NICK HOPKINS and KATHRYN JOSSERAND

Interviewed March 10, 2005, at the home of David and Elaine Schele, Austin, Texas

Linguists Nick Hopkins and his wife, the late Kathryn Josserand (she died in 2006, a year after this interview) have devoted most of their careers to the study of the modern Maya languages of Mexico and Guatemala. In addition to their fieldwork, they were professors of anthropology at Florida State University and taught workshops on Maya hieroglyphics around the world. Josserand's analysis of the "discourse structure" of modern Maya storytelling contributed to our understanding of the poetic construction of ancient Maya texts.

In this interview they discuss:

- **Their entry into linguistic fieldwork among the Maya**
- **Their experience of Linda Schele's early hieroglyphic workshops at Austin**
- **Their concentrated work on Chol Maya as the modern Maya language that might provide the best clues to the structure and vocabulary of ancient Mayan Grammatical parallels between modern Chol and the ancient language of the hieroglyphs**
- **Collaborations with David Stuart and Linda Schele**
- **Discourse structures in Maya storytelling**
- **The origins of the Maya hieroglyphic workshops in Guatemala.**

Interview transcript

Their entry into linguistic fieldwork among the Maya

Q: So I want to go back to the early days of your becoming linguists and specifically when you began <inaudible>. And can you talk a little bit about that in terms of your experiences at it and how <inaudible>. What do you do?

Kathryn Josserand: I think you're in for about an hour.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, this is lecture No. 1 in the introductory essay. Yeah. No, well, I got into linguistics coming out of a college career in physics and mathematics, as a matter of fact. I grew up at Texas A&M. My father was a zoology professor, so I went to college there. And I was into science, so I was going to be a physicist. And somewhere around my junior year, I decided I really was much more interested in languages than in physics labs. So I tried to get out of that. And I ended up graduating with a math degree. And I came over here to the University of Texas and took what was then just a graduate program in linguistics. This is before there were any departments of linguistics, actually. It was a multi-departmental program. And so I started taking linguistics courses. And I had been going to Mexico to study Spanish in the summers, and one summer I went down. And the guy said, “Well, we've got this special program on this summer. It's a Maya studies program. We've got four courses going in Maya studies. maybe you'd be interested in that.” So I said, “Well, sure, what's Maya?” He said, “Well, you know, it's just stuff from southern Mexico.” So I stepped into a set of four courses which had one professor teaching the Maya language, Yucatec, one professor teaching the archeology of La Venta and the Maya, one professor teaching the colonial documents. That was the Barrerra Vásquez. Well, it was -- let's see. It was Moisés Romero on language, [César] Lizardi Ramos on archeology, [Alfredo] Barrera Vásques on the Chronicles. And there was a fourth course, which was on -- oh, it was Lizardi Ramos on the hieroglyphs. So, I had my first course in Maya hieroglyphics the summer of 1959 in Mexico City, Mexico City College. And so I got interested in the Maya. All of a sudden I had the whole package. I have the history; I have the archeology; I have the language. I had the hi[eroglyphs] -- you know, at that time, of course, it was Thompson's hieroglyphs, I mean, the calendar and not much more. So, when I came back up here to finish my master’s degree, I thought I would go to work on Maya. And sure enough, I got hired out of a summer course by Norman McQuown with the University of Chicago, and he took me down to the Chiapas program. And for the next two years I did fieldwork on Tzotzil.

Mac would assign people different areas according to their personal situations and married couples with children...

Kathryn Josserand: Since Nick was a bachelor, he got sent out way out into the boonies.

Nick Hopkins: Married couples with children would be put in civilized places. And I was an expendable bachelor, so I got sent out to the extreme north Tzotzil area where, I mean, it was great. Then I came back here and finished that up and then I got invited to go up to the University of Chicago and do a PhD with McQuown. And for my dissertation, again, I got sent to the remotest area of Guatemala, up in the Cuchumantans, San Mateo Ixtatán, to do my research there. And so I did a year in Huehuetenango working on Chuj, which no one else has ever worked on since, basically. And then I went back, finished up my degree and came down here to Austin to teach at the University of Texas. And my first courses were taking students through books on -- through teaching manuals on Yucatec Maya and then on K'ichee'. And then I had made up a course on Chuj, and I trained a bunch of Mayan linguists here, etc. And then we got married, a couple of years later, moved to Mexico City to work, and for probably the next...

Kathryn Josserand: Eight years, five to seven years.

Nick Hopkins: Eight years, we didn't work on Mayan at all.

Kathryn Josserand: We didn't work on Mayan at all. I had started working on Yucatec when I was a graduate student. But I just sort of didn't keep it up for various reasons. But when we went to live in Mexico City, we wanted to work on a language that was closer to Mexico City. So there weren't any Mayan languages there. So we worked on Oto-Manguean languages which were very under-worked. And that was great. And we continued to work on those as well. But we got back into Mayan because of Linda, really. And I don't know whether we should go into this now.

Q: No, actually, starting with Nick and talk about the initial questions when you go into an area and you're doing -- what is the process? You go into the actual village and work there? What happens?

Nick Hopkins: Yeah. What descriptive linguistics is all about is just sort of basic documentation. I mean, you're not doing anything really theoretical. You're trying to get the patterns of the language down, registered. You may be doing dictionary work. You may be doing grammar analysis. You may be doing phonological stuff. You're probably

doing all of these things, but yes. What you basically do is you go in and set up a relationship with a speaker of the language in some situation where, you know, you can actually get some work done. And you work intensively, usually with one person. Well, for my dissertation I hired a Chuj speaker [Francisco Santizo Andrés] that was recommended to me by the local priest, who used to do translations for the priest. And he was fluent in Spanish and very sharp. And we started working together on a trial basis for about a month. And then we both decided that we liked the work, and he stayed with me for a little over a year. And basically, we worked an eight-hour day, six days a week, office work. I would ask him to dictate a tape, a story, tell me a story, tell me about something, we would record that, and then we'd work on transcription. I would teach him how to write the language. He was already -- he was very sharp. He picked it up very fast. And he would sit and transcribe the tapes for me. And then we were going to discuss them and pick out stuff we wanted to work on, and find the verbs and conjugate the verbs and, you know, and get the other words in this semantic domain. Here's a word for something and a kinship term, what are the other kinship terms and so on. You basically just grind your way through collecting all the material you can that demonstrates the phonological system of the language, the grammatical system of the language, the lexicon of the language, and all this stuff. You put all this stuff together and it's basic documentary work. I mean, you're not making theoretical inroads. This stuff may be interesting theoretically, but you're there to set up the data that the theoreticians would be analyzing, in our kinds of study. So it involves a lot of people-on-people work, which is what had really attracted me, I think, to linguistics, because you're working with people very intensively. And I think actually that linguists, among anthropologists, probably work as closely with individual people as any other kind of anthropologist. I mean, social anthropologists generally have a number of informants they're working with. They know people. They become part of the village. Linguists are working very intensively with single people, day after day. You really get to know people. You really get to know about what they, you know, what they think about things and so forth, because you take breaks and you have all kinds of, you know, bull sessions and so on. I mean, you really get to know people very intimately. But what you're doing is you're producing a descriptive package. And that usually consists of a grammar, a set of texts, and a dictionary or some version of that whole thing. So, McQuown taught us to do this in the best possible way. He said, "You know, we're linguists. We have the luxury of not having to live in the village." Language is in people's heads. You can get your informant out of the village to work somewhere where you have electricity and you can record. And you have, you know, decent surroundings. And that separates you from all the problems of working in a village. You're in a village, you can't get more than 15, 20 minutes alone with somebody. You know, people, they're involved in life. And people are interrupting, and they have to go off and run an errand, somebody comes in,

takes them away. And Mayas in Guatemala, and Chiapas for that matter, too, are used to going away from home for six months or a year to work in the plantations. And so their family structure is all set up for that. It's very easy to do. So, you hire somebody, you take them someplace else, and you work very intensively with them. So, that's what we do. Now, that's one kind of work. Then we did a lot of... <crew talk>

Q: Kathryn, can we talk a little bit about how you got into linguistics? And my understanding, I remember your description of it is that, you know, you feel that he got in on more of the descriptive side and you came much more in the...

Kathryn Josserand: I have a little story before that. When I went to graduate school, I wanted to be an archaeologist. And I went to Tulane to study Maya archeology, and I thought that that was the way that I could learn about hieroglyphs. So I used to study Thompson's Catalog all the time. I mean, all you could learn at that point it seemed to me were the glyphs for the time periods and the months and the days and so forth. And this was back in short skirt days, the late 60's. And I would wear my short skirts. And every morning I'd take my eyebrow liner and draw a glyph on each knee so that all day I could be looking at my knees and learning my glyphs.

Nick Hopkins: A lot of people learned glyphs that way.

Kathryn Josserand: So my nickname was "the girl glyph." And I had a friend who was "the girl archaeologist." Well, that was all very well and good, but back in those days there was still a lot of prejudice against women in archeology. And I think Mesoamerica was particularly bad and continues to a certain extent to have that prejudice. But anyway, I was good at being a teaching assistant. And they hired a new linguist who was a generative linguist. This was a new theory of how to study language, not the descriptive linguistics of listening to people speak and describing the words and so forth, but rather trying to study how people create new sentences, what are the underlying structures in language, and how can you study this from the speaker's point of view rather than from the hearer's point of view -- very different, created a great rift in linguistics, in anthropology, and has had continuing impact on the field. But anyway, they needed a T.A., teaching assistant, for this new professor. And so I became his assistant, not because I was interested in linguistics, but because I was good at being a teaching assistant. And he was very engaging, Marshall Durbin, very exciting, full of ideas, and he had a new textbook. And there were lots of assigned problems in the textbook, but there was no pony, there was no key, no answers. So I had to solve all the problems a week ahead of them being assigned to students. And I would do that on my own and then I would meet with Marshall and we would work out all the solutions. And I got to be really adept at that, very good at this kind of abstract analysis of the underlying structures

of language. Years later, when I -– well, it wasn't that many years later, I guess, actually, it was a year or so later -- I met Nick at a professional meeting in Pittsburgh. And he gave a paper on positionals, adverbials of motion in Mayan languages, which are these special words that you can use in a sentence that tell you how the action is being done. For example, you can be walking standing up or you can be walking kind of hunched over, or you can be walking sort of leaning sideways or squatting. And he was acting all of these things out. So I thought, this is pretty strange, but he's a Mayanist, and my professor had said go to this meeting, find people who are giving papers on Mayan languages, and meet them and ask for bibliography. So, I called him up, his room, after he had given the paper and asked to speak to Nick Hopkins. And some other male answered the phone, and turned and said, "Hey, Nick, it's for you. It's a girl." So we met in the cash bar. And that was the beginning of our interaction. And a few years later, we married, and a year or so after that, we went to Mexico to work. We had both independently been working on Mayan languages. But when we went to Mexico, we started working on a family of languages called Otomonguean, which are languages that are located in central Mexico. So it was going to be easier to train students and have them go out into the field and work with real living speakers of languages, not just bookwork. So that was fine. And our two kinds of linguistics turned out to be very useful for that. Unfortunately, when we first got married, we found that we could not talk about linguistics because our two upbringings in linguistics were really diametrically opposed to each other. And as soon as we started talking, we would get into fights. And then there would be these strained silences. So, we sort of didn't do much linguistics for the first couple of years of our marriage until we went to Mexico. Then it turned out that what he could do, which was write down these strange sounds of these languages -- and these languages really did have strange sounds, like sequences of glottal stop, m, vowel. Now, that's hard to figure out how to pronounce.

Nick Hopkins: And let's not even try.

Kathryn Josserand: And we won't even try to do it. But you can do it. And then it also turned out that my way of analyzing things at a more abstract level worked well with these languages as well, because the way that the words are formed on the surface obscures what the real base forms of the words are. So together, our two ways of approaching this problem from opposite ends worked very well. And that's how we started working together on languages again.

Q: Could you give an example of that? I think I have a fairly clear idea of what makes describing less clear. If you could maybe give a comparison of how you both come at the

same thing or how those two would complement one another, what your method would be.

Kathryn Josserand: Let me try this a little bit before I get started. I need to talk about how words change their shape in different environments. And it's hard because we don't have very much of that in English. Well, in language, a lot of times words take different shapes according to where they fall in the sentence, or what sounds are around them. We don't have a lot of differences like that. But, for example, when we form the plural of nouns, certain words, we say the plural is an s, "add an s." But if you add an s to some words, it doesn't sound like an s. If you say cat, and you say cats, that's an s, but if you say dog, and dogs, that's a "z" [sound]. And if you say rose, and pluralize it, it's roses. That's an "iz" [sound]. So those are three different ways that that word, the plural piece of our nouns can sound. In some languages -- and this was particularly true of Otomonguean languages -- the shapes of words just got really different from one form to the next. The first student that we sent out to work on a language, Mazahua, this was Mariscela Amador. And we said, "Go out and get someone to conjugate a verb: I run, you run, he runs." And she came back with her data, and we were working on our kitchen table. And she had these forms. There was not any single word that looked like the other words. Each one had two different consonants and one vowel that was the same. They were consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel, each one. I run, you run, he runs. But the first consonant was different in all three words. The second consonant was different in all three words. The last vowel was different in all three words. Only the first vowel was the same. And we said, "Look, Mariscela, the idea is to use the same verb. You want to say, I run, you run, he runs, not I run, you walk, he sees." She said, "No, that's what it is. This is how it is." So this is what we call morphophonemic variation of forms. That is, the shape, the morph, of words, and phoneme, the sound of words, varies according to how you're conjugating the verb.

Nick Hopkins: Basically, what I would be doing with that would be getting the sounds down and make sure that we have all the sequence of the sounds right and then, you know, getting the data correct. And what Kathryn would be doing would be doing the analysis to figure out what kind of underlying stuff is there that could be behind all these different forms and what are the rules for getting from that underlying structure to the surface.

Kathryn Josserand: So the generative grammar theory worked more on what you would call underlying forms, more abstract representations of words. And when we were able to think of words as having some kind of base form, then when you put the first person pronoun on them, they changed the first consonant. And so that meant then that

the first person and second person and third person were all affecting the first consonant of the word.

Nick Hopkins: But it's the difference between looking at what's called surface structure and surface phenomena, which is what I'm trained to work from, what the hearer hears and how the hearer analyzes what he hears. And that's the descriptive approach. Kathryn's is from the generative approach and it's what the speaker has in mind and how that gets converted to the sounds that are conveyed to the hearer. We're coming at this problem from two different ends, right?

Kathryn Josserand: That's not much of a problem in Mayan, fortunately.

Nick Hopkins: No, Mayan's not at all…..

Kathryn Josserand: And so when we got back to work on Mayan, we had already resolved our difference of how to work with languages.

Q: Let me talk about your first encounters with really working with the hieroglyphic system. I know you'd both read Thompson…

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, dissertation topic.

Q: With Kathryn it was [a dissertation] experience. So Kathryn had the experience of being assigned to work with comparing Yucatec and then the hieroglyphs using the [inscriptions]. And Nick, you had the experience of being assigned to transcribe all of [Knorosov] and translate it.

Nick Hopkins: Well, that was a term paper I did, yeah. But Kathryn's dissertation topic was a classic. This was Marshall Durbin's first PhD student.

Kathryn Josserand: I was his first PhD student.

Nick Hopkins: He really didn't have at that time an idea. I mean, Marshall's a very dynamic person. Marshall may have been able to do this project. But the project was to go to Yucatán and learn the hieroglyphic writing, learn the Yucatec language, and then compare the two.

Kathryn Josserand: Well, he wanted me to write a grammar of Yucatec, to write a grammar of the hieroglyphs and then to compare the two. And I was innocent enough not to realize that I couldn't even write a grammar of Yucatec, much less a grammar of the hieroglyphs. The only hieroglyphic inscription that I had available to me in drawing

form was the three tablets of the [Temple of the] Inscriptions from Palenque, which is a very long text. Back then, we didn't have Xerox copiers. Can you remember life before Xerox copiers? Just coming in were these copiers called Thermofax. And when you made a copy on them it was on this kind of flimsy paper that fairly quickly got brittle and curled and turned brown and purple. The ink would become purple and the paper turned kind of a beige color. So I had two copies of this inscription, and really no instructions on how to deal with it. So I cut one copy up into what I would now call "glyph clips." Every glyph block I had a separate cutout for. And I would write on the back of it the position in the inscription that it corresponded to, and then I had my reserve copy so I could see where it went. But I didn't know what to do with these. And I was having about the same problem with the language. I was working on a part of the language that I thought I had under control, which was numeral classifiers. When we count things, we just count with numbers, you know, one bowl, two fingers, three ties, four people, whatever. But in Mayan languages, you have to specify what kind of thing it is that you're counting. Like, one long cylindrical thing, ear of corn; or six round things, oranges; or four four-legged animal things, cows. And so I was studying that. And I thought I had a good presentation of it, came back to Tulane, presented it to my professor. But there was a visiting Yucatec professor there teaching Yucatec that semester, and this was Moisés Romero.

Nick Hopkins: Happened to be there, right.

Kathryn Josserand: Right. An older fellow. And as far as he was concerned, there were only three classifiers in Yucatec: One for humans, one for animals, and one for things.

Nick Hopkins: Plants.

Kathryn Josserand: Okay. Maybe there were four.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, four, plants, and then everything else, yeah, right.

Kathryn Josserand: And so everything else, he just thought was not a classifier. He didn't understand what they were. He wasn't trained as a linguist. He was a Maya speaker. So he said no that wasn't right. And I appealed to my professor that it should be right. But he thought that he had to support the visiting professor. This was in my presentation. And so I got really put out about that, that I wasn't supported by my professor. And I said, "Fine, I'll just go do my dissertation on my own, the way I wanted to do it." But I never finished it before we married and then moved to Mexico City. And then it became increasingly difficult to work on Maya when we were living in Mexico

City and working on other languages. And I just sort of let it go. I had not been able to make much progress on hieroglyphs, even though by the time I was in graduate school, Tatiana Proskouriakoff had written her famous articles. I had very old professors who were not into hieroglyphs, and her materials were not really well received by the old school at first. So I didn't really know anything about this. I had not learned about it at the time that it came out. And it was only later that I began to read about it and realize that I could have made more progress. But we were, as I said, working on other languages.

Their experience of Linda Schele's early hieroglyphic workshops at Austin

We still had a house in Austin and we would come up periodically to take care of the house or see how things were and also for R&R. I mean, living in Mexico is a different country. And we were in a situation where we really didn't have any English-speaking friends. We spoke Spanish all the time. We lived a Mexican life. And it was a vacation to come back up here and to talk English to everybody and to eat American food. I can remember as soon as we crossed the border, man, it was off to a Baskin-Robbins to get some ice cream. So, we saw a flier advertising this workshop on Maya hieroglyphic writing by Linda Schele at the University of Texas, Austin. And since our house was in Austin, we said, "Well, okay, let's go see if they know how to do anything now." And we came up here and went to either the second or the third; I'm not sure which.

Nick Hopkins: It was probably -- it may have been the first really public workshop.

Kathryn Josserand: No, it was not. It was either the second or the third one. But it was in the Hogg Auditorium, which was a very small auditorium. And there were a hundred and fifty people or so there, a lot of people who were students here and faculty from here and from elsewhere. And I remember that we were really just blown away, because here was this woman who was up there. She had these awful slides, reverse Kodak slides, black, line drawings where the lines were white and the background was black. So you had to kind of train yourself to look at what it was and to see the images. And, of course, looking in detail at hieroglyphs, it requires training your eye. We all joke about it when we're teaching neophytes now. You talk about, you know, when they come in, they look at an inscription and it's like a plate of spaghetti. And after they've had a day or so of instruction, then they begin to see doggy biscuits. So, you know, after you can see the doggy biscuits, then you can begin to think that perhaps these things make some sense and you can study them. So she was showing us all that. She was showing

how to look at the different parts of each glyph. And because Linda was an artist, she had an artist's eye, and she could see parts of things and see that same part in another glyph. She could see a glyph, and she could say, "Now, look, this is the same as that one, just turned sideways. What is this?" She could show you that it was the same thing turned sideways. And so she was saying, "These are the histories of kings, and we know what this means. We know that this particular glyph means 'to be seated as king.' But we'll never know the Maya word for that." And so, here we are, and Vicky Bricker, also in the audience, all Mayan linguists, and we know a lot of Mayan words for things like "to be seated." And we said, "Well, you know, there's two words in Ch'ol that it could be. One would be *chum,* and the other one would be *b'uch*. And those are two words for 'to be seated.' So it must be one of those two words." Well, she was very excited by that. And that was one of the amazing things about these early workshops. They still were the discovery phase for all of us, including Linda. And there was so much interaction between linguists who were just coming into this and the archaeologists who were having their eyes opened by this art person -- not even an art historian at that point, just a person who had become enamored of the art of Palenque and had fallen into the hands of Merle Greene-Robertson, and through Merle had met Kelly and a lot of other important people from that period. That was when Peter Matthews was a student of David Kelly's, and they had the very first Palenque Round Tables. So she sort of built off of that interest and was trying to get some training.

Nick Hopkins: Linda was very quick on picking up on things that she should know. And I remember that first workshop. She would say, "Well, you have a word for -- how do you know this?" We'd say, "Well, we work on Mayan languages. I mean, we've been working on languages for a long time." "Well, how about this? You know a word for that?" "Yeah. There's a couple of words for that." So she realized that we had this body of knowledge that she really ought to get into. So, she, you know, made the connection with us, and she'd come down to Mexico City.

Kathryn Josserand: And it was because of Linda then that we decided that somebody needed to work on Ch'ol.

Q: Before we get to that, let's get a little bit more about what those first workshops were like. And what was the atmosphere? What was Linda like when she was...

Kathryn Josserand: The first workshops, the first one that we attended, which was either the second or the third one, Linda was a madwoman. I mean, she's always been a madwoman, and since then. But it was really startling to have this woman up there just gesticulating wildly and so excited, so full of enthusiasm for what she could talk about. And I guess, really, the most important thing about Linda is that she shared. She wanted

people to know what she had learned. She just had this enthusiasm that she wanted people to enjoy with her what she was able to see. And there were people who were certainly Doubting Thomas attending these first workshops, sort of, okay, let's see this person trip over themselves, because there's a long history in hieroglyph studies of there being only an elite who knew everything. And other people would try to break in and make contributions and they would be sort of laid low, laid waste by the scholars.

Nick Hopkins: Thompson being the early…

Kathryn Josserand: Thompson was a great example of that, but I don't think he was the earliest one.

Nick Hopkins: No, no.

Kathryn Josserand: He was within our generation. There's the famous story of Tatiana Proskouriakoff's manuscript, the so-called historical hypothesis, which is hardly a hypothesis. It was actually the way things are, and that she had showed it to Thompson before it was published. And he read it and told her that he thought she was probably right but he was too far along in his career to make that change. And that I think he had worked very hard in the past to be the person who knew everything. His contemporary in a sense was Knorosov, the Russian scholar. And Knorosov had been proposing phonetic readings, phonetic decipherment of the hieroglyphs, which Thompson just did not believe could be done. And I think that whole issue was wrapped up in the Cold War competition between Russian and the West so that you had to put Knorosov down. Otherwise, Russian would be one-upping us.

Nick Hopkins: Well, I mean, Thompson had worked with Mayas for years. He'd worked on archaeology. He'd worked on ethnography. He knew something about the languages. He knew the colonial history. He knew all this stuff. Knorosov had never been out of Russia, had never read any Maya books, knew nothing about the language. I mean, it was just the difference in the kind of knowledge they had was just -- I mean, Thompson couldn't possibly have accepted that stuff. I mean, it's just crazy.

Kathryn Josserand: And this is not to denigrate Thompson. Thompson certainly made incredible contributions to Mayan decipherment. But, I think that it was and always will be the case that there is a certain elitism in scholarship, and that there is a certain feeling that the scholars know what's really going on. And there was a famous case in the United States, Benjamin Lee Whorf, who's quite well known in linguistics for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. And he dabbled in Mayan hieroglyphs, Mayan languages. And he had the idea that the hieroglyphs could be read phonetically, which was the correct idea, but his

decipherments were not correct. And Thompson, I think, was able to show that they were not correct, and cut him to shreds, basically threw out the baby with the bath water. So there is this history, then, of people being, oh, doubtful or, what's the word I'm looking for here?

Nick Hopkins: Rejecting the work of others.

Kathryn Josserand: Rejecting the contribution of people who are not already accomplished scholars in the field.

Q: You didn't find the Mayan meetings [like that] when you first came?

Nick Hopkins: No.

Kathryn Josserand: So when we got to the Maya meetings, I think in the audience there were a lot of people who thought that this person was going to make a fool of herself, or certainly she couldn't know what was going on, because we'd never heard of her before. She wasn't trained as an archaeologist. She wasn't trained as an art historian. She wasn't a linguist, not that anybody thought that linguists had a contribution to make at that time, which I don't think is true. Nick had already written an article about the fact that the inscriptions must be recording the Mayan language because they are from an archeological culture in the middle of an area where there had only been Mayan languages spoken as long as we know of. No other languages were really candidates. And so in ’69 or ’70...

Nick Hopkins: One of the Mexican meetings, 1966...

Kathryn Josserand: He wrote a little article about the fact that the inscriptions should be following Maya word order, which...

Nick Hopkins: The key to that was syntax.

Kathryn Josserand: The key to that was grammar, the word order in the sentence, which in Mayan languages is always the verb first followed by the object, followed by the subject. So in English, we say the subject first, then the verb, and then the object. We say, “The boy hit the ball.” But the Mayans would say, “Hit the ball the boy.” And so this was one of the propositions that Nick made.

Nick Hopkins: Well, actually, that was beyond my knowledge at that time, but I had the idea. Basically, the way you would resolve the question, which was: Is this a Mayan language? If so, which Mayan language is it? And how does the script system work? Is

it phonetic? Is it logographic? You know, how does it work? The key to that would be comparing the structures of the Mayan languages with the structures of those inscriptions. So it was the right idea, but no, I was not prepared to do that at that time.

Kathryn Josserand: And of course, this was Marshall's idea, too. Marshall Durbin, my professor, had gone to the same meetings that Nick had gone to in Mexico. Is this right?

Nick Hopkins: Yeah.

Kathryn Josserand: And that's right because we actually, our second meeting was at a 1966 meeting in Mexico City.

Nick Hopkins: Mexico City, right.

Kathryn Josserand: And that's another story that needs to be told, too, the Mexicans and their participation in decipherment.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, because no one writes, absolutely no one writes, about that period.

Kathryn Josserand: I've lost my track.

Q: We were starting to talk about the atmosphere at the meetings. What was the atmosphere of early workshops and what was Linda like?

Kathryn Josserand: All right -- the crazy woman. Well, these first workshops that were held here in Austin, where Linda was -- Linda was a protégé of Nancy Troike. I'm not sure how they hooked up. And I'm not sure why it was that Linda began coming over here to do the workshops. But later, it was a matter of her trying to get her degree. And so this sort of progressed as the years went on. But the early workshops she was still living and teaching in Mobile. And she would come over and do this little workshop. Little workshop? I mean, there were easily a hundred or a hundred and fifty people, mostly locals, but there were some people from elsewhere. And as I said, Linda was just so enthusiastic, and so anxious for people to know what she knew, and very accepting of audience participation. So, there was a lot of audience participation. People would ask questions. And people that thought they knew something would say what they thought they knew, and Linda was accepting of people's contributions so much more so than anyone else that I know still today. So, there was a feeling of collaboration. There was a feeling that when you came to these workshops you were going to learn a lot, but you also had a chance to put in your two cents, to let your knowledge be used by Linda and by other people in the way of decipherment, so that we all really felt like we were being involved in some way of this process of decipherment.

Q: You were involved in a long workshop?

Nick Hopkins: Well, there wasn't, the first one was just like a one-day, maybe two-day presentation over a weekend.

Kathryn Josserand: No, the first workshops were Saturday and Sunday. And this went on for a number of years. And people would come back over and over again. And Linda only did the inscriptions of Palenque at that point. She would do, like, just the Temple of the Cross or the Temple of the Sun. Each workshop, so you'd go over one inscription. Well, after about five years, the people who had been there every year wanted more. They didn't want just the beginners' workshop all over again. They wanted to be able to get their hands into this. So, there was some discussion. By this time, we were friends of Linda's and David's. Linda and I were the same age within a month. And we had our house here, and we would socialize with them when we were up here. And we had been participating in the short weekend workshop. And people began asking for a long workshop. And so Linda said, well, she just didn't feel like she could do that if we didn't help her. And so, we thought, well, okay, we can probably get away for a week every March from Mexico. We were working, but not at a university, so we didn't have a university schedule and we could take off time. So we began the first long workshop by each of us giving presentations. And I believe that Nick and I gave a couple of presentations on the Mayan languages themselves, which languages were Mayan languages, where they were located, what their characteristics were, and how they related to each other historically, so that you could understand why it was important to know more about Ch'ol and Yucatec, to understand the hieroglyphs, than just whichever Mayan language.

Q: And the long workshop?

Kathryn Josserand: The first of the long workshops were held up in the Institute of Latin American Studies, which was in the LBJ Building up on the hill. And there weren't any really large rooms. So we had a lecture room and Linda gave an orientation lecture and Nick and I each gave a couple of lectures. But the real fun part was we broke people down into small groups, three people each, and gave them a table out in the hall. And each group got an inscription, say the Temple of the Sun, or the Temple of the Cross, or the Temple of the Foliated Cross. And they had to cut their glyphs up into little pieces and lay them out on graph paper in order, but breaking them into sentences. And they would tape them down. And they had to do this together and decide together as a group which glyph was going to be the verb, and which was the subject, and what other kinds of things were in there. At this point they're all learning about distance numbers and time periods and long counts. That part they were sort of able to get fairly quickly,

but the rest of it was a little harder. Well, there was some really unusual pairings of people. <laughter> And we didn't know a lot of these people very well, and you know, we sort of grabbed three names and put them together. And there were some people that just almost could not stand each other that got put in the same group. And they had to work it out, <laughter> this weeklong session of working together. I think after the session they never spoke again, <laughter> but they did manage to get through this session. These were really great times, because there were not so many people, maybe twenty or twenty-five people at the most in the long workshops. So there was a lot of very much one-on-one work with them, Linda and Nick and I all working together. After a few years there were more people, mostly people who had been trained within this long workshop, who began helping. Ben Leaf was one of those people, and Janis Indrikis and Jerry Garing, who had a little more experience and I guess Linda sort of took them on as apprentices in a sense. But there were a lot of other people from that same period who participated. This housewife from Canada named Sandy Bardsley who now is Sandy Nobel, the director of FAMSI, and this other ex-nun from California, Martha Macri, who's now a very well known linguist and works on not only Maya hieroglyphs, but the Olmec, epi-Olmec writing as well. So, you know, we were all back there in the days when these people were just getting started, and it was a lot of fun to participate in that.

Nick Hopkins: Well, besides all those people that were professionals or became professionals, I mean there were all of the classic, now so-called amateurs. I mean the woman from south Texas, I can't remember her name now, the housewife who, you know, was a housewife. And she would come up every year and do the workshops. And she could glyph as well as anybody else. I mean it was just -- really the amount of information that people got out of the hands-on work was just really incredible. And the atmosphere there of course was -- this was not institutionalized, I mean we didn't have an institution. We were camped in the hallway of this classroom building. They had one seminar room that we could have a seminar in, but everybody else was up and down the halls. I mean we were making something out of nothing basically. I mean there was no structure to this thing. We just sort of worked it out --.

Kathryn Josserand: But it just kept getting bigger and bigger. And I guess we participated in it for three or four years. And then we were not able to participate for a number of years after that. And by that time it had moved from the Hogg Auditorium to the Art History Auditorium for the weekend workshop, and they began to get the studio art rooms in the Art building to have the long week workshop. And it just grew like Topsy.

Q: Were there original discoveries coming out of that process?

Kathryn Josserand: You know, at that point I think that most of the original discoveries were still on the level of Linda and Nick and I really profiting by what we were doing, working so closely with the texts and with these people. And I remember a really wonderful event where we had figured out that the Tablet of the Ninety-six Glyphs <laughter> is not only one of the most beautifully carved, inscribed texts in all of the hieroglyphic corpus, but when you lay it out you see the text structure, what we call the discourse structure, and that also is just one of the most beautiful structures of all of the texts. And each of the little episodes in the text opens with what's called a distance number that counts how much time has passed since the last event till the event that they're going to talk about in this episode. And so that would be introduced by a phrase that was basically so much time passed, so many days, so many months, so many years, so many scores of years. But in this text there was a little introductory phrase that varied with each different event. And the introductory phrase had a pair of words, what we call a couplet of words. You know, you probably remember these better than I do.

Nick Hopkins: Well, day and night, life and death, Imix and Ik, the moon and Venus.

Kathryn Josserand: Right, and water.

Nick Hopkins: Well, that was the Imix, Ik.

Kathryn Josserand: That was the Imix, Ik?

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, uh-huh.

Kathryn Josserand: So it would start with this little phrase, "Time passed like day follows night. Time passed like life follows death." And then it would say what was happening. So we by that time were really getting to where we could put quite a lot of Maya words to these texts, and Linda got it into her head that we should try to do a full transliteration--

Nick Hopkins: I'm not sure it was Linda. By that time there were so many people helping that had been around so much that we were kind of supernumeraries. I mean we didn't necessarily have to go around and work with each group, and there was a workshop when I found I didn't really have anything to do. So I took the thing back into-- I said, "Well, you know, we're getting pretty close to reading these things. Let me just see what we can do." And I laid it out and just started trying to a glyph-by-glyph reading of that inscription. And so then-- and by this time we had also gotten into Ch'ol, and so we knew quite a bit of Ch'ol, so --.

Kathryn Josserand: Well, and also a part of the long workshops was that at the end of the week, each table had to present to the rest of the group what they had found. So for a couple of years whoever had had the Ninety-six Glyphs got to do this wonderfully dramatic rendering, <laughter> "and time passed like life follows death", and one girl did it in Spanish. This was María Elena Bernal, who later became a graduate student of Linda's. And so we would get these attempts to put the Ninety-six Glyphs into different [European] languages, and Nick said, "Well, you know, let's try it in Ch'ol." So he worked out a transliteration of the Ninety-six Glyphs in Ch'ol, and at the end of the week then he got up and read that.

Nick Hopkins: Read that, yeah.

Kathryn Josserand: And it was a truly moving moment, the kind that makes the hair stand up on the backs of your arm. Well, we later then were also instrumental in getting Linda started working with the Maya Indians in Guatemala. And one of the first things that we did with them was this particular text. And reading it in Ch'ol, which was not the language that they spoke, not the Mayan language that they spoke, but so close that they could see that that could be done. And they were hot to trot. They wanted to do that.

Nick Hopkins: Oh, it's been done in every -- <laughter>.

Kathryn Josserand: It's been done in every Mayan language I'm sure.

Their concentrated work on Chol Maya as the modern Maya language that might provide the best clues to the structure and vocabulary of ancient Mayan

Q: Let's not go forward to that yet. But let's talk about, you know, after this workshop, the initial workshop period around 1978 I believe, you said you kind of as a result of that began decided to down to Palenque and began working--

Nick Hopkins: Oh, yeah.

Kathryn Josserand: Right. Well, after we had been to one of Linda's-- the first one that we went to, we realized that if anybody was going to translate this writing system into a Maya language, you had to know the Maya language. From years back, Thompson had proposed that the language that was probably closest related to the language of the hieroglyphs was the modern language Ch'ol. Because colonial descriptions placed Ch'ol speakers in the area where hieroglyphic inscriptions were written, and because there was

very little evidence for Yucatec speakers having been as far south as the Peten where most of the inscriptions are found. The problem was that there was tremendous amount of scholarship on Yucatec Maya and virtually nothing on Ch'ol Maya. So we thought, well we were sort of uniquely positioned to be able to do that. And from Mexico City we were able to mount a project of fieldwork in the Ch'ol area around Palenque. We went down there with a group of about ten students?

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, it was a bunch of students.

Kathryn Josserand: A field linguistics class and-- No, that's not what it was.

Nick Hopkins: That wasn't when we went down the first time. The first time we went down--

Kathryn Josserand: The first time we went down we went down because we had by then heard about the Round Tables in Palenque. And so we went to a Round Table in Palenque. And that must have been in 1978.

Nick Hopkins: 1978, maybe?

Kathryn Josserand: Yeah, 'cause that's the year that we started working on-- but we had already decided to work on Ch'ol. So we went to this Round Table meeting in Palenque, and we went to Merle's house, and we were staying upstairs in these little screened-in rooms above her house. We went a week ahead of time. And we were trying to find a speaker of Ch'ol to work with. <laughter> So we kept asking locals, you know, "Who could we work with?"

Nick Hopkins: We could find plenty of speakers of Ch'ol.

Kathryn Josserand: And we tried to work with them, but they couldn't speak Spanish. <laughter> So that made it extremely difficult. You know, you'd ask them for, "How do you say *perro*, dog?"

Nick Hopkins: They had no idea.

Kathryn Josserand: They had no idea what *perro* meant. <laughter> And we just kept getting nonsense answers. So then we said, "Well, we have to have somebody who knows more Spanish." And then they brought us this fellow who was supposedly tri-lingual who worked as an interpreter for different people. We worked with him for a little while. Well, he knew hardly any Ch'ol at all. So he knew Spanish but not Ch'ol. And we were really frustrated. And finally Merle says, "Well, why don't you work with

Chencho?" Chencho [Ausencio Cruz Guzmán] was this man, Nick's age, who had been working with her as an assistant when she was out working in the ruins. And he was just doing things like holding scaffolding, putting together scaffolding, or helping her with ladders, and things like that. I mean he was a jack-of-all-trades, a-- really good in construction. Chencho had been raised in a Ch'ol-speaking village. His father was Ladino, a Spanish speaker. He's not himself an Indian, but he was raised in this Indian village. And his mother died when he was very young, and so he had a Ch'ol-speaking nanny. And he learned to speak Ch'ol from all the children around him and his nanny, and he's a perfect bilingual in Spanish and in Ch'ol. And then he has a third language as well, Tzeltal. So she said, "Why don't you start working with him?" Well, we did and boy, we hit the jackpot. Because not only was he bilingual, able to deal with the Spanish and translate to the Ch'ol, but he also was interested in what we were doing. And he caught on pretty quickly to how we were trying to find words. We had a big word list, five hundred word list.

Nick Hopkins: Fifteen hundred word list we were trying to work our way through [Terry Kaufman's Mayan Vocabulary Survey list].

Kathryn Josserand: Oh, fifteen hundred word list. And we had a grammar questionnaire that had about five hundred sentences in it [Archivo de Lenguas Indígenas questionnaire]. And this is tedious work. You know, five or six hours a day of, "How do you say "The man walked into the street and saw a dog?" How do say "The man will walk into the street and will see a dog?" <laughter> How do you say "The man used to walk in the street and he used to see a dog?" Well, you just get to where you're kind of--

Nick Hopkins: This is the excitement of linguistics. <laughter>

Kathryn Josserand: The excitement of linguistics, right. Mind numbed. But we worked with Chencho and from there we began collecting stories. And it turned out that he was a master storyteller.

Nick Hopkins: Well, his father was a canoe master, a man who made dug-out canoes and sailed them up and down the Tulijá River. In his youth he used to take supplies from Salto de Agua upriver to the plantations and carry stuff, products and so on, back down. And he knew everybody up and down the Tulijá River. But periodically when Chencho was a kid they would be out in the jungle somewhere making a dug-out canoe with a half-dozen men, and they'd be out there camped for a couple of weeks while they cut the tree, and trimmed it, and so on. And what you do in that situation is you sit around in the evening and you tell stories. And so he had this incredible collection of stories from up and down the river from-- and he was a good-- he had learned to tell them in a really-- I

mean Mayas have a very good storytelling tradition. And we work with people from Oaxaca in central Mexico, and they tell a story and you say, "What was the point of that?" I mean there's nothing-- I mean it's just a series of events. OK, fine [catching a pro-Oaxaca glare from Kathryn]. <laughter> <inaudible>

Kathryn Josserand: Now, I think part of the problem was we were probably not asking for the stories at the right time of day. It turns out if you really want to get a good story you don't ask at ten o'clock in the morning, "Tell me a story." You ask at six o'clock in the evening when everybody's finished their work, and they've taken their bath, and they've had their lunch, and they're sitting around, and they're ready to chit-chat. And when we were working in Oaxaca we were usually out in the mornings doing our work. But with Chencho we would do our linguistic work all day, and then at the end of the day we'd sit around and maybe have a beer and say, "Well, how about a story? Do you know some stories?" And so he was in the mood. And he would tell these great stories. But also it is true that the Maya do have a wonderful tradition of storytelling. And people take pride in their linguistic virtuosity and being able to tell a story beautifully. And when we would ask Chencho to tell a story, usually he would say, "OK, I'll tell it to you tomorrow." And he would go home and think about the story and get it all straight in his mind, and then he'd come back and he'd tell this story. Well, tell a story, fine. And we'd sit down with him and we'd write out the translation, "Oh, this is a very interesting story. This is about the beginning of the world when the moon goddess was a woman, and she lived here, and she had a son, and he was kind of a mean guy, and then she had another baby, and he was a real smart guy." And we thought, "Wow, this is really interesting stuff. This is mythology about the creation of the world, where the animals come from, how the little boy became the sun. This is just really great stuff." Then as we began to work with it we began to see the rhythm of the lines. They don't rhyme in the same way that we use rhyme at the end of a line, we use--

Nick Hopkins: Things that sound alike.

Kathryn Josserand: Vowels that sound alike. But they use alliteration and they use--

Nick Hopkins: Structure.

Kathryn Josserand: Parallel structures. They'll use the same word but in a different form in two adjacent lines. And they have lots of these couplets, paired lines or triplets, three lines. When it's really exciting then you'll say the same thing three times in a row. And that helps the listener know that we're really at the peak event at that point. This is how I became involved in discourse analysis. And I was really impressed with the style of Chencho's telling and the really inherent structure in these stories. As we began to

record other people we found out that it wasn't just Chencho. That other people could tell the stories in the same way.

Q: That's fantastic. What I'd like to go back to is, you know, you talked about how Ch'ol was a language very undocumented. Why is that?

Kathryn Josserand: He can do that.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, I can speak to that, yeah. Because that--

Kathryn Josserand: I don't know what to do when you're talking. Can I sit back?

Nick Hopkins: You're supposed to gaze admiringly at me. I mean, you know, think of yourself as, you know, Nancy Reagan or something. Don't you dare!… <laughter> OK. Mayan languages as it turns out were very undocumented at the beginning of the twentieth century. I mean there was colonial material in K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Yucatec and a few other languages around**;** Tzeltal, Tzotzil, nobody knew much about. But there were no linguistic studies to speak of. Tozzer did a Maya grammar in the twenties and that was about it.

Kathryn Josserand: That's Yucatec Maya.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, Yucatec Maya in the twenties, virtually nothing else. So when things started moving in hieroglyphs and my professor, Norman McQuown, was interested in-- he was a Meso-Americanist basically. And he realized that the problem was you're not going to bring linguistic information to bear on the question of decipherment unless you have information on the Mayan languages. So he started a program in the late fifties, mid-fifties actually, of placing graduate students on different languages to do basic descriptive work. And he started in the late fifties, he had the first phase of the Chiapas project, he had guys doing work in Tzotzil, Tzeltal, the early sixties a continuation of that project, we had-- I guess '60 to '62 were the big years. We must have had a half dozen graduate student linguists working on different varieties of Tzotzil, Tzeltal. And then he would start putting people onto Tojolab'al, and he put me on Chuj, the second round, and he put someone else on another language. And he systematically placed the students over a twenty-year period to get basic descriptive work done on Mayan languages. And as soon as there was enough descriptive work, then historical linguists like Terry Kaufmann, who's a contemporary of mine, he was a couple years ahead of me in school I guess, but he was interested in comparison. He would pick up the descriptions and begin doing the comparative work.

Kathryn Josserand: Now the deal is though that these were all languages in Chiapas particularly, a little bit into Guatemala. But this was because of the programs during the 50s and 60s, the area studies programs, that were supported by the government. And there were three universities, Stanford, Chicago, and Harvard, that got together to do one of these regional area studies programs. And they chose Chiapas. I don't know why, but Evon Vogt picked this one village, Zinacantan, and all of his students worked there and they did just this really intense work on Tzotzil and the culture of the Tzotzil Indians of Zinacantan.

Nick Hopkins: A single village, yeah…

Kathryn Josserand: Stanford had a lot of people doing social anthropology, cultural anthropology, like economics and politics and kinship and other things. And Chicago did the linguistics. So they concentrated their efforts in Chiapas, the Chiapas languages. That was sort of a counterbalance to Yucatec which had much more documentation because it was in a more civilized area. People had been working there for a longer time. The Ch'ol language had been reduced to only a couple of villages in very remote areas of Chiapas.

Nick Hopkins: It just got ignored.

Kathryn Josserand: It just got ignored.

Nick Hopkins: Just got ignored, fell through the cracks.

Q: Could we go back, 'cause you know, the original question was, you know, what was the Ch'ol area? And I'm thinking about the fact that the Ch'ol area at the time of the conquest, didn't get documented the way the other ones did.

Nick Hopkins: Well, actually as Kathryn mentioned earlier, Thompson did a paper in 1939 I think it was [it was 1938], talking about the colonial distribution of Ch'ol as it was known from the documents. And it was all throughout the lowlands. It was-- and Jan deVos has documented this process very well. He's an ethnohistorian, Belgian ethno-historian. He lives in San Cristóbal, has gone through all the documents and -- the Spanish in Chiapas first took the highlands, highland Chiapas, working out of San Cristóbal, and pacified those highland Tzeltal and Tzotzil villages, but they left the lowlands alone because the Ch'ols were very militant, and they resisted missionization. And they would burn churches and kill priests and do all kinds of nasty things.

Kathryn Josserand: And eat them.

Nick Hopkins: Well, that's the story. So highland Guatemala got pacified, highland Chiapas got pacified, but the lowland jungle was not. And around the end of the sixteenth century, in the 1590s, the Spanish Crown started a military campaign to pacify and resettle the Ch'ols.

Kathryn Josserand: To get them out of the lowlands.

Nick Hopkins: To get them out of the lowlands.

Kathryn Josserand: The Spaniards didn't like the lowlands, because they were full of tropical diseases, they're too hot, they weren't like Spain.

Nick Hopkins: You can't farm down there. <laughter>

Kathryn Josserand: And you can't farm down there. And so they wanted Indians where they could use them up in the highlands, and they didn't want Indians causing trouble.

Nick Hopkins: They certainly didn't want renegade Indians in refuge areas for rebels and so on, off down out in the jungle. So they started a hundred-year military campaign. It started down around the Palenque, Tenosique area, moved up the Usumacinta River, finally moved over into Guatemala, and ended up a hundred years later at Tayasal with the conquest of the Itzaj in Lake Petén.

The lowland population were mainly Ch'ols and they would move them out of the lowland areas up into the highlands in places like Retalhuleu, Guatemala, where they died off. Various other places in Guatemala where they were resettled --

Kathryn Josserand: -- and absorbed.

Nick Hopkins: And absorbed, and the only ones that survived out of that process were the ones who were settled in Tila and Tumbalá in extreme northern Chiapas, out of which a third group then, Sabanilla, grew. But those were probably, we would think those were probably formed by the colonial powers, 'cause they always talk about founding these towns. But in fact all those towns existed as Ch'ol towns before the jungle people were resettled there. But that's the only area, very limited area, where Ch'ol survived. Now Ch'ol is back through the entire territory that they were removed from, I mean up to the Guatemalan border. Not across it, but all the way up the Usumacinta and over into Campeche. I mean they have huge establishments.

Kathryn Josserand: Even into the Becán area in Campeche.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah.

Q: Going back, I'm trying to get a fairly simple idea, I believe that in the colonial era dictionaries were done of the Yucatec and of the areas that submitted fairly easily and that these did not include the areas of Ch'ol.

Nick Hopkins: The Spanish came to the New World with a program of study and documentation that, I'm not sure what the origin was, but it was an organized effort. So that they had to learn the local languages. The priests would come in first, learn the local languages, produce teaching materials for other priests, translate all the basic documents like catechisms and sermons and the sacraments and so on. And so they deliberately did a lot of linguistic work. And during this they would also write, compile dictionaries and so on. So for a lot of languages we have that package. The first document we have in Ch'ol is a 1789 response to King Charles who asked for certain information to be collected all over his kingdom. And it's a word list collected by the priest at Tila, right. We don't have any early colonial materials at all. We have no grammar, we have no dictionary, we don't have the catechisms, we don't have any of that kind of material. But it must have existed because there's a string of Ch'ol missions that went from the Ch'ortí area over around Esquipulas and up into Copán and over to Quiriguá and across north of Cobán through the lowlands to --

Kathryn Josserand: Dolores.

Nick Hopkins: Dolores in -- up in the upper Usumacinta, and down the Usumacinta and then they got to Tila and so on, on the other end. So there were lots of missions. And there may be documents somewhere. But all that stuff was shipped back to Spain and put into things like The Archive of the Indies, ecclesiastical archives, etcetera, and they were very disorganized and very difficult to locate stuff in. And, you know, some day someone may discover some of those things.

Q: Last time we talked the impression that I got was that they didn't exist, but you said that the other areas were subjugated, but that the Ch'ol were like the wild men, the wild Indians. And, you know, they couldn't get close to them, they didn't get to sit and do--

Nick Hopkins: Well, there was a certain point at which the missionary effort was abandoned and the military effort replaced it. And there doesn't seem to be anything left from that first period. Well, that's not quite true because the Ch'ortí document of -- the Ch'oltí document that we have, Morán, is actually -- was done at a Ch'ol mission site. And it represents one of the languages in this string of Cholan-type languages that were across the lowlands. So that's a document that-- we do have a dictionary from that. But

that's the eastern extreme of Cholan and it's well away from the Ch'ol, the kinds of Ch'ol that survived the colonial period at the other extreme. So they're like different languages essentially.

Kathryn Josserand: Today.

Nick Hopkins: Today. Yeah, well today one of them is Ch'ortí and the other one is Ch'ol.

Kathryn Josserand: But during the Classic period we're talking about the ancestor of these two surviving modern languages. So during the Classic period there was a language that was widely distributed across the Petén and the adjacent areas of Mexico and into Honduras from Copán to Palenque and up probably as far as Tikal if not further north.

Q: You're talking about Ch'ol?

Kathryn Josserand: I'm talking about the ancestor of Ch'ol and Chontal [and Ch'ortí]. During the Classic period the language that we think was the language of the Classic Maya period was a language that was the ancestor of the modern language Ch'ol and the modern language Ch'ortí, Ch'ol in the west around Palenque, and Ch'ortí in the east around Copán. There were lots of different kinds of this language, which we call Cholan or proto-Cholan. Every community, every city-state, every site probably had its own local dialect. But they were held together by a court language. And that court language was a kind of a standard language, something that if you moved from one community to another you would be able to use. And of course the people who were moving from one community to another are the upper strata of society. They're not the farmers.

Nick Hopkins: And of course this is the language that you wrote.

Kathryn Josserand: And this was the language that you wrote.

Nick Hopkins: You didn't write in the dialects, you wrote in the standard court language.

Kathryn Josserand: So when we try to talk about the language of the Maya today we're triangulating back from the two modern languages that we still can get information on and we have this one colonial period document by the priest, Francisco de Morán?

Nick Hopkins: Yeah. Out of Ch'ortí-- or Ch'oltí, yeah.

Kathryn Josserand: Who was documenting one of these varieties of Cholan that's called Ch'oltí. And we think that probably during the Classic period there was a kind of incipient division broadly of western versus eastern dialects. Ch'oltí and modern Ch'ortí would be representative of the eastern dialect and Ch'ol is represented--

Nick Hopkins: And Chontal now.

Kathryn Josserand: and Chontal are representative of the western dialect.

Q: OK. Thank you. That's great.

Nick Hopkins: You need a blackboard, right?

Kathryn Josserand: Yeah, why don't we get to write on a blackboard? <laughter>

Nick Hopkins: We'll fill the blackboard in later, right, you know?

Grammatical parallels between modern Chol and the ancient language of the hieroglyphs

Q: And try, Nick, on this. I think you're both involved in this. We're still back in '78, '79 in Palenque. And your work on Ch'ol produced some work on the "ti" compound. I don't want to get too technical about it, but you began to find articles in the grammar that ... <inaudible>

Nick Hopkins: Yeah. That was the first step of what happened later. Moving towards...

Kathryn Josserand: You have to start and say what this is about.

Nick Hopkins: Right, yeah. Since we were working on the Ch'ol language, because we knew Ch'ol had to be documented because it was the logical language to be the descendant of the Classical Mayan language, we were working on Ch'ol grammar basically with Chencho and occasionally with some other people. And we worked out of Merle's house in Palenque. And we were working out a crude first understanding of the grammatical patterns of the language. And there was a day when we discovered this strange construction that we thought was rather odd, because it's not matched by the other Mayan languages that I knew, which used this particle "ti" in the verbal construction that would have an auxiliary verb, the "ti", and then the semantically important verb so that instead of saying something like "I run," you would say something like "I'm going to run." [or "I'm doing running"]. The "going" would be this equivalent to this auxiliary

verb, but the information is in the other verb. This is a very curious construction. So we're puzzling over this. And at the same time Linda was working downstairs with...

Kathryn Josserand: Right, we were upstairs...

Nick Hopkins: …with Floyd.

Kathryn Josserand: …in the screened rooms, working with Chencho and we kept coming up with this thing, the “ti”, which is exactly like the "to," in "I'm going to run." And it would be "*woliyon ti xämb’al*." We kept trying to get Chencho to say…"Can't you say 'I run'?" And we'd construct the word like we thought it should be. And he'd say, "Nope, can't say that." So we're struggling with this. And at just that moment...

Nick Hopkins: We're working downstairs at Merle's house with Chencho, working out these -- we were working upstairs, I guess...

Kathryn Josserand: We were working upstairs…

Nick Hopkins: We were working upstairs, I guess, because they always put us upstairs. Linda's working downstairs. Sometimes we all met for coffee or something, we started talking about what we were doing. And she looks at this stuff and says, "Oh, my God. You know, we have that in the hieroglyphs." We said, "Well, where?" "Well, here, let me show you this." And so she began dragging out inscriptions and showing us where they had these constructions with “ti”. There was this sort of general verb which was the *b’ah*, I guess, this gopher head.

Kathryn Josserand: Oh, that wasn't the only one.

Nick Hopkins: It wasn't. There were some others. “Ti”, and then there would be the semantically loaded event verb or whatever coming after that. And we realized we had the same parallel constructions in Ch’ol and in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Well, turns out that this kind of construction is basically unique to Ch’ol, although it leaked out around the edges. There's some Mopán and some dialects of Yucatec, and some other languages that have some examples of it, probably from diffusion out of the Ch’ol area from the Classic language. But it basically nailed down the identification of Ch’ol as one of the languages which preserved more of the Classic period language than any other language we knew about. Now, we already knew that phonologically, because of the particular consonants and vowels and changes that had happened in the different languages, that Ch’ol was phonologically similar to the Classic languages. But this nailed it down because the grammar was there. And this was sort of step one in beginning to project back from the work we were doing on the modern language to

understanding the classic language. That culminates, I think, in Kathryn's “The Narrative Structure of Hieroglyphic Texts at Palenque”.

Kathryn Josserand: So we decided we would write an article with -- Linda and Nick and I would write an article together on this. This was a really ground breaking article, however well it's held up, we'll see. But, we came up to Austin from Mexico, and Linda had a little apartment out in West Austin, and we stayed there for a weekend, shut ourselves in the apartment and tried to hammer out this paper.

Nick Hopkins: “Hammer out's” right!

Kathryn Josserand: Well, you have three hard heads working together. And we should have had hardhats on, because we literally came to blows about every hour. And one of us would have to leave the room, walk out, and the other two would try to patch things up. But out of this came this paper called "The *ti* construction." And it was, I think, very seminal because it did show that linguistic structures are in the glyphs and that the glyphs are writing language. It's not an approximation of language. It's language that you could read, word-for-word, sound-for-sound.

Nick Hopkins: And it would make perfect sense, but, I mean, that's ...

Q: We were talking with Barbara MacLeod the other day, and the whole issue of, “Have we pinned down what is the language of the texts?”. And this kind of argument was more in relation to split ergativity, which we don't want to go into. But, she said, "Well, you know, you have an argument that says there's only one modern language that preserves this thing, and hieroglyphs preserve it." How do you know that it didn't fall away from -- and other languages before <inaudible>

Kathryn Josserand: That's right.

Nick Hopkins: Right.

Q: How do you respond to that?

Kathryn Josserand: Well, the argument about which language best represents the hieroglyphs is really a kind of a straw man argument. We know that the language of the hieroglyphs -- and I don't think anybody's going to argue with this -- was the proto-Cholan language, at least in the southern and western part of the Classic distribution. There are arguments about how much participation Yucatec Mayan had in the eastern and the northern. But, so let's just talk about Cholan languages, the ancestor of the Cholan

languages. And there were multiple varieties of Cholan during the Classic period and after that. We only have left two out of those multiple varieties.

Nick Hopkins: Three.

Kathryn Josserand: Three.

Nick Hopkins: You keep forgetting Chontal.

Kathryn Josserand: Well, because I think it's further away. Three languages, Chontal, Ch'ol, and Ch'ortí. So, I think when we were first working with the ti constructions, the argument was: We can show that the hieroglyphs are writing a Maya language in full detail. And the argument at that point was to identify a Cholan language as the one that was most useful for understanding the grammar and the language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions.

Nick Hopkins: As opposed to Yucatec Mayan.

Kathryn Josserand: As opposed to Yucatec or any other. There were still people arguing for Highland languages being involved in the Classic writing system. Well, our understanding has certainly progressed a long ways since that first proposal that the inscriptions are written language, written speech. And today, people argue about whether or not Ch'ol is the best living representative of what the writing system was like. And I don't think that you really need to make that argument. Other people say, "Oh, no. It was eastern Maya, it was Ch'oltí and Ch'ortí. They were the elite language." And I think again, we're talking about modern descendants of a language that was ancestral to both of these, to all of these languages.

Nick Hopkins: The essential point is that during the Classic period, there was not a Ch'ol, and a Ch'oltí, and a Ch'ortí, and so on. There was only a language that was the ancestor of all of these languages. So saying, "Was it Ch'ortí they were writing in the ninth century or was it Ch'ol they were writing in the ninth century?" doesn't make any sense because there wasn't any Ch'ortí and any Ch'ol in the ninth century. There was only the ancestor of both of them, which probably had regional variants, eastern and western, and so on, but it was a single language. That statement, It was Ch'ortí or it was Ch'ol, doesn't make any more sense than asking, say, "What was Spanish like in the third century?" Well, there wasn't a Spanish in the third century.

Kathryn Josserand: There wasn't Spanish. It was Latin.

Nick Hopkins: It was Latin, right? And Spanish grew out of Latin, right? So, when you say, "Which Romance language was it that was spoken in, you know, Iberia? Well, it was *the* Romance language. There wasn't any ...

Kathryn Josserand: Now, what we can also say -- we can say for example, that the grammar and the linguistic characteristics of the language that is written in the hieroglyphs is different in some significant ways from any other modern languages. There are elements of Ch'ol that we can find in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. And there are elements of Ch'ortí or Ch'oltí that we can find in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. And there are elements in the hieroglyphic inscriptions that we can't find in either of those, any of the modern remnant languages. So, this language was different in the same way that the grammar of Latin is different from the grammar of the Romance languages that descended from it. There's not a single Romance language that you can say, "This is the best representative of Latin."

Q: Thank you. That covers that story.

Kathryn Josserand: Are we forceful enough here? Putting other people down right, left, and sideways.

Nick Hopkins: <laughing>

Kathryn Josserand: You can believe us or not, but we know the truth.

Collaborations with David Stuart and Linda Schele

Q: In 1980, Linda and David came to visit you in Mexico City. <inaudible>

Nick Hopkins: We knew George for a long time.

Kathryn Josserand: I think we'd known David for a long time. We'd known George since before 1964.

Nick Hopkins: Actually, I knew David when he was a baby, because I visited them in Yucatán in 1959, whenever he must have been born. But, what year was he born in?

Q: He wasn't born that time.

Nick Hopkins: It was his brother. I guess it was his brother, yeah, okay. So I didn't know him, then, I guess that's right. But, I mean, I knew George from back then, and Kathryn knew George from Tulane and meetings and things like that.

Kathryn Josserand: Yeah. From the 60's at least.

Nick Hopkins: So we knew him as a, you know, as a person but...

Kathryn Josserand: But I think David sort of came on to the screen, David Stuart came onto the screen when he gave his first public presentation at a Round Table in Palenque. We may have known about him, but, I mean, he was a kid. His first public presentation was when he was 13. And he gave a paper on hieroglyphs because he had been in the field with his parents when George was working on different sites, particularly Cobá, I believe, is one of the famous stories. And he was being home-schooled by his mom. And he was a bright kid, and she couldn't keep him busy enough and he wanted something to do, so they put him to looking at the hieroglyphs. And so he did that. Anyway, after one of the Mesa Redondas, by that time, Linda had been working with us, and she was in graduate school, if I'm not mistaken.

Q: Excuse me, were you at the Mesa Redonda when he gave his first paper?

Kathryn Josserand: Oh, yeah.

Nick Hopkins: Uh-huh.

Q: Could you tell us about that?

Kathryn Josserand: Can you remember what the paper was about?

Nick Hopkins: What the paper was? No. The one I remember, it wasn't his paper. It was the time when the Mexican archaeologists brought the hieroglyphic stair of...

Kathryn Josserand: Resbalón.

Nick Hopkins: …Resbalón to show. That was a couple of years later. He ran up to the screen and started reading it, and they were really hacked off.

Kathryn Josserand: They just got so mad.

Nick Hopkins: He just blew their paper.

Kathryn Josserand: Because here were these professional Mexican archaeologists presenting to the world this new discovery, this hieroglyphic stair that had been discovered in Resbalón, a site nobody knew anything about, and they had pictures of it. And they showed this at the Mesa Redonda, the Round Table, in Palenque. And here's this twerp. I mean he must have been 15 or 16 or something like that. They put the slides up there and he goes up and starts reading the glyphs, translating the inscription. And the Mexican archaeologists were embarrassed. I mean, it was not appropriate. It was really not.

Nick Hopkins: <laughing> But it was memorable.

Kathryn Josserand: It was funny. It was memorable.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah. But he did it. I can't remember what his paper was at the earlier one.

Kathryn Josserand: His first, David Stuart's first paper at that Round Table had something to do with iconography more than hieroglyphs, as I recall. I really don't remember.

Q: I think it was on an expression that he found in the Cross Group at Palenque, something he found when they were working together on the Cross Group. <inaudible> Anyway, what was your impression?

Kathryn Josserand: Well, so, David Stuart, this kid, clearly a kid, gets up and here's all this audience of international scholars, Mexican and American, and Canadian and from everywhere, and he gives a paper that was certainly beyond the abilities of about two-thirds or three-quarters of the audience to follow. It was a scholarly paper. And mostly people were just amazed, you know. But it was sort of a Wunderkind. Here's this young kid who is going to be a star, and you could tell it already. So immediately, everybody started taking him under their wing, Merle, and Linda. And a few years later, we were at another Round Table, and Linda wanted to learn more about how to use dictionaries in different Maya languages, because, as we know from the Romance languages, Italian, French, Spanish, and so forth, each language has certain sounds that are different for the same word than another language. And in the Maya languages that's true as well. One language will have a K where another language has had a Ch, a "Ch" sound. And the question is then, if you're look in a dictionary, do you want to look for a word that has the K sound or the "Ch" sound in that language to get the one that you want?

Nick Hopkins: Now, the reason you were going to be doing this is because the Cholan languages are not well documented, right? And so you don't have extensive dictionaries for a bunch of Cholan languages that you could look up these words in. So you have to go to other languages that are well documented and see if you can find a cognate word, a word that's written that would have existed in Ch'ol but you don't have a record of it, and figure out what it would have looked like in Ch'ol. Well, this is a job for a historical linguist. I mean, that's what historical linguists do, is they do exactly that kind of comparison. So this is what Linda decided she had to know.

Q: <inaudible>

Kathryn Josserand: So, Linda wanted to learn how to use dictionaries in different Maya languages. And we invited her to come up to our house in Mexico City after this Round Table in Palenque. And David and his mother, Jean, came along. And I think Jean left after a day or two, but David and Linda stayed for most of a week, as I recall. And we would have lessons in the living room about the sounds of each of the Maya languages and how the sounds of K'ichee' corresponded to the sounds of Q'ekchi', and how those corresponded to Yucatec, and how they would correspond to Ch'ol. So a word, for example, like snake, which in Yucatec is *kan*, in Ch'ol is *chan*. And if you were looking for a word in one of these other languages, you would have to know whether you wanted to look for a K word or a "Ch" word. So we had these lessons in comparative Mayan linguistics.

Q: <inaudible>

Kathryn Josserand: Oh, and so while David was staying there, we put him up in one of our spare bedrooms, and in this room we had a rubbing.

Nick Hopkins: A rubbing.

Kathryn Josserand: It was actually a rubbing. But it was not a rubbing of a monument. It looked like it was a rubbing of a stela from Aguateca, looked very much like that. But what it was, was some artist had gone out there to the site, made a drawing and carved a wood block -- good sized thing, about this big -- but he wasn't really great on glyphs. So he just sort of picked a few glyphs and put them around artistically.

Nick Hopkins: Well, they weren't even real glyphs, they were just ...

Kathryn Josserand: And they weren't real glyphs. They were sort of approximations of glyphs. This is a beautiful piece of turquoise cloth with black ink on it from the rubbing. And it was hanging in this little bedroom where David was staying while he was studying

linguistics with us. After the first night, he asked if we could take it out of the room, because he couldn't stand to be look at this thing that purported to be a Classic Maya inscription but it was just gobbledygook.

Nick Hopkins: I think David has denied that story since. I don't think he remembers it. But it definitely happened. <laughing>

Q: In relation to her, Linda, coming and learning, I think you phrased like that she, you know, periodically, throughout the time you knew her, <inaudible> would find a different area that she needed to know and would soak it up like a sponge?

Nick Hopkins: Well, I mean, one of Linda's talents and one of the things that made her, you know, really great in the field, was that she would figure out what she needed to know, or she would spot an area that might tell her something that she needed to know, and she would go out and latch onto it and find some source, somebody to teach her that or some books or whatever, and just soak that stuff up. I mean, it might be linguistics.

Kathryn Josserand: For us it was linguistics.

Nick Hopkins: For us it was linguistics and the language.

Kathryn Josserand: But then she figured out she needed to know astronomy.

Nick Hopkins: Astronomy.

Kathryn Josserand: And so she got a hold of Tony Aveni, probably, and on her own, learned a tremendous amount of astronomy.

Nick Hopkins: And then it might be the archeology. And then it might be the geography. And it might be the climatology. And it might be something else. But I mean, she would just take on these areas and just soak them up, right, and then amalgamate the whole thing, make sense out of it. And then we're going to do a workshop and she'd give it all back to us, right, in some integrated way. This is really, you know, it was great scholarship. And one of the things about Linda was that Linda was not trained as that kind of a scholar. She's trained as a studio artist. She didn't even have art history courses. I mean, she was trained as a studio artist. So she had none of this background in archeology or Mesoamerican ethnography or languages of Middle America. I mean she had none of this. She had to learn all of that stuff, but she'd do it.

Kathryn Josserand: But she also did not come to the field with pre-established prejudices that all of us had because we had learned things a particular way. The world

was changing. When Proskouriakoff put up the historic hypothesis and Dave Kelly began to work after her to establish the dynastic sequence of sites like Quiriguá, and then Linda and Peter Mathews worked with Floyd Lounsbury to establish a sequence for Palenque. The world was changing. What we thought was the way the hieroglyphic system worked was not true. So, many of us, in a sense, almost had to unlearn bad habits. Linda came fresh to the field. She learned what she needed to know, what was appropriate to know for the task at hand. And as she went through, you could see her trying to pick things up. And one of the good things was that there were a lot of people of different interests around. You would see her start trying to use something, and you could go up to her and say, "You haven't got that quite right. You need to have more detail on this. You need to learn this." And she would say, "Okay, teach me." And so she learned from people that way.

Discourse structures in Maya storytelling

Q: I'd like to jump ahead to the period, I think it was around 1984, when you went off into the Blue Ridge mountains and...

Kathryn Josserand: Here we go.

Q: And spent a lot of time with the text, and learning discourse analysis. Give us some idea of what kind of things came out of that, what you did and what came out of it.

Kathryn Josserand: Had we already written something on Ch'ol discourse?

Nick Hopkins: 1984, we had done our first NSF grant project on Ch'ol.

Kathryn Josserand: But that was the dictionary project.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, putting the together the lexicon and so on.

Kathryn Josserand: Dictionary database. We collected stories.

Nick Hopkins: We had collected a lot of stories. We had begun to analyze the stories and I don't think we were too far into discourse analysis.

Kathryn Josserand: Yeah. Okay. We were, because I was working on -- we had collected a lot of texts in Ch'ol. We'd worked out the grammar.

Q: I'm sorry, can we go back to <inaudible>.

Nick Hopkins: About 1984.

Q: Okay. Yeah. Thank you.

Kathryn Josserand: By 1984, we had been working on Ch'ol about 4, 6 years actually. We'd collected a lot of text; we'd done a lot of grammatical work. And we had been using the texts as the basis for understanding the grammar. But I began -- this was when, you know, we had computers then, you could do a text and you could move lines around or indent, and you didn't have to type everything over, over and over again. So I began trying to layout the text in short lines so that there was just one verb per line, like one phrase, or even the main sentence and then a couple of adverbial phrases or prepositional phrases. And I would put those on separate lines. And I began to see this structure, that each little bit of text was generally formed of four lines and that within those four lines, the last two lines might form a couplet, where they would have some kind of parallel verb structures or parallel words or somehow they would feel like they were more like each other. And that as you moved through the text, you would get to these events that were central to the story line that were sort of moving the story along in a significant way. We called them peak or pivot events. And you would come up to the big action peak of the story. And that when you hit these peak events, there was more coupleting, more formal structure, sometimes triplets, and sometimes very elaborate, inverted, what we would call mirror or nested couplets, so that line A, and then would be followed by B, would be followed by another line that was like B, and then there would be an A line again. So you have A, B, B, A. This is called mirror or nested couplets. And I thought this was really interesting stuff. And I began to read about discourse analysis and the way that people like Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock were arguing that American Indian texts had formal structures that were literary structures like European literary traditions. I began to write about this in modern Ch'ol. And that was paralleling my interest in the hieroglyphic texts. We had already done the 96 Glyphs text, which was so beautifully structured.

Nick Hopkins: By 1984, for years, we had been doing structural analysis of hieroglyphic texts. I mean, this was the main methodology for the workshops. You try to look for the structure of the inscription. You cut it into pieces, and you line up the phrases and you put the parallel parts, you know, above each other, and so on. And we had been working on that. And we knew that the inscriptions had structures.

Kathryn Josserand: Parallelisms.

Nick Hopkins: Parallelisms and...

Kathryn Josserand: And couplets.

Nick Hopkins: And couplets and so on. Right? Independently of that, we were working on Ch'ol texts, and Kathryn was doing this same kind of analysis with Ch'ol, without thinking of there being a connection between these two. And at some point there was this sudden, you know, realization.

Kathryn Josserand: Realization that they were alike.

Nick Hopkins: They were very much alike, right.

Kathryn Josserand: So, by that time, I wanted to learn to do more of the hieroglyphic analysis myself. I had been working with Linda. We had been working with Linda. We were the linguists; she was the epigrapher. And I reached the point where I really wanted to be able to do the hieroglyphic analysis. And she said, "Well, you're never going to be able to do it unless you just do what we make these students do. You go take a text and sit by yourself and work through it glyph by glyph." So we were living in Virginia and taking care of Nick's dad, who was ill. And we took an R&R to the Blue Ridge Mountains and rented a little cabin. And Nick was working on some other paper and I got the Tablet of the Cross, and my colored pencils, and I started going through and coloring all the verbs green and all the kings' names purple -- purple is for kings -- and green is for go, go is a verb, so I did all the verbs in green. And I had different colors for the different kinds of speech, like the distance numbers or the dates would be in yellow. And I began, then, to see in the inscriptions the same grammatical patterns that I saw in the texts. And that's when I began to work on this article called "The Narrative Structure of Hieroglyphic Texts at Palenque." Actually, Linda and I began working on that together. And we progressed to the point where we presented a paper on this topic together at the American Anthropological Association Meetings in Denver in 1984.

Nick Hopkins: It was '84.

Kathryn Josserand: We got out there for the meetings. And the night that we arrived there, Nick's dad died. So we had to turn around and go back. And Linda presented the paper. After that, we kept trying to work on it, but we were in distant parts of the country and it was hard to work on it together. And it sort of never got finished as a jointly-authored paper. We had some disagreements about how the whole text should be cut up into pieces.

Nick Hopkins: Where the breaks were between the sections.

Kathryn Josserand: Where the breaks were between the sections.

Nick Hopkins: Because Linda wanted it cut on one side of the distance numbers. You wanted it cut on the other. So this was never resolved.

Kathryn Josserand: Was never resolved. So I finally just wrote the paper up by myself. But I think of this as joint work. I think of this as work that I would never have been able to do if I'd not worked with Linda. And I think that my contribution to her understanding of the texts advanced her quite a bit as well. This is now, I think, a technique that most people find useful. I know Nikolai Grube has told me that he has his students look at texts, read my articles, and look at text this way. I call this "whole text analysis." You don't take a glyph at a time. You don't even take a sentence at a time. You take the entire narrative of the text and try to understand it as having an opening, a closing, an event line, actors that have to be introduced. New information has to be introduced. Old information has to be maintained in a certain way. For example, when we're telling a story, we don't start, say, a joke, by saying, "*the* man came into *the* bar." We start by saying, *"a* man came into *a* bar." Later in the story when we're talking about that man, we can say, "the man," or we can say, "that man."

Nick Hopkins: Or you can say "he."

Kathryn Josserand: Or we can say "he." And just like that, the hieroglyphs and the modern Ch'ol language have ways where you introduce characters or props in the story in a certain way, and after that you treat them in another way. It's called participant tracking or information flow management. And these are really very useful terms for understanding, then, what is the point of the entire story? Why are they telling you all these things? What are the things that they're telling you that are really just background information? And what is it that they want you to understand? This text is about this event.

Q: And could you give us an example of how these kind of discourse structures work?

Nick Hopkins: Discourse structures ...

Kathryn Josserand: Parallelism and text structures.

Q: <Inaudible>, yeah.

Nick Hopkins: Text structure, yeah. There's a little text that I like to use in class, this was published back in the '40s by a linguist who didn't do any text analysis at all. But I got a hold of it and started looking at it, and realized the structure it had. And it's called *The Lacandón Song of the Jaguar*. Now this is a little magical formula that is good for keeping the jaguar away basically. And it has three verses, and each of the verses has a

different structure, and that's typical of the longer text where every time you introduce a new topic, the sentences may have different syntax and so on. It's got couplets, nested couplets, triplets, it's got a lot of structure. You'll hear it, I'm going to do it in English, but it's a magical formula in which the first verse, the jaguar is stalking the human. And the language of the text follows that. Well, in Lacandón it's

Jujun tsit in jitik in wok,

jujun tsit in jitik in k'äb'.

Tan u pek in nej.

Right, so it's the jaguars are [stalking the human]… The second verse, the jaguar hears this song being sung, and he gets sleepy, and he finds some place to sleep, lie down and sleep. And the third verse is the jaguar dreaming. So it goes like this in English:

Step by step, I move my feet;

step by step, I move my paws,

my tail is twitching.

I heard your song coming from afar.

I'm getting sleepy.

I'm looking for a fallen log to lie on.

I'm going to sleep on the fallen log.

My hide is spotted;

my paws are spotted;

my ears are spotted.

And so that's structure. I mean every one of those verses has its own little structure. There's a syntactic pattern to each one of them, right. It's concise, but Maya texts are like this. I mean even this tiny little mini text is just highly structured, but that's what Mayan discourse is like. Now, the mark of formal speech is the parallelisms or the couplets, and you can go, I've seen guys go immediately from ordinary speech into formal speech and, say at the end of a court hearing or something like that where they'll speech formally to the judge, and then they'll start passing the time of day. But when you go into couplets you're going into formal speech. Prayers are formal, or couplets from start to finish, and so, it's you know for instance, right. So that's the central element around which you build a Maya text. The peak events are always highly coupleted in their elaborations on that and so on. But I mean there's real structure there that's very visible when you lay the text out, or very audible when you hear a text being read. Now in the hieroglyphic inscriptions, the formatting, the double column format totally destroys that structure. You do not see it, you don't realize there's a structure at all. And so the structural method, which has been the key to decipherment, understanding the inscriptions, is to take those glyphs off of the monument and lay them out in such a way that you can see the structures visually, right. And that's the method which Dave Kelley published in the '70s but he had been talking about this stuff for ten years before he got his book published. That was the stuff that Lounsbury and Kelley taught to Linda, and David, and so on ...

Kathryn Josserand: Peter.

Nick Hopkins: ... and that's the stuff, and Peter, yeah, don't forget Peter. And that's the stuff that was brought into the workshops. And it's linguistic methodology, standard methodology from linguistics, compare and contrast, that Kelley picked up from linguists and passed on to the world of <inaudible> [epigraphers], and that's been the sort of the major breakthrough, the methodological breakthrough, the structural method you can be able to- that's what you teach in a workshop. How to cut a text apart and put it back together again in terms of how it's structured.

Q: Thank you.

Nick Hopkins: [performing] "Step by step I move my feet. Step by step I move my paws, my tail is twitching. I heard your song coming from afar. I'm getting sleepy. Looking for a fallen log to sleep on. I'm going to sleep on a fallen log. My hide is spotted, my paws are spotted, my ears are spotted." The jaguar is asleep and dreaming. Now we know what jaguars dream about.

Kathryn Josserand: You want to do it Maya?

Nick Hopkins: In Lacandón? Okay, let's see if I can remember it all, because I always blow one line of it.

Kathryn Josserand: Just fake it.

Nick Hopkins: Yeah, fake it. You mean they wouldn't know? What if Lacandóns were watching?

Kathryn Josserand: Get on with it.

Nick Hopkins:

Jujun tsit, in jitik in wok.

Jujun tsit, in jitik in k'áb'.

Tan u pek in nej.

Tin wu'uyah u tar a k'ay ch'iknach.

Netak in wenen.

Tin käxtaj u pachtäkij che'.

Oken tin wenen yokor jenen che'.

Tu yek'er in nok'.

Tu yek'er in k'äb'.

Tu yek'er in xikin. <Fade on out.>

Kathryn Josserand: You get the *yek'er.*

Nick Hopkins: *Yek'er*, yeah.

<Crew talk>.

The origins of the Maya hieroglyphic workshops in Guatemala.

Kathryn Josserand: There was a group of Mayan linguists who wanted to meet and give more time to hearing each other talk about their languages. And we started meeting in alternate years, one year in Mexico, one year in Guatemala [as the Taller (de Lingüística) Maya]. By 1986, we were meeting in Guatemala, and the idea was to have the speakers of the languages there with us, and in fact Nick and I convinced all the linguists that they had to start talking in Spanish so that the Mayan speakers could understand them, most of them couldn't speak English. So by 1986, we were giving-- we were participating in this workshop in Antigua, and at that meeting I gave a presentation on how you could present texts in Mayan languages, not just published text like stories, but that you could do cartoon books, you could do plays, and we actually had Bob Laughlin's Tzotzil players from San Cristóbal [Sna Jtz'ib'ajom] put on a play there called *The Lightning God*, which was very successful. And they went on from there. They had previously been doing puppet theater, but they started doing real theater after they got the hang of that. Well, as a kind of an R&R or special treat for not just the linguists but the Guatemalan Mayans, all the Mayans that were at the meeting, Nora England, who had arranged that particular workshop, had arranged for us all to go on a two-day trip to Copán, from Antigua to Copán. So before we went to the meetings…

I'm sorry. I'm going to start over at some point, I'm not sure where.

Nick Hopkins: You gave a paper on text structure.

Kathryn Josserand: So I gave a paper on text structure, and I talked about how you could present texts not just as stories, but you could present them as poetry or you could present them in a comic book, which is what most Mexicans read anyway, or you could present a play. And we had the Mayan players from San Cristóbal present a play about The Lightning God that I had prepared a script for them. I had all the story board laid out, and the little scenes, and taught them the script, and they did that. And I also talked about how the text that we recorded from modern languages were like hieroglyphic texts. And I showed a hieroglyphic text, and I showed how you could read it. Well after that presentation ...

<Phone rings. Crew talk>.

Kathryn Josserand: So at this Mayan workshop in Antigua, I gave a presentation about how you could present Mayan text in different formats, some of which might be more accessible to the people, the Mayan speakers themselves. And I had shown how you

could do it as a comic book or even a play. And I had made a storyboard of the little scenes that would happen in a play, and I'd broken it down into scene one, scene two, and so forth. We had the Mayans from San Cristóbal who were doing puppet theater under the direction of Bob Laughlin, they were there. And so they did this play about The Lightning God that I had prepared for them. And also as part of that presentation, I showed that the hieroglyphic texts could also be used in the materials for the Indians to learn from, and I read some hieroglyphic texts. Well, the Guatemalan Mayans in particular had already been realizing that there was a lot of their history that they had never been taught in school, and they wanted to recuperate that history. And when they saw that you could read the hieroglyphs, they wanted to do that. So we were going to have a little field trip to visit the ruins of Copán. Linda was working at Copán, she had a Fullbright to work at Copán that year. So all the linguists, and all the Mexican and Guatemalan Indians were going to go Copán and see the ruins. Well, when they realized that we were going to go see inscriptions, and we told them not only can we read them but Linda Schele can read them a lot better than we can, they wanted to know more. And so Nick and I said okay, well we'll set you up for this. And we did a Saturday one-morning quick workshop for them about hieroglyphic inscriptions, and how the glyphs represented words or parts of words, and how they were put together in sentences. And these are all Maya speakers, they got it right off, they learned a lot faster than English speakers or French speakers or German speakers do. They recognized the words, they recognized the word order, they recognized the kinds of structures and parallelisms and couplets that were occurring in there. So they were primed. And we went on to Honduras, got to Copán, were met by Linda, went out to the ruins, had a wonderful day, and the Mayans were just sort of hanging around her. Unfortunately, Linda was speaking mostly to the American linguists, and she was speaking mostly in English. But they could tell, the Mayans could tell, she's pointing to glyphs and saying what they were. And they wanted to know what she knew, and they wanted her to teach them.

<Crew talk>.

Kathryn Josserand: So we got to Copán, and Linda was speaking mostly to the American linguists in English. The Mayans, particularly the Guatemalan Mayans were really hanging around, they wanted to know what was going on, and Nick and I were kind of hanging back with them and translating. I think we were probably the most accomplished Spanish speakers because of ten years of living in Mexico. So we were doing a lot of translating, kind of simultaneous translating to them as we went. By the end of the afternoon, we all got back to the Hotel Marina, which was then a small, little dinky hotel but it had a really neat little courtyard, and Martín Chacach and a couple of other Mayans ...

Nick Hopkins: Narciso Cojtí I think was another, yeah.

Kathryn Josserand: Narciso Cojtí got ahold of us and came up to us and said, "We want Linda to teach us hieroglyphs. Can you help us do that?" So we said okay, well we'll, you know, go present it and we'll introduce you to her, and off we'll go. So we call Linda over and we sat under this bougainvillea-covered nook in the patio there, and introduced her to Narciso and Martín, and talked to her about the fact that they wanted her to come to Guatemala, to Antigua and teach them, give them a workshop. Well, first she said she couldn't leave Honduras because she had a Fulbright, and she wasn't supposed to leave the country. So then they convinced her, and we chimed in, that her Fulbright was really to the *Nación Maya*, to the Maya Nation, and that Guatemala was part of that, and so she should be able to come over and do that. Well, she thought it was a wonderful idea. She really wanted to do it, but her Spanish was probably not up to it. Her Spanish was very rudimentary at that point. So she said she would do it if we would come. We were working in Mexico that summer, we weren't living there anymore. So we decided we could come back, and about a month later we met her in Antigua, and we held the first hieroglyphic workshop for Maya Indians, and nobody else could come, only Maya Indians could come. There were lots of other people that wanted in but they couldn't. So we had this workshop, and I think the text that she wanted to use was the 96 Glyphs, which is so poetic, and we were trying a new technique because she couldn't explain everything she wanted to in Spanish. I was doing some translating for her, but she was up at the front of the room, at the screen, and we had an overhead projector, which was her technique by then, and Nick was cutting the inscription into little glyph blocks, and I was placing each glyph block on the overhead projector screen. Of course, that kept moving, and I was trying to tape them down or something like that. But we were showing them how to do structural analysis, and they were getting it, and we had a wonderful time. They really learned well, and we learned a lot from working with them. But during that, one of the people in the crowd in the group said that he thought that this book she had written, The Blood Of Kings, really showed the Maya in a bad light, and that it made out that the Maya were war-like, and that that was not really what they were all about, and they didn't like that presentation. I think Linda was taken aback by that. But we got to talking about it to them, and talked to them about the fact that our religion, Christianity, also had blood in it. It had blood sacrifice, the God that we worshiped, Jesus, had been sacrificed, killed, and that when we commemorated that act, some Christians believe that they're actually drinking the blood of Christ. So this seemed to calm them down, and I think ...

Nick Hopkins: Well actually, a lot of them said, "Okay, okay, look. This is an issue for some people, but I mean this is just not an issue for us. Let's get on with it."

Kathryn Josserand: Right. "Let's get on with it, let's get on to the hieroglyphs." So that was the first workshop. And after that, I think Linda really enjoyed working with the Maya so much that she began making this an annual event. She would go down every summer. Pretty soon Nikolai Grube started working with her. Occasionally we would come through and work with them, or we also would, whenever we were in Guatemala, we would give a workshop to them.

Q: How did the Maya react when, <inaudible> first workshop? Like how did they respond to getting this material?

Nick Hopkins: Well, after that first day when Kathryn gave her paper, and the guys came up to her after the paper and said, "You were showing Maya hieroglyphics there on the screen." And "Yeah," she said. "It looked like you could read those." And she said, "Yeah, we can pretty well read those now." "Okay, we want to know that. Right, we want to know that." We said, "Okay, we do workshops. We've got tomorrow off. Let's meet tomorrow morning, we've got some material with us, we'll get it duplicated," and so on. So we went in, and we started doing the Cross Tablet, right. Starts off ...

Kathryn Josserand: Which is all births.

Nick Hopkins: Starts out with mythology and so on, but it ends up with the births of the Gods, and then it goes through the birth of the Kings, and the birth of the next King, the birth of the next King, we're about five or six births down the list, and we said to the guys, "Do you see what this is?" And one of the guys looked up and says, "*Es un registro de nacimentos!*."

Kathryn Josserand: "It's a birth registry!"

Nick Hopkins: "It's a birth registry." So they said, "Whoa, this is our history." They said, "This is what they've always kept from us, this is what we want to know." So then the next day we all took them off to Copán, and you know, that was the beginning of that whole thing.

Kathryn Josserand: But that's what they think about this. They think that this is their history, and they want to know everything that the academic world knows about hieroglyphs, and they're getting there. Today, for many years now, there have been groups of Mayans from Guatemala especially, a few from Mexico who have come up to the Austin workshops, and they have been working on hieroglyphs consistently.

Q: Thank you. I mean, I really got it. Thank you, thank you so much. That was the last little bit that I sort of missed. It's that moment when they…<inaudible>.

Nick Hopkins: …they start to realize what <inaudible> [it is.] Oh, whoa, this is what we've been looking for, right?