

## **Professor Stephen J. Parker, April 7, 2006**

### **Opening remarks on the dedication of the Parker Library**

I am delighted that the housing of the Parker collection in the Department has finally become a reality.

Let me first say a few words about my mother: Fan Parker (Fania), was born in Riga, Latvia, lived in Moscow, and came to the USA, through Ellis Island as the traditional immigrant. She received her BA and MA at NYU, and her PhD in Slavic Studies at Columbia University in 1945—she was one of the earliest women entering into the profession. She founded, developed, and chaired the Russian Department at Brooklyn College, which is part of the City University of New York. She was there for nearly 4 decades teaching an array of courses in Russian language, culture, and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature. She served as 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-president of AATSEEL in 1952 and First Vice-President in 1953. In 1954 she was the President of AATSEEL, and subsequently was Chairman of AATSEEL's Executive Council. She was the author or co-author of five books, the first being *Vsevolod Garshin: A Study of a Russian Conscience* published in 1946 and the last being *Lewis-Carroll in Russian: Translations of Alice in Wonderland, 1879-1989*, published in 1994 (a full 48 years of productivity). Her other writings – books and articles – were in regard to Dostoevsky, the Russian artist Ilya Repin, Soviet literature, and children's literature.

It was way back in the Fall of 1989 that the book collection came to the University of Kansas as a tribute to my mother. She had given the books to me with the understanding that the full collection would be presented to KU. To quote from Chancellor Budig's letter to me: "You are most generous to have benefitted the Library in this fashion. It is a thoughtful and timely gift which will have a strong impact on the quality of our Russian programs. It is an honor for the University to have this collection as a tribute to your mother." In the official University news release, Gordon Anderson, then director of the library's Slavic Department, noted some of the contents of the collection, including "multi-volume collected works of more than 40 major Russian authors; first editions autographed by their authors, belles lettres from 1930-1980, and numerous biographical and critical works on Russian authors, artists, and topics." He cited specifically the collected poetry and prose of Boris Pasternak, the 1949 edition of Alexander Pushkin's collected works, and the 1954 edition of Konstantin Stanislavsky's collected works. Many of those works are in the University Library.

However, the collection was given to the University with the proviso that all volumes that proved to be duplicates of materials already in the University collection would be held separately for eventual placement in the Library of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Thus in 1989 much more than 1,500 items were boxed up and put into storage. That same year, Jim Muyskens, Dean of the College, promised to find space in Wescoe Hall for the construction of the Parker Library.

That was in 1989. Now, finally, some seventeen years later, the Library has become a reality. And today we see it already well organized thanks in particular to the work of Marc L. Green-

berg and Maria Carlson. I am indebted to all who have been involved in this project.

For me and the members of my family here today this is indeed a very special occasion.