We are pleased to present the proceedings of the twentieth annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society.

To celebrate our twentieth anniversary, BLS decided to dedicate the conference to the contributions of Charles J. Fillmore, in recognition of his influence on the field of Linguistics, and as a thank you from BLS officers past and present.

The idea of dedicating the conference to Chuck was received with great enthusiasm. It soon became clear that, rather than focusing on a narrow topic, in the form of a parasession, the most natural way of honoring Charles J. Fillmore, grammarian-at-large, was to announce our dedication as the theme of the General Session as a whole and to invite papers from all areas touched upon by his work.

The response to this proposal was more than enthusiastic. We were overwhelmed by the eagerness of the conference participants to honor Chuck and to thank him. Special thanks to Matt Shibatani and Sandy Thompson, who allowed BLS to provide the forum for a surprise announcement of the publication of two volumes that they edited together, both of which are dedicated to the guest of honor: Essays in Semantics and Pragmatics: In Honor of Charles J. Fillmore (Benjamins), and Grammatical Constructions: Their Form and Meaning (Oxford). Sincere thanks to Eve Sweetser who also was at the center of this delightful conspiracy.

We would also like to thank Barbara Kaiser and Josh Guenter, without whom the task of organizing the conference would have been overwhelming. Numerous other members of the Linguistics department at Berkeley also helped to make the conference possible, among them Collin Baker, Kevin Moore, Ju Namkung, Sonda Reiman, Jocelyn Rybka, Laurel Sutton, Natasha Warner, and Comfort Wentum. Leela Bilmes put together an incredible conference party, which everybody who was there will remember for a long time, and which many who weren’t there will have heard about by now. We are grateful to the Office of the Dean of the Graduate Division for providing extra funds for this special event, and we are also grateful for the support we have received from the Linguistics Department chair, Larry Hyman.

We hope that you enjoy this volume!

The editors of BLS 20

Susanne Gahl
Andy Dolbey
Chris Johnson

An "introduction" to Charles Fillmore
by Eve Sweetser
(presented before Fillmore’s BLS 20 paper)

The introduction of an honored speaker is the kind of situation where general Gricean maxims are at war with more context-specific conventions and intentions. How many people in my position have begun with "this is someone who needs no introduction" - and gone on to do the introducing?

I might succeed in giving an informational introduction this evening by citing aspects of Charles Fillmore’s career less familiar to the present audience: you might thus encounter Charles Fillmore the part-time Africanist, to whom a paper was dedicated at Friday’s Africanist session - or Charles Fillmore the phonologist - or perhaps Charles Fillmore the sky-diver and lambada dancer, whose photograph appears on our department bulletin board together with his statements about his hobbies. Maybe you can meet the lambada dancer at the BLS party this evening. But Chuck at least will be relieved to hear that this introduction will mostly be a more traditionally framed, if less informative, type of speech act, focusing on Charles Fillmore in his roles as generative and transformational grammarian, generative semanticist, case grammarians, frame semanticist, and construction grammarian. All of these definitions, however, are too narrow for someone whom I prefer to call both grammarian and cognitive scientist.

This conference honors the work of Charles Fillmore on the occasion of his approaching 65th birthday. It is a particularly joyful gathering for me, and as both Chuck’s former student and his present colleague, I’ll do my best to express sentiments that I hope may represent some of yours as well. As a fellow Minnesotan, I’ll begin by happily reminding all of you that Chuck is a native of St. Paul, and began his linguistic studies at the University of Minnesota. After a detour or two, including a teaching job in Japan, he returned to the Midwest to do graduate work at the University of Michigan, where he received his Ph.D. in 1961 with a thesis entitled A System for Characterizing Phonological Theories. This Fillmore the phonologist joined the faculty of the Ohio State University, also in 1961. His work in the early 60’s includes well-known papers on the ordering of syntactic transformations and their relationship to the rest of the grammar. The late 60’s saw the publication of "The Case for Case," "Towards a Modern Theory of Case," and the 1970 "The Grammar of Hitting and Breaking," all of which developed a theory of case roles as essential components of grammatical theory. We may in fact note that 1993 was the 25th anniversary of Case Grammar, if we date it from the 1968 appearance of "The Case for Case."

A fascinating aspect of case structure is its situation as an interface between lexicon and syntax, which may explain its particular fascination for a lifelong syntactician who is also a lifelong lexical semanticist. The 1970’s saw, as well as the 1977 publication of "The Case for Case Reopened," the appearance of a series of Fillmore articles on the structure and nature of lexical representation, and also the series of Santa Cruz lectures on deixis, of which "May we come in?" was later published in Semiotica. At the same time, Chuck was also working on idioms and
formulaicity, among many other issues. During the 1970’s, graduate students at Berkeley were lucky enough to get a lexical semantics course team-taught by Fillmore, Paul Kay, and George Lakoff, who were already working together closely and developing a very new perspective on linguistic meaning. The ideas of Frame Semantics which Chuck developed during this period are of course also represented in his 1980’s articles such as “Frame Semantics” (1982), and “Frames and the Semantics of Understanding” (1985). The concept of a lexical frame has been one of Chuck’s crucial contributions to current cognitive linguistic theories.

Construction Grammar, the current grammatical framework of which Chuck has been one of the principal architects, incorporates insights from his earlier work on case, on frames, and on partial idiomaticity. And this brings me to his recent work - for example, Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor (1988) on “Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: the case of let alone;” Fillmore’s 1992 Presidential Address to the Linguistic Society of America, on “Home;” his recent lexical semantic work on risk; and a number of insightful articles on conditional constructions in both English and Japanese, some of which have influenced my own recent work very strongly. Within construction grammar, we should properly no longer separate the lexical and syntactic strands of Fillmore’s work. His work with Sue Atkins is part of his long-term dedication to corpus-based linguistics, rather than dependence on speaker intuition alone. Papers such as those presented yesterday by Ohara and Yamaguchi Fuji show the extent to which Chuck has also constantly been involved in - and fostered - work on the syntax and semantics of Japanese, as well as that of English. The conference as a whole testifies to the impact of his work on our general understanding of grammatical structure. There is no doubt that he has brought the field a very long way, in his journey from transformational grammarian to Construction grammarian.

Chuck has received various awards, ranging from his 1984 election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, to the “Hero of Construction” medal awarded to him unofficially by the President of the International Cognitive Linguistics Association at that organization’s 1991 meeting. He has served as President of the LSA, and as chair of the Governing Board of the Cognitive Science Society. He serves on the editorial boards of multiple journals.

During my own graduate work at Berkeley, among the topics of courses I took from Chuck were: syntax and lexical semantics (of course), lexicography, idiomaticity, speech act verbs and metapragmatics, and Field Methods. Yes, in fact two field methods courses, since a large portion of the Finnish Field Methods class was so impressed with Chuck’s teaching methods that we decided to retake Field Methods when we discovered that he would be teaching it again, this time with Bakweri (a Bantu language of Cameroon) as the language to be investigated.

As I said, this conference demonstrates the contribution of Chuck’s thinking to that of many of the participants, both his colleagues and his students, all of whom are like me aware of our debt. Not even Chuck can give all his students his acuity, his genius for distinguishing subtle contexts and thinking up potential counter-examples, or his compendious knowledge and his ability to connect distant pieces of linguistic puzzles, any more than all of us can acquire his deadpan approach to a wicked pun. We have hopefully learned other things, though. We have come to appreciate the need to work on lexicon and syntax side-by-side, to deal with clines of freedom versus formulaicity, and to approach language in context rather than out of context. As a footnote to Haj Ross’s comment this evening that Chuck has given us “many wonderful examples,” let me cite a salient one. In a graduate course where Chuck was discussing the idea of neutral context, he recounted the proposal of an early transformational grammarian that one imagine that the neutrally contextualized sentence had arrived as a message in a bottle, sender unknown. Said Chuck, “I can’t imagine a more marked context.” I can’t imagine a better example, either in the sense of a scholarly information-nugget or in the sense of a teacher’s guidance of students, and it has obviously stuck with me over the intervening years. We have also, I think, all acquired from Chuck a profound respect for the complexity of linguistic structure, and a consciousness of the importance of detail and thorough description as a basis for any broad theoretical statements about language.

In short, Chuck has set a high standard against which to measure our efforts at linguistic analysis. As a teacher, an advisor, and a colleague, he sets an equally high standard of kindness, patience, honesty, hard work, responsibility, and concern for his community. Both of these standards might be daunting, if Chuck were less modest. So another thing which he wasn’t trying to teach us, but which I think we all learned anyhow, and which I think we share with a large community, is a deep admiration and affection for Charles Fillmore.