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### THROUGH THE LABYRINTH OF YESTERYEARS...

A man with a quick hurried pace, twinkling eyes often somewhat squinted, a boyish smile and a heavily accented English, sprinkled with the German *also*, while the written version easily competed with Thomas Mann in the complexity and length of its sentences...

*Also* – a few glimpses of Professor Omeljan Pritsak, the founder of the Harvard Ukrainian Studies.

My recollections do not touch his scholarly accomplishments which I leave to the extended number of scholars who benefitted from his teaching, mentoring, research, discussions and consultations and presently occupy responsible professional positions throughout the world.

Upon being offered the job of an editorial assistant, I remember how startled Pritsak was when I suggested a later beginning date due to my commitment to head a Plast camp in Chicago. For one so immersed in academia, it seemed strange to him that someone would go off to a summer camp rather than hurrying to Harvard. However, we negotiated successfully and I finally boarded a Greyhound bus from Philadelphia in late summer of 1970 for my journey to a new chapter of life in Cambridge...

The Ukrainian Studies office consisted of one and a half rooms in an old building on Cambridge Street which also housed the Russian Research Center and Middle Eastern Studies. In those days there was one common oversized computer that occupied a small sized room and which only a few people knew how to use, as well as a duplicating machine and a well-guarded new Xerox machine.

Staff consisted of me and an elderly retired good-humored gentleman, Mr. Nykolenko, a volunteer who gladly typed and edited Ukrainian texts on an old manual typewriter and rejuvenated himself by running endless errands and delivering notices around the Harvard campus.

This was complimented by the tireless energy of the Harvard Ukrainian Studies Fund (HUSF) activists and a group of young Ukrainian graduate students working on their research and degrees who grouped around the beginning Ukrainian Studies project. Many contributed numerous volunteer hours towards the project.

1970s was an exciting time to work at Harvard Ukrainian Studies. The first chair, in Ukrainian history, had been endowed and was recorded in Harvard University's history as the first academic chair ever endowed by community funds; funds were sought for the remaining two – in Ukrainian language and literature.

I quickly nicknamed Professor Pritsak as “Tornado” – a name that seemed so natural. This nickname captured the energy that he exuded in going about his tasks, often with directness and a suddenness that whirled its fallout somewhat “undiplomatically” on the fund-raising efforts of HUSF. It often demanded the tactfulness of Stepan Chemych and Bohdan Tarnavsky to pick up and smooth out the pieces of Tornado's intense statements.

Professor Pritsak turned into reality the creation of Ukrainian Studies as a separate discipline, an idea initiated by the Ukrainian Federation of Students in the United States. He gathered academic supporters and proceeded to advocate, negotiate and build what ended up becoming three academic chairs as well as a research institute. Some diaspora members wanted to know if a Ukrainian flag would fly over the office while others did not understand why one picked the most expensive university in the States. Meanwhile the established American academic community, often quite complacent with the existence of Russian studies as encompassing the whole Soviet Union, saw little need for something called “Ukrainian” However, HUSF relentlessly pursued its goal.

Beginnings of new projects are always exciting. If you believe in the project there is an energy that just renews itself. Creative ideas continue to be born and tried out... There were meetings, presentations, mail campaigns, articles, debates, exhibits, etc.

Viewing from the perspective of time, one recognizes the daring initiative of young students who believed that everything was possible, the willingness of a Professor Pritsak on the Harvard faculty to embrace their goal, and the thousands of Ukrainian diaspora individuals and organizations who donated what they could (\$1,5,10,20,100,1000, etc.) to provide Ukrainian Studies in USA with its distinct identity and a valid academic home.

And Professor Pritsak had his *also*'s: the courage to approach Harvard's academic establishment, the foresight to gather a committee of recognized scholars, the ability and conviction to present the validity of the academic value of such studies and, most importantly, vision and faith.

Of course, who from us who were there in the beginning can forget the words he threw out sometimes mercilessly during the money raising campaign and made us all cringe? And he would simply smile and say – "but I only told them the truth...".

Tornado's academic career topped by the Ukrainian Studies efforts demanded much sacrifice from his family – his late wife Nina Moldenhauer Pritsak and their daughter Irene. I will never forget when Nina tried to dissuade me from going to a fundraising event with him to Cleveland by car. She knew well his driving habits and urged me to make sure that he made enough rest stops... Needless to say... we did end up jumping a highway barrier – yet alive...

There was also the funny Tornado, dressed as a Middle Eastern dignitary, at our masquerade New Year's Party and the social host of the traditional Ukrainian Christmas gatherings who always started the caroling.

Therefore, it is not surprising that "Tornado stories" or "Do you remember when Pritsak...?" come up naturally as we meet each other wherever we may be...

It is an era well remembered and one that continues to remind all of us that initiative, vision, and action can bring fruitful results.

Professor Pritsak's legacy is as multiple as his *also*'s and is spread as wide as a tornado's path – only more substantive and positive – the numerous students and scholars who continue to pursue academic excellence in both Ukrainian studies and other fields.