Simounet, Alma
IN MEMORIAM . DR. JOAN M. FAYER
Instituto de Estudios del Caribe
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Disponible en: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=39215017007
IN MEMORIAM

DR. JOAN M. FAYER

Joan M. Fayer was a professor of linguistics in the Department of English of the College of Humanities for 45 years. In addition to an M.A. in English (literature) she obtained a second M.A. and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania where she studied sociolinguistics, an emerging and ebullient field at the time, with illustrious professors like sociolinguists Shirley Brice Heath and William Labov, a household name in variationist sociolinguistics, anthropologist and ethnolinguist Dell Hymes and Gillian Sankoff, distinguished professor and her dissertation adviser, among others. Dr. Fayer was one of those few fortunate students who received the baton directly from the great masters in the field.

During her academic career, she helped expand the graduate program in English by creating new courses like Sociolinguistics, Language and Culture, Special Issues in Sociolinguistics, Creole Languages, Dialectology of the English-Speaking World and Studies in Bilingualism from a Sociolinguistic Perspective. She was truly responsible for bringing this new area in linguistics to the university and to Puerto Rico.

She also served as the director of the Graduate Linguistics Program in the College of Humanities and coordinated the English as a Second Language component of the English Department. In the 1980s she
introduced and taught a doctoral course in sociolinguistics at Inter-American University on its Metropolitan Campus. She truly strived to ensure that sociolinguistics would be part of the core curriculum of any students specializing in linguistics.

During the gestation period of the Ph.D. Program in English in our department, she was one of its main supporters, given the importance of Creole Languages in its linguistics component. In fact, she established and funded the Joan M. Fayer Award, a monetary prize that is given to the student with the best doctoral dissertation and best overall academic performance in the Department of English. As soon as this program was established, she became an important voice in the planning of the yearly gathering of the Eastern Caribbean Conference on the smaller Caribbean islands. This was a project sponsored by the University of Puerto Rico, the University of the West Indies and the educational institution on each island. It was the beginning of many other projects in which she would engage herself together with retired professor Joan McMurray (the two Joan’s, as they were known). Their innovative research into the Anglophone Caribbean islands won for them an award from the ‘Atlantea’ Project. They also worked with Dr. Peter Roberts, from the University of the West Indies in Barbados in the confection of an Encyclopedia of the Caribbean. In addition to her work in the Caribbean, she published and presented conference papers on the topic of Puerto Rican English, a notion that she initiated as part of the sociolinguistic concept of World Englishes. One of the papers published on this topic was written by her students, who under her guidance wrote it for one of her graduate classes. This, of course, meant many meetings outside her regular schedule.

She belonged to the Society for Caribbean Linguistics, was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Caribbean Studies*, and shared her research in many official meetings in different parts of the Caribbean Basin. Along with other professors from the University of Puerto Rico, she founded and promoted for more than twenty-five years the Speech Communication Association of Puerto Rico (SCAPR), affiliated with the Eastern Communication Association (ECA) which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2008 and the National Communication Association (NCA), the oldest academic association in the United States. In the ECA she was invited and became part of the editorial board for one of its official journals. She was truly an avant-garde woman of her generation. We are very proud to have had
her as a colleague, and in my particular case, as a dear friend, a confi-
dante and an academic mentor.

Her most significant legacy is her dedication to the students who so deeply have felt her passing. She promoted their participation in academic conferences and directed the publication of research they had carried out. She was the mentor of dozens of students who found in her the support and the knowledge necessary to write their Master’s and Doctoral theses. Today you will hear some of their voices in grati-
tude for her intellectual, academic and emotional support.

The University of Puerto Rico has lost a precious gift. The Department of English of the College of Humanities extends its deep-
est condolences to her husband, Mr. Joseph Fayer, her four children, Jane, John, David and Martin, their spouses, and her grandchildren. She will be missed by many. May she rest in peace. Que descanse en paz.

Alma Simounet, Ph.D.
Department of English
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras Campus