

HILDRED STOREY GEERTZ

1927 - 2022

This Memorial Resolution
Prepared by a special committee,
was approved by unanimous rising vote at the meeting
of the Princeton University Faculty
on November 6, 2023 and ordered spread upon the
records of the Faculty.

Hildred Storey Geertz

February 12, 1927 – September 30, 2022

Hildred Geertz, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology passed away at her home in Princeton on September 30, 2022.

Hilly (as Hildred preferred to be called) joined Princeton's newly created Anthropology Department in 1971 and was soon appointed its chair in 1973. She was the first woman to head a Princeton department and the third woman to earn tenure at the University. Her distinguished scholarship on the interactions between culture, social organization, and art forms was based in extensive fieldwork in Java, Morocco, and Bali. As professor, chair, colleague, and mentor, Hilly Geertz was as tough-minded as she was welcoming and generous. While leading her intensive scholarly career, she was a devoted mother, grandmother, and friend. She was named Professor Emeritus in 1998.

Hilly Geertz was born in Queens, New York and grew up there and later in Teaneck, New Jersey. She earned her bachelor's degree at Antioch College in 1948 and her Ph.D. at Radcliffe College in 1956. Before moving to Princeton, she had been teaching at the University of Chicago since 1960. Her distinguished career as an ethnographer began when she was a doctoral student focusing on kinship and social organization. Her two years of research in Java (1952-54) resulted in the pathbreaking book *The Javanese Family* (1961). She later co-authored *Kinship in Bali* (1978) with her then husband Clifford Geertz; the book notably introduced the concept of culture into studies of kinship organization. Her research in Morocco in the 1960s appeared in *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society* (1979), co-authored with Clifford Geertz and Princeton colleague Lawrence Rosen.

Over the next two decades, Hilly vigorously pursued her fascination with various forms of Balinese art and she produced a marvelous trilogy of books. *Images of Power* (1995) is based on the paintings that local artists made in Batuan for anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, who had famously worked there in the 1930s. In 2004, she published *The Life of a Balinese Temple: Artistry, Imagination, and History in a Peasant Village*; and at the age of 90, she published *Storytelling in Bali* (2017). Throughout her career, Hilly's fieldwork was regarded as thorough and deeply insightful, marked by human warmth and great respect for her interlocutors.

Hilly Geertz was instrumental in establishing Princeton's Anthropology Department as the discipline's hotspot for a new subfield of symbolic anthropology, while also anchoring securely in place its enduring commitment to ethnographic ways of knowing. As a pioneering woman chair (1973-1978), Hilly helped the department navigate a difficult period of faculty departures, while strengthening its methodological and theoretical commitments together with talented newly hired colleagues. A wonderful citizen of the University, Hilly participated in numerous committees and served as Anthropology's acting chair in 1987-1988. Throughout her time at Princeton, Hilly's profoundly ethnographic approach to the arts inspired creative experimentation with storytelling, visual ethnography, and artistic exhibitions, which continues to energize the department to this day.

A month before her passing, Jeffrey Himpele, Director of Anthropology's VizE Lab for Ethnographic Data Visualization, and Carol Zanca, the department's Manager, visited with Hilly at her home in Princeton for a documentary on the 50th anniversary of Anthropology at Princeton. At the age of 95, Hilly Geertz was welcoming and engaged as ever. She spoke proudly about chairing the Department in its earliest years, and she beamed while reminiscing about her dear colleagues and the many students she caringly mentored throughout her life.

Hildred Geertz is survived by her son Benjamin and her daughter Erika and her children Andrea and Elena.

Mister President: We move that this Resolution be spread on the records of the Faculty; that a copy be sent to her son Benjamin Warren Geertz, her daughter Erika Geertz Reading, her brother Warren C. Storey, her granddaughters Andrea Geertz Martinez and Elena Maria Martinez, her nephew Fred Storey, and to the Archivist of the University.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jeffrey D. Himpele

Lecturer in Anthropology and Director of the VizE Lab for Ethnographic Data Visualization

Rena Lederman

Professor of Anthropology

João Biehl

Susan Dod Professor and Chair of Anthropology