approval at the 1979 spring Board meeting. The suggestions offered by Ms. Ruth Blair of La Rue County High School at Hodgenville, Kentucky, later printed in the Spring 1975 issue of *The Bluegrass Bulletin* of the Kentucky Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, served as a basis. With very limited modifications these rules governed all subsequent fairs until 1999.

In 1997 at the fall meeting after much discussion the Executive Board decided to consider a rubric scoring system. There had been many complaints about the extremely competitive atmosphere that had developed concerning the awarding of trophies and the naming of winners of categories. Mr. Louis Rowles volunteered to develop the rubrics so that they would be ready for the fall board meeting in 1998. The rubrics were enthusiastically received and the decision was made to begin using them during the 1999 Fair.

We can be justly proud that somehow year after year for almost thirty years foreign language teachers of Mississippi have come together with their students to celebrate the study of other languages and cultures. All of us deserve accolades for our enthusiastic participation in the past which resulted in these thrilling celebrations and which permit us to project future fairs, so let us all take a moment to reward ourselves for the creation and support of an institution that has been maintained as a cooperative endeavor of the high school and university foreign language professionals of the State of Mississippi.

The Collaborative Movement in Mississippi

Another very significant project was our involvement in the collaborative movement created and led by the indefatigable Claire Gaudiani. Through the years we have benefited greatly from the support and assistance of individuals who have not been foreign language professionals. One of these is Dr. Cora Norman, who for many years was the Executive Director of the Mississippi Humanities Council. Many of our special projects have been supported by MHC grants and are described in other pages. Her most outstanding contribution to us, however, was her commitment to the Collaborative Movement, founded and directed by Dr. Claire Gaudiani, currently President of Connecticut College. Cora, as she is affectionately known by all of us, heard about this program while attending one of her many national meetings. When she returned she lost no time in calling a meeting of committed university faculty from across the state.

We met January 19, 1984 at the Research and Development Center in Jackson. All of us were intrigued by the program and anxious to become involved, but there was no money for us to attend the regional meetings. At this point a fairy godfather in the person of Dr. Edward McGlone, Dean of Liberal Arts at Mississippi State University, stepped forward with a challenge. If groups could put together proposals according to Dr. Gaudiani's guidelines then he would find the money. They did, and he did. Two teams—one from Jackson State University and one from Mississippi State University—traveled to the Cincinnati regional conference that was held April 11-14, 1984.

The Collaborative Concept as articulated by Dr. Gaudiani struck a deep chord in all of us who attended. Many of us had begun to follow the same path, recognizing that foreign language professionals had to band together across the spectrum if we were to have any impact in the increasingly hostile academic environment.

On October 11, 1984, a foreign language educators meeting was called for the Research and Development Center in Jackson. Some 100 educators attended. The enthusiasm of the original teams spread to others and a collaborative network was created to encompass the entire state and provide support to all foreign language teachers at whatever level. Although only one of the original nine cells has maintained a continuous existence—Sea Cells—key individuals continue to serve as contact persons ready to re-establish networks whenever needed. Sea Cells, located as its name suggests on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, has continued in existence with many exciting activities, particularly through exchange programs with France that have provided wonderful travel/study opportunities for students and teachers both in France and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Jax Cells, the Jackson group, did not continue functioning as a collaborative. For some reason the Spanish component was never able to muster much enthusiasm so it has dwindled over the years. The French, on the other hand, have seized the initiative and have met regularly evolving into the Alliance Française that has become a significant cultural entity. Building on the interest generated by the acclaimed French exhibit, Splendors of Versailles, they receive regular news coverage. They offer French classes to

the community and provide regular opportunities for Francophiles to practice their conversational skills. Perhaps the Majesty of Spain Exhibit, which opened March 1, 2001, will provide the spark needed to ignite a Spanish initiative and we will see Jax Cells rise again like the Phoenix.

Statewide Foreign Language Curriculum

Throughout the years the maintenance of a strong foreign language program with a central position in the Mississippi State School Curriculum has been a vital concern of the organization. The Mississippi Modern Language Association and later the Mississippi Foreign Language Association have written numerous letters voicing our concerns about certification for foreign language teachers, choice of textbooks, and the place of foreign languages in the State public school curriculum. Our organization has also been closely involved in the preparation of the three published Mississippi frameworks for foreign languages.

The first statewide curriculum was entitled *Curriculum Structure: Foreign Language* and was prepared in 1986. The Chair of the committee was Dr. Jack Davis Brown of the University of Mississippi. The other consultants were Ms. Brenda Batey of Long Beach Separate Schools, Dr. Ben Blaney of Mississippi State University, Ms. Gail Buzhardt of St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Ms. Helen Currie of St. Stanislaus College, Dr. Barbara Dease of Jackson State University, Mr. Vincent Drago, also of St. Andrew's Episcopal School, and Dr. Arlene Schrade of the University

of Mississippi. The chair and all of the consultants were members of the Mississippi Foreign Language Association.¹⁵

A second curriculum was written in 1992. Under the leadership of Dr. Sam Slick of the University of Southern Mississippi a *Review of the Foreign Language Curriculum* was prepared. Other members of the committee were Dr. William Powell, Associate Professor of French, University of Southern Mississippi, Dr. Mark Clark, Associate Professor of Latin and Greek, University of Southern Mississippi, Ms. Peggy Williams, Spanish Teacher, Oak Grove Middle School, Ms. Kathy MacDowell, French Teacher, Bay St. Louis High School, Mr. William Sanders, French and Spanish Teacher, Pascagoula High School, Dr. Elaine Coney, French and Spanish instructor, Southwest Community College, Ms. Carol Mann, French Teacher, Pearl High School, Ms. Patsy Ricks, Latin and Spanish Teacher, Jackson Preparatory School, Dr. Martha Dow, Spanish Teacher, Petal High School and Ms. Helga Arrington, German Teacher, Pascagoula High School.¹⁶

Further action on curriculum revision was deferred until 1998 as MFLA followed with great interest the development of national standards. Special sessions at MFLA state meetings were held to discuss national standards. A letter supporting the standards was sent to the national task force. Unfortunately, given our November meeting date, it arrived

¹⁵ Jack Davis Brown, et al. 1986. *Curriculum Structure: Foreign Language*. Mississippi State Department of Education.

¹⁶ Sam Slick, et al. 1992. *A Review of the Foreign Language Curriculum*. Mississippi State Department of Education.

too late to be published with the list of organizations supporting the national effort.

In 1998 the Mississippi State Department of Education named a Foreign Language Framework Writing Team composed of 30 foreign language teachers from different levels from across the state. Dr. Linda Irby, English and Foreign Language Consultant in the Mississippi State Department of Education, led the team, which included three MFLA officers, Dr. Rafael Sánchez, President, University of Southern Mississippi, Ms. Lauren Bearden, Past President, Columbus Municipal School District, and Dr. Sarah Banks, Historian, Jackson State University. The remaining twenty-seven members were:

Ms. Barbara Abril, Starkville Public School District
Ms. Rosario Boxx, Pearl Public School District
Ms. Pamela Brewer, Brookhaven School District
Ms. Elisabet Casano, Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District

Ms. Donna Chandler, Meridian Public School District
Mr. Carl-Michael Day, Laurel School District
Dr. Martha Dow-Adams, Petal School District
Dr. Edmond Emplaincourt, Mississippi State University

Ms. Linda Flynn, Copiah-Lincoln Community College

Ms. Marguerite Gray, Clinton Public School District
Ms. Ana Maria Haydan, Biloxi Public School District
Ms. Debbie Honnoll, South Panola School District
Ms. Brenda Key, Tupelo Public School District
Ms. Anna LeRay, Aberdeen School District
Dr. Michael Metcalf, University of Mississippi

Mr. Dieter Miller, Jackson County School District

Ms. Debbie Moody, Philadelphia Public School

District

Ms. Annie Richerson, Lamar County School District

Ms. Carol Schweitzer, Jackson State University

Dr. Heloise Seailles, Mississippi University of

Women

Ms. Christa Taylor, Jones County School District

Ms. Beryl VanLierop, Jackson Public School District

Mr. David Varnado, McComb School District

Ms. Claudia White, Greenville Public School District

Ms. Brigitte Williams, Harrison County School

District

Ms. Phillip Zinke, McComb School District¹⁷

The team had two two-day meetings, one in the fall of 1998, the other in the spring of 1999. An editing team of five persons that included Dr. Sarah Banks, Ms. Pamela Brewer, Mr. Carl-Michael Day, Dr. Michael Metcalf, and Mr. Dieter Miller met April 19, 1999 to prepare the final form. Using the national standards as a guide, the Mississippi Foreign Language Framework is an adaptation which reflects the commitment of Mississippi foreign language teachers to the future. The new framework proves that language teachers in Mississippi are aware of the newest trends and practices in their field and are accepting the challenges of adapting them to their individual situations.

¹⁷ *Mississippi Foreign Language Curriculum Framework*. 2000. Mississippi State Department of Education.

*Foreign Languages—Frill or Foundation?*¹⁸

In 1979 MFLA approved a proposal for a series of community meetings that was submitted to the Mississippi Humanities Council. This was the initial contact with Dr. Cora Norman, who was mentioned earlier. The proposal resulted in a grant of \$5,765 and involved both public and private schools. Following the suggestion of a high school teacher, the first forum was held in conjunction with a Christmas concert at Callaway High School. The large and enthusiastic audience remained for the entire program.

The second forum was held in combination with an international smorgasbord supper. An incredible 700 persons attended the four-hour event at Murrah High School, which included dinner, entertainment and finally the public policy forum. The dinner was a class project. All the food served was prepared by the students. (Each student was asked to make a dish representing the culture of the foreign language that he/she was studying. Each dish was to provide ten servings and each student was permitted to invite two guests.) The interaction among the community, students and teachers was something to behold. The euphoria from that evening spread throughout the Jackson area. The enthusiasm was so contagious that two more equally successful smorgasbord suppers and forums were held.

¹⁸ Sarah J. Banks. 1980. "Foreign Languages. Frill or Foundation? Or How to Grab the Bull by the Horns" 1, *ADFL Bulletin*, November, pp. 35-36.

Although the leadership for the project came from Drs. Sarah Banks and Barbara Dease at Jackson State University, faculty from the other senior universities were intimately involved as speakers, moderators and discussion leaders, promoting the growth of relationships among those involved. Through this project and the previously mentioned foreign language fairs, a strong network developed that helped to promote morale and esteem during the early 1980s, when it was sorely needed.

Mississippi's connection with the Mississippi Humanities Council has remained strong. In recent years Dr. Helen Sharp and Ms. Lauren Bearden have written grants to the Council to acquire funds to provide nationally known speakers for the annual meetings. Through their efforts Mississippi foreign language educators have been able to hear presentations by recognized experts, such as Robert De Mado and Helena Curtain.

Additionally, the Mississippi Humanities Council has regularly held sessions at our state meetings encouraging foreign language teachers to participate in the state based program. Dr. Barbara Carpenter, current Executive Director, has followed in our beloved Cora's footsteps as a friend of foreign languages. She regularly keeps board members up to date on current trends in humanities policies and is eager to assist them in taking maximum advantage of any opportunities.

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

In 1991 the MFLA supported a most ambitious project. Following the inspired leadership of Jeanne Wells Cook, the

English/Foreign Language consultant at the Mississippi State Department of Education, and Marilyn Slay from Institutions of Higher Learning, with the support and encouragement of Dr. Patricia Galloway from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, a project was designed and an application was submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding. It was an ambitious project. Authentic historical and literary texts that explored Mississippi's French and Spanish heritage were to be retrieved, edited and compiled into specially developed anthologies, both to be funded by the Phil Hardin Foundation of Meridian.

The NEH grant which we received was for \$206,000. It supported two four-week intensive institutes—one for Spanish teachers and another for French teachers. In these institutes Mississippi teachers were trained in the latest most innovative foreign language methodologies and introduced to the new anthologies. The participants developed activity guides to accompany the anthologies.

The French anthology, *Mississippi's French Heritage: Selected Writings, 1682-1763*, was prepared by Gail Buzhardt with the assistance of Margaret Hawthorne. It was based on a supplementary reader developed through the sponsorship of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History entitled *Les Français le long du Mississippi au temps de la colonie louisianaise, 1682-1763*, also by Gail Buzhardt and Margaret Hawthorne and funded by grants from the Mississippi Humanities Council, Stuart C. Irby, the Du Pont Corporation, the Telephone Pioneers, the Gannett Foundation, the West Tennessee Kiwanis District Foundation and a very generous anonymous contributor.

Direct support was also received from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

The Spanish anthology, *Mississippi's Spanish Heritage: Selected Writings, 1492-1798*, was prepared by Sarah J. Banks and Charles A. Weeks. The editor was Caroline S. Kelly. The Spanish anthology began with initial observations of the Western Hemisphere, including sources related to voyages and expeditions of discovery in the form of accounts by friars, explorers and conquistadors with some native American sources. The second half combined letters, reports and legal documents from the end of the eighteenth century which reveal the very significant Spanish presence in Mississippi at that time.

The Institute for French Teachers was held during the summer of 1992 at the University of Southern Mississippi and was directed by Elizabeth Anglin. Twenty-three French teachers attended. The Capretz methodology was emphasized. The Institute for Spanish Teachers was also held during the summer of 1992 at Mississippi State University and was directed by Dr. Helen Sharp. Twenty-four Spanish teachers attended. Special permission was received to pilot the *Destinos* materials.

Distinguished Service Awards

A recent project undertaken by this organization has been the official recognition of foreign language professionals who have rendered distinguished service to the profession and to the organization. The first Award of Distinction was given to Dr. Teresa Arrington of the University of Mississippi in 1995 in recognition of her seven years of

service as Executive Director of the Mississippi Foreign Language Association. Other recipients of this award are:

- 1996 Ms. Elizabeth Anglin, University of Southern Mississippi
Dr. Giovanni Fontecchio, University of Southern Mississippi
Ms. Solange Frappier, Gulfport High School
Dr. Hans Gaycken, University of Mississippi
Ms. Josefina Rayburn, Tupelo High School
- 1997 Dr. Sarah J. Banks, Jackson State University
Dr. Ben Blaney, Mississippi State University
Dr. Jack Davis Brown, University of Mississippi
Dr. Charles Martin, Mississippi College
Dr. Jeanne Wells Cook, State Department of Education
- 1998 Dr. Elaine Coney, Southwest Community College
- 1999 Ms. Gail Buzhardt, Millsaps College
Dr. Barbara C. Dease, Tougaloo College
Dr. Richard Klein, University of Mississippi
Mr. Louis Rowles, Nettleton Schools
Dr. Helen Sharp, Mississippi State University
- 2000 Ms. Brenda Batey, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
Ms. Lauren Bearden, Columbus High School

Victory or Defeat

So far only victories have been described. Unfortunately, the Mississippi Foreign Language Association also has had its

share of defeats. The most challenging defeat was the elimination in one fell swoop of French degree programs from all but one of the senior universities which occurred Wednesday, November 18, 1981, and was formally announced in the newspapers the following day. Although the Insitutions of Higher Learning Board had been conducting program reviews, no one really believed that such an elimination would actually be mandated. Foreign language faculty were momentarily rendered speechless. Deep despair reigned as foreign language faculty realized that no one was speaking out in defense of foreign language study. They were totally isolated as if suffering from some dread disease. Then the trust and friendship fostered by the previously described programs broke through and a counter offensive was launched.

Again, the first step was taken under the leadership of Dr. Roger Johnson of the University of Southern Mississippi. That very Thursday evening after the immediate shock began to dissipate, a car load of foreign language faculty from the University of Southern Mississippi came to the Foreign Language Department Office at Jackson State University. After a good cry it was decided to launch a defense under the leadership of Barbara C. Dease at Jackson State University, Carmen McClendon at Mississippi State University and Elizabeth Anglin at the University of Southern Mississippi. A letter writing campaign was initiated. Thousands upon thousands of letters arrived at the offices of the Institutions of Higher Learning. Trucks needed to be sent to pick up the mail protesting the elimination of French. Foreign language faculty from the senior

universities built an alliance during that trial by fire that exists to this day.

The Future of the Mississippi Foreign Language Association

The Mississippi Foreign Language Association is now at a critical point. The activities that I have described have been carried out by a small, but extremely dedicated, resourceful, creative foreign language faculty. Our numbers may have been small but our determination has been truly extraordinary. Unfortunately, although we have fought the good fight we are now facing retirement. This very spring we are losing three of the most hard working and loyal members of the team—Dr. Ben Blaney of Mississippi State University, Dr. Giovanni Fontecchio of the University of Southern Mississippi, and Dr. Richard Klein of the University of Mississippi. Dr. Barbara Dease and Dr. Jack Davis Brown retired earlier. The future of MFLA, as we affectionately call it, will shortly rest in the hands of young teachers now entering the field. Thus, this article is being written. Those of us who have struggled in the past want you to know what we have achieved. We are leaving you a legacy. The vision of those teachers in 1934 who established a chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French has been shared by those of us who have followed them first to the Mississippi Modern Language Association and then to the Mississippi Foreign Language Association. Our vision has not been totally realized but we have learned that everyone must work together if anything is to be accomplished. The groundwork has been laid. The goals of

the original association continue to be our goals today. They will be YOUR goals in the future. We give you our plastic sword and ask you to continue on as the Knight of the Woeful Countenance advancing the cause of foreign language education.

Good luck! ¡Buena suerte! Bonne chance!

Works Cited

- Banks, Sarah J. 1980. "Foreign Languages. Frill or Foundation? Or How to Grab the Bull by the Horns." *ADFL Bulletin*, November, pp. 35-36.
- . 1991. "Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho. Come to the Fair. Mississippi's Statewide Foreign Language Fair." *Mississippi Foreign Language Crusader*, February, pp. 12-21.
- Brown, Jack Davis et al. 1986. *Curriculum Structure: Foreign Language*. Mississippi State Department of Education.
- Constitution, adopted March 16, 1950.
- Constitution, prior to November 25, 1948.
- De Jaive, Edmond. 1953. Letter to Dr. Margie G. Morris. March 14.
- Minutes of the 1939 Meeting of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French, prepared by Claribel Drake, December.
- Mississippi Foreign Language Association Constitution. Adopted March 16, 1950. Revised March 13, 1979; revised November 9, 1985; revised November 5, 1994.

- Mississippi Foreign Language Framework*. 2000. Mississippi Department of Education.
- Nydegger, Melvin J. 1954. Letter to Dr. Donald D. Walsh. October 28.
- Slick, Sam et al. 1982. *A Review of the Foreign Language Curriculum*. Mississippi State Department of Education, September.