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Le Lien

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Hommage en mémoire de la Présidente Honoraire de l'Alliance Française Professor Emerita Claude-Marie Senninger † 16 July 2020

Chers amis,

On July 16, 2020, we lost our chère Présidente honoraire, Claude-Marie Senninger, founder and longtime director of our Alliance Française, the French for Children program and the École Francophone du Nouveau Mexique; former Consul Honoraire de France au Nouveau Mexique (1982-1992); and a pillar of the French department of UNM during her teaching career which spanned more than three decades. Madame Senninger, as many knew her, was inimitable, with a formidable intellect and tremendous energy and passion for her work. One could fill many pages describing her life and all she did to promote French language, literature and culture in New Mexico. In this edition of *Le Lien*, we honor Claude by having those of you who knew her, studied with her and worked with her, share your reflections, impressions and stories of how Madame Senninger touched your life. We hope this will paint a portrait of this most remarkable woman and serve both as an *hommage* and inspiration to us all to continue to enjoy, share and celebrate *la langue et la culture françaises* which she held so dear. Carolyn Simmons



Claude-Marie Senninger ~ A very brief biography



Born and raised in Paris, Claude received her BA in English from the University of Paris, married an American citizen and moved to the US in 1950. She earned her MA in French, Latin and Spanish from the University of Texas at Austin in 1956 and taught for several years in Austin high schools before moving to Albuquerque in 1960. Hired by the University of New Mexico, Claude, together with her husband, Truett Book, built the tiny French section into a full-fledged program which, by 1972, offered a BA and an MA in French and a PhD in Romance languages with a concentration in French. She chaired the French section from 1973 to 1994, becoming a Presidential Professor in 1986. During this same period, she wrote five books and numerous scholarly articles, directed some 15 theatrical productions in French and Spanish with the help of the UNM drama department, served as president of organizations like the National Council on Francophone Studies and the NM Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French. In 1977, she founded the Francophone Summer School of New Mexico, which she led for 19 years. She brought prominent French and Spanish writers to work and teach at UNM, including JMG Le Clézio, Nathalie Sarraute, Anne Hébert, Michel Butor, Roger Ikor and Fernando Arrabal. The list of honors and distinctions she earned

over the years include Officier des Palmès Académiques (1982) and Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite (1985). And of course, starting in the early 1960s, she founded and directed the Alliance Française d'Albuquerque, the Alliance Française School and French for Children. Upon retiring from UNM, she taught her signature course, *la Joie de la lecture*, in nearly every session, never once repeating the subject!

Remembrances by colleagues at the University of New Mexico

Lise Hoshour (collègue de Claude-Marie Senninger à UNM de 1963-1983) était présente lors de la fondation de l'Alliance Française d'Albuquerque au sein du département de français et en fut la secrétaire pendant presque 20 ans. Elle nous raconte ses souvenirs de ses années avec Claude à UNM:

C'est en 1963 que j'ai fait la connaissance de Claude-Marie Senninger et de Truett Book qui dirigeaient alors le pôle de français au sein du Département des Langues Modernes et Classiques à UNM. La ville d'Albuquerque et l'Université étaient alors en pleine expansion. L'obligation de suivre un curriculum d'au moins 2 langues étrangères afin d'obtenir son BA venait d'être instaurée et le pôle de français était sur le point d'exploser. Française d'origine, fraîchement débarquée dans la ville, je me suis retrouvée sans trop savoir comment au début du semestre de printemps 1963 devant une classe de 45 étudiants avides d'apprendre le français.

C'est alors qu'a commencé pour moi un véritable tourbillon qui durera 20 années au cours desquelles je verrai Claude et Truett établir une présence indéniable de la France et de la langue française non seulement au sein de l'université mais dans toute cette partie du sud-ouest américain.

L'intelligence et le dynamisme de Claude et de Truett, épaulés par les Services Culturels de l'Ambassade de France à Los Angeles et chaleureusement accueillis et soutenus par la nombreuse diaspora francophone et francophile présente dans la ville et la région créèrent de toutes pièces un vrai bouillon de culture française à Albuquerque.

Au cours du quart de siècle de la présence de Claude et de Truett à la tête du pôle de français de l'UNM, une extraordinaire effervescence verra le jour. Ils sauront attirer et retenir une faculté de qualité incomparable qui, à leur tour, dispenseront un enseignement supérieur qui se reflètera plus tard dans plusieurs générations d'étudiants qui se distingueront particulièrement dans la recherche et l'enseignement. Avoir eu comme professeurs en titre Michel Butor ou Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio (Prix Nobel de Littérature 2008) et/ou comme professeurs en visite Alain Robbe-Grillet ou Fernando Arrabal (qui resta suffisamment longtemps pour monter une de ses pièces de théâtre, "Le Cimetière de Voitures", les très nombreux rôles joués entièrement en français par les étudiants... et pour en écrire une autre, "Sur le fil" qui se passe à Madrid, New Mexico et sera présentée la même année au Festival d'Avignon avant d'être reprise l'année suivante en 1975 à Paris au Théâtre de l'Atelier, mise en scène par Jorge Lavelli). Avoir eu la possibilité de saluer la peintre Françoise Gilot, le cinéaste Joel Séria, le mime Marcel Marceau, l'organiste aveugle Jean Langlais, le pianiste Jean Casadesus au cours de réceptions données en leur honneur par l'Alliance Française et auxquelles participaient toujours tous les étudiants, était pour ceux-ci, en plus des salles de classe, une occasion de se plonger dans ce bouillon de culture généré par Claude et Truett, un privilège, une chance unique.

L'Alliance Française (son French for Children ... mais aussi son French for Older Citizens à l'Assistance League de la ville), le Phare-Ouest (petit journal mensuel en français des étudiants), le Café Causette (hebdomadaire où chacun apportait son sandwich), le Festival de Films français (annuel au Guild Cinema proposé à toute la ville), le Saturday Night Downtown (soirée ethnique organisée par le Maire David Rusk qui ouvrait gratuitement toutes les portes souhaitées pour présenter des activités culturelles françaises aux citoyens de la ville), le Québec à Albuquerque, les nombreux colloques et conférences, les pièces de théâtre en français montées par Claude (souvent présentées sur une des scènes officielles de l'Université ou de la ville)... souvenirs, souvenirs ... oh là là là... que c'était magnifique!

Bravo et Merci à Claude qui pendant près d'un demi-siècle, a fait rayonner la langue et la culture françaises au Nouveau Mexique.

Claude va nous manquer. Sa personnalité attachante et son oeuvre multiple et immense nous laissent un souvenir incommensurable et ineffaçable. Nous ne t'oublierons jamais très, très chère Claude.



Claude, her mother Lucienne and Truett Book

Peter Pabisch (Professor Emeritus of German, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, UNM):

Claude Senninger was a strong woman and university professor, at times not easy to come to terms with, because of her strong will. But what were her achievements? She stood for Francophone Studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. She contributed decidedly to its status, particularly in the last decades before the end of the millennium when she managed to introduce and, for many years, to direct even a doctoral program for French graduate studies. Her connections were universal in the francophone world; famous French writers were invited by her to teach at the university's department of languages and literatures, including the later Nobel Prize laureate Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio. She founded the French Weekend of New Mexico for high school and college students and established the total immersion program of the Francophone Summer School of New Mexico that existed in New Mexico for many years. Last but not least, she directed the renowned Alliance Française in Albuquerque of which she was also president. She was a published scholar and enjoyed the respect of her colleagues and students within and outside academia in the USA, in Canada, in Europe, and elsewhere. Her legacy as a university professor, an international educator and a sophisticated personality will not be forgotten.

Byron Lindsey (Professor Emeritus of Russian, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, UNM):

Her painful absence now confirms her remarkable presence all those years. It's impossible for me to remember the decades—70s, 80s, 90s—at UNM, and specifically the language department, without seeing Claude rise there. No one set of words, whether English or French, fits her outsize personality. She was like a force of nature, a gale from the Seine blowing intact across the Atlantic to Albuquerque, to stir things up in an often too sleepy, too isolated place, to bring fresh thoughts and possibilities to a milieu that struggled to keep them, and especially self-confidence. “*Oui, vous pouvez, bien sûr. You can do it. We will expect you.*” She was forever teaching us—students, colleagues, esteemed university administrators, members of the community—that we could do it. She took no excuses and no prisoners. If our performances fell short of her inspired ones, we learned from doing them. We came away feeling more French, more engagé, and yes, refreshed. New Mexico has lost an irreplaceable source of all things Parisian and an inimitable voice with a loveable French accent. “*À bientôt!*” she says again.



Rachele Marongiu Duke (Lecturer III of Italian, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, UNM):

I met professor Senninger 30 years ago, when I joined the Department of Modern and Classical Languages as a lecturer in Italian and Latin. My office was next to hers in Ortega Hall, and she took me under her wing, supporting Italian through the ups and downs of budget crises and departmental reorganizations. She was a true friend, frequently inviting me and my partner Giorgio to dinner in her little corner of France in the North Valley, where she would regale her friends with gourmet dishes that could easily rival those of Julia Childs. I will miss the wonderful reminiscences of her childhood in France, as well as the thought-provoking conversations on literature, philosophy and history.

Lisa Stewart (Academic Operations Officer, UNM School of Architecture and Planning):

Professor Claude-Marie Senninger founded and directed the École Francophone du Nouveau Mexique hosted by the University of New Mexico Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. This five-week intensive total immersion language, literature and culture program was held in the breathtaking Taos Ski Valley year after year and was intended to provide an opportunity for high school French teachers to pursue a Master's or Doctorate degree during the summer months. The diverse body of students came from near and far and represented a variety of age groups and backgrounds. Professor Senninger invited internationally renowned professors from France (including from the Sorbonne), Switzerland, Belgium, Quebec, the French Antilles, Guadeloupe, other francophone countries and la Louisiane. In addition to including poetry, history and novels spanning the centuries, she insisted on offering a variety of entertaining courses such as folk music, theater and cuisine, tout en français. Professor Senninger diligently hand selected hundreds of books from her personal collection and the Zimmerman Library at UNM to provide a mini-library to participants. Every evening students and professors dined together and enjoyed conversation, occasional talent shows and superb meals prepared by the Hotel Edelweiss chef. Every minute of the five-week session was a French lesson! Professor Senninger also exposed students to life in New Mexico. Students were transported to the Santa Fe Opera and rafting trips down the Rio Grande. I assisted Professor Senninger in coordinating the Francophone Summer School and very quickly realized how deeply passionate and steadfast she truly was. She excelled in bringing people together, inspired intellectual curiosity and worked tirelessly to promote francophone studies. Professor Claude Senninger never settled for anything less than excellence. Merci mille fois, Claude!

Remembrances from former students at UNM and the Alliance Française

Alice and Bill Fienning (Former UNM student and longtime AF treasurer and membership chair):

I met Claude in 1970 when I came to UNM as a naïve graduate student who had taught French in Illinois for 10 years. She must have sensed I was out of my element at first, and was warm, gracious and demanding when I was in her classes. My husband and I have been friends with her for 40 years, taking her to and from the airport many times on her trips to France. Many years ago I went to visit Claude and she took me to her back yard to see the ducks she kept in cages there. After we admired them, she asked if I wanted a few neggs. I asked her, “What are neggs?” She laughed and replied it’s what she jokingly learned to call ‘un oeuf’ in English. If you think about how the ‘n’ is pronounced as part of the ‘oeuf,’ the same holds true with ‘an egg;’ thus, the word ‘negg.’ Claude enriched our lives and we will miss her.



Claude, Carolyn and Karin at Boxcar Re-dedication ceremony in 2018

Diana Stauffer (Former UNM and AF student and AF Board member):

I am so sad to learn of Claude’s passing. It is difficult to express just how significantly she figured in my life in New Mexico – from UNM classes in the early- to mid-70s when I had just returned from France to the activities at the Alliance, including her courses before she “retired” from the board. I loved our chatty conversations at Café Causette when she would share personal stories. She projected a joie de vivre as well as a serious French intellectual rigor all at once. I am so happy we were able to fulfill her wish to rededicate Le Wagon de la Reconnaissance. The end of an era. She will be missed.

Thérèse Mueller (Former UNM student and former director of the Alliance Française School):

In loving memory of a wonderful person. I will love you and miss you always. Professor Senninger was one of the most incredible teachers I have had. I have many very fond memories of her. These memories include the classes I took under her, the many long nights of theatre practices for the plays she put on at UNM, the weekend retreats at Glorieta, the Poetry Slams, the cooking sessions and many other gatherings at her home that I was fortunate to be a part of. My heart will always have a part of these great and wonderful memories. My heart reaches out to the family members!

Carol Sowar (Former UNM student, former AF Board member and longtime APS French teacher):

Tant de souvenirs. J’ai fait la connaissance de Claude Senninger en 1984 quand les profs de français du lycée et les profs de l’université se réunissaient pour faire des projets pour le weekend à Glorieta pour les lycéens. À Glorieta, Claude avait toujours un cours de cuisine pour les profs. C’était merveilleux! Une fois elle a partagé sa recette pour “LE PÂTÉ”. Quel bonheur! Quand je faisais ma maîtrise, elle était une de mes profs. Elle était dure et exigeante mais aussi si intelligente et chaleureuse. Un de mes cours a commencé avec une douzaine d’étudiants et a fini avec trois! Mais quelle chance pour nous trois. Claude nous a invitées chez elle au moins une fois pour étudier et dîner. Être invitée chez elle me semblait toujours un vrai cadeau. Ce que j’aimais le plus c’était de l’écouter lire de la poésie. Je ne l’oublierai jamais. J’ai eu l’honneur de faire un discours de la part des profs du lycée quand elle a pris sa retraite. Elle en était très reconnaissante. Elle était comme ça. J’ai suivi quelques cours particuliers avec elle. Un autre rapprochement. Et ayant été membre du conseil d’administration de l’Alliance Française, je pouvais voir tout ce qu’elle faisait pour notre ville et notre état. Une femme sans pareil. Elle a quitté la terre mais pas mon cœur. Adieu, Claude.

David Wilson (Former AF student and head of Le Groupe français d’Albuquerque):

Lorsque j’ai déménagé à Albuquerque en 1985, récemment arrivé de la Côte d’Ivoire, elle était la première francophone que j’ai connue. Je suis allé la voir dans son bureau à UNM afin de m’informer sur la communauté francophone à Albuquerque. Bien que mon accent africain l’ait surpris un peu (le beau roulement des “r”!!), elle a admis que ma grammaire n’était pas mauvaise! Je lui ai promis qu’un jour j’irais en France. Quatorze ans plus tard, j’ai fini deuxième dans un concours de composition française parrainé par les Alliances Françaises USA. C’était grâce au prix que j’ai reçu (un billet aller-retour gratuit) que j’ai pu faire ma première et seule visite en France! Si ce n’était pas pour les efforts de Madame Senninger et le fait qu’elle avait fondé l’Alliance Française d’Albuquerque en 1962, je n’aurais pas pu participer au concours de composition en 1999 et n’aurais jamais vu la France! Merci, Madame, pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour encourager et partager la belle langue, culture, art, et histoire de France avec les citoyens d’Albuquerque! Adieu!

Remembrances from former students at UNM and the Alliance Française, continued

Joseph Charles MacKenzie (Former UNM student):

If all the virtues of that civilization we call France had a human embodiment, it was our beloved teacher Claude-Marie Senninger. She did not simply enrich my life, she transformed it. Her voice remains with me, to teach, to encourage, to make good decisions and yes, to chastise when I err. To the same extent we all loved her—which was to no end—we always maintained our reverential fear of so formidable a mind, a fear that was all admiration, all respect. We knew that Madame was a treasure that was given us who were so unworthy, so very unworthy. She was the most moral person I ever knew, a woman of solid principles in everything she did. Her whole life was a giving of herself to others, a handing down of traditions, culture and knowledge. Madame did nothing for herself. She was all about exhausting her almost super-human energies for others. I have a hundred stories to relate of Madame Senninger, one of which is the story of who I am today, because that is what I owe to her. If people really knew who she was, how she inspired us and how she will always endure as a kind of angel of our better natures, or the enormous place she occupied in our hearts, they would faint! With her passing from this world, it is as if the very last breath of civilization has expired and the flame of true greatness has been extinguished. Madame Senninger was the best and noblest of all those whom I have ever called my teachers in this life. One day, perhaps, if we should gather to share our tears, I will tell you about her heroism. All her gifts were from on high. Let our hearts be filled with gratitude to the good God who allowed us to know her. As for me, I can say that there shall be no end of my mourning.

George Frear (Former AF student and longtime AF secretary and Board member):

J'ai fait la connaissance de Claude-Marie Senninger peu après mon arrivée à Albuquerque en 1994. Les souvenirs d'elle que je chéris le plus sont de Claude comme professeur de cours de littérature française à l'école de l'Alliance. Ces cours s'appelaient toujours "la Joie de la lecture." Elle savait bien communiquer la joie qu'elle tirait de la lecture littéraire tout en démontrant aussi une attention soigneuse au texte et même à l'intertextualité. On avait l'impression qu'elle voulait être stricte mais elle s'adaptait de bon coeur aux niveaux variés de ses étudiantes et étudiants. Si l'on a suivi comme moi de nombreux cours qu'elle a donnés au fil des années, on a étudié la littérature de France de toutes les époques mais aussi la littérature du Québec et même de la Louisiane francophone. Les cours de Claude finissaient toujours par un dîner somptueux chez elle. Après tout, bien manger fait partie intégrale de l'esprit français qu'elle incarnait si parfaitement. Merci, Claude.

Larry Fricke (Former AF student and longtime AF Board member):

French language, French grammar, French pronunciation, French literature, French cooking, French culture, French temperament, French drama, French music, French cinema. In my opinion, Claude was La Belle France.

Johanna and Will DeMay (Former AF student):

I'm sure everyone at the Alliance will always feel Madame Senninger's loss. I feel fortunate to have taken a class from her. She gave me the assignment of writing a presentation about Manet. I got carried away talking about his painting techniques and how he changed the aesthetic of his time. Madame reminded me this was a language and literature class. I replied, *Bien sûr, madame, mais moi, je suis artiste et je voudrais parler de ses innovations artistiques!* Madame laughed and said, *Allez-y!* When I finished she made me a gift of the Manet catalogue she'd loaned me for my research. I still treasure that book.

Douglas Carver (Former AF student):

I am saddened to hear of the passing of Madame Senninger. Some years ago I took one-on-one classes with her, making a weekly trip to her house to learn French under her strict but wonderful manner. I learned so much, loved her as a teacher and had tremendous respect for her knowledge of and love for the French language. She will be missed.

Jane Lieberman (Former AF student and instructor):

I am so sorry to hear we've lost Claude. Such a marvel! I loved every minute of her classes and enjoyed her keen observations and fiercely trenchant humor. She will be greatly missed.



Remembrances from former students at UNM and the Alliance Française, continued

Steve Graves (Former AF student):

I am sad to learn of the passing of Claude Ma, as she once suggested to a class that we should address her. I knew her only in that class, but I'll always remember her. Upon reading what has been written about her, I see that she gave unstintingly of herself and made a difference in the lives of many others. I would say, as well, that she loved it all, to the hilt.

Cristina Quiroga (Former AF student):

Madame Senninger was the soul of the Alliance. I remember taking a workshop at her house in the Valley.



Claude with her sons Philippe and Warren Book

conversation sharp yet charming – everything that I had heard about her. But as it happened, I became acquainted with her only a few years before her decline into ill health. I took her class on Molière, which was challenging and delightful. I was honored to sit at her table on a few occasions for our Déjeuner de Noël, where I enjoyed talking with her and her sons. One summer day, I visited her at home. We spoke at length about books and literature, and she gave me some useful volumes she had culled from her extensive library. I last saw her at the Christmas luncheon in 2019, though the ambient sound did not permit more than friendly nods. She was very frail, and I knew she probably would not join us again. Nonetheless, she sat erect, and with admirable force, sang her beloved French carols.

Stan Dunin (Former AF student and Board member):

Votre email m'a rendu vraiment triste. Comme vous l'avez dit, nous apprenions toujours quelque chose en participant à son cours ou à une simple conversation. C'est toujours un plaisir d'entendre quelqu'un qui maîtrise sa profession et qui peut communiquer ce savoir. Je suis très heureux que nous ayons tous eu l'occasion de célébrer ses réalisations lors de notre 50e anniversaire. Elle nous manquera.

Helen Moody (Former AF student):

When I first heard that Mme Senninger had passed away, an image instantly leapt to mind of a giant Sequoia falling to the forest floor, something so ancient and fundamental that we are taken aback when it is gone and surprised that the inevitable has occurred. It was appropriate, then, that the family requested not the sending of flowers in her honor, but the planting of trees. I am very grateful to have known Mme Senninger, though I wish I had known her much earlier. Her accomplishments were legendary, her energy formidable, her



AF 50th Anniversary Celebration 2013

Remembrances from French for Children

Karin Frings (AF Vice-President and Director of French for Children, and Moriah Peterson, former FFC and AF student):

De Frère Jacques à La Vie en Rose. Combien d'enfants et d'adolescents ont découvert leur amour pour la langue et la culture française dans nos cours de French for Children? Impossible à dire après 50 ans déjà mais définitivement grâce à l'initiative de notre chère Professeur Senninger. Elle savait qu'il faut commencer quand on est jeune, il faut jouer et chanter en français et il faut manger des crêpes pour célébrer la fin d'un semestre. Les jeunes étaient même honorés à la Distribution des Prix pour leurs accomplissements. Quelle joie de les voir avec leurs diplômes! Une de ces jeunes « fana », Moriah, représente parfaitement la vision que Mme Senninger avait pour le programme French for Children et veut bien partager ses souvenirs avec nous. Merci, Claude et merci, Moriah !

Moriah Peterson:

Je suis très honorée d'avoir l'occasion de rendre hommage à Dr. Claude-Marie Senninger qui avait servi ses élèves pendant de nombreuses années à l'Alliance Française d'Albuquerque, qu'elle a fièrement fondée. C'était un privilège de la rencontrer souvent lors d'occasions spéciales. Nous avons partagé toutes les deux une passion commune, la langue française. Un grand merci à Dr. Senninger dont l'amour de l'enseignement du français a contribué à la société et à notre communauté. Je suis très reconnaissante d'avoir été une étudiante du programme French for Children enseigné par Mme Karin Frings. C'est grâce à ce programme que j'ai acquis toutes les compétences nécessaires pour ma réussite aujourd'hui étant en dernière année à Washington State University me spécialisant en français. Mon dernier souvenir de Dr. Senninger est quand elle avait parlé de ses voyages en Amérique du Sud et en France et comment elle aimait bien le sucre vanillé de Madagascar. Elle va beaucoup nous manquer. Merci pour tout, Dr. Senninger!



Laura Brainard, Claude, Moriah and Karin at Plume d'Or awards celebration 2013

Expressions of friendship

Perry Bendicksen (Consul Honoraire de France à Albuquerque):

Claude m'a toujours encouragé dans mon rôle de consul honoraire, a toujours été très gentille avec mon épouse et moi, et n'a jamais critiqué ma grammaire déformée. Elle me manquera beaucoup et je me souviendrai toujours d'elle avec tendresse.

Letty Buchholz (Longtime AF member and former AF Board member):

Je présente mes sincères condoléances à la famille de Madame Senninger. Elle a bien représenté la France par des efforts extraordinaires pour propager cette belle langue qu'est le français. J'ai rencontré Claude dans les années 70. Elle me disait toujours que je prononce mes "R" à la Joséphine - oh là - de Beauharnais, Martiniquaise, impératrice de France. Quelle comparaison!! Elle disait aussi que les insulaires parlent un français chantant et charmant. Depuis la mort de Claude, je regarde souvent un classeur des rencontres de l'Alliance datant des années 80. Que de souvenirs!! Cinq ans de cela, pendant la célébration de la Fête Nationale, Claude me disait qu'elle faisait un triage des archives de l'Alliance et qu'elle voyait mon nom très souvent. J'étais volontaire pour toutes sortes d'activités et j'étais sur le Comité pendant 3 ou 4 ans. Ça me faisait plaisir de contribuer le plus possible.

JoAnn Ruppert (Longtime AF member and supporter):

Claude was just a remarkable woman and a great friend. We have all been enriched from having known her and being the beneficiaries of her knowledge and expertise. I am saddened by her passing, as I know you all are.

Anna May Conarty (Widow of Colonel Roger Conarty who was a longtime AF Board member and editor of Le Lien):

What an energetic French promoter of her culture! It was always an event to visit Claude in her home on Guadalupe Trail. I remember such gourmet food and French wines, and playing boules in her back yard. She was a very wonderful, warm hostess to all, but she and her good friend, Suzanne Hanson, were my husband's good friends throughout our residence in Albuquerque. She was so kind to Roger Conarty, and he as well cherished his French heritage, being as how his mother was French! Claude-Marie Senninger was a leader of all things French, including the Alliance Française d'Albuquerque, the 40&8 Boxcar Memorial of WWII at the NM Fairgrounds, the Fête du Beaujolais Nouveau and the Bastille day picnic, rain or shine, but one event stands out for Colonel Conarty. Claude-Marie was instrumental in honoring Roger for his service in WWII with the Legion of Merit in August 1993, fifty years after WWII. Roger was very humbled to receive the honor from the French government.

Warren and Philippe, Roger and I so deeply appreciate all your mother did for French heritage while a citizen of the USA.

Lois McClave (Former AF librarian and student):

Elle était une femme incroyable et elle vivait sa grande passion pour la langue française et la culture française. Elle nous manquera.

Anne Sandry-Seidel (Longtime AF member):

Je veux exprimer mes profonds regrets à l'occasion du décès de Madame Senninger, une grande perte pour la communauté francophone et francophile du Nouveau Mexique.

Marie Ginette Cahill (Former AF instructor and longtime member, former UNM student)

Ces heures passées à parler de Théophile Gautier,
toutes les deux autour d'un café qu'elle venait de me faire
et d'un croissant qu'elle avait acheté
à la boulangerie du coin.

Une journée à Paris, dans un musée
pas loin de son appartement à Montmartre.

Un film sur la chaîne TV5.

Et puis tous ses souvenirs à elle:

sa vie à Saint-Sulpice,

sa vie à la campagne durant la deuxième guerre mondiale,

sa vie à la Sorbonne,

sa vie au Texas,

et sa vie au Nouveau Mexique

pays qu'elle aimait bien.

Mes tas de souvenirs partagés avec cette grande dame.

Souvenirs qui m'ont attachée à elle

et maintenant, à sa mémoire.

Elle est partie,

mais elle m'a tant laissé.



Remembrances of Alliance Instructors

Karin Frings:

Une amitié franco-allemande américaine

Imagine this: you have lived, as a youngster, through the horrors of WWII, through the losses and the trauma of the Nazi occupation of your beloved Paris; you had to flee and leave everything behind to survive, and then, 50 years later, you find yourself in Albuquerque forging a lifelong friendship with a German. “C’est historique!” or at least that’s what Claude and I called it. She regretted not having learned any German, since she spoke several other languages fluently and part of her family was from the German-speaking town of Remich, “Die Perle der Mosel” (on the German Luxembourg border), but obviously this was not about linguistics. Claude saw beyond my nationality when she welcomed me into her classroom, her home, her heart and the Board. We had a very strong feeling that our friendship was a great example of how one cannot forget, but rather learn from the past and prevent history from repeating itself, one relationship at a time. She even declared me the godmother, “la marraine,” of her beloved dog Willie-Billie, my highest honor! Alors, merci Claude pour notre amitié historique !

Penelope Lespinasse (Longtime AF instructor and former Board member):

I first met our chère Claude-Marie after moving to Albuquerque in 2006. I had retired from teaching high school French in Florida and attended a Café Causette at La Crêpe Michel in Old Town. I was told that the Alliance Française was looking for French teachers, so I applied for a position and had my interview with Mme Senninger, Carolyn Simmons and Karin Frings. This amazing trio of women, led by the formidable Mme Senninger, soon became near and dear to my heart, and to this day I continue to teach French for the school. Claude-Marie was always so supportive and gracious, with her “je ne sais quoi” manner, that “look” and her Sonia Rykiel velour track suit! There are so many wonderful memories of all the events with the Alliance: the Bastille Day parties, the 50th anniversary of the Alliance, la Distribution des Prix for the French for Children’s program, the Board meetings, Beaujolais and so many more with Claude-Marie at the helm. The one thing that was constant was Claude-Marie’s willingness to share her knowledge of French culture and language with everyone she met. I learned so much from her and about her personal experiences in Paris during WWII, her joys and struggles while teaching and her views on the world today. This woman will forever be a part of my personal and professional development as I strive to have the same positive impact on those around me. To all those who knew her, I share your sadness, but I will also smile each time I think of this incredible woman. Toutes mes condoléances à Warren, Philippe et toute sa famille et ses chers amis.



Remembrances of Alliance Instructors, continued



Claude and le Père Noël (Claude Dardant)

Patricia and Claude Dardant (Longtime Alliance instructor and former Board member):

Claude Marie, deux prénoms pour une grande dame. Très honorée d'avoir pu la rencontrer et discuter avec elle. J'ai eu une relation particulière car je suis française.. Elle adorait parler d'actualité ou du passé, seul quelqu'un de français pouvant comprendre. Elle avait un très fort caractère, et savait comment mener sa barque. Elle avait une énorme culture, et adorait les livres. La preuve : sa maison en est pleine. Très fort son amour pour Théophile Gautier. Elle aimait parler à des temps que l'on n'utilise plus, comme l'imparfait du subjonctif : il eût fallu que vous le sussiez. L'assemblée générale de février où elle utilisait des mots inusités ou des expressions idiomatiques. La Distribution des Prix. Dans mon village, en classe primaire et au collège, la mairie distribuait des livres aux élèves, et j'étais fière d'avoir souvent le prix d'excellence. J'ai encore aujour-

d'hui tous mes livres gagnés. C'était la fin de l'année, et on allait dans la salle des fêtes. Avec notre instituteur, on montait sur scène devant nos parents, fier comme Artaban. Au collège, chaque premier dans une matière avait aussi un livre. Quelle joie quand j'ai découvert à l'Alliance d'Albuquerque que l'on distribuait des livres aux lycéens, mais aussi aux enfants qui venaient aux classes de l'Alliance. Les parents étaient si fiers, et prenaient plein de photos. Toujours un moment d'émotion!

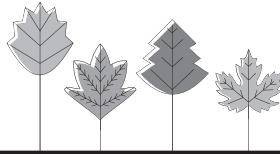
Carolyn Simmons (AF President and Director of the Alliance Française School of Albuquerque):

In the spring of 2009, I was able to spend a day with Claude in Paris. I met up with her at her Montmartre apartment, a small one-bedroom place, so quintessentially Claude - full of books and paintings, and exuding Parisian elegance and class. She wore a Sonia Rykiel outfit (of course!), a big silver necklace, and had her hair stylishly cut by her favorite Parisian coiffeur. We spent the entire day visiting Montmartre. She took me to tourist attractions like Sacré Coeur, la Place du Tertre and Le Lapin Agile, but also to places less frequented by tourists, like the Église Saint Pierre and the Musée de Montmartre, and all along she told me in detail about the history and famous inhabitants of this iconic quartier. We had our déjeuner at her favorite neighborhood bistrot where the Maître D' and the servers all greeted her by name. She then took me to the sculpture of *le Passe-Muraille*: Marcel Aymé depicted as the namesake of his most beloved tale. We posed there for photos which I have since shared with my students when we read Aymé's works. Yet, my favorite photo from that day is of Claude on one of the long Montmartre staircases. She is standing a flight above me. Although I was little more than half her age, I had had to stop and catch my breath. She had just bounded up those stairs, expecting me to follow and keep up! For me, that was Madame Senninger. A woman of astounding knowledge and drive who was always ahead of me but always encouraging me to do more than I had imagined possible.

Like everyone who has contributed to this issue of *Le Lien*, and many more who knew Claude-Marie Senninger, I will always feel, and be grateful for, her influence on my life. *Merci, chère Claude! On ne t'oubliera jamais!*



Claude in her Montmartre apartment



Membres du Conseil de L'Alliance Française d'Albuquerque

Présidente Honoraire	Claude-Marie Senninger †
Présidente	Carolyn Simmons
Vice-Présidente	Karin Frings
Trésorier	Bruce McClure
Secrétaire	Gillian Michell
Le Lien	Tomás Butchart
Responsable des adhérents	Carolyn Simmons
Directrice de l'école	
French for Children	Karin Frings
Directrice de l'école de l'Alliance	Carolyn Simmons
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Alliance Française

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