



Frank W. Medley, Jr.
2000 Northeast Conference Chair
2003 Northeast Conference Brooks
Award Winner




"No one has ever asked of Frank and not received." So Protase E. "Woody" Woodford concisely and pointedly expressed the profession's debt to this astounding and outstanding teacher, who was also a

dearly treasured friend. Lynn A. Sandstedt phrased it even more succinctly: "Frank never refused." And Vicki Galloway reported that when she first offered Frank "all work and no pay" — an offer she admits having made numerous times during the 30 years of their friendship! — Frank accepted "without hesitation."

Frank Medley made his peace with cancer some years ago. He died on July 16, 2008 at age 70, still providing friends the gifts of his courage, sense of humor and intelligence. He emphatically stated his wish that no one feel sorry for him — but in truth, our sorrow was for ourselves. Like so many others, we at NECTFL continue to feel his loss on the most personal and also on the broadest levels.

Frank Witcher Medley, Jr., was born in Crockett, TX. After receiving his B.A. in Spanish and English from Texas Tech University, he taught high school and junior high school language before pursuing a Master's in Spanish and English, also at Texas Tech. He did a stint as a language lab director in the 1960s before returning to high school teaching but then got his Ph.D. in Foreign Language Education from Purdue. From 1977-1993, he rose through the ranks at the University of South Carolina. His final appointment was as professor and chair of Foreign Languages at West Virginia University from which he retired in 2003.

At each phase of his career, he published and presented widely, served as mentor and consultant to innumerable



colleagues, and played important roles in professional organizations. It is no surprise that he received the Southern Conference on Language Teaching Founders Award, NYSAFLT's Robert J. Ludwig National Distinguished Language Leadership Award, ACTFL's Florence Steiner Leadership Award (postsecondary), and the Northeast Conference Nelson Brooks Award, among other honors. These awards were supported not only by testimony from old friends and colleagues with whom Frank had served or teachers whom Frank had mentored, but also by letters from state foreign language supervisors and association directors. Frank's topics ran the gamut from anglicisms in U.S. Spanish radio to teaching grammar, from national language policies in Trinidad to maintenance of a language lab, from junior faculty development to needs assessment and goal-setting. The breadth of his interests reflected a natural curiosity unfettered by academia's tendency to demand a narrow focus that can be both counterproductive and self-serving. It reflected also his willingness to delve into a topic not so much for personal benefit but rather in order to co-author an article with a graduate student, learn more about a colleague, or have a pretext for spending time with a treasured colleague — as Maria Amores, Frank Mulhern and Charlotte Gifford, Carmen Rogers, Bruce Fryer, Bob Terry, Gillian Paul and Carolyn Hanson, Maria Teresa Garreton and others discovered.

Frank's passions were for his wife, his three children, his two sisters and their husbands, his eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; for steel drum making in Trinidad and for trips to Home Depot; for country music and for travel to Spain; for a beer and a good steak; and for Clara Yu's poetry. He had no tolerance whatsoever for arrogance or self-aggrandizement and could convey that feeling with the most expressive of American English's idioms!

What Frank wanted for us, and what we must commit ourselves to achieving, was the vision reflected in the 2000 volume of the Northeast Conference



Reports, edited by his dear friend and frequent partner in crime, Bob Terry. The volume and that year's conference were titled "Agents of Change in a Changing Age." In a brilliant synthesis and critique of the authors' responses to Frank's request that they "identify the changes in teaching and learning foreign languages that we are likely to encounter as we move into the next century and then (...) describe the role that we can have as teachers, students, and administrators in controlling that change," Dorothy James provides this vision. Her chapter in the volume, "Kleiner Mann, was nun?", exhorts the profession to:

- "dismantle the watershed" between various factions and unify the profession,
- begin to write and publish for a larger cohort of readers,
- elicit stories from teachers and others that present "vivid insights into the realities of the classroom, in all settings from the private liberal arts college to the inner-city middle school to the suburban community college," and
- find ways to develop multiple paths toward multiple futures for the full range of language learners by avoiding "one size fits all" reforms and solutions to the problems we face.

Tell stories — and trust what they tell you; enjoy being with each other; respect difference; be both true and truthful; move forward.

Thank you, Frank.