SLAVIC NEWS

SUMMER 2002

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

CELEBRATING THE COLLEGE'S TOP GRADUATE

This summer's issue of A & S Perspectives includes an article about the Arts and Sciences students who received Dean's Medals this year. One of those students is Slavic major Roy Chan, who wrote his honors thesis, "Mikhail Kuzmin: Towards a Critical Reevaluation," under the guidance of Professors Galya Diment and Gordana Crnkovic. With the permission of Nancy Joseph, we are proud to include her article, as well as several quotes which did not make it into the article.

Roy Bing Chan is in a rush to begin graduate school. He's headed for University of California-Berkeley on a five-year fellowship and can't wait to start. He's still in shock about that fellowship. And the Dean's Medal in the Humanities. And the President's Medal, which he accepted at commencement as the University's top student for 2002. Then again, Chan was amazed that he was accepted into the UW's Honors Program.

"I went to an inner city high school - Cleveland High School in Seattle - which frames expectations of what you're worth," says Chan. "When I got to the UW, I had to get over my self doubt."

Chan had always been a math wiz but also loved literature. In high school, a teacher encouraged him to take a comparative literature course through the UW's Summer Quarter. "I got a 3.9," he recalls. "It confirmed for me that is what I want to do."

As a UW student, Chan - who has a fascination with Soviet history - began studying Russian through the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures so he could read primary documents. He soon was hooked, both by the language and the department, and became a double major in comparative literature and Russian.

"I took a summer intensive course in Russian. I didn't plan to continue with it, but the Slavic Department just sucks you in. It made me feel good to be a student. I think it is perhaps the best humanities department at the UW. You go there and you are adopted. I go twice a week just for the free food!"

It helped that Chan has a natural ability with languages. "It's an extremely logical language. As a math person, that really makes sense. And the literature is great. It deals with basic philosophical issues of life and death, freedom, love and the pain of love. The department seems to attract people with a dark sense of humor, a wry view of life. Russian literature seems to appeal to that mentality."

"Astonishingly, he was able to skip third year Russian and go on to the fourth level, a feat akin to hopping the moon and pushing on to the sun," writes Willis Konick, associate professor of comparative literature, in his recommendation letter.

Konick has been a mentor to Chan, who hopes to do the same for other students when he becomes a professor. "Willis really took me under his wing," says Chan. "There were times I didn't believe in myself at all - but Willis did. I want to be able to do that for other students."

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

The Russian Context: The language behind the culture" (ISBN 0-89357-287-X), co-edited by Lecturer Eloise Boyle and Genevra Gerhart, was published by Slavic Publishers this spring. This companion to *The Russian's World* is a collectively authored monograph which sets itself the daunting task of quantifying the minimum level of cultural literacy necessary for serious foreign learners of Russian to appreciate and function properly in the Russian cultural context. Chapters are devoted to history, poetry, prose, children's literature, proverbs, theater, art, popular entertainment, geography, government, and science.

In "Underground Anti-Nationalism in the Nationalist Era," Donald W. Treadgold Papers, special issue on Nationalism, Culture, and Religion in Croatia since 1990, University of Washington, Jackson School of International Studies, 2001, **Professor Gordana Crnkovic** looks at the role of nationalism in Croatia from a different angle, in this case the attempt (and, as Crnkovic shows, failure) of the regime to transpose the exclusive nationalism prevalent in politics into the cultural sphere. By purging Croatian culture (films, music, literature) of any outside influence, particularly Serbian or Yugoslav, the government tried to replicate the ethnic homogenization that had taken place to a considerable degree at the political level throughout society as a whole. Rather than reject everything Serbian, many Croats continued to listen to Serbian bands or watch films from Belgrade, indicating that the "nationalist project" did not permeate Croatian society as much as the actions of the government made it seem. In other words, the "underground anti-nationalism" detailed in Crnkovic's chapter reveals that the characteristics of a government do not necessarily reflect the characteristics of the society as a whole, despite that government's deliberate attempts to exert its influence into the nation's culture. (From write-up by Vjeran Pavlakovic.)

Professor Galya Diment's "The Nabokov-Wilson Debate: Art Versus Moral and Social Responsibility" appears in *Discourse and Ideology in Nabokov's Prose*, ed. by David H. J. Larmour, London & New York: Routledge, 2002.

FACULTY NEWS

In January Affiliate Professor Michael Biggins began a 3-year term as Chair of the Bibliography and Documentation Committee (B&D) of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. B&D consists of five Slavic and East European studies librarians from throughout North America, plus one Slavic studies faculty member (currently, a Russian historian), who together develop an ongoing national agenda for Slavic librarianship and coordinate activities to further that agenda. As digital media gain in importance and as the publishing industry in Russian and Eastern Europe continues to set annual records for productivity, B&D will help to ensure that the North American Slavic studies community is provided with the information it needs.

Professor Galya Diment, who transitions from being Acting Chair to Chair for the next five years as of July 1, has been invited by the Executive Committee of ADFL to be a candidate for a seat on the committee in the category of Ph.D. granting institutions in Russian. The slate is printed in the fall bulletin and appears on the web; voting occurs in November. The Executive Committee, composed of nine chairs from different institutional types and languages, is largely advisory, however, they have a few duties: they plan three sessions for the MLA convention, members conduct the workshop for job seekers at the convention, and at the seminars they conduct the workshop for new chairs and help lead discussion groups.

STUDENT NEWS

Undergraduate **Jessica Blackford** is off to Poland, having won a Kosciuszko Foundation scholarship. This \$2009 award, given to only 29 students in the U.S. every year, will allow Jessica to study Polish language and culture at Jagiellonian University this summer.

Undergraduate **Matthew Keeton** was recently awarded the Military Order of World Wars for "outstanding scholastic and military skill, exceptional personal dedication, devotion and service to the ROTC program, bringing great credit to the organization, the school, and himself."

In May graduate student Lynne Walker presented "To Kuleshov from London: Law Preempts the Unexpected" at the Screening the Word conference at the University of Surrey in Guildford, Surrey, UK.

NEW GRADUATES

On June 15 graduates, family, friends and faculty gathered in Parrington Hall Commons for the Slavic Department's 9th annual graduation convocation. Our engaging keynote speaker, Mr. Emile Ninaud (B.A. 1967), owner of Champion Wine, kept the audience riveted with family stories that were dizzying in their geographic scope - from France to Russia, to Shanghai, and eventually to America.

Faculty members then introduced each of our graduates. The newest members of the Slavic alumni ranks include Roy Chan, Ethan Clark, Matthew Doxey, Timothy Doyle, Dorota Horton, Deborah Leslie, Janet Purdy, Nelli Tkach, and Anna Tolan. Karrie Renfrow earned her M.A. degree, and Laura Friend, now residing in Spain, recently passed her Ph.D. exams and now only needs to write her dissertation. Our graduates have big plans for the future: attending graduate school, writing bilingual children's books, researching borderline personality disorders, helping kids in Russian orphanages, and "remaining flexible" are some of the plans I heard mentioned. We wish them all well. Write-up by Michelle Foshee

COLORS OF IDENTITY

Questions about modern Polish art? Chances are, Tom Podl can answer them. Over the past 20 years, Mr. Podl has built an outstanding collection of Polish paintings, which are now on exhibit in Poland. He's an inquisitive collector, seeing the beauty on the canvas, and tracing the lives and histories of the artists who created them. Through collecting these paintings, this Polish American son has discovered his roots.

This exploration of his Polish identity, which he shared with the UW and local communities in a slide presentation at the Ethnic Cultural Center on April 6, began with the popularity of Alex

Haley's book, *Roots*. This led Mr. Podl to that most beloved of hobbies - stamp collecting. Looking at his growing collection of Polish stamps, he was drawn to those which depicted Polish art. His passion for stamp collecting faded, but an introduction to a group of people on the East Coast with Polish art for sale led to his first acquisition. A new, more enduring and consuming passion began.

This desire to learn more about where his family came from has led Mr. Podl to a fascinating niche in Polish history. He traces the path of many 19th and 20th century Polish artists to Paris, where the Cracow Academy of Art encouraged young

artists to go. They came together at the School of Paris, where their unique social and artistic style fueled an outpouring of work which is the core of Mr. Podl's collection.



Mr. Podl grew up in a Polish community in Chicago. He learned in this neighborhood the value of work, and commitment to education and religion. An underlying motivation for collecting this art is to show what Poles have contributed to the societies they live in. His collection is a tribute to his grandparents, who came to this country with nothing. The art in Mr. Podl's collection shows what artistic emigres created in lands that weren't their own, and that they have a place among the Masters of Europe.

Mr. Podl's collection is now touring Poland. Many of the paintings, created in Paris or Munich or St. Petersburg, have never been seen in Poland. The tour has been a remarkable success, and Mr. Podl has been at the openings in every city. The exhibit, appropriately entitled "Colors of Identity: Discovering My Roots through Polish Art," will stay in Poland until early next year. It will then be seen in Europe and will finally come back to North America in 2004. Perhaps, as Mr. Podl is a Seattleite, we can see it then.

Write-up by Michelle Foshee

C & M DAY 2002

In Galya Diment's words, "I believe this was one of the most successful C&M's we have had." Held on May 18 at the Polish Home on Capitol Hill, the event was dedicated to the memory of Mirko Spasojevic.

This year's event featured food by the Polish Home Ladies Auxiliary and entertainment by St. Sava's Children's Ensemble, Radost Children's Dance Ensemble, Radost Folk Ensemble, Druzhba, and Nisava, with guest soloist Mary Sherhart. As in the past, the Polish Home Ladies Auxiliary presented an award for the best Polish student; this year's award was split between undergrad Jessica Blackford and graduate student Dan Newton. Another tradition was also observed, that of holding a raffle, with proceeds going to the Slavic Alumni Club's scholarship fund. Finally, an official C&M t-shirt



was available for purchase. In Glagolitic text, the t-shirt says "I fell in the hole which I myself dug."



Thanks go to all participants and guests, sponsors (The Foundation for Russian American Economic Cooperation, MIR, Pogacha, and Polyways Travel), the 2001-02 Slavic Alumni Club Board and, in particular, Paul Kriloff and Denise Goforth, who were utterly instrumental in the event's success.

MIRKO SPASOJEVIC 1929-2002

Mirko Spasojevic was born in the village of Vuckovica, Yugoslavia, on December 22, 1929. He grew up under circumstances which were very difficult in some ways but rich in others.

It was the difficulties that forced him to escape from Yugoslavia on August 10, 1960. While his escape was successful, he was detained in refugee camps in Italy for two years before entering the United States on February 2, 1962.

Under the sponsorship of the Church World Service, he settled in Buffalo, New York. From there he made his way westward, through Chicago to Alaska, during which time he became a citizen of the United States. He arrived in Washington State

August 1967 where he maintained a home until his untimely passing. It was here, at the Koleda Dance Ensemble's kafana, that Mirko met his wife and life partner, Cheryl Carrier. He knew that she would be the love of his life on sight. They went on to build a life in



Edmonds and Vuckovica that spanned more than three decades, raising their sons Rade and Marko.

Mirko's wife and sons were the pride of his life. He could often be heard to say, "Maybe there's a man with a wife and sons better than mine. It is not for me to say. But honest to God, I do not think so."

While the difficulties forced him to escape his home, it was

the richness that buoyed his lifelong and fierce love for the village of his birth and the Serbian people. Over the past 12 years, he and Cheryl spent countless hours and energy raising money and taking medical relief to people in need throughout Sumadia. It was also during this period that they began construction on the home where they planned to retire in Mirko's beloved Vuckovica. Surrounded by relatives and loved ones, their dream materialized into a little patch of heaven with a garden and orchard.

Mirko's love of life was evident in so many ways. In his love of music and dancing, in his love for his friends, in his love for matchmaking, his love for his village and the Serbian people, his love for his family, and his love of God.

Mirko now rests in the Vuckovica cemetery with his ancestors on a hillside overlooking the home that he and Cheryl built with love. He would, no doubt, be honored to think of all his friends and family celebrating his life this year at an event commemorating Sts. Cyril and Methodius.

May his memory be eternal.

Write-up by Mary Jane Vujovic

Mirko was one of those bigger than life figures - like John Henry. From his personal history to his passions, he was nearly epic in proportion. It is the stuff of movies and folk tales. His path after escaping from Yugoslavia didn't take him to a quiet hamlet somewhere, but to the gritty city of Chicago and frontiers of Alaska. He selected his bride from a line of dancers on first sight. He loved her, their two sons and their home life with a steadfast commitment. That's not

to say Mirko couldn't be a flirt. His eyes twinkled and sparked enough to light anyone's flame, but innocently. "Larica, kako se kolica?" Many of us remember that melodious inquiry, "Larianne, how is your wagon?"

Really, it is impossible to separate Mirko from Cheryl. Their generosity seems to be boundless. I never knew a time when they didn't share their house with different and assorted wayward souls, and I was one of them. As a teenager, they gave me the refuge of their loving home. I hate to think what my fate might have been without them. They, in fact, probably saved my life. He gave of himself in so many ways every day. Mirko rose early for nearly every important event to get the fires going to roast a pig and lamb. He gave of his electrical expertise to countless friends and causes.

Back in the '70s the Balkan region was still mysterious and inaccessible. It was like finding buried treasure when a new recording made its way out of the mist, and it took real work to unearth song words and dance steps. Mirko was our link to the Balkans. He embodied the passions, the joy, the complexity. It was such a profound joy to me to dance U Sest next to Mirko, to try to match his styling and steps. I can see him so clearly with that slightly upturned head, so proud and so happy, leading the line. Periodically he'd shout out, "Adje, zivili svatovi." I had no idea what it meant, but it was a call of unbridled joy and full of the passion that drew us to Eastern Europe. His feelings for his homeland ran deep. I know that he is happy lying at rest in his beloved village of Vuckovica.

In the past ten years, our lives intersected less frequently than they had in the past, though I always considered him central to my life. When I saw him in the audience at December's Narodil se Mladi Kralj concert at St. James Cathedral, it felt like seeing my own father. It meant so much to me that he was there. The Monday after he died I rehearsed with Nisava. We started the evening off with Coban Tera Ovcice and Cuvam Ovce, two Serbian songs Mirko loved. I was flooded with warmth and love. He was there with us. Mirko will never be gone. He is inside each one of us who loved him and our community. Just look in your heart and you'll find him. Heart to heart as always.

Write-up by Mary Sherhart

ALUMNI AND FRIENDS NEWS

For the past two years **Gray Carpenter** (B.A. 1977), who works as a software project manager, has been living happily just north of San Diego with her 6th Basenji, "Beej."

Christopher Frank (B.A. 2001) will be heading to Harvard this autumn to study cell biology.

John Givens (Ph.D. 1993) and Laura Givens (M.A. 1993) had their second child, William Michael, on March 22, 2002 (daughter Anna Sophia was born on December 29, 1999).

Laura finished her second year as Senior Lecturer in Russian at the University of Rochester, where John is Associate Professor of Russian as well as the editor of Russian Studies in Literature, a journal of translations. He is currently researching a new book, tentatively titled "The Image of Christ in Russian Literature."

David Graber (Ph.D. 1996), Berlin, Germany, works as a freelance journalist and also writes and performs with the English-language theater company "Tuni In Toko." In May the group premiered its original work "Need," a set of five solo pieces about three failed relationships, including one between a woman and a knife.

Rachel Harrell's (B.A. 1993) translation of Jiri Weil's *Colors* (Barvy) has been published by Michigan Slavic Publications (ISBN 0-930042-87-5). According to Josephine Dickinson, Assistant Editor, "The subject matter -- stories about life as a Czech Jew during the Nazi Occupation -- is tough in places, but Rachel's translation is great."

In April the Seattle-based software firm Insightful Corporation (NASDAQ symbol: IFUL) promoted **Doug Johnson** (B.A., Russian Regional Studies 1974) to senior consultant.

Joon W. Kae (B.A. 1997) returned to Seattle last summer to start dental practice after finishing school in Boston. He has been married for almost four years to somebody "I met in J. Haney's Russian folklore class. Look out for Russian class romances!" He also writes that, "Russian came in handy treating Russian immigrant patients in the Boston area."

Sandra Layman writes, "I don't know if you would consider me an alumna. I used to study Romanian and ethnomusicology at the UW and work now as a Romanian interpreter and translator, as well as a musician. In any case, I have a CD out now of Balkan/East European violin music ("Little Blackbird: Klezmer, Romanian, Greek, Turkish, and Hungarian Music"), and it's gotten some very nice reviews nationwide." Info and links to reviews, etc., can be found at www.sandralayman.com. "Also, Alexander Eppler and I have resumed performing as a violin and cimbalom duo."

Scott Leopold (B.A. 1982) continues to challenge body and spirit by organizing the 5th annual Donor Party Crossing, a swim across Lake Washington to benefit the Puget Sound Blood Center.

Don Livingston (Ph.D. 1998) writes, "No news to report this round. Although I've now added yoga to my activities. It's glorious. Should have done it two decades ago."

George Nease (B.A. 1976) writes, "Good grief, out of the blue comes news from musty old Thomson Hall! What a pleasure. Thank you for sending me the newsletter, although I can't figure out how you found me...

"One of my proudest moments was finishing my B.A. with an "A" from 4th year intensive Russian, courtesy of Nora Holdsworth, Vadim Pahn, and the Amazing Gribanovsky. Declining employment from our brethren at Langley, I decided to study intensive Arabic for a while, then worked in the Arabian oil fields for four years. The Iran/Iraq war was getting too close to our rigs (turned out they were flammable) so I learned Thai and went to work in the Gulf of Thailand for four years...ahh. Then I studied Modern Standard Chinese and went to work in Shenyang for a year, then came back "home" and became a Cisco/Solaris network/Unix geek. Now studying Nihongo.

"Never made it to Russia, can you believe it? I'm jealous of all you grads who got to see it, feel it, taste it."

Melinda Olson (B.A. 1971) and Anna Olson (B.A. 1998) are hoping "to host our Petersburg friends in August. A first for them to visit the Northwest. We are still in the planning stage, but they have gotten their visas for travel here. It should be a great trip for them, including stays in both San Francisco and New York City. We will let you know when all is confirmed (& ticketed!)."

Dwight Roesch (M.A. 1982) continues as an interpreter,

working as a contractor for the international space station, UN and State Department. He will spend part of June in Geneva working at an arms control session, then vacation with his wife on a farm in southern France.

On June 3 Cheryl Spasojevic (B.A. 1967) left Seattle with mother Margaret Hord to fulfill her and husband Mirko's dream of retiring in his native Vuckovica. As someone who got to know Cheryl through the Slavic Alumni Club while working together on Homecoming and Cyril & Methodius Day celebrations, I will miss her greatly. I will miss her quiet, roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-it-done work ethic and the big hugs she always had at the ready. Best wishes, Cheryl, and don't forget us!

Heather Thorne (B.A. 1994) is living in Seattle again (and loving it), working as a consultant for McKinsey and Company, and trying to get out to the mountains every weekend now that she's back in the Northwest.

According to **Edward Vajda** (Ph.D. 1987), his only big news is that he has become an editor of *Word*, the journal of the International Linguistics Association.

Keoki Young (B.A. 1997) has been working as an administrator in Moscow from 1998 to the present.

Be sure to mark November 1 on your calendar - annual Slavic Homecoming celebration.

GIFTS

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

• Friends of Slavic Languages and Literatures Fund – for use at the discretion of the Department Chair. A special subset is used for outreach efforts to the public schools and the community at large.

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• The Lew R. Micklesen Graduate Fund is used for graduate student support.

Lew R. Micklesen

Vadim Pahn Scholarship Fund – used since 1989 to pay tuition for one student to attend the summer intensive Russian language program. This summer's recipient is William Harvey.

Burton E. Bard Jr.

Mark Kiken

Bruce McKinney

Susanna Westen

• Ever since 1996 a special subset of the *Institutional Allowance* has been used to provide the Nora Holdsworth Scholarship to the winner of the local Olympiada of Spoken Russian. The scholarship covers tuition to the department's summer quarter intensive Russian language program.

Nora Holdsworth

Jon Lehman

Susanna Westen

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