

OBITUARIES

Joseph L. Conrad, 1933-2003

Joseph L. Conrad, Professor of Slavic Languages at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, was born on June 26, 1933 in Kansas City, Missouri, and passed away in Lawrence on December 21, 2003, surrounded by his family. He is survived by his wife, Galina, one son and two daughters. He worked almost to the very end. In August 2003 he gave a paper at the Congress of Slavists in Ljubljana, but health problems arose during the trip, and a diagnosis of fourth-stage pancreatic cancer was made after his return home.

Joseph did his undergraduate work at the University of Kansas, and upon graduation received a Fulbright award for study at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universitaet in Frankfurt during the academic year 1955-56. After the year in Germany he entered graduate school at the University of Texas, where he studied Slavic and Indo-European linguistics with Winfred Lehmann, among others. His dissertation was on Nikolai Marr, whose linguistic theories and the battle to make them dogma had a strong negative impact on the work, careers and even lives of many Soviet scholars. He received the Ph.D. in 1961.

Joseph was an Assistant Instructor at the University of Texas from 1956-59, and then an Instructor and Assistant Professor at Florida State University from 1959-62. The University of Texas recognized his abilities and invited him back as an Assistant Professor in 1962. He remained at Austin until 1966, when Kansas, his alma mater, called him as Associate Professor and Chair to build a strong Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. His success at this task was recognized in many ways, including promotion to the rank of Professor in 1971.

During the 1960s his research interests turned from linguistics to literature. His first article, an outgrowth of his dissertation, is on Marr's theories, but the remainder of his more than forty articles are on literature or folklore (except for three on language teaching and programs). Chekhov was the subject of nineteen of his articles, starting with his third article and continuing through his paper at the August 2003 Ljubljana Congress. Like most scholars of his generation, Joseph was originally primarily a Russianist, but a trip to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1970, followed by three summers (1971, 1972, 1975) as Resident Director of a cooperative summer Serbo-Croatian language program in Zagreb kindled a lasting passion for Yugoslavia and folklore. His first article on a folklore topic appeared in 1980, and it was followed by fourteen more in the ensuing twenty years, with incantations and charms the most frequent topic. Folklore was the subject of his most popular course at Kansas, and the classes filled up to the last seat. His house became an extension of the classroom, with many folkloric objects and displays.

Several of Joseph's students now occupy senior positions at American universities, and the Slavic program at Kansas remains one of the most important. He received numerous grants and awards, including six IREX awards and Fulbright awards to Croatia and Slovenia. He served ten years as Chair of the Department at Kansas and ran eight summer programs in the USA, Russia, and Yugoslavia. He was frequently invited as an

outside evaluator of programs or applications for grants (twenty-five times) and candidates for promotion and/or tenure (nineteen times).

He was also a good friend and good company to spend time with. We shall miss him greatly.

Charles E. Gribble

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