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## In Memoriam

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### Lurline Hughes Coltharp, 1913-1998

Lurline Hughes Coltharp, a former president (1978), life member, and, for many, a guiding spirit of the American Name Society, passed away August 1, 1998. She had been convalescing from heart bypass surgery but died unexpectedly of a virulent cancer. She leaves us an exceptional legacy of grace, wit, and warmth.

Lurline—always “Lurline” to the many who knew her—was born in Bridgeport, TX on May 9, 1913 shortly before her parents—Frank A. Hughes, a noted engineer and inventor, and Mary (Fisher) Hughes, a well-known civic leader—moved to El Paso. She attended the University of Texas (Austin), where she graduated *Summa cum Laude* in 1935. After teaching public school and then starting a family, she earned her masters and doctoral degrees. She began teaching at Texas Western, now the University of Texas at El Paso, in 1954 and in 1970 became one of the first women full professors in the Texas system. Her academic honors included Delta Kappa Gamma, Phi Lambda Theta, and Phi Kappa Phi.

Her dissertation was a linguistic study of criminal language, *The Tongue of the Tirilonas*, published by the University of Alabama Press in 1965. She subsequently specialized in onomastics with *Names in a Pawn Shop: A Study of Navajo Names* (1966), *Bilingual Onomastics: A Case Study* (1973), and numerous presentations and journal articles.

In 1983 Dr. Coltharp started working towards an endowment for an onomastics collection at the University of Texas at El Paso library, and through her own generosity along with gifts from friends and family the fund was established in 1991. Lurline asked a Swiss artist, Bob Kolliker, to design a bookplate for the collection. The distinctive owl bookplate is placed in each volume purchased or donated to the collection. A bibliography of the collection has been issued several times: in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1995.

Lurline was very active in PLANSUS, The Placename Survey of the United States; in September, 1993, she served as program chair and, with the help of her university, as host for the combined meeting of the

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Western States Conference on Geographic Names and the US Board on Geographic Names.

In addition to her service to the American Name Society, she was president of the El Paso chapter of the American Association of University Women (1953-54), delegate of the Modern Language Association (1971-75) and president of the Texas Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (1972-73). She also served on the boards of directors of the International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (1978-1984) and the American Dialect Society (1984-87), and was a member of the University of Texas System Chancellor's Council.

Throughout her life Lurline was also an important part of El Paso's cultural and civic institutions, e.g., she was an honorary member and Club Historian of the West El Paso Rotary Club, life member of the Chamber of Commerce, charter member of the El Paso Museum Association, Elder of the First Presbyterian Church, and on the Board of Directors of the El Paso Symphony. She was an active fundraiser for many organizations including the Community Chest, Red Cross and American Cancer Society. Such activities led to many awards by her local community, culminating in her election to the El Paso Women's Hall of Fame in 1992.

Lurline had a tough-minded, empirical approach to issues but will be best remembered for her positive, encouraging, generous and supportive personality. She recruited me into ANS by saying a little something nice about my paper at MLA and inviting me to the annual banquet at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. in 1981. Ever since I have looked forward to sharing ideas and gentle conversation with her at our annual meetings.

Since her passing, many people have sent their fond memories to be shared here. Among these, Don Lance, who knew Lurline at least as well as I did, says "It was an honor to know her and be influenced by her positive approach to everything." Ed Lawson wrote "She was a good, strong force for ANS.... We will miss her." Jane Messenger "will miss her cheerfulness, friendliness, and smiles in Cody and all other future Geographic Names Conferences." For Nancy Dukes, she "made me feel welcome at the WSC right from the beginning." Wayne Furr remembers "Lurline was the ray of sunshine any time we met." To Leslie Anderson she was a "wonderful, grand, class lady."

To all of us she brought a wise, kind, and loving touch to our professional lives. For those who feel so moved, memorial gifts may be sent to the Lurline H. Coltharp Collection of Onomastics, C/O Development Office, The University of Texas at El Paso, 1100 N. Stanton Street, Suite 205, El Paso, Texas 79902.

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