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Letter from the Editor

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

WITH THIS issue, *Sign Language Studies* (*SLS*) resumes publication under the auspices and ownership of Gallaudet University Press. This represents, in effect, a homecoming for a unique scholarly journal that was born and flourished under the care of an equally unique human being—William C. Stokoe. Most readers of *SLS* will by now be aware that the homecoming is bittersweet. It was my wish to hand Bill the first copy of the new *SLS*, but now, sadly, that will not be possible. Bill died on April 4, 2000, as he had wished—at home and in the presence of his family—just as this issue was going into final production. The first piece in the issue was to have been a commentary by Bill, but it is now the second, following a statement of appreciation for Bill's life by Sherman Wilcox.

The assertion that *SLS* has come home requires some qualification. *SLS* was never previously owned by Gallaudet—Bill owned and published it himself for most of its history. However, Bill began the journal in 1972 while he was a faculty member and director of the Linguistics Research Lab at Gallaudet. Those wanting a full history of the journal should consult Jane Maher's excellent biography of Bill, *Seeing Language in Sign* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1996), or Bill's own forthcoming memoir, *Language in Hand* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press).

Bill himself took all the risks and deserves all the credit for bringing forth and sustaining a journal that both created and then defined a field of scholarship; but, given his long association with Gallaudet, we are especially proud to have *SLS* here and to be able to return it to regular publication. We will continue Bill's tradition of publishing a wide range of original scholarly material relevant to signed languages and signing communities. Moreover, we will continue his tradition of providing a forum for the dissem-

ination of important ideas and opinions concerning these languages and communities, even when these ideas are controversial. Bill's commentary in this issue is very much in that tradition, and it can only be described as vintage Stokoe.

David F. Armstrong