Remembering Mei Liang Bickner
By Chris Knowlton

Mei Liang Bickner, a woman of joy, determination, and integrity, passed away on September 1, 2016. Her daughter, Su-Yin, survives her.

Mei grew up in Jakarta, Indonesia and immigrated to the United States in 1958 to study sociology at UCLA. She earned her bachelor’s degree there in 1962 and went on in the university’s graduate school of management to earn an MBA and a doctorate in industrial relations, with an emphasis on labor-management relations. Mei taught in UC Irvine’s graduate school of management until 1968, when she joined California State University at Fullerton as a professor of management.

She was an exceptional teacher. Her collective bargaining simulation class at CSUF was legendary for bringing students together with federal mediators, union leaders, HR representatives, and labor attorneys. Her work at the University influenced many students to choose a labor relations career. Mei also regularly appeared on NAA programs, as a panel speaker or workshop leader. She particularly enjoyed teaching skills sessions for advocates and designing hypotheticals highlighting cutting-edge arbitration challenges.

Mei worked at the highest level of the arbitration profession, and was sought after for the most complex and industry-defining cases. In her last days, advocates expressed to her their admiration, affection, and respect. One wrote describing her as having a “brilliant mind, kind spirit, constant humility, ability to listen for and discern truth, and a presence that instills great confidence in everyone in the room.” He said working with her made him a better advocate and a better person.

Mei embodied the enjoyment of shared work and collegiality that is the heart of the
Academy. She was a devoted member who regularly attending meetings with Su-Yin and her husband Robert, who pre-deceased her in 2015. She led and contributed to numerous committees, and served on the Board of Governors. She will be remembered for her love of dancing the night away at our annual Dinner Dance, her photographs capturing our times together, her friendship, and her many kindnesses.