

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Mona Tobin Houston
(1935-2021)

Mona Tobin Houston, 85, passed away January 15, 2021, in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. She was born May 20, 1935 in New York City to Irving and Zella (Galsky) Tobin. She attended the High School of Music and Art, where she performed in opera productions at an early age. She majored in French and Italian at Barnard College, and earned a Ph.D. in French literature at Yale University. While at Yale, she fell in love with John Porter Houston, a fellow graduate student in the French department. After marrying in Paris, they came to Bloomington in 1962 to join the faculty of Indiana University's Department of French and Italian. At IU, she taught courses in seventeenth-century French drama, phonetics, and translation. Many of her students were devoted to her and still cherish their memories of her today.

Houston was a member of the American Literary Translators Association and translated several plays as well as a well-received anthology of French Symbolist poetry, translated and co-edited with her husband. She also co-authored an important French grammar textbook with several IU colleagues. She combined her musical training with her knowledge of the French language to develop a course in French pronunciation for singers for the School of Music and was a sought-after coach for performers in the IU Opera Theater.

Houston's passion for theater extended beyond her teaching: she was very involved in Bloomington Town Theater, including serving as its president as well as directing and performing in numerous productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas and other plays. She also received research funding to study productions at several professional theatres in Paris and Washington, DC, which had a huge impact on her work with students and singers, as well as enriching her own performances. She performed with the Early Music Institute and coached the Concord Ensemble. She also translated and produced two plays by Molière for the John Waldron Arts Center.

Houston was known as a compelling teacher and storyteller, inspiring people well beyond the formal classroom. She was active in the Elm Heights Neighborhood Association, including serving a term as its president. She enjoyed cooking, playing the piano, and reading mystery novels. She loved her family, friends, and cats.

Her love of beauty and her vibrant personality remained intact into her later years, even as dementia diminished her capacities.

Mona Tobin Houston was preceded in death by her dear husband, John Porter Houston (1987) and her beloved son, Jeremy Daniel Houston (2003). She is survived by her daughter, Natalie M. Houston of Newton, Massachusetts and her spouse, Bunny Parkerson; as well as her brother, Dr. Jordan Tobin of Cleveland, Ohio and his wife Jeanne and their children and grandchildren.

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