

# CAPTIONS

Official Newsletter Publication of the Colorado Association of Professional Interpreters  
P.O. Box 40664, Denver, CO 80204, [www.coloradointerpreters.org](http://www.coloradointerpreters.org)

Fourth Quarter 2004 (December)

## A LETTER FROM MELINDA GONZALEZ-HIBNER

Dear CAPI members and friends,

By now, you probably have heard that I will be serving you in a more official capacity, as I recently was named to the post of State Court Interpreter Program Coordinator, a first for Colorado. It is time, therefore, for me to relinquish my position on the CAPI Board of Directors. While I am saddened by the end of my tenure as Co-Chair, I am excited about a future that is full of promise for the field of court interpreting in our fair state.

As the training and testing of court interpreters returns to the State Court Administrator's Office, CAPI will have renewed flexibility and energy to devote to other aspects of its mission. This is a wonderful time to add your talent to an already dynamic and committed group of people. I encourage those of you who have been considering a bigger role in our organization to take advantage of this turn of events



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and join the Board. I guarantee you won't regret the experience!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your hard work in support of CAPI programs and events. You have all played a part in making these incredible last three years possible. I feel privileged and most grateful to have been involved with CAPI from the very start. To have been a part of the camaraderie and unified sense of purpose of such a diverse and independently minded group of people has been enormously rewarding for me. Thank you for allowing me to serve on your Board.

In partnership,

*Melinda*

You can reach Melinda at her new post by calling 303-837-3616 or writing her at [melinda.gonzalez-hibner@judicial.state.co.us](mailto:melinda.gonzalez-hibner@judicial.state.co.us)

**Read Melinda's Biography on page 4.**

## **COLORADO JUDICIAL CONFERENCE**

Written by Elia Simón-Martin and Anna Kelsey

This year's Judicial Conference was held in Southern Denver at the Marriott Hotel on October 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. Elia Simón-Martin designed CAPI's booth and enlisted the help of CAPI members Samir Farah, Ana Mostaccero and Anna Kelsey to help staff the booth. The goal was to create awareness about CAPI and educate judges throughout the state of Colorado about the use of interpreters in the courts. But the question was, how to attract the judges to CAPI's booth when there were so many other booths vying for their attention? The answer: cookies. The scent of homemade cookies drew many judges to the CAPI booth where they were able to look at the colorful map of the judicial districts in Colorado, which showed the number of certified interpreters in each district. We handed out information on CAPI, a Bench Guide for Judges using interpreters, an article on appeals related to the use of non-certified interpreters and some funny interpreter tales from the courtroom. Whereas a few judges were only interested in the cookies, many were interested in learning how to make better use of interpreters and shared with us their experiences with interpreters. Many of them had very good things to say about the interpreters they work with, although in some of the more remote districts they admitted to problems due to the use of non-certified interpreters. By the end of the conference, almost all of the districts had signed up for a presentation by CAPI to evaluate their district's needs, and hardly a cookie remained. **(Read excerpts from a handout that the judges got on Page 2)**



### **Visit the CAPI website!**

You can find more information about upcoming events of interest to interpreters and translators, as well as resources for interpreters and those who are looking for an interpreter at

**[www.coloradointerpreters.org](http://www.coloradointerpreters.org)**

**A Day in the Life of an Interpreter (the following anecdotes were related in a handout that was given to judges who attended the Colorado Judicial Conference.)**

“In traffic court one day, the city attorney announced the name of the next person on his list. I didn’t really understand the name but waited for the individual to come up. All of a sudden a voice shouted out (in Spanish) “that is not my name – my name is not “DOMICILIO DESCONOCIDO”! Apparently, the police had written the first thing they saw on his Mexican license: domicilio desconocido, meaning “ADDRESS UNKNOWN”.”

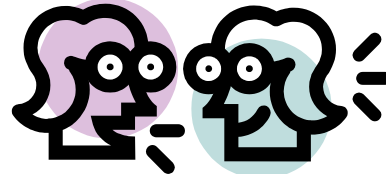
“During a conversation between the public defender and his client regarding the plea agreement to an attempted rape charge a term came up that gave me pause: ‘capar’ (meaning to castrate in Spanish). Fortunately, I questioned the defendant and realized what he was really trying to say was “to put a cap on the sentence he would receive” – apparently ‘capar’ is the SPANGLISH term meaning ‘to cap’. “

“Before a Preliminary Hearing for a First Degree Homicide case, I asked the District Attorney to look at the police report to become familiar with the details of the case. He couldn’t comprehend why an interpreter would want to see his files. I had only time to take a very quick glance at the report. The testimony involved a description of a murder victim named Guadalupe. After interpreting half an hour under the assumption that the person who had died was a woman, I discovered by the use of an English pronoun that Guadalupe was a man, and that all my previous references to a female victim must have left the defendant wondering whose case was being heard.”

*“Sometimes the defendants think they know more English than*

*the interpreter. During a hearing done through teleconferencing a defendant named José gave his full name and spelled both his first and last names. When I repeated the spelling, as I came to the “e” he yelled out his disagreement, not realizing that the English “e” is pronounced the same as the Spanish “i”. He was certain the interpreter was spelling his name wrong!”*

“I was interpreting at a trial, when at one point the defendant spoke up and asked if he could speak. When I said, “May I say something?” (exactly what the defendant had said) the judge looked right at me and said, very disapprovingly and sternly, “OF COURSE YOU MAY NOT!” I was so taken aback by her reprimand that for a moment I couldn’t say anything, and just mutely pointed to the defendant in an attempt to indicate that the words had been his. I think I looked so stunned that she understood, and said, “Oh, the defendant wanted to say something,” and proceeded to ask him. I had just assumed that the judge would know that a professional interpreter would not be interrupting proceedings to speak, and would not speak without identifying himself or herself first.”



**From the Board** -A report by Ruth Warner

The CAPI board of directors has met regularly this year, for several brief brown-bag lunchtime meetings and a few longer Saturday morning eat-well and discuss-issues sessions. In addition, CAPI held an annual meeting on March 13, and a general meeting in Fort Collins on September 25. Board meetings are always interesting and productive. (We’ll have several board openings coming up in the Spring; hopefully some of you will join us.)

This is a partial list of some of the issues and projects the board has been working on:

**NAJIT** conference held last May, CAPI volunteers were essential to making this national conference a success.

**Amendments** to our bylaws to be sure board members have no conflict of interest with their own businesses and activities.

**Medical interpreting:** A task force on this subject is working to raise the level of medical interpreting to that of court interpreting in Colorado, through training and eventually certification. An upcoming class is scheduled at Front Range Community College (see separate note), and board member Tonya Johnson will attend a Massachusetts conference on medical certification.

**Certification:** CAPI continues to provide support for the consortium certification test (now including languages other than Spanish), providing administrative support, publicity and training (orientations). Hopefully, we will soon be relieved of this task when the state hires an interpreter coordinator, and we can move on to other projects.

**Outreach:** In March, Board members Isabelle Houlbreque and Emy López (both interpreter coordinators in Denver) were invited to speak at a state meeting of **Court Administrators**. Since then, two new interpreter coordinator positions have been created, in Colorado Springs and the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. Board member Elia Simón Martín spearheaded CAPI volunteers (thank you all!) attending the **Colorado Judicial Conference**, where contacts were made with judges and administrators from many districts in Colorado. The board will be following up on these contacts, and making presentations in areas that would like them. (See separate article)

## NEXT CAPI MEETING

The CAPI annual meeting will be held on **March 5, 2005**. The location and exact time will be announced closer to the date. The most important matter to be addressed at the annual meeting is elections. Four positions on the CAPI Board of Directors are up for reelection and the current board would very much like to encourage any CAPI member interested in running for office to contact Mari Welch or Lee Trujillo Lopez of the Nominations and Elections committee. They can be reached at: 720 865 8637 and 303 699-8145.

The positions of Co-Chair and Secretary, currently held by Melinda Gonzalez Hibner and Tonya Johnson, respectively, will be vacant, as well as two Director positions, currently held by Elia Simon Martin and Isabelle Houlbrequé. This is a great opportunity to have an impact on and contribute to the interpreting profession, and get active in an organization that matters to you as a member.

**(For a review of what happened at the last CAPI meeting in Fort Collins, go to Page 5.)**



### SOME HUMOROUS QUOTES FROM THE NAJIT INTERPRETERS' EMAIL FORUM

*OK, I can't resist. Not a translation blooper but a typo from the classified section of the San Diego Union Tribune, under the category of "furniture for sale". "Grandfather cock, excellent condition, never been used; \$500".*

There are mountains of documents that must be translated into Spanish for distribution to registered voters upon request. The law specifically states that the content must be translated "AS IS"... which means that typos stay as such and the translator is not allowed to fix anything... even if the author's typo is obvious to anyone...

So... one of these pages contains the phrase ... "full public disclosure"...just a little "L" that flew away.... the into-Spanish translator will do her job.

*As a flamenco dancer in Spain, I had a summer contract performing in a tablao in internationally touristic Marbella. Each night, the emcee would announce the starring performer in Spanish, French, German and English. Instead of saying, "Attention, ladies and gentlemen etc...." He would say "CAUTION - ladies and gentlemen...." Hmmm....I guess flamenco dancers are pretty dangerous!*

I was in Mexico over the weekend at a nice hotel where they had a beautiful buffet laid out, and as is often the case, the various dishes had cards next to them identifying the dish. The only one that had a translation was the mashed potatoes, perhaps so that the Gringos would know their hosts had thoughtfully provided something "American" for them. However, "puré de papa" was translated as "pure of pope." I guess I should be comforted that we're still needed out there ...

*There's a store in Visalia, CA with this very large sign: Feliz Ano Nuevo (Happy New Anus).*

## WHY I AM AN INTERPRETER, BY MARI WELCH

I was having a bad day. One of those days that leaves you thinking of changing careers and jumping on the first airplane to anywhere. But an assignment to cover a Juvenile Division came my way. Typically interpreters enter courtrooms ready to handle any situation, but what occurred in this courtroom was most unusual.

The case ended without any hitches until the mother of the defendant began to complain of feeling ill and suddenly fainted, falling hard to the floor and hitting her head. Everyone in close proximity rushed to her aid. The Judge asked everyone to leave the courtroom. Everyone that is, but the defendant's attorney, who by pure luck was a nurse in a prior occupation, and myself, the interpreter. The two of us gently tried to lift her head, and to figure out her symptoms. Speaking in Spanish, the poor lady said she couldn't breathe and had excruciating chest pains. She also stated she had fainted a day prior and had had a heart attack just last year. The Attorney/Nurse tried to calm her. I stayed by her side and kept interpreting for her while waiting for an ambulance. Soon, an officer familiar with CPR came, then the paramedics. None of them spoke Spanish, so I stayed with her as the medical assistance took place. Also I kept her son, the juvenile, informed of what was happening, as he was extremely upset at seeing his mother ill. It was difficult to interpret, console and help all at the same time.

After the incident, the Judge approached me and invited me to her office to unwind from the unexpected experience. The Judge offered me a soda, opened the can, got ice and poured it in a glass for me. She told me that she didn't know what would have happened had I not been there to interpret. I was grateful for this kind gesture from the Judge. I realized at that moment that what I do is of value.

My bad day turned out to be a great day. It reconfirmed why I continue in this line of work. Yes, interpreting is my job, but to me it is more than a job. It is a meaningful way to help others. Whether it is a regular court proceeding without any extraordinary events or some very complicated trial, interpreters play a valuable role. I have worked as a staff interpreter for 9 years. The days are not all easy, but when they are the toughest, I remind myself that I do this work to help others. I am there to assist in making the legal process fair to all regardless of their origin, or the language they speak. I will always remember the incident in this Division and the appreciation given me by the Judge. It confirmed why I am a court interpreter.

The first **Managing Interpreter Committee Meeting** was held in Denver on November 12th with eight Coordinators/Managers of Court Interpreters from around the state attending. The agenda included how to schedule interpreters, tracking cases, interpreting in and out of court (Certified interpreters- Non Certified), translation of court documents and, creating a Spanish glossary for Colorado Courts. The next meeting in January will be hosted by Miguel Buch in Boulder.

## BIOGRAPHY OF AN INTERPRETER

### Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner

By Isabelle Houllbrèque

Just a few days ago I sat down to chat with Melinda, a friend and a colleague. We met to speak about her new job, her life, her family and her accomplishments. I thought I knew Melinda well, having worked with her and socialized with her for many years. She had even given me a recent, updated resume to help me write this article. Once again I was taken aback, surprised by her wisdom, her strength and, yes, her humble personality. Melinda has a sharp mind and a big heart.

I first met Melinda in November of 1997 during one of our Court Interpreter Orientations. A few of our instructors reported that we had a pearl in our midst: a Mexican/American who was truly bi-lingual. Court Interpreting opened the door for Melinda. During the mid-90's, she was trying to complete a dissertation in Anthropology. She was also recovering from cancer and treatments that had brought on depression. She remembers coming to life again as she spent a day talking and listening in Spanish at the orientation, heart leaping with forgotten joy at the words, and thinking, "I can do this!" Sure enough! Melinda rocketed her way into the interpreting world in Colorado. In the next two years she passed the Denver County tests, then the Federal written test, then the oral Federal Certification test ("I was so nervous...I was sure I had blown the sight translation...") She became a rater for the Federal Certification Exam, then an instructor for the Colorado and Missouri Court Interpreter Orientations and the University of Colorado course on Court Interpreting, studied Medical Interpreting at the University of Arizona and is now slated to start teaching Medical Interpretation at Front Range Community College in January. She is also a translator and does voiceovers for radio spots, TV ads and training videos.

Melinda was the first daughter born to two young doctors during their rotating internship training in Boston, Massachusetts. When she was six, her parents moved from the USA back to Monterrey, Mexico, home to Melinda's father. She spent the next 9 years studying at the Jewish schools in Monterrey ("My parents wanted me to go to a school where being girl who was independent-minded would be a good thing. Catholic schools in my town didn't necessarily value that"). She completed one year at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico, then transferred to the University of Texas, Austin, where she got her B.A. "I had a hard time writing in English...all my work had been in Spanish where I had learned to write in flowery, never-ending sentences." She got her masters in Political Sociology at

the London School of Economics and Political Science and went back to the University of Texas for more coursework toward a MA/PhD in Anthropology. She married Rogelio Peña, a lawyer, in 1985.

When I asked Melinda about the most amazing thing she had done in her life, she did not hesitate: "Delivering my twin daughters at home". Yes. Accompanied by her husband, mother, siblings and 3 midwives, Melinda gave birth to Sara and Ilana in her Houston home. Three years later, Lucas joined the twins and again, the home delivery was celebrated and attended by family and friends.

We know Melinda for all her hard work helping to found CAPI. She was there from the start, giving generously of her time and opinions. She serves as co-chair for our organization. Only a few weeks ago, we celebrated the announcement of a job opening. Colorado's Judicial Department had decided to hire its first full-time State Coordinator of Interpreters. Today we rejoice at their choice for this position: Melinda. The job is challenging and includes compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Executive Order 13166 (which mandates accessibility for populations with "Limited English Proficiency") along with all the work that needs to be done regarding court interpreting. Melinda showed me pages of a neatly typed, color-coded agenda to help her get organized and see the bigger picture. She says she is very happy to have been chosen. But she will miss interpreting, the intellectual stimulation, her colleagues, the performing and the adrenalin rush interpreting gives her.

Melinda started at State Judicial on November 8. When I asked her if she had plans for the future, the response was clear and forthcoming. She has her new responsibilities as State Coordinator. There is the ATA (American Translator's Association) accreditation she wants to pass from English to Spanish ("To start with"). Then she would like to learn ("really learn") French, Portuguese or Italian. There is that great correspondence course offered by New York University for translators. Most of all, she dreams of becoming an interpreter for the Department of State in Washington D.C. There is no doubt in my mind that these goals are not dreams. Melinda is perfectly capable of doing all of the above, doing it well and in a framework that would be impossible for us mortals. We still look forward to seeing her at our CAPI meetings. We look forward to her continued work on curriculum. We will continue to respect her as a teacher. We will miss her in the free-lance work but we have great confidence in her leadership! Congratulations, Melinda.

### Announcing Continuing Education Sessions for Court Interpreters!

These sessions will to provide a forum to help each of us who works in the court setting improve our skills in all modes of interpretation. This forum is intended to provide interpreters with an opportunity to continue learning and sharing. It is an open forum that will be respectful of opinions and differences.

Meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. District Office, Denver City and County Building, Room 379. Elia Simón Martín lead the first session on November 9 on the subject: "**Sight Translation of Court Documents.**"

**Thanks go to Elia, and to all those who participated. Your diplomas are in the mail.**

**2005 may come to be remembered as the year medical interpreter training took off in Denver! There are TWO medical interpreting courses starting off in January 2005, one language specific (Spanish) and one open to all languages.**

### **Introduction to Medical Interpreting**

**January 29, February 5, 12 and 26, 2005, 9 AM - 5 PM**

**Front Range Community College, Westminster Campus. Cost: \$225**

This intensive 4-week course, taught by two federally certified interpreters, is designed for individuals with highly developed language skills in both English and Spanish. The course will cover medical interpreter ethics, develop Spanish↔English interpreting skills and provide an introduction to the field of medical interpretation. The role and function of the medical interpreter and proper protocol will be discussed, as well as interpreting tools and methodologies. Throughout the course, students will be exposed to medical terminology and interpretation exercises in both English and Spanish, allowing for language specific feedback from the instructors. Students will be expected to develop glossary building skills and learn how to access medical terminology and glossaries using specialized national and international websites. The course will focus more intensely on the consecutive mode of interpretation most often used in the medical setting, but will provide an opportunity to learn about simultaneous and sight interpretation as well. **For more information, visit [www.frontrange.edu](http://www.frontrange.edu), select 'continuing education' and then 'languages'; or contact Julia Davis at [sitc@qwest.net](mailto:sitc@qwest.net)**

### **Bridging the Gap Medical Interpreter Training**

**The next five day training session will be**

**January 28, 29, February 4, 5, and 12; 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM**

The nationally acclaimed medical interpreter training program of Seattle's Cross Cultural Health Care Program offered under license by The Interpreter Network of Colorado. (A project of Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning) This 40-hour course is designed to train interpreters of all languages.

**Deadline for applications is December 30, 2004.**

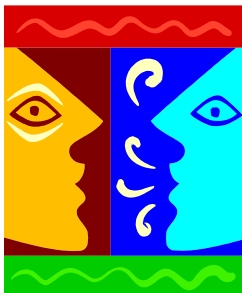
**Training will be held at Spring Institute, 1610 Emerson St, Denver, CO**

**For an application, e-mail us at [rskanson@springinstitute.org](mailto:rskanson@springinstitute.org). Course Fee: \$420.00**

**[www.interpreter-network.org](http://www.interpreter-network.org)**

**CAPI MEETING IN FORT COLLINS:** Larimer County Courthouse hosted the last CAPI meeting on Saturday, September 25th. Thanks to Humberto Orive for arranging to share their space with us for this meeting, and thanks to all the interpreters from northern Colorado who brought good food to eat. The meeting was a great opportunity to network and share. We gave an overview of CAPI for interpreters who have not previously been involved with the association. There was also a discussion of the many changes that are going on in our state that affect our profession. We had a good representation of interpreters from all over the state, including colleagues from a variety of language groups. Mark your calendars... our next **General Meeting will be March 5, 2005** in Denver.

### **INTERPRETERS MAKING HEADLINES!:**



**Kelly Musick** passed the written portion of the federal certification exam in August.

**Vicky Santamaría** passed the written portion of the NAJIT exam in May.

**Jenni Turnidge** was hired to be the new Managing Interpreter for the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

**Teresa Lopez** had a baby girl, Sofia, on November 15. She weighed in at 6 lb, and was 17 in tall!

The results are in for the certification test that was given for Russian court interpreters. Join us in congratulating **Irina Kamensky, Maria Zarlengo, and Yekaterina Cotey**. We are still awaiting the results for other language groups.

Congratulations to **Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner** who was honored at the Sixteenth Annual Multicultural Awards Banquet" on October 7, for her "significant contribution to the quality of life in Boulder County." She was recognized for her work as an interpreter and translator.

### **Spanish Court Interpreter Certification**

- **Spanish Court Interpreter Certification Exam** to be given January 22-23, 2005 (Register before January 3!) and again on in June 25-26, 2005.
- **Court Interpreter Certification in Languages Other Than Spanish**, September 24, 2005 (Orientation in August 2005)  
To register for these events, go to [www.coloradointerpreters.org](http://www.coloradointerpreters.org).

If you have any news or reviews to share with the readers of Captions, please send it to Ron Olson at [ROLSON@COLORADOINTERPRETERS.ORG](mailto:ROLSON@COLORADOINTERPRETERS.ORG) so it can be included in the next issue.