

# Distinguished Service Award

Presented to

David T. Gies

On

April 9, 2011

By

The Virginia Chapter

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese

At the

Saturday Workshop for Spanish Teachers

Presented By

The Center for the Liberal Arts

University of Virginia

With

Sheila W. Cockey

Respresenting AATSP-Virginia

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Gracias, Profesor Pellón. Nuestras felicitaciones por el 2011 All-University Teaching Award y le agradecemos por todo lo que ha hecho para organizar este día tan bonito.

Buenos días ...

Last summer the Board of Directors of the Virginia Chapter of AATSP created a distinguished service award. This award recognizes individuals who have worked toward improving the teaching of Spanish in Virginia, above and beyond the general job requirements. The recipient does not need to be a member of AATSP-VA, nor does he or she need to be teaching at the present time, but must have taught for at least fifteen years. This award might not be presented every year. Criteria and nomination forms will be available on our website for future nominations.

Our first recipient is someone who is well-known around the Commonwealth, the country, and the world. We are here today, participating in this wonderful workshop, meeting with our colleagues, and enjoying the friendships we have formed in this very hall because of the man whom we honor here today. Professor David T. Gies is the first recipient of the Distinguished Service Award presented by the Virginia Chapter of AATSP.

I would like to share some of the accolades we have received from representatives of his various “lives,” as we set out to create this award.

From Randolph Pope, Commonwealth Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature and colleagues, Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, University of Virginia:

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*His career has been stellar and a constant inspiration to us all, for his outstanding teaching, numerous publications, and service. ... in the year 2000 he was awarded the highest recognition granted to a member of the University of Virginia community, the Thomas Jefferson Award. ... The quality of his scholarship has been confirmed by grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Philosophical Society, and the Spanish Ministry of Culture.*

*Of his many accomplishments he is especially proud of his work with Virginia teachers, through the MLA Teacher Education Project and The Spanish Project of the UVA Center for the Liberal Arts, which offers a variety of programs designed for and by Spanish teachers in the Commonwealth of Virginia. ... his concern for Virginia and teaching is unflagging. He will always be available for any teacher or student who needs to consult with him, he will unfailingly find the encouraging word for our work of teaching the Spanish culture and literature, and his good humor, dynamism, and generosity are an inspiration to us all.*

From Pedro Álvarez de Miranda, Catedrático de Lengua Española de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Presidente de la Sociedad Española de Estudios del Siglo XVIII, y Miembro electo de la Real Academia Española:

*Es una figura unánimemente conocida, respetada, y admirada en el Hispanismo mundial, como gran especialista en Literatura Española de los siglos XVIII y XIX; ha hecho contribuciones [como autor y como editor], absolutamente imprescindibles ... en esos campos, entre las que destaca su labor de muchos años al frente de la revista Dieciocho, de la que es, desde luego, editor, y, más aún, verdadera alma. Pero, más allá de los círculos especializados, David Gies ha proyectado su labor sobre otros*

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*notablemente más amplios, gracias a obras de mucho mayor alcance y consiguiente repercusión, como The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture y The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature. ... Como consecuencia de todo ello, ha obtenido una de las más altas distinciones del Reino de España, la Gran Cruz de la Orden de Isabel la Católica.*

*... me parece fundamental destacar, en cambio, su papel como dinamizador de la enseñanza del español, no solo en el nivel universitario sino también, lo que es esencial como fermento e incitación, en el de la enseñanza secundaria. Sus iniciativas en ese campo, apoyadas, en razón de su calidad y rigor, por el National Endowment for the Humanities y otros organismos, se han convertido en una referencia inexcusable para cuantos se interesan por la mejora en la enseñanza del español en los Estados Unidos de América. ... Estoy absolutamente seguro de que todos cuantos conocemos al profesor David Gies, coincidiremos a la hora de enunciar sus cualidades personales: simpatía, generosidad, capacidad de trabajo, entusiasmo contagioso, brillantez, profundo sentido de la amistad y de la fidelidad...*

Andrea M. Smith, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Spanish, Shenandoah University, and former student of Professor Gies:

*... in 2000. I had the privilege of taking his advanced conversation course on Spanish film, entitled "Conversation Cinema." I remember many things about that class: first, that Prof. Gies' teaching style was exciting and engaging in a way I had not previously experienced; second, that my speaking skills improved dramatically in a few short months, as did my knowledge of Spanish culture; and, most importantly, that Prof. Gies spent a great deal of time working with the three of us who were Foreign Language Education students. As we prepared to start teaching*

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*high school upon leaving UVa, he spent extra time mentoring and interacting with us, helping us with details of vocabulary and pronunciation, and modeling various teaching styles himself in the classroom.*

*In addition to countless other ways that he has shaped my intellectual and professional development since then, that semester Prof. Gies strongly influenced my teaching style. He modeled teaching methods that demanded student preparation outside of class and required student engagement each moment of class time. Never had I prepared so fervently for class discussion! He also focused on providing individual feedback to each student; in fact, he informed me that my pronunciation was, to put it mildly, inadequate. Although it stung at the time, I desperately needed to know what and how to improve. Prof. Gies had the integrity to tell me, that as a person preparing to teach high school Spanish, my speaking skills were not sufficient. He encouraged me to study abroad that summer in Lima, Peru, and he helped make that trip a reality for me. It was, undoubtedly, one of the most defining experiences of my life, personally and professionally, and I am extremely grateful to Prof. Gies for his guidance at that vulnerable time.*

*...he influenced my journey as a secondary education teacher, and I believe that mine is just one of many testimonies to his commitment to excellence in his own career, as well as his commitment to mentoring others in the teaching profession.*

From Janet Beckmann, High School Spanish Teacher in Fairfax County and member of the ¡Cine con Clase! team:

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*David Gies understands this singular breed, the secondary school Spanish teacher, a person who*

*Wants to be current with politics and culture*

*Wants to be challenged and inspired by art, literature, cinema*

*Wants to empower other teachers and enrich students*

*Wants to encapsulate enthusiasm for this language*

*And this teacher is often one who spends much of the year mired in imperfect and preterit.*

*I have a particular story. I'm the "learn Spanish as an adult" participant. ... But, I was so hesitant to talk. I was one of your metaphorical teachers stuck in the vocabulary and sentence patterns of Spanish II. ... You took a chance on me when you invited me to participate in "Cine con Clase." I will be forever grateful. Working with you and with the tremendously gifted members of the team allowed me to grow astronomically in my speaking and listening skills. I love that you recognize the importance of film – and the importance of technology – and that you exemplify being on the cusp of what is new. And I love that your energy has no bounds – and that you energize others, inspiring them to reach goals they hadn't even imagined. ... Someone once told me that you were a singular university professor because you understood what we high school teachers want to learn. And that observation is true.*

From Karen Falcon, High School Spanish Teacher in Fauquier County and member of the ¡Cine con Clase! team:

*... I really can't [say] how much [the ¡Cine con Clase] project has meant to me. It was my first step into reshaping my life after focusing on raising kids and doing my job in a small Fauquier County world. I had decided it was time to get some more*

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*education, and a 2-week project sounded good, even though I wasn't that interested in film. From the beginning, your high standards and enthusiasm set a standard for success that was a joy to buy into. Whether by luck or good selection, the group turned out to be special, and has given me true friends for life.*

From Victor Luftig, Associate Professor, the University of Virginia, and Director of the Center for the Liberal Arts:

*David Geis ... is dauntingly possessed of promise, poise, and panache ... [he has an] extraordinary faith in educational possibility. I have never met or heard of anyone else who so reliably asserts faith in the potential of individuals and institutions – whether the most hard-pressed child at the most under-resourced middle school, or the weariest and most distinguished scholar at the most august foundation. ... We all, all of us who come into contact with him, do our work infinitely better because he insists that we believe we can.*

*I have served for a decade now, first as co-director and then director of an entity that Professor Gies founded, the Center for the Liberal Arts, which offers programs for K-12 teachers; I am delighted to think that some of the teachers who have given those programs their greatest luster will witness him receiving this award. A while ago I accepted, even embraced, the fact that for quite a substantial number of people the most important thing I will have ever accomplished is to help support and sustain the annual occasions on which they receive, from David Gies, a kiss on each cheek. I have seen the faces of the recipients of those kisses, the kissees; I have also observed Professor Gies's face, that of the kisser. It is a courtly face, a knightly face – the King of Spain really only ratified what had long been a visible truth – and it glows, and the kissees' faces glow, with a kind of delight and*

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*ardor that is not often to be found in other places, on other people. It is a glow of recognition: it says, 'Here we are, together, people who believe in working hard and living well and making things come out very very well indeed.' David Gies deserves every possible recognition, but none could ever seem more appropriate than one bestowed upon him in the presence of teachers, who can see him really well for the extraordinary thinker, giver, and man that he is.*

...

Had we not wanted this to be a surprise, David, there would have been many more words from hundreds of people, but we all know how much you like surprises.

Janna, I must thank you for keeping the calendar clear for today and for getting David here to receive this award.

As we can see and know so well, David's spritely personality reaches far and wide: from international professional activities, through university level teaching and service, to improving the minds and skills of K-12 Spanish teachers in Virginia. Plus, he makes us smile, he eagerly awaits news of our lives, and just generally makes us feel good about ourselves and our accomplishments.

Thank you! ... David, please come forward to receive your award.