

## Statement on the death of Miriam Balmuth, Classics Department

Read by R. Bruce Hitchner, Department of Classics at the Arts, Sciences and Engineering Faculty Meeting on May 18, 2005

Professor Miriam S. Balmuth, Research Professor in Classics and Art History, passed away on June 30, 2004 at her home in Santa Fe, NM. Professor Balmuth joined Tufts' Department of Classics first as a teaching assistant in 1962, and then as an Assistant Professor of Classics in 1964. From 1966-1967 she served as one of the core Classics faculty at the Tufts in Italy program. She went on in 1969 to become one of the first women to receive tenure in the Classics Department. She was promoted to Full Professor of Classics and Archaeology in 1977 and in 1990 was made Professor of Classics, Archaeology and Art History.

Professor Balmuth was the driving force behind the creation of a formal, interdisciplinary Archaeology Program at Tufts. She was named its Director in 1981, serving in that capacity until 1995. The program she forged was, and is, truly interdisciplinary, uniting areas of history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, chemistry, geology and physics in order to produce students who understand all of the intricacies of the field of archaeology.

She was also the pivotal force behind the graduate program in Classical Archaeology and even after becoming Research Professor in 1998, she continued to actively mentor graduate students and involve them in her research.

She was a dedicated teacher and advisor who developed strong relationships with her students, both graduate and undergraduate. She truly cared about her students and looked at them as future colleagues to be mentored and nurtured in their intellectual development. Her own research was always a key aspect in her classroom teaching and her advising. She inspired generations of students to pursue careers in Classics and/or Archaeology and often included them in her own cutting edge research. In the 1970s and 1980s she spearheaded groundbreaking excavations in Sardinia, leading the first American expedition in 1975 and essentially opening up the field of Sardinian archaeology to international scholarship.

In 1992 at a banquet held in her honor, Professor Balmuth was presented with a *Festschrift* on Sardinian archaeology entitled Sardinia in the Mediterranean-A Footprint in the Sea: Studies in Sardinian Archaeology Presented to Miriam S. Balmuth (Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology) with 41 essays representing the work of 53 scholars from seven countries, including former students who had worked with her in Sardinia.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw her focus her research on hacksilber, culminating in 2001 with the publication of Hacksilber to Coinage: New Insights into the Monetary History of the Near East and Greece, which she contributed to and edited. The book was described by D. T. Potts (University of Sydney) in a recent review in the American Journal of

Archaeology as "an extremely interesting collection of essays in this beautifully produced volume that will be of interest to a diverse body of scholars with numismatic, metallurgical, archaeological, historical, and philological interests. There is much food for thought in this volume, and not a little controversy."

Throughout the 1990s Professor Balmuth also involved herself in the exploration of volcanoes and the landscape and materials they produce, as well as the classical writings they inspired. Three international conferences were held on the topic, and the proceedings from those conferences were published in late 2004.

Miriam Balmuth had an iron will and refused, throughout her life, to ever give up or give in when faced with, at times, difficult challenges. She received her Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology from Harvard in 1964 during a period when female doctoral candidates, particularly in archaeology, were few and far between. She went on to thrive in the field of archaeology, building an international reputation, at a time when most of the leading archaeologists were male. All the while, she managed a successful 55-year marriage to her husband Norman (who passed away in 2001) and raised two sons.

She was a trailblazer, both in her scholarship and in her career at Tufts, never content to follow the pack or accept the status quo, never afraid to face controversy if she believed her view to be right, always looking to move forward and to open new doors of inquiry and analysis.

She will be greatly missed.

*Be it resolved that this resolution be spread on the minutes of the faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering and that a copy be handed to Professor Balmuth's family members, as designated.*