MG: For many years your research has focused on the Silver Age in Russian literature. Most recently you have redeveloped your research and teaching interest in Slavic folklore by redesigning and teaching the popular Introduction to Slavic Folklore course. Tell us about your engagement with Slavic folklore in terms of your research and teaching interests. What are you working on?

MC: My work on the Silver Age and my interest in folklore are not two different things — they stem from the same tvorcheskoe nachalo. I first became interested in the Symbolists’ use of folklore in literary texts (Andrei Belyi’s use of folklore, for example, in The Silver Dove). That interest segued naturally into the Symbolist’s interest in the magical world view and the occult. So my three passions — Symbolist art and literature, Slavic folklore, and speculative mysticism — are really three facets of a single research complex. By focussing on folklore at this point in my career, I have abandoned neither the Silver Age nor the speculative mysticism; I am simply examining a different part of my research vision. But each part feeds the other two, and all three revolve around a particular, metaphorical view of reality.

I embraced folklore as a graduate student. I worked with Prof. Felix Oinas and other faculty from Indiana University’s Folklore Institute. My first published article, as a grad student, was on vampires in literature. It is natural that my current project is a book about the Slavic “walking corpse” of folklore, its transformation into a European literary character, and its borrowing back into Russian culture. I am ready to write about that now, after 30 years of reading and thinking about it.

MG: Congratulations on being inducted into the Women’s Hall of Fame in spring 2009. You’ve always preferred to be a role model for scholars regardless of gender, rather than specifically advocating women’s issues. Has the award made you feel that your approach has been successful? How do you view the Hall of Fame induction?

MC: I don’t think of this induction as a “gender thing” because I have never thought of myself as specifically advocating women’s issues, as you put it. I have always sought to be true to my Self (and for me, that Self is not gendered). I think of the induction into the Women’s Hall of Fame as one of several ways in which my discipline, my institution, and my colleagues have recognized my academic work and my professional and administrative contributions. This does not mean I am blind to “women’s issues” in the academy, in our society, or in the world. I have personally encountered those issues in pleasant and unpleasant ways, but I have not let them steal my “thinking Self” from me. Instead, my personal strategy has always been to model professionalism, ethics, collegiality, and commitment to the best of my ability, and to assume that if I think my career speaks for itself, then others will think so, too. Positive action changes negative attitudes faster and better than words or ideological positions. So I am grateful to my colleagues for the recognition, and I don’t feel put in a box.
MG: You have seen the university from two perspectives, both as a most effective administrator, who raised the national prominence of REES, and as a most successful academic. What has changed both administratively and academically in your quarter century at KU?

MC: Everything. A revolution has occurred in higher education, although not everyone has noticed yet. The computer, technology, the internet, the culture wars, the self-esteem movement, American attitudes towards the perceived elitism of higher education, the collapse of the Soviet Empire, and a thousand other things have reshaped what we do today at the University and how we do it, why we do it. I’m not saying that this is good or bad, but that this simply is. I will retire from a completely different institution than the one that hired me (only the name remains the same).

MG: You have received a number of awards for teaching and mentorship. You are much sought-after as a mentor. What accomplishments are you proudest of with regard to your mentorship of students? Where are some of your students now who have benefited from your mentorship?

MC: I am most proud of the fact that I have created no personal “disciples.” I have mentored PhDs, MAs, and undergrads, students in SLL and students in History, Russian & East European Studies, Theatre and Film, Political Science, Education, English, and other disciplines. Every one of the students with whom I have worked closely has grown, evolved, gained confidence, cut the tie that binds (that’s important), and gone down his or her own life’s path toward his or her own goals. My advisees are not my product, they are their own product; my job was to fill in the gaps, give the occasional pointer, and provide a few tips here and there. This is not to deny that I have occasionally sat on a student’s head, but only if they needed it. And I’m the queen of pep talks — my forte.

Many KU graduates who have worked with me are now my professional colleagues in the academy (I do not think of them as “my former students”). But others have gone on to serve the nation, work in libraries (I have a soft spot for libraries and librarians), support higher education in various ways, improve their communities, and assume other valuable and worthy roles. I am enormously proud of each and everyone of them (you know who you are!), and I am grateful for the privilege of having played a role in their lives. They can like me or not (I’m not here to be liked), but I take pride in their talent, their independence, their ambition, and their achievements. (And I am smart enough not to name names in a publication.)

MG: Your Hall Center Lecture Series talk in 2007 “Culture and History Matter: Russia’s Search for Identity after the Fall” continues to resonate: after you gave it you were asked to speak on the topic at other universities and the video of the lecture has been watched from the U.K. to China to the United Arab Emirates (according to the KU Scholarworks usage statistics). Tell us, briefly, why culture matters.

MC: Who would have thought it? I am still getting e-mails from academics and non-academics about that presentation. Most recently I was invited to give
KU Slavic Goes Global

A recent headline from Inside Higher Ed declared “Russia(n) is Back,” affirming the observation that we have already made in the KU Slavic Department that Russian enrollments are rising for the first time since the end of the Cold War. In our internal discussions we had been predicting that globalization will not mean that the world will speak English, but that more people will need more languages. Americans who expect to be engaged in the world will have to engage in local and regional languages or be left out. Our view has been vindicated not only by seeing more bright student faces in our classrooms, but by the new streams of support from the federal government and other sources for the study of critical languages.

The increasing globalization of our world is reflected not just in our classrooms, but in the way we and our students now learn. What an eye-opening experience our new Slavic Department Friends and Alumni page on Facebook has been. Our current and former students are at once all over the world, posting from Ashgabat to Moscow to Zadar, yet are simultaneously interconnected in virtual reality. It heartens us to know that our students use what they know and keep learning when they leave our classrooms. Come join us on Facebook! And our Slavic “Doers’ Profiles” webpage (http://www2.ku.edu/~slavic/doers/doers.shtml) shows that our students use their knowledge to do meaningful things in their careers. Send us your suggestions for Doers’ Profiles!

The Slavic Department faculty now reaches globally without leaving its offices. An early adopter of KU’s new Open Access Policy (the first in a public university!), the Slavic Department’s faculty have been depositing their published papers into the KU Scholarworks digital repository. The usage statistics on our work indicate that our readership truly reaches every continent and nearly every country in the world.

Yet we as faculty and students also remain firmly grounded. We know it still takes hard work and dedication to know languages and cultures deeply. We continue to strive for quality and depth in our research and teaching. But keep your eye on us — you will see new developments, new connections, just as we maintain our commitment and ardor as strongly as ever.

CHAIR’S CORNER

Culture matters because culture gives us an understanding not only of other people and other cultures, but also of ourselves and our own culture. How can you understand your own culture until you have an intelligent (that’s the key word, isn’t it?) understanding of where your culture lies in the context of other cultures, both past and present? Understanding and meaning are born out of that context.

“Culture” is an enormous and all-encompassing subject, and daunting as well. Basically, it’s everything outside genes and reflex actions. It is what humankind has created, the totality of humanity’s legacy. How do you make sense of it? I have tried to find or create “tools to think with,” strategies and paradigms to help my students think coherently (and intelligently) about their culture, the cultures of others, the cultures of the past, about their place in the world, about how they relate to others (the “negotiations” among cultures). Culture is about identity and negotiation and connections — connections not only with other people in our communities and on our globe, but connections to the past and continuities into the future. Who are we without identity and connections but mere blades of grass?
To Friends and Alumni

The Slavic Department gratefully acknowledges the loyal support of many of its friends and alumni, who donate in amounts large and small to its Endowment funds each year. Private support has become more critical than ever as the university continues to receive an ever shrinking percentage of state support. The current economic situation has made the need all the more acute. The funds that our friends and alumni send to us go directly to improving our operations by supporting students, purchasing pedagogical and reference materials, and enriching the academic program in numerous ways. The faculty’s top priority is to build funds for graduate and undergraduate support. Whether you wish to establish a memorial fund in a special person’s name or donate incrementally, please consider sending us a donation. The easiest method is now the secure on-line donation site at http://www2.ku.edu/~slavic/donations/, which requires a credit card. Alternatively, donations may be in the form of a check made out to “KUEA - Slavic Dept.” with a note in the memo “Slavic General Fund.” If you prefer to donate to the Joseph L. Conrad Memorial Fund or Czech Opportunity Fund, please note in the memo accordingly.

Remarkable Faculty Accomplishments

The American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages named University of Kansas associate professor William J. Comer as the 2009 recipient of its Distinguished Service Award. He was cited by colleagues for his high-quality service to the organization. For example, from 2004 to 2007, he chaired the committee that organizes the association’s annual national meeting. He is the third faculty member from KU’s Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures to win a prestigious award from the association. In 2005, Professor Maria Carlson earned an Excellence in Teaching (Post-Secondary) Award, and Professor Marc Greenberg was honored for the Best Book in Slavic Linguistics in 2002. KU’s Slavic department is among the rare departments to receive multiple awards from this most prestigious national association.

The year 2009 was an eventful year for Professor Maria Carlson. After a hectic semester, Spring 2009 ended with her induction into the KU Women’s Hall of Fame on 21 April [see interview, p. 1] and her appointment as The University Marshal (which means that she gets to carry the KU Mace and protect the person of Chancellor from sudden and unexpected physical attack — OK, it’s not the Middle Ages anymore and the role is mostly ceremonial, but still); she also engages in advanced logistics and planning for Commencement, Convocation, Hooding, and other ceremonial events. On 11 April 2010, Prof. Carlson will serve as The University Marshal for the inauguration of KU’s new Chancellor, Dr. Bernadette Gray-Little. In Fall 2009 Prof. Carlson really enjoyed teaching the undergraduate general education course “Introduction to Slavic Folklore” and the “Survey of Slavic Folklore” for graduate students with reading knowledge of Russian or another Slavic language. With Prof. Perelmutter now a new member of the department, KU SLL offers serious expertise in folkloristics. Prof. Carlson trained with Felix Oinas and Richard Dorson at Indiana University; Prof. Perelmutter trained with Alan Dundes at UC-Berkeley. That covers the territory. Prof. Carlson is working on a new research project that both returns her to her secondary specialization in folklore research and uses her literary background: a monograph on the mythological personage of the vampire in Slavic folklore and Russian literature. Why should
Bram Stoker and his Dracula always get all the attention when the Slavs have Pushkin and Gogol’ and Odoevskii and A.K. Tolstoi and Turgenev (not to mention the original vampire figure of folklore)? Prof. Carlson continues to speak at conferences and by invitation on both Slavic neo-paganism and understanding culture (why culture is important and how to understand “culture”). She has been invited to speak on the semiotics of culture at a conference at Duke University on “Russian Futures: Contexts, Challenges, Trends,” in February 2010. Her service obligations remain undiminished. She continues as SLL’s Director of Graduate Studies and Convenor of the department’s Faculty and Graduate Colloquium. This year she served on a variety of committees and boards, internal and external; she served on several search committees; she chaired a review of a major KU research center; she was elected to a three-year term on the KU Graduate Council of the Office of Graduate Studies. Beyond KU, she was named to the Chair of the Board of the National Council on East European and Eurasian Research.

2009 has been filled with program planning and grant writing for Professor Edith Clowes, who is now in her second year as Director of the KU Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Among the highlights of an eventful year were visits by Moscow Conceptualist artist, Vitaly Komar and Polish poet and novelist, Izabela Filipiak. The “Fall of the Wall” semester featured an international conference on “Central Europe 1989: Lessons and Legacies” in October and a November community “Velvet Revolution Party,” featuring the visits of Slovak Ambassador Peter Burian and Czech Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel Koštoval and the staged reading of Karel Čapek’s play, RUR: Rossum’s Universal Robots, newly translated by SLL doctoral student, Eva Hruska. The part Prof. Clowes enjoys most about being director is working closely with REES faculty to enrich intellectual and cultural life at KU and across the Great Plains. Professor Clowes’s research life has continued, though a tad curtailed by administrative multitasking. Her new book manuscript, “Russia on Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity,” has been accepted for publication at Cornell University Press.

A research forum she edited on “Gorky and God-building” was accepted for publication in Modern Greek Studies. She gave a number of talks at KU and elsewhere. The year started with a noon talk in the CREES Laird Brownbag series, “Reaching for Utopia: The Avant-garde in Russian Art and Literature.” She delivered a keynote speech, “Eurasia on Their Minds: Russianness in the 21st Century,” at a conference at the University of Colorado on “Constructing Nation: From Modernity to the New Millenium.” 2009 marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of the famous Russian philosophical volume, Landmarks (Vekhi), an occasion that has brought with it a number of conferences and other gatherings. During the summer Professor Clowes’s paper on “Vekhi and the Post-Thaw Debate about Russian Intellectual Leadership: Solzhenitsyn vs. Pomerants,” was read in her absence at a conference at the University of Bristol in England. Another paper on the topic, “How To Be an Independent Public Intellectual in Russia: Solzhenitsyn, Pomerants, and Vekhi,” was delivered at the November AAASS meetings in Boston.

The 2008-2009 academic year was a busy one for Professor William Comer, who returned to full-time teaching after 10 years of administrative appointments. In January 2009 Slavica Publishers brought out his edition of Viktoria Tokereva’s story День без вранья = A Day without Lying. The edition provides facing-page glossaries, activities and a dictionary — everything needed to make the text accessible for intermediate students of Russian. The book’s companion website (www2.ku.edu/~russian/dbv/) provides lesson plans, audio, visuals for teachers, reading strategies and hints for students, and some links to sample the book’s contents for the curious. An article that he co-authored with Lynne deBenedette (Brown University), entitled “Processing Instruction and Russian: Issues, Materials, and Preliminary Experimental Results,” will be appearing in Slavic and East European Journal in Spring 2010. Professor Comer spent June and July in Russia participating in the ACTR’s Summer Teachers’ Program at Moscow State University. In August, he learned that American Association of Teachers of Russian and East European Languages (AATSEEL)
had chosen him for the organization’s 2009 Service Award. And in the second week of classes in the Fall 2009 semester, Professor Comer received a visit from the campus “Prize Patrol.” Just as he was about to launch into an analysis of Lomonosov’s poem «Вечернее размышление,» a group of KU administrators and colleagues walked into the classroom to present him with a W.T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence. This recognition, which brings with it a check for $5000, left him speechless as you can see in the video that KU has put on-line at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J55yAD1nlX

Professor Stephen Dickey has continued his aspectological research, publishing two co-authored articles in the journal Russian Linguistics: “Verbal Aspect and Negation in Russian and Czech” (with Susan Kresin of UCLA) and “Хохотнул, схватил: The Relationship between Semelfactives Formed with -NU- and S- in Russian” (with Laura Janda of the University of Tromso). He also published a short article on translation methods, “The ‘Third Language’ in Translations from Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian” in the SlavFile newsletter of the American Translators’ Association. He recently presented a paper entitled “Subjectification and the East-West Aspect Division” at the annual conference of the Slavic Cognitive Linguistic Association in Prague, Czech Republic. In spring of 2009 he taught a new course “The Ottoman Empire Cultural Formation of the South Slavs”, and is currently working on the production of an online version of the introductory course, “The Literature and Civilization of the South Slavs”.

Professor Marc L. Greenberg published “Prekmurje Grammar as a Source of Slavic Comparative Material” in Slovenski jezik / Slovene Linguistic Studies 7 and his “PIE inheritance and word-formational innovation in Slavic motion verbs in -i-” will soon appear in New Approaches to Slavic Verbs of Motion (Amsterdam: John Benjamins), edited by Viktoria Driagina-Hasko and Renee Perelmutter. In May 2009 he gave the twelfth annual Kenneth E. Naylor Memorial Lecture in South Slavic linguistics at The Ohio State University with his talk “The Line, the Which, and the War Trope.”

In September 2009 he gave the plenary lecture “The Meaning of South Slavic Dialectology” at the 6th Congress of the International Society for Dialectology & Geolinguistics, University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia. He has also been busy promoting critical and less-commonly-taught languages at Myrtle Naylor, Marc L. Greenberg, Brian Joseph, and Khia Naylor at the Naylor Memorial lecture, May 2009. Myrtle and Khia are Kenneth Naylor’s sister and niece, respectively. Kenneth Naylor (1937-1992) was a prominent specialist in South Slavic linguistics.
Marc Greenberg presiding

Elaine Cyzman, Danny Wolak, Malgorzata Stamm performing

Morgan Bahn and Marc Greenberg performing

Olana Chervonic, Anna Geselbracht, Prof. Svetlana Vassileva-Karagyozova

Ms. Marta Pirnat-Greenberg, Cody Brown, Diana Dukovoic, David Kozar, Prof. Stephen Dickey

Ms. Marta Pirnat-Greenberg and Shay Wood

Excellence in Elementary Polish

Excellence in Elementary Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

Excellence in Advanced Slovene
Excellence in Ukrainian

Bradley Serafine, Dr. Yaroslava Tsiiovkh, and Theresa Van Orman

Excellence in Elementary Russian

Ms. Eva Hruska, Ms. Mylissa Jones, Prof. William Comer, Anastasia Metzger, Marshall Beauchamp, Rhianna Patrinely

Excellence in Intermediate Russian

Mr. Sidney Dement, Anna Spendersky, David Samms, Ms. Erin Moulton, Lilian Boyce, Prof. William Comer, Alphilde Dick, Eva Rosenblumova

Excellence in Advanced Russian

Prof. William Comer, Professor Kerry Sabbag, Alexei Zoubine, Dezeree Hodish

Major Critical Language Scholarship

Prof. Kerry Sabbag, Michaela Boman

Special Awards Recognition

Prof. Stephen Dickey, Alphilde Dick
Harley Nelson Scholarship

Prof. Kerry Sabbag, David Samms, Prof. Marc Greenberg

Dobro Slovo Inductee

Stephanie Smiros, Prof. William Comer

Outstanding Service by an MA Candidate

Prof. Marc Greenberg, Natalie Bazan

Outstanding Service by a PhD Candidate

Prof. Marc Greenberg, Sidney Dement, Prof. Maria Carlson
KU by heading a task-force on them for KU’s new Center for Global and International Studies. The task-force’s report is now available on the CGIS website (http://global.ku.edu/resources/index.shtml). He has also served on the Faculty Senate’s task force on the implementation of KU’s Open Access policy. KU is the first U.S. public university to have such a policy and has spearheaded the movement with MIT, Stanford and Harvard. Parallel to this, the peer-reviewed journal (Hall Center for the Humanities, Slovenian Academy of Arts & Sciences) Slovenski jezik / Slovene Linguistic Studies became the first Slavic journal to be issued simultaneously in print and open-access in 2009 (http://www2.ku.edu/~slavic/sj-sls/); and the KU Slavic Department became an “early adopter” of the policy. The Department now has more than 100 publications archived in the KU Scholarworks database (http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/dspace/handle/1808/735).

Prof. Greenberg also played his guitar as a guest with the Carl Maria von Weber Guitar Orchestra and members of his Lawrence Guitar Quartet in Germany and Lawrence (including an appearance on KPR) in June and October, respectively. His German tour included his performance of Russian Roma music by Sergej Orexov (1935-1998). He also played excerpts from the opera Der Freischütz on his new Russian seven-string guitar in an arrangement by Andrej Sixra (1766-1851). The performance took place at the Max Kade Center in November 2009 as part of the ceremony for the acceptance of the Turner Archives.

Professor Stephen Parker, though now a .50 phased retiree, continues to be actively involved in Vladimir Nabokov-related matters. He remains editor and publisher of The Nabokovian (issues number 62 and 63 in 2009), the journal which he created, and secretary/treasure of the International Vladimir Nabokov Society, the organization which he formed. As one of the five executive members of the Vladimir Nabokov Foundation, activities this year were focused on the decision to publish Vladimir Nabokov’s last, unfinished novel, The Original of Laura (TOoL) and determining the form in which it should be presented, since the work had been written on a series of 4x6 cards. Dmitri Nabokov explained to the world his reason for publishing The Original of Laura in the Fall 2009 issue of The Nabokovian.

In the past year, Professor Renee Perelmutter enjoyed developing and teaching two new courses, Jewish Folklore (in Spring 2009) and Jewish film (in Fall 2009). She was especially excited about the collecting project in her Jewish Folklore class: students recorded and documented folklore items such as Jewish mother jokes, family legends, proverbs, superstitions and much more. She is looking forward to teaching both Jewish Folklore and Jewish Film again in 2010. Prof. Perelmutter also completed two article manuscripts: “Impoliteness Recycled: Subject Ellipsis in Modern Russian Complaint Discourse” and “Interactive Properties: Modern Russian Predicate Adjectives in Affirmative and Negative Contexts.” Both articles are currently under review. With her colleague Viktoria Driagina-Hasko (University of Georgia), Prof. Perelmutter completed the editorial work on New Approaches to Slavic Verbs of Motion. This edited volume, forthcoming from John Benjamins in early 2010, features her full-length article “Verbs of Motion Under Negation in Modern Russian,” as well as an introduction co-authored with Viktoria Hasko. Currently, Prof. Perelmutter is hard at work on her book on the evolution of cognition and perception expressions. She gave a talk on this topic at the SLL departmental colloquium in Fall 2009, and will give a talk about her project at UC Berkeley in Spring 2010. In addition to the book manuscript, Prof. Perelmutter is working on an article on reported speech in translations from
Hebrew to Ruthenian associated with the Heresy of Judaizers.

Instructor Marta Pirnat-Greenberg was invited to write a new Slovene volume for the Routledge Colloquial language series. Colloquial Slovene: The Complete Course for Beginners is scheduled for completion in fall 2010.

Professor Kerry Sabbag’s article “Fame Tropes in Old East Slavic Hagiography” was published in the Winter 2009 edition of the Slavic and East European Journal. In Summer 2009 she led the “KU in St. Petersburg” program to Russia; the group of 5 undergraduates and 1 graduate student spent six weeks studying Russian and touring the sights of St. Petersburg.

This past summer Dr. Yaroslava Tsiovkh traveled to Lviv, Ukraine to continue her ongoing project for the book Curiosity Readings in Ukrainian, a language manual in reading and comprehension for English-speaking students on the intermediate and advanced levels of Ukrainian. At SLL Faculty and Graduate Student Colloquium Dr. Tsiovkh discussed the variations of the contemporary Russian language used by the Russo-phones in Russia and in Ukraine to demonstrate that the Russian-speaking population is not a homogenous group and that it is possible to analyze the “World Russians” on analogy with the “World Englishes” and thus her talk was entitled Russian-Speaking Population: How Many Languages Are There? In the spring she also made a power point presentation for graduate students’ workshop Ukrainian Egg: Symbolism of Color and Pattern.

In Fall 2008 Professor Svetlana Vassileva-Karagyozova traveled to Krakow, Poland to attend the 4th International Congress of Polonists. She presented a paper entitled “Obraz “Matki Polki” w polskiej powieści inicjacyjnej po 1989 roku” [The Image of the Polish Mother in the post-1989 Polish Initiation Novels] whose revised version was accepted for publication in the Congress’ Proceedings. In December 2008 she gave a paper, “The Myth of Mother Poland and the Image of the Mother in the post-1989 Polish Initiation Novels” at the AATSEEL conference in San Francisco. Her article “Voluntary Social Marginalization as a Survival Strategy in Polish Post-Communist Accounts of Childhood” appeared in The Sarmatian Review. She also published a review of Carol Rocamora’s book, Acts of Courage. Vaclav Havel’s Life in the Theatre in The Slavic and East European Journal. In the past academic year Professor Vassileva-Karagyozova won two competitive grants from the Hall Center for the Humanities: the Humanities Research Fellowship which provides her with a semester released from teaching and service and $1,000 research fund and the Faculty International Travel Grant which supported her research trip to Poland in June 2009. Professor Vassileva-Karagyozova thus had a research intensive semester in fall 2009, which will be followed by residency in the Hall Center for the Humanities in spring 2010 devoted to working on the manuscript of her first book Communism through the Eyes of a Child. Polish Post-1989 Initiation Novels.
Kurt Harper’s My Rotary Trip to Russia:

Many of life’s best experiences come about almost by accident. So it has been for me. I never expected to major in Russian when I began at KU in 1972; but I happened onto Russian to fulfill my foreign language requirement, and fell in love with it, so I majored in it.

I have kept my knowledge of the language up notwithstanding a law practice that is pretty much unrelated to anything involving Russia (other than the occasional immigration matter), but my professional ties brought me to Rotary, and Rotary ultimately to membership in Rotary International’s US-Russia Inter-country Committee, which met in Novosibirsk in June, 2009. I had the privilege of attending that conference, and along the way spending a delightful week in Moscow, where I became reacquainted with a man from Ulyanovsk who had stayed with my family a few years ago (also courtesy of Rotary), met the daughter (still resident in Moscow) of a Russian immigrant friend; and toured the city on my own. I began conducting business in Russian on the 11-hour flight from Atlanta to Moscow by speaking Russian to the flight attendants and listening to the movies in Russian; spoke exclusively Russian with the hotel staff, waiters, etc.; and forced myself to have an immersion experience. It was fabulous. I got to see the performers of the Bolshoi perform in their “small” auditorium; visited, in addition to several of the well-known sites, the new and obscure Museum of the Cold War and the State Museum of the Gulag System, two museums I would never have expected to see based on my 1970s experiences as a Russian major; and, as a matter of principal, stood in line for 40 minutes or so to visit Lenin’s tomb.

In Novosibirsk, I was able to watch a parade in miserable weather on Russian Independence Day; attend a remarkable performance in Novosibirsk’s grand Theatre for Ballet; and meet perhaps 30 Russian Rotarians who were thrilled to find an American who had travelled that far and who could converse with them without an interpreter! I also saw first-hand the current stresses on the Russian economy, and the continued growth of centralized authority in Russian governance. Especially in Novosibirsk, everyone was talking about the “crisis”, referring to the staggering unemployment. We got a mini-course on Russian tax law as we explored how to move American not-for-profit dollars to Russian Rotary clubs for traditional charitable functions there.

Above all, the message I would like to share with my fellow graduates is this: use those language skills you have acquired to visit Russia soon. It remains an enigmatic place, full of opportunities to explore a different world view with delightful people. You will be warmly received, and richly rewarded.

Angela Warren Hood (BA,’97) has been living in Paris for more than two years. After some Croatian language training in Washington during the first half of 2011, she will be moving on to work in the U.S. embassy in Zagreb. She previously spent time at the embassy in Kosovo and relates how pleased and amazed she was to find how much Croatian she could come to understand just from her knowledge of Russian.

Megan Murphy-Lee (PhD, ‘03) is presently in the fourth year of her appointment as an Assistant Professor of Russian language and linguistics at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Her duties there have been quite varied. Last semester
Katherine Beall, a fourth-year undergraduate with minor emphasis in South Slavic, was chosen to participate in a US State Department internship at the US Embassy in Zagreb, Croatia, from June 15 to August 20 2009. Ms. Beall worked in the Public Affairs sections of the embassy, including work on the organization of a regional anti-corruption conference in Tirana and a children's diversity summer camp called “Teaching Tolerance Through English”. She was then awarded a prestigious internship at the U. N. International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague, Netherlands for this year. From August 16 to December 23 she will work in the Office of the Prosecutor in the Leadership Research section. The Leadership Research Team researches and analyzes the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, including history, politics, demography and media. In preparation for her work Katie has been studying Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian at KU for the last 3-1/2 years.

Gary Roy (PhD, ‘96) continues to teach foreign languages at Thornton Academy, where he has been since 1996. Over the years he has taught Latin, French, Spanish, German, Russian, and Chinese, usually 3-5 of them in any given year. For the last ten years there has been a Russian program, the only high school Russian program left in Maine today. His students who persevere for 3 or 4 years are generally of the highest quality.

Howard Solomon (PhD, ‘97) has joined the White House staff to become a Director for Russia at the National Security Council. He will be there on detail from the State Department for an entire year.

Laura Wilhelm (PhD, ‘94) recently formed LauraWil Intercultural in connection with some business development projects she was working on with the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. She has also developed some business interests in France and Italy along with several international associates.

With great regret we announce that Walter Kolonosky, (PhD, ’72) Professor of Russian at Kansas State University, passed away August 23, 2009, in Manhattan, KS.

Katherine Beall in Varazdin, Croatia

Molly Bloedel, who has been studying Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, is the 2009 winner of the Jerkovich Award, which provides a stipend to students participating in a study-abroad course in a country in which one of the languages are spoken. Ms. Bloedel is currently taking part in the KU Study Abroad Program in Zadar, Croatia.
Nathan Andrew Mack Jr. was the recipient of the university’s prestigious 2009 Chancellor’s Student Award, the Rusty Leffel Concerned Student Award. He earned his BA degrees in Russian and linguistics and plans to pursue a career in higher education administration. He was vice president of administration for Student Union Activities. He won an Excellence in Community, Education and Leadership Award, an honor that includes responsibility for planning the annual Blueprints Leadership conference at KU. In summer 2006, he taught English in a suburb of Kampala, Uganda, to students in first, second and fifth grades during the day and to adults, most of whom were Congolese refugees, in the evenings. In Lawrence, he volunteered for more than five years with the Lawrence Interdenominational Nutritional Kitchen, which provided meals to needy residents. He worked as an orientation assistant for the New Student Orientation office for three years and as an assistant for the University Advising Center for four years. He was chair of the New Student Orientation Advisory Board, and served on numerous committees and boards including the All-Scholarship Hall Council, Homecoming Steering Committee, the Multicultural Affairs Committee, the KU Memorial Unions Corporation Board and Student Union Activities. He also served a year in the Student Senate and was president of KU for Uganda, a group that raised about $4,000 for northern Ugandans.

Alphilde Dick received a most prestigious U.S. Department of State Title VIII Southeastern Europe Research Program Fellowship for fall 2009 to carry out research on literary biography in the former Yugoslavia. The title of her project is “What the Stories Tell Us: Biography as a Literary Genre in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian Literatures”.

Anne Kercsmar and John Korba have received FLAS Fellowships for AY2009-2010 (tuition and $15,000 stipend)

Shay Wood, a graduate student in History and in his third year of Slovene language study, translated the short story of Slovenian author Klemen Pisk, "Vilnius," from Slovene to English at the request of the author and as part of a class project under the direction of Slovene lecturer Marta Pirnat-Greenberg. The translation has been accepted for publication in the on-line literary journal Fiction Fix, of the University of North Florida (http://www.fictionfix.net/).
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