

Henry Fischbach

IN MEMORIAM: JAVIER L. COLLAZO
1918 - 2003



Javier L. Collazo, ATA Charter Member and Prominent Terminologist, is dead at 85

Javier L. Collazo, an ATA Charter Member and recipient of the Gode Medal, died of heart complications on September 20, 2003, after several months of illness. His friends and colleagues, some of whom have known him for more than half a century as an eminent technical translator, editor and author of specialized dictionaries, were shocked by his loss.

Javier L. Collazo was born in Baire (Oriente Province), Cuba in 1918. He started his technical career in 1937 with a certificate of Telegrapher, and soon earned a diploma as Radiocommunications Technician from the *Academia Oficial de Comunicaciones* in Cuba. While attending the School of Engineering at Havana University, he joined the Cuban Wireless Corporation (Inalámbrica), where he later became Chief Radio Operator and Technical Director. This led to the position of Technical Supervisor for the Havana Bureau of the United Press and, from 1947 to 1951, to Traffic Manager for the Radio Corporation of Cuba (Cubaradio).

In 1951, Mr. Collazo came to the United States and started work as a Spanish-English technical translator for International General Electric, where he soon became the associate editor of *Dial*, a bilingual magazine of electronics. It was at this time that he embarked on his life-long exploration of the problems of English-Spanish technical terminology, for which he was to receive the distinguished Gode Medal from the American Translators Association.

Over the next quarter century, while he was Editor of the ITT *Revista Internacional* and later, as Manager of Translation Services at RCA, which he joined in 1954, he assembled a massive collection of hundreds or thousands of file cards culled from his far-flung correspondence with technical editors in the Spanish-speaking world. This evolved into what was to become his monumental 3-volume, 2,300-page *English-Spanish, Spanish-English Encyclopedic Dictionary of Technical Terms* published by McGraw Hill in 1980. In 2001, his *Dictionary of Information Science, Computing and Other Subjects* in two volumes was published. Both of these major works have become valuable tools for the Spanish technical translator.

In January 1992, when asked by Vivian Isaak in an interview with the *Gotham Translator* (later reprinted in the *Chronicle*) "How does a lexicographer deal with the variety of usage in Spanish-speaking countries," Javier Collazo explained:

"I discarded expressions clearly improper from either the technical or the linguistic viewpoint. As a general rule, the various equivalents of a semantic group are given in order of preference on the basis of factors such as brevity, clarity, univocal correspondence, definition value, etc. Besides, concrete guidance is supplied by means of classifying labels, explanatory notes, usage cues, etc. ... The most important of the labels... are those of *localismos*. Under these labels we supply terms that do not belong properly in the standard or international Spanish technical vocabulary, but are peculiar to a country or a few countries." He added by way of caution: "A translator working into Spanish in the United States

should avoid *localismos*, in particular if the translation is intended for international or multinational use."

In addition to his membership in ATA, which he highly prized, Javier L. Collazo was a life member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the *Publicistas y Traductores Hispanoamericanos* (PTH), and the *Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española* (ANLE).

Jay Collazo is survived by his wife, Flor, and children, to whom the American Translators Association extends its warmest sympathies. His contributions fill all of ATA with pride. The Spanish translation community is especially saddened by his passing.

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