



2023 Honored Alumni Lecture: Barry Slaughter Olsen

by Emma Rostrom (Editing and Publishing '24)

Successful careers evolve through a conglomerate of experiences and hard work, as exhibited by the decades-long interpreting career of Barry Slaughter Olsen (Spanish Translation and Russian '95). During the annual Honored Alumni lecture on October 19, 2023, Olsen shared stories from his experience working as a translator for national and international business and government leaders.

Olsen explained that interpreting and other language-related fields require flexibility and pragmatism, especially in a changing world of technology. He then shared specific experiences from his career that exemplify these traits.

For instance, he recounted a time when adaptability and persistence enabled him to successfully hold an interpreting conference in Mexico City just two weeks after a formidable earthquake hit. Facing many unknowns, Olsen and his team moved forward with the conference and created a great event that provided training and networking opportunities for interpreters of indigenous languages in Mexico. Helping attendees learn skills and make connections became one of the most satisfying moments of his career.

Above all, Olsen stressed the importance of interpretation work and other language-related fields, saying, "I have a deep belief that when people can truly understand one another, then they can live in peace with greater ease." He encouraged BYU faculty and students to always put in effort, seek guidance from the Lord, and be ready to make mistakes and accept course correction when necessary.

Each college at BYU selects an alum to honor for their life of service and accomplishment during the annual BYU Homecoming week. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/honoredalumni2023.



2023 James L. Barker Lecture: Jennifer Bown

by Emma Farnsworth (Editing and Publishing '23)

Chair of the department of German & Russian, Professor Jennifer Bown (Russian Language Pedagogy and Linguistics) received the 2023 Barker Lectureship. She presented to the College on October 26, 2023, describing how the relationship between language and identity can lead either to discrimination or to connection.

Bown shared some of her own experiences seeing the interactions between language, identity, and power, including some from her mission to the Baltic states shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union. She saw the dynamics between those who spoke Russian natively and those who had experienced oppression from the Soviet Union and wanted to know how language can be used to foster belonging or create exclusion.

Her research seeks to understand how ethnic affiliation affects language use amongst the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltics, which has become increasingly relevant since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Bown implored her listeners to "consider how immigrants to this country might feel and what barriers they might face because they don't speak English . . . Use language as a tool for belonging, not as a tool for exclusion."

The annual Barker lecture honors faculty who have shown research excellence in the fields of linguistics, language studies, or translation. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/barkerlecture2023.



2023 Todd A. Britsch Lecture on Citizenship: Marie Orton

by Rylin Green
(Editing and Publishing '24)

As Professor Marie Orton (Italian Language and Culture) shared, even our best attempts to serve do not always work out. She recounted a story of bringing bread to a sick coworker, only to discover that he had Celiac disease. On November 16, 2023, Orton shared experiences like this one that have taught her about how service enriches our lives and helps us understand grace.

Orton emphasized that service facilitates change and transforms us as much as it transforms the person we serve. When Orton taught a class of junior high students, she received a letter from one student's parent, thanking her for her hard work. Orton had previously believed that the student did not care about the class, so this expression of gratitude changed her perspective on the value of her efforts.

As King Benjamin taught, we serve not to thank others for serving us, but to be more like God and to show gratitude for the gift of the Atonement, for which we can never repay (see Mosiah 2).

Orton concluded that one of the aims of a BYU education is forging a dedication to lifelong learning and service. Orton said, "I'm convinced that our value as a university is dependent upon our capacity to live together in charity." ❏

The College awards this lecture to faculty who exemplify the legacy of service and citizenship that humanities professor Todd A. Britsch left. To watch this lecture, go to bit.ly/britsch2023.