

SLAVIC NEWS

SUMMER 2004

Slavic Languages and Literatures, Box 353580
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-3580

LETTER FROM ACTING CHAIR JAMES AUGEROT

Galya Diment is off doing what professors do during a sabbatical, and the onus has fallen on me to go to all the meetings and ride herd on the delinquents, but the office includes the honor of addressing my thoughts to you in our newsletter. The good ole department is still alive and kicking. You probably know that we got two new assistant professors last year and a new lecturer in Russian for this year. Enrollments held steady, getting us back up to numbers in first-year Russian where we can anticipate reestablishing the Russian House on a regular basis. It is not a done deal yet, but we will be negotiating for it this coming year. We are missing all our retirees, but most will be at Homecoming this fall to reminisce with whoever feels the need.

We are in the midst of a university-wide appeal for endowment funds to help us remain consistent in the times of severe budget fluctuations that began a couple years ago but seem to persist long after the primary causes have disappeared. If anyone would like to see the department put one or more of our "Second Slavic Languages" on a firmer basis, now would be the time to make a small (or large) donation in the name of your favorite tongue. We had to put Polish and Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian on an alternating year basis a few years ago and barely get in a little Bulgarian and Romanian on an irregular basis. I put in a thousand for a "Balkan Language Fund" a couple years ago, but it hasn't grown enough yet to even make it onto the books (it takes at least \$25,000 for that). I hope someday to see an endowed Teaching Assistantship that would free up our hardworking East and South Slavic specialists to teach their specialties in linguistics and literature/film studies yet allow us to always have at least first year in these languages on a yearly basis. If we can just get a couple of these funds started well, we can probably parlay some competition among the languages into some larger corporate or governmental support.

Enough of my begging. I wish all of you a fine summer and invite you to visit us sometime. We had a great gathering this spring at what we have named the UW Slavic Fest. There were eight national groups with kids in costume and folk musicians marching around Red Square, followed by fine performances by youngsters of all stripes in Kane Hall after a previous night of revelry at the traditional Cyril and Methodius celebration at the Polish Home. Lots of this was directly attributable to our alumna, the incomparable Mary Sherhart, but many others collaborated, including the first ever Bosnian-Herzegovinian community group and a rag-tag set of tourists carrying the banner of the new Rossiya. We hope that next year's festivities will be even bigger and better with all groups enthusiastically represented. I am going to a meeting tomorrow night to set the dates and venues for next year. Anyone within shouting distance is encouraged to join our Association of Alumni and Friends of the Slavic Department. Get in touch with Shosh or Michelle for more information.

I'M ALIVE AND WELL

As you may recall from our last issue, Matthew Scott Brauer is a senior honors student double majoring in Russian and philosophy. Scott received a Bonderman Honors Travel Fellowship, enabling him to experience an imaginative and focused Wanderjahr.

6/14/04 Tomorrow, I leave Germany for the U.S. A night in Chicago and a night in Billings, MT, and then I'll be in my very own bed. It's a strange feeling, ending the adventure. But, I also look forward to pancakes and cornbread and big pepperoni pizzas. It's been two and half months since I've last sent a message, and I have been busy. I wanted to let everyone know that I am, in fact, still alive.

I spent the past month in Belgium, Luxemburg, and Germany, alternately living with graffiti writers and finding hostels. My time was well spent. In Belgium, with a writer named Waf (it's only his graffiti name), I found myself in Turkish theaters and French elementary schools and abandoned train stations, following him around as he carved out his idea of what graffiti was. There were writers I met in Ghent and Brussels and Antwerp, the only real commonality being an insatiable need to make the world a little more colorful. In Luxemburg, I was with the ID Crew, writers Odnok and Dalt1, as we painted vans in the Luxemburg countryside or put up posters on wildlife bridges. There, on the lookout for wild boars — "They kill people," Dalt1 tells me as we're already halfway into the dark, dark forest — and deer, it's like war photography: fast-paced, always watching your back, and adrenaline shooting through every limb. And in Germany, I met people from Poland and France and Greece and Brooklyn, all of whom descended on the country for the summer graffiti jam circuit. These people are good, really good, and companies pay for their paint and their troubles. There

are only a few people who manage to make a full-time living from graffiti, but a lot of people make a good summer of it. And then there are some of the smaller writers, like Yok7 in Wiesbaden or Main1 in Weimar, burrowing into their local streets with stickers and small, couple-color pieces...it's the ugly graffiti that you see everywhere, but everyone gets their start somewhere. And testament to the many, many faces of graffiti everywhere, I can't seem to find a writer who agrees with the next one down the wall on what, exactly, graffiti is.

Waf, back in Belgium, after an all-night party with his crew, Team Alost, and people who had traveled in from all over the country, even tells me at one point that what he does is not graffiti. He doesn't write his name as a tag, and instead he draws little one-line babies. "Everyone's got an ego, everyone is angry, and I say 'fuck it' so I make babies and puppies. Everyone likes babies and puppies." And yet, I met people in Poland and Germany and Greece and New York who knew his name and his babies. He's part of the whole reason that I came to Europe to look at graffiti — things here are changing. Companies like Montana and Belton Paints have taken this old American art form and put it on its head. A guy from Germany who writes "Kiam" as his name, in fact, has helped these companies develop new paints of varying color content, pressure, and can-size. His role, like the rest of the semi-professional graffiti writers in Europe, is part of what makes graffiti in Europe completely different from graffiti in the U.S. Here people do not associate the art with gangs or violence, cities sponsor large murals or let writers paint abandoned buildings as a way of beautifying the broken streets of the big cities. Because of this atmosphere, new styles show up every year, concepts of color and

composition take precedence to "getting up" and the egos present in past years of graffiti. The writers spend as much time looking at the works of El Greco as they do looking at old Dondi or Loomit murals. The scene, in a word, is exploding and no one sees an end in sight.

Before all of this, there were a few days spent in an abandoned and fortified Warsaw (May 1st EU integration celebration and expected riots around the World Economic Forum meeting had locals saying it looked like a war zone), a few sick days in Lithuania, and a bit of time in Latvia which convinced me that Legos must be a European invention. And April was a half-mad month in the most northwesterly part of European Russia.

I'd no real idea where to go or how to do what I wanted, that is to meet tribal reindeer herders, but a little city named Vorkuta seemed like the right place. It's the last stop on a two-thousand kilometer rail line from Moscow (in fact there's one further stop, about 20 miles further past the Arctic Circle, but the note next to it on a map I found is translated a bit like "not fit for habitation") and it's had a colorful history switching between Russian governance in the Komi Republic and autonomous tribal governance under the Nentsy and the Komi autonomous regions. But it's also placed in a perfect spot for a watering hole between the mountains and the Arctic Ocean. The Nentsy tribe, who've been herding reindeer in the area for at least a couple thousand years, spend their summer in the Urals, where pastures are plentiful and the sun is bright, and move toward the ocean as the snowdrifts get taller.

Meeting some of these people was a gamble, and weather cemented my failure in actually going out into the tundra. Ignat Ignatevich, a big city businessman who's recently helped his own company and a few

Scandinavian corporations turn small-time herding into world-wide exporting, told me I could charter a helicopter and hire some guides to go out, but people from his company, with whom I could go for free, would be waiting at least a month to make the arduous trek to the herds and the chooms, teepee-like dwellings made of reindeer skins.

But I'd also wanted to meet someone like Ignat Ignatevich. His wealth was obvious, and it confirmed what I'd heard about the riches to be made opening up traditional Russian lifestyles to Western-style capitalism. In their fur coats and imported leather boots, he and a Nentsy herder, who'd moved from the tundra to the city in search of opportunity and found his place as an accountant at Ignat's company, expressed no shame in making a profit from the old ways of life, and probably they shouldn't. Their lives are much better and so are those of a lot of the herders. But the herder-cum-accountant couldn't help but tear up a little, repeat the word "industry" a few times, and say that a lot of the old ways have disappeared.

Then, on my last day, I run into Volodya, a tribesman who still lives in the tundra and travels everywhere by reindeer. I interrupt him as he and some others are scrounging around an abandoned building for usable wood. He's willing to talk, because it might mean some money, he tells me. When the weather's good, as it was only on my last day in Vorkuta, the tribes travel to the cities and charge money for rides on their sleighs. He's dressed in traditional reindeer-skin clothing, save for a pair of sunglasses now missing one earpiece, and it's obvious he's having a hard time making ends meet. "We can't sell our meat. The businesses have their meat in all the stores. It's hard. But we've been at this for a while. The kids still want

to herd. I love the tundra," he says with a tribal accent in decent-enough Russian. I ask him whether there are problems between the tribes and the Russians, and besides the tough competition for selling reindeer meat, he has nothing but good things to say. And this confirms what I'd learned earlier at one of the many tribal boarding schools scattered around the Russian hinterland.

I'd gotten a tip from a museum curator in Vorkuta about a "kindergarten," as it is labeled, in one of the outlying settlements. Across 20 kilometers of blinding white and fierce cold and I'm standing outside a nondescript, snow-banked building. Inside are at least 50 young Nentsy, from 3 to 15, who live there for the cold months and learn everything from Russian and mathematics to how to write the tribal language and how to use a toothbrush. The kids love it, but they miss the tundra. The boys gather rocks around them — little herds — while the girls carve sleighs or sew bedding for miniature cradles. They spend a good deal of time outdoors. Nadezhda Konstantinovna, director of the boarding school, explained that since the children spend so much time outdoors while in the tundra — indeed they never properly go indoors — the school tries to give them as much time outside as possible. At this school that means at least half the day, no matter the temperature. And it was 30 or 40 below while I was out there; the smallest children stayed indoors for safety, of course.

And that's what's been going on. There are no regrets about the trip, though there are plenty of things I'd do differently. Now I've got to work on the photos. I'm daunted by the thought of processing 200 rolls of film by hand.

25 YEARS AND COUNTING...

by Michelle Foshee

Ann Romeo and Shosh Westen were recently seen chatting at the Cyril and Methodius Day celebration. The conversation was the class of '79, now celebrating its 25th anniversary. It is a joy that the graduates from this class have taken some interesting career and life turns. In honor of this silver anniversary, we are going to see what these alumni are doing. The themes that run through the letters we received are a continued appreciation for the language training received here, fond memories of the Russian House, and curiosity about long lost former students.

Thanks to all who responded. Here is a sampling of the emails we received:

First, as a matter of interest, I (**David Hopper**) am coming back to Seattle on vacation on July 3rd to July 6th. Anyway, I plan to make the UW one of my stops and of course the Slavic Department. I am assuming there are summer classes happening and the department is open for a visit at that time? I hope to see you and whoever might be there I might know. This will be my first visit to the Seattle area in over 24 years, as I left the area March 1980 to resettle in the San Francisco Bay area where I grew up. Since 1993 I've been living in the Phoenix area.

Also, I am interested in what's become of some of the members of class(es) I took from 1977-79. The only names I can remember are: John Gallant, David McKee, Michelle Smit, Linda Tapp, Jackie Kaminski, David Turner, Alan Mustard, John Strange, Dan Catrell. There were many others. All of these people were former members of the Russian House.

Regarding questions:

1. What are your favorite memories of the department?...perhaps of your professors, classmates or Slavic L & L events?

I have to say my "funnest" moments were not necessarily in class, as I was struggling with the language at that time. That changed later on. But the linguistic knowledge I got from Nora Holdsworth, Jack Haney, Herb Coats, James West, Zoya Mikhailovna, Willis Konick (and others I'm forgetting) provided a basis for understanding and actually learning Russian later after I left the UW.

Some of my favorite moments were at the Russian House, of which I was a resident and manager once. I enjoyed the cultural events, the plays, the folk dancing and songs. Of course, the point - at least then - of living in the Russian House was to speak Russian. We actually did manage to speak some Russian - some of the time. I also remember Liza and Evgenii Smirnov - the "house parents", who I've heard have passed on.

2. What did you learn at the Slavic L & L that stayed with you?

It wasn't until 1988 that I finally went on a tour of the former Soviet Union. This literally changed my life as I met my wife because of this trip. Both my wife and I were and still are involved in citizen diplomacy. This gets into a tangential interest of mine, that of sharing a spiritual connection with people we've met in Russia. We have close Russian friends here in the Phoenix area, whom we've known since 1994. Anyway, I met my wife in 1989 and she as a 6th grade social studies teacher set up a situation in Moscow where we could live and work for a time. She succeeded and we got visas to stay in Moscow for 6 months. Both of our visas got extended as my wife JoAnn got a position as a local hire at the Anglo-American School and I worked for the LA Times. My job required my Russian skills, in that I had to ensure that the mini-newspaper "NewsFax" got delivered daily to Soviet government officials as well as the diplomatic community of other nations. Our stay in Moscow lasted a total of 17 months. We still have a number of friends in Moscow, Kiev and St. Petersburg from our experience.

While in Moscow, I took advantage of the opportunity and hired a tutor to expand my Russian conversation skills. Thanks to Nora Holdsworth's drilling back in 1978 (for which I'm very grateful) I had not only a strong foundation of grammar but also my vocabulary was pretty strong too. My language skill got so good that

Russians thought that I came from Eastern Europe and never did they guess I was American. Our experience in Moscow was quite interesting as we were living on the economy as Soviets in Soviet housing. That is to be compared with foreign housing, which was somewhat better living standards. It was worth it since at the time the U.S. Embassy demanded of its personnel a "non-fraternization policy" with the Soviets. We were free to come and go and meet with whomever we wanted, and this allowed us many adventures and fascinating experiences we definitely would not have had otherwise.

So in 1991 we came back to the U.S. and lived in the SF Bay Area until 1993, when we moved to the Phoenix area. Interesting, the "Russian Connection" as we've come to know it followed us here too as we have two Russian families that we're close to here. It is interesting, that even though I pick up a Russian book maybe once or twice a year, I can still read quite a bit and understand it too. I am not studying the language but I sometimes engage in conversation with our Russian friends. What's slipped the most is my vocabulary. The grammar, syntax and sentence structure are still excellent I've been told by Russians themselves. The ultimate compliment!

Oh, yes, my current occupation here in the Phoenix area is working as a technical writer for software at a company that promotes hospice.

Eto vsyo, gospoda! Vsevo khoroshevo.

David E. Hopper

Dear Michelle,

Your mailing about the Slavic L&L newsletter was forwarded to me recently, and I do have some personal details that I would be glad to share.

Favorite memories of the department:

- * Learning Czech in a tiny class with Professor Micklesen from his own textbook, meeting in his office. It was absolutely great. I looked forward to each stimulating class.
- * Learning about the rigorous principles of translation from James West. Many of the lessons I learned from him I still follow to this day in my professional life.
- * Learning about the Novgorod birchbark documents from Herb Coats.
- * Learning Old Church Slavic from Jim Augerot and having the t-shirts made with a passage in Glagolitic script that said "I fell into the hole that I dug for myself."
- * And, of course, teaching intensive Russian summer quarter with Augerot.
- * Favorite activities outside of the academic realm: houseboat parties and swimming in Lake Union with Kit Adams.

I have worked full-time as a professional Russian into English translator for the past 20-odd years. I have been working for the International Monetary Fund in that capacity since 1991. Thanks in part to the skills I acquired at the UW, I was able to teach myself Latvian and Lithuanian, after being requested to do so by my supervisor at the IMF, so I also translate from those languages into English for the IMF. I have done translations for the World Bank, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague, NASA, and the MacArthur Foundation. I was certified as a Russian/English Court Interpreter in the State of Washington, and I did that work part-time for a number of years while I was translating. I have also taught Russian at the college level, in Ohio and at The Evergreen State College in Olympia.

A recent high point in my life was immigrating to New Zealand in November 2002. It is a stunningly beautiful country full of incredibly friendly and welcoming people. Because of the wonders of electronic communication, I am able to translate for the IMF from here.

If I won \$1 million, I would open a refuge for neglected dogs. I have been married for 24 years to Geoff Hughes, who is an architectural designer.

A big hello from down under to everyone at the Slavic Department.

Elizabeth Hewitt

CLASS OF 2004

by Michelle Foshee

What a delight it is to be on campus at the beginning of June! The sun comes out, the campus is in bloom, and around every corner is a beaming graduate in cap and gown. Graduates, their families and friends, and almost everyone from the Slavic Department turned out for our departmental convocation on June 12. Our convocation speaker, Professor Bruce Kochis, brought us back to the tumultuous years of the 1960s and encouraged us to stay politically aware and engaged. Our faculty presenters provided many humorous anecdotes about our graduates, and everyone came away knowing something about each graduate.



After graduation, these recent grads dispersed in all directions. Several will continue their studies abroad — in Prague, in Vladivostok, and in a TESOL program near Moscow. We're happy to report that some of our alumni have already found employment; one has a paid internship at the Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation and another — a double major in Russian and computer science — has a programming job lined up. Don't worry, though — he's already looking for Russian translation volunteer opportunities. We recently learned that one grad will earn his real estate license this summer and become the rare agent who can both sell homes and expound on the beauty of Pushkin. We've managed to convince one of our graduates to continue, and he starts the Ph.D. program this autumn. Our other sensible graduates have decided to relax and enjoy the beautiful summer before searching for jobs.

Our B.A. recipients include Phillip Belenky, John Belmont, Virginia Browne, Marisha Doan, Michelle Gantz, Clayton Hanson, William Harvey, Christine Hutchinson, Derek Juhl, Ekaterina Oulassevitch, and Marijana Pavlich. Our lone M.A. graduate is Lubov Penkova. Congratulations to all!

ALUMNI NEWS

For the past year **Gwyneth Barber** (B.A. 1996) has been living in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, working at the George Marshall Center, which runs various security studies programs for military and civilian officials from North America, Europe and Eurasia. "I am enjoying the job, traveling and generally loving life in this hiking and skiing paradise!"

Roy Chan (B.A. 2002) writes, "Nothing much going on here. Finished my second year of grad school and am teaching second year Russian during the summer session intensive Russian program in Berkeley. Everyone here is still trying to figure out what 'Governator' Schwarzenegger's administration will mean for the UC but still holding out hope that we will survive the budget crisis."

Amar Das (Shannon Gularte) (B.A. 1994) is enrolled in graduate school at the University of Alaska Anchorage in order to get an MBA degree. "I am taking two Russian classes this summer. After I fin-

ish the business program I hope to work with the local Alaska-Russian Business Center, so that I may use both my undergraduate and business degrees working with the Russian people. I would like to hear from any old classmates if they feel so inclined. My email address is amardasi@yahoo.com."

Camilla Hveding (B.A. 2001) just finished her certificate to teach English as a second language at The School of Teaching ESL in Ballard and plans to get an M.A. in Adult Education-Teaching ESL this fall. "I have not been able to use my Russian that often, but on occasion I meet some Russian speakers to practice with."

Sandra Layman writes that she continues to work as a freelance Romanian interpreter and translator. She is also a violin teacher and performer.

Don Livingston (Ph.D. 1998) began teaching Anusara yoga two months ago. He invites you to check out his web site: <http://azyoga.net/instruct-don.htm>.

NEWS OF FRIENDS

Elizabeth Smirnov, also known as Liza (Lisa) or Elizaveta Aleksandrovna, passed away on March 11, 2004 at the age of 97. Nora Gerbertovna Holdsworth, a steadfast friend, provided the following history of her life:

Liza lived in a number of countries and had command of several languages. Upon completing her secondary education, she enrolled in Moscow Art School, majoring in piano. She married George Feldman and had a daughter, Natalia, who died at age one, and a son, Alex. Soon after that Liza was widowed and found herself, together with her young son — during the turbulent years of World War II — carried by life's circumstances into one country after another. As the changing situations demanded, she received training in nursing and social work, professions she practiced for some time; she also performed factory work. In 1948 Liza and her young son emigrated to Paraguay, and shortly after that moved on to Uruguay. There she met and married in 1953 her second husband, Eugene Smirnov, a language teacher.

In spite of her usually rather intense activities, Liza always found time for friends, good music, theater and art galleries. She was a devoted wife and caring mother. In her younger years, theater, literature and poetry were also passions. She could recite by heart over 200 poems of her favorite poet, A. K. Tolstoy.

In 1972 the Smirnovs — both over 65 years old — emigrated to the United States, and in 1973, at

the age when most folks have already retired, they began a new career as house parents/educators at the Russian House.

Liza was endowed with a large heart and an “educated” soul and became a tremendously appreciated house mother to Russian language students, many of whom kept in touch with her long after the couple retired from the UW in 1978. Some of her students were still visiting her 25 years later.

In 2001, in their mid-90s, Liza and Eugene moved into the Columbia Lutheran Home, where Eugene died later that year. The bereaved widow, with no relatives in North America and in declining health, nevertheless was known at her nursing home facility as a great source of love and warmth and kindness for all. She had the unique gift of bringing out the best in others and getting their love to shine. When informed of her passing away after a brief stay at a hospital, the staff and administration had a hard time holding back their tears. When thanked for their wonderful, loving care of “Mama Liza” for the almost three years she had spent there, they responded to the effect that it was she who had brought so much love into their home and that it had been such a pleasure to care for her.

In summary, Liza lived a long life, full of difficulties, but she always had time and a kind word for others. She unconditionally gave of herself to those who were in distress, and in her comfort to mainly elderly persons she was unquestionably a role model to those decades younger. She is survived by her son, who resides in Montevideo, Uruguay.



Eugene Smirnov, Mary Reichert, Liza Smirnov

Ileana's Pix of Romanian Literature

by Michelle Foshee

The Mill of Luck and Plenty and Other Stories translated by Ionel Slavici (Columbia University, 1994) includes stories by Ionel Teodoreanu (One Moldavian Summer) and Mircea Eliade (Mystic Stories).

The Phantom Church and other Stories from Romania, edited & translated by Georgiana Farnoaga and Sharon King, contains a fine selection of 20th century short stories, including pieces by Eliade, Blandiana, Voiculescu, Cartarescu, and the modern author Ion Manolescu.

The works of philosopher, religious scholar and fiction writer **Mircea Eliade** appear in both of these anthologies. During his long, distinguished scholarly career, Eliade explored the role of myth in religion. His fiction uses the tropes of fantasy - mythic beings, quests for immortality, the hidden world behind the everyday – with a dash of erotic love thrown in.

The Bald Soprano, an “anti-play” by absurdist **Eugen Ionescu**. Disgusted by the banality of expression, Ionescu wrote this clever parody of a dinner party in which the characters’ useless blather prevents them from talking or even thinking about any issues of importance. Samuel Beckett fans will be right at home here.

Female poets have received well-deserved attention from translators and publishers. Ileana assures us that the following translations are excellent:

An Anthology of Romanian Woman Poets, edited by Adam Sorkin and Kurt Treptow (Columbia University Press, 1994)

Silent Voices, an Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Women Poets, translated by Andrea Deletant and Brenda Walker (Forest Books International, 1986)

Don't feel like reading? *Balanta (The Oak)* and *Nunta de Piatra (The Stone Wedding)* are this issue's recommended video pix.



UW SLAVIC FEST 2004

A picture's worth a thousand words...

Heartfelt thanks to Denis Basic for permission to use these photos. To see more from the UW Slavic Fest check out Denis's web site: http://homepage.mac.com/denis_basic/Menu16.html



GIFTS

Gifts to the Department play a vital role as we build and develop our programs. Below we recognize the generosity of individuals and companies who have made donations in the past six months.

•The *Friends of Slavic Languages and Literatures* fund is made up of gifts



expended at the discretion of the Department Chair. Gifts to this fund are invaluable, enabling the department to allocate funds wherever the need is greatest.

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