

“Corónente tus hazañas”:
Studies in Honor of
JOHN JAY ALLEN

Edited by

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JOHN JAY ALLEN

JOHN JAY ALLEN was born May 20, 1932 in Wichita, Kansas, where he and his older brother Dick attended public primary and secondary schools. Dick, who now lives in Florida, enlisted as a seaman in the navy after college, and, after an outstanding career, retired as a Captain. While growing up, Jay was an avid swimmer throughout his high school years and also worked as a lifeguard during the summers. As a freshman at Duke University in 1954, Jay was a member of the freshman swim team and competed in springboard diving. He studied for one semester in Paris during his junior year and graduated from Duke University with a major in English and American literature in 1954.

The summer following his graduation, Jay volunteered for the draft (Korean Conflict) and, subsequently, served in the army's Counter-Intelligence Corps in Panama and the Canal Zone. There he met and married Tulia Elena Rodríguez in 1956. They have two daughters, Luly (Tulia) and Tisha (Leticia). Luly is an elementary school teacher in Maui, and her son Gregory is a junior at the University of Florida. Tisha is a lawyer with the INS Asylum Program in Nutley, New Jersey, where she lives with her daughter Rachel, who is in the third grade.

Upon completing his two-year military obligation, Jay entered Middlebury College's M.A. program in Madrid. In 1957 he received his degree on the Vermont campus, where he also waited tables. In 1960 Jay earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, with a dissertation on Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* under the supervision of Mack Singleton. In addition, he worked for two years as a research assistant for Lloyd Kasten while Kasten prepared the *Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish*. Jay was the recipient of the University of Wisconsin's Knapp Advanced Graduate Fellowship, 1959-60.

In 1960 Jay accepted a position at the University of Florida, where he taught Cervantes, Golden Age poetry, the *comedia* and the picaresque until 1983. It did not take long for him to establish himself as a preeminent Cervantine scholar. During his tenure at the University of Florida, Jay's outstanding contributions to Cervantine scholarship included more than a dozen articles and two books that influenced scholars worldwide. In 1969 the University Presses of Florida published Jay's seminal study *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool? A Study in Narrative Technique*, which Michael McGaha described as "the most significant attempt to deal with the central

question facing any interpreter of *Don Quixote* [...].”¹ Jay wrote a second part to *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* in 1979 after rereading and rethinking the novel in the years since the publication of the first part. In 1977 Cátedra published his edition of *Don Quijote*, which Henry Sullivan described as “one of the finest modern editions available in Spanish.”² Cátedra published in 2004 a much-revised version of Jay’s edition, the twenty-fourth printing since 1977.

Following the retirement of his colleague Francis Hayes in the late 70s, Jay embarked upon his “second career:” the *comedia*. Questions from students about the staging of the *comedia* inspired him to recreate the physical disposition of Spanish playhouses and to study the relationship between the design of the playhouses and the staging of the *comedia*. While on sabbatical in 1979, he reconstructed the Corral del Príncipe using toothpicks and the backs of legal pads. The publication of Jay’s *The Reconstruction of a Golden Age Playhouse: El Corral del Príncipe 1583-1744* forever changed *comedia* and performance studies scholarship. This groundbreaking recreation of one of Spain’s best-known playhouses inspired other scholars to research the physical disposition of playhouses throughout Spain. A model of the Corral del Príncipe (Madrid, 1583-1744) based upon Jay’s researched design and commissioned by the Teatro Español was placed on exhibit in the Museo Municipal de Madrid in 1986; it is now part of the holdings of the Museo Nacional del Teatro in Almagro, Spain. Jay’s research activity during this stage of his career included a one-year sojourn at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina where he investigated the comparative structure and development of the Golden Age and Elizabethan playhouses. This significant phase of his work culminated in Alcalá de Henares on June 4, 2003, with the inauguration of the museum tour of the Teatro Cervantes (1605) created by Juan Sanz and Miguel Ángel Coso, with whom Jay collaborated off and on for twenty years.

In the early 1960s Jay directed the Florida National Defense Education Act Summer Institute for high school Spanish and French teachers, a national program created to strengthen the United States’ role as a global leader and designed to prepare language teachers in the new “audio-lingual” methods. About the same time Jay began to teach the *comedia*, he qualified as a certified translator for Spanish-English proceedings in the U.S. courts. He served as a court translator for several years, and it was with a desire to share his knowledge of translation with his students that he taught a course in simultaneous translation at the University

¹ Michael McGaha, “John Jay Allen’s Contributions to Cervantes Studies,” *Cervantes* 23.1 (2003): 11.

² Henry Sullivan, *A Study of Cervantes’s Don Quixote, Part II* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996) xv.

of Florida. In addition to his many pedagogical and scholarly activities, which included the supervision of seven dissertations while he was at the University of Florida, Jay also pursued his own interests, one of which was playing the guitar. During one summer on Long Island, he studied flamenco guitar with Carlos Montoya. Near the end of his tenure at the University of Florida, Jay taught briefly as an exchange professor at the University of Utrecht, Holland, and as a visiting Mellon professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

In 1983, four years after Jay and Tulia divorced, he accepted, following the death of Bill McCrary, the Golden Age theater position at the University of Kentucky. The primary reason Jay decided to move to Lexington was to be close to his then-fiancée Patricia Finch, who had recently accepted a job at nearby Berea College. In addition, Joe and Margaret Jones, both of whom Jay had known and respected from his years as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, and Dan Reedy, another friend whom Jay had known for a number of years, were at the University of Kentucky. Patricia, who is now a Professor at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, and Jay married in 1984. Their son, John Patrick, was born in 1989.

While at the University of Kentucky, where he served as department chair and directed six dissertations and served on numerous Ph.D. committees, Jay's scholarship became even more prolific, as he published nearly thirty articles and co-authored with José María Ruano de la Haza *Los teatros comerciales del siglo XVII y la escenificación de la comedia* (Castalia, 1994) and co-edited with Domingo Ynduráin Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *El gran teatro del mundo* (Editorial Crítica, 1997). Following Jay's retirement from the University of Kentucky in 2000, he and Patricia, along with four other families in Danville, created a Montessori Middle School. He and Patricia taught Spanish courses there for three years, until their son John Patrick entered high school in 2002.

In 2003 Jay received two of the profession's highest honors. *Cervantes*, the journal of the Cervantes Society of America and of which Jay was the founding editor, published a special volume in recognition of his many contributions to Cervantes scholarship. Howard Mancing, Professor of Spanish at Purdue University and the first graduate student to earn a Ph.D. under Jay's guidance, eloquently described the sentiment that so many of Jay's students and colleagues share: "I will not cite other examples of his generosity, wisdom, and scholarly rigor, but merely state that together with Patricia Finch, Jay Allen represents the best that our profession—our species—has to offer. I am honored to have known him."³ This same year, when the Hispanic Society in New York recognized Jay's

³ Howard Mancing, "Jay," *Cervantes* 23.1 (2003): 5-6.

outstanding contributions and service to Hispanic studies by admitting him as an honorary fellow, Jay became one of only one hundred honorary fellows in the world. It should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Jay's humility that he allowed his wife Patricia to put only a single sentence in the local paper to announce this prestigious honor.

During the summer of 2004, Jay and Patricia each taught a graduate course at Middlebury College. The opportunity to teach there was special to Jay, who remarked, "Teaching *Don Quijote* there for the last time was, for me, the equivalent of the farewell performance of a cellist playing the traditional Strauss *Don Quixote*, but, with the added meaning of closing my career in Spanish in the very place where I began." Middlebury College awarded Jay an honorary doctorate that he described as "all the more meaningful for me in those circumstances." The fall of 2004 Jay saw the fulfillment of his dream with the publication of his and Patricia's book, *Don Quijote en el arte y pensamiento de Occidente* (Cátedra), dedicated to their son and produced to honor Cervantes on the fourth centenary of the publication of *Don Quijote I*.

Jay delivered more than two dozen invited lectures at colleges and universities in the United States, including the annual Cervantes lecture at Fordham (1978), the annual Raimundo Lida lecture at Harvard (1987), and the Phi Beta Kappa Founders' Day lecture at the University of Oklahoma (1990). He also lectured at the Folger Institute in Washington, D.C. (1982), the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Nashville (1983), and he moderated post-performance discussions for the National Park Service at productions of Golden Age plays at the Chamizal National Memorial (1986). In 2004 Jay and Patricia delivered a lecture based upon material from their book *Don Quijote en el arte y pensamiento de Occidente* at Hofstra University's Cervantes conference, "*Don Quijote: The First 400 Years*." Subsequently, they received invitations to present the same lecture at the University of Kentucky, Indiana University, Ohio State University, and at the Modern Language Association's meeting in Washington, D.C. Most recently, in February of 2005, Jay delivered an invited lecture titled "Smiles and Laughter in *Don Quijote*" at Penn State University. In addition to his lectures within the United States, Jay delivered more than a dozen lectures in Spain, England, and Mexico, including a plenary address to the Asociación Internacional de Teatro Español y Novohispano del Siglo de Oro in Mexico (1993) and a public lecture sponsored by Globe Centre Education, Bear Gardens, London, on "The *Corral* Playhouse Tradition" (1997).

While the impact Jay has had on Hispanic studies is inestimable, his students will never forget his genius as a professor. As one of the last students to write a dissertation under him at the University of Kentucky, I have many fond memories

of attending his classes. He believed that Spanish literature could be truly understood and appreciated only by someone who knows the language well. For this reason, he periodically reminded us that we were students of language, first and foremost. His intellectual curiosity was clearly evident in all of his classes, as he impressed upon us not to be satisfied with one reading of a text, but rather to discover why centuries-old literature and culture continue to fascinate and to inspire. Jay often asked my classmates and me to perform scenes from the plays we studied in front of the class, bringing the meaning and the experience of what it must have been like for actors and actresses of the seventeenth-century all that much closer to our understanding. His remarkable insight into the literature taught us that the texts in one way or another represented a blueprint of our own humanity. Jay invited a lively exchange of ideas in his classes, and, when he challenged us, he did so in a courteous and respectful manner. He was extremely popular with his students, not only because he taught us well, but also because we knew we were in the presence of a true gentleman and an expert scholar. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a student in several of Jay's classes, but even more so, I am honored to know him as a generous and thoughtful friend and as a humble and gifted colleague.

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March 2005