

# **Dedication of the Fan and Stephen J. Parker Slavic Library and the Joseph L. Conrad Slavic Collection, Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures, University of Kansas**

7 April 2006, 4:00 PM, 2120 Wescoe Hall

Remarks by Marc L. Greenberg, Chair

Thank you for joining us at this important milestone in the history of the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures at the University of Kansas. Today we dedicate the Fan and Stephen J. Parker Slavic Library and the Joseph L. Conrad Slavic Collection. This moment marks the culmination of years of efforts beginning with the donation of the Fan Parker Russian literature collection in the late 1980s to create a library for the Department. Those efforts began with Professor Stephen J. Parker, who secured agreement from the then Dean, James Muyskens, to build the Library, but at the time neither space nor funds were forthcoming for the endeavor. Some ten years later, in his last days as chair, Professor Parker headed what has become known as the Wescoe Space Program and in the process claimed the territory in which we are standing in the name of the Slavic Department. What was one small step for Stephen Parker was a giant leap for KU Slavic. Without this strategic foresight, without the generous gift of precious books from his scholarly mother, and without a considerable monetary contribution from the Parker family, this handsome and eminently valuable resource would not exist. For these reasons, this space will continue to carry the Parker name.

## **Stephen J. Parker**

Stephen Parker has already made some remarks about his mother, so please allow me to make a few remarks about the son.

It is a pleasure to honor Stephen Parker, our colleague, friend, and eminent scholar of Russian literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He received his B.A. from Cornell University in 1960 with a double major in world literature and biology. His first publication was “Depression by Antibody of the Immune Response to Homografts and Its Role in Immunological Enhancement,” with Dr. George Snell, Nobel Laureate, in the *Journal of Experimental Medicine*. Once Steve had clinched the Nobel Prize for his colleague, the field of biology offered no further challenge to him, so he turned his attention to more challenging and complex field of literary scholarship. His contributions to the Slavic field begin with his first publication on Hemingway in the Soviet Union in 1965. We refer to this article in shorthand as his “The Old Man and the C...KKPSS.” This was followed by his doctoral dissertation *Vladimir Nabokov-Sirin as Teacher: The Russian Novels*, defended at Cornell University in 1969. After a brief appointment at the University of Oklahoma in 1966-67 he came to KU in 1967. He was Core School Director, Council on International Education Exchange, Russian Language Programs in the USSR from 1977 to 1987.

Steve Parker is author of a number of works on Nabokov, including the important book *Understanding Vladimir Nabokov*, and he recently marked 25 years as editor of the

noted international journal, *The Nabokovian*. His works include also writings on Russian art, among them the book *Russia on Canvas: Ilya Repin*, co-authored with Fan Parker. At KU he was longtime Director of Graduate Studies in the Slavic Department and, most notably, he distinguished himself serving as chair of the Slavic Department for thirteen years, from 1987 to 2000. He is responsible for 6 Ph.D. students, most working at prestigious U.S. universities, and more than 80 M.A.s and countless B.A.s. Steve has served as mentor to many of us and his contributions to the excellence of the Department today owes much to his wisdom and guidance.

## **Joseph L. Conrad**

Today we also honor the memory of Joseph L. Conrad, our longtime colleague, a founding member of the KU Slavic Department, who so graciously bequeathed his fine and focused collection of Chekhov, Turgenev, and Slavic folklore, as well as numerous other works on Russian literature and Slavic reference works. I would also like to thank the gracious and generous Conrad family, Joseph's widow Galina, and his daughters Belinda, Karla, and son Allan, for helping us to make real and in short order Joseph's wish to have his collection continue to be used by students. In addition, I am touched and honored to be able to announce that the family has made a pledge of \$10,000 towards a scholarship fund in Joseph's name for students of Slavic.

A few words about our friend and colleague.

Joseph earned his BA degree from the University of Kansas in 1955 and, after an academic year as a Fulbright scholar at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität (Frankfurt), went on to doctoral work at the University of Texas at Austin, where he studied Slavic and Indo-European linguistics under Winfred Lehmann. His 1961 dissertation concerned the eccentric but highly influential Soviet linguist, Nikolai Marr.

In 1959 he worked as Instructor and Assistant Professor at Florida State University, as Assistant Professor at the University of Texas until 1966, and in the same year moved to the University of Kansas, where he was hired as Chairman at the Associate Professor rank. He was promoted to Professor in 1970. During his time at Kansas he became involved in study abroad programs, accompanying students to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In his research and teaching interests he redirected his attention from Indo-European linguistics to Russian literature and Slavic folklore. His writings on Chekhov and Turgenev gained him national and international recognition. His undergraduate course in Slavic Folklore was a perennial favorite among students, always enrolling to capacity.

He lectured by invitation in Germany, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria. His numerous publications appeared in journals in the U.S., Germany, Bulgaria, Scotland, Serbia, and Canada. Among his students are several prominent Slavists in tenured positions in U.S. universities. He served as a regional and national representative in the field in matters of conferences, study-abroad, educational policy, selection committees, academic exchanges, and editorial boards. Joseph continued working nearly to the end of his life. He attended the Congress of Slavists in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in August 2003, where he returned to one of his favorite places in the world shortly before his health caught up with him and he left us shortly before the end of the same year.

## Conclusion

With gratitude and esteem we thank the Parker and Conrad families for their generosity in sharing with us and with future students and faculty the knowledge contained in these books and for the space within which passion for learning and respect for the text will continue to be handed down.

Many others deserve recognition, including Slavic Department alumni, current faculty, and Friend of Slavic, who donated money and materials to the Library.

I would like to thank all of those who helped in bringing this Library to its present state. Countless hours of work went into this effort, much of it unpaid, both on the part of the faculty and the graduate students of the Slavic Department.

Of special note.

Graduate student **Sidney Dement** packed, transported, sorted, and inventoried the Conrad Collection, using his wide expertise in Russian and South Slavic languages.

**Prof. Maria Carlson**, who sports a Master's degree in Library Science, was involved with many tasks of selection and preservation as well as a great deal of the physical labor of assembling the Library.

**Donna Waters**, former administrative assistant, and **Rae Ann Brown**, our current administrative assistant, helped coordinate everything from the construction to the final beautification of the space.

**Tom Prebyl**, our student hourly worker, helped with this strong back and marvelous efficiency to do all the things we middle-aged faculty could not.

Dr. Brad Schaffner, former Slavic librarian at KU, and Geoff Husic, current Slavic librarian, saw to the safe storage of the Parker Collection for nearly two decades and helped relocate the Collection to its present home. And I do mean *relocate* in all senses of the word: if Geoff hadn't found where it had been stored, the Collection wouldn't see the light of day for another 50 years.

Finally, thanks to the Parker and Conrad families. I should note that Galina Conrad worked with us while still grieving in the hope that the Conrad Collection would rapidly be used by Joseph's colleagues and students. I hope that Galina will think that this has been rapid enough: sooner, alas, was not quite possible.

So many people contributed to the fruition of this project that if I have inadvertently overlooked anyone, I extend to them my sincerest apologies.

I invite you now to partake of refreshments and enjoy this wonderful new space and the fine and eminently useful collections.