

## William P. Keasbey (1928-2003)

*Appreciation by Jim Walker*

William (Bill) Keasbey, the Russian-English Language Chair of ATA's accreditation (now certification) program, died of an apparent heart attack while playing tennis August 29, 2003 in Eugene, Oregon, where he had moved after long residence in Maryland. He was 74.

Bill was full of enthusiasm for life, which he applied to his hobbies of rock climbing, hiking and backpacking, folk dancing, singing, playing the clarinet, and athletics. He was a loving husband and father and a dedicated church member. Fortunately for ATA and SLD, one of his primary interests was foreign languages.

Bill majored in Russian at the University of California, Berkeley, where he later received a master's degree in economics. He also spent a year at the University of Heidelberg studying German. His study of Russian continued at the Army Language School (now the Defense Language Institute) in Monterey, California. During his career in the Foreign Service, which he began in 1957, he made a point of learning the local language wherever he served. He learned Finnish while serving three years in Helsinki and faithfully attended a weekly Finnish class at the Finnish Language School in Arlington, Virginia for more than 30 years.

In preparation for diplomatic assignment to Moscow, he spent an academic year in advanced Soviet studies at the U.S. Army school in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. When the training was completed in the summer of 1966 he took his family (wife Doramay and two children) overland by car from Germany through Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, camping most of the way. The trip was memorable not only for the sights seen, but also for hardships such as camping in the rain and hordes of mosquitoes. On the last leg of the trip to Moscow through Russia, the family's year-old Ford sedan attracted a great deal of attention, and Bill was frequently asked how long he had to be on the waiting list to get such a car.

Of course, at that time foreign diplomats in Moscow were quite limited in their opportunities to travel and interact with the locals. However, Bill and Doramay took pleasure in frequently attending outstanding classical music performances. On the few trips they were permitted to take, they did see some other areas of the Soviet Union and enjoyed the local cuisine, particularly bread, soup and unusual dairy products. Two trips accompanying the diplomatic pouch to Helsinki provided a brief respite from the restrictions of Soviet life.

After his stay in Moscow, Bill returned to Washington, DC to work for the State Department. He had one more three-year overseas assignment in Dusseldorf, Germany before retiring from the Foreign Service in the late 1970s. He then began his career in freelance translation of technical material from German, Russian and Finnish into English.

Bill had a strong desire to contribute to any organization of which he was a part and, since languages had always been important to him and translation was now his livelihood, it was natural for him to volunteer to do more than his share of work for the organizations that are so vital to advancing our profession.

There is no record that I could find of when Bill became a grader or when he became the Russian-English Language Chair. Cecelia Bohannon, now the Deputy Chair of the Accreditation Committee, remembers that when she became a grader in 1981 Bill was grading Russian-English and German-English exams. Bill was already the Russian-English Language Chair when ATA past president Ann Macfarlane became a grader in 1993, and he continued in that position until his death.

The list of Bill's service to the National Capital Area Chapter of ATA (NCATA) gives some indication of his unstinting dedication to service. Between 1982 and 1999, he served for six years as Chair of the Accreditation/Professional Support Committee, two years as Chair of the Program Committee, two years as President (1987-1988) and one as Vice President.

*Continued on page 15*

---

## Inside:

From the Administrator .....	3
Embarrassing Questions for Translators .....	4
Review of Conference Presentations .....	5, 10
SlavFile Lite .....	8
The Slovist .....	10
Post-Conference Forum .....	12
The Interpreter Interpreted .....	13

SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION

**Officers**

Administrator: Alex Lane  
63 N. Pagosa Boulevard, Suite B-3  
Pagosa Spring, CO 81147  
Tel.: 832-444-4555 Fax: 209-391-9931  
words@galexi.com www.galexi.com/alex

Asst. Administrator: Nora Seligman Favorov  
100 Village Lane, Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
Tel.: 919-960-6871 Fax: 919-969-6628  
norafavorov@bellsouth.net

**Membership**

\$15 addition to ATA membership fee and designation of Slavic Languages Division membership on application or renewal form provides full membership.

Write to ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane  
Alexandria, VA 22314

**SlavFile** is published four times yearly.

Letters to the Editor, short articles of interest, and information for the calendar are invited.

Submissions become the property of SlavFile and are subject to editing.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of the Division.

Editor: Lydia Razran Stone  
1111 Westmoreland Road  
Alexandria, VA 22308  
Tel.: 703-768-5441 Fax: 703-768-1889  
lydiastone@verizon.net

Associate Editor: Nora Favorov

Associate Editor (Russian and Technical Material, Layout and Typesetting): Galina Raff  
Tel.: 704-849-8200 Fax: 704-841-2797  
galina\_raff@att.net

Contributing Editor (Ukrainian): Vadim I. Khazin  
Tel.: 212-650-8094 Fax: 732-866-4372  
vadkhazin@cs.com

Contributing Editor (Polish): Urszula Klingenberg  
Tel.: 651-649-0277  
vaukling@msn.com

Contributing Editor (South Slavic Languages):  
Paula Gordon  
Tel. & Fax: 836-236-7591

Copy Editors:  
Jennifer L. Guernsey and Christina Sever

Subscription to SlavFile  
without other membership benefits:  
\$15 in USA and Canada  
and \$20 elsewhere.  
Write to Nora Favorov at above address.



Dear Lydia,

The Summer-Fall 2003 issue of SlavFile was another success, in my humble opinion. (And this is definitely NOT ONLY because some of my stuff was published there!) SF is one of those very few publications, if indeed any, that I continue to read literally from cover to cover. Thank you very much for that.

I just felt like responding to some of the “issues” raised in your column, and others as well. First, here’s my simple suggestion for finding a term for an inverse of linguistic false friends (in connection with your example of *пиарный, пиар*, etc.). Obviously, they should be referred to either as “translator’s true friends” or, more humorously, “translator’s false foes,” if you wish... In my case, I recognized what ПИАР was immediately when I first came across it—and I just hated it and continue to hate... but what can one do against this “natural selection” process in linguistic borrowing? Absolutely nothing. What I’m trying to say is that for me as a translator it turned out to be a “true friend.”

I found the dictionary section in the most recent SlavFile both attention-grabbing and extremely useful! Let me add my half-a-penny’s worth, in terms of E > R dictionaries. (Of course, the choice will very much depend on a specific translator’s area of specialization.) I just thought to myself, what is the dictionary that I rely on more than others and get the best “yield,” in a manner of speaking? Get more hits than misses... To my surprise, I realized it was the АНГЛО-РУССКИЙ ЮРИДИЧЕСКИЙ СЛОВАРЬ (С. Андрианов, А.С. Берсон, А.С. Никифоров), Русский язык, М., 1993. (I say “to my surprise,” because I hardly do any legal stuff these days—it’s mostly technical and engineering that I’m into now.) Yet, I must admit that this particular dictionary has always been very reliable, as dictionaries go. So you may want to add it to the list of “recommended” E->R dictionaries.

Another thing I wanted to note was the recurrent use of the misspelt “to whit” in your column. Perhaps I shouldn’t be editing the editor, but since it is probably the third or fourth time that I see you use it, I thought I should point it out to you. It should be “wit” of course. It originates from the Old English “witan” (know) and is related to such words as “wise,” “wisdom,” and I believe even “wizard” and “witch,” even though this is not what etymological dictionaries may tell you. On a wider, Indo-European scale, it is related to the Sanskrit “vedas” and even the Russian *ведать (знать), сведения*, and also *ведьма* (the woman who “knows” – hence in part is my belief that the English “witch” is also related to the verb “wit”). (You see, they’ve been able to squeeze some stuff into our heads at the good old University of Odessa in our so-called “History of English” seminars, if it stuck to the extent that it’s still there when I’m over 50! But I must admit I’ve always been too keen on etymology...)

I hope all is well with you and look forward to the next *SlavFile* issue!

Best regards,  
Michael Ishenko

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Lydia, Galina, and all –

Congratulations on an absolutely astonishing issue of *SlavFile* ... the very best yet and – in my opinion (as the author of more than 80 articles) – the epitome of what a good translation newsletter should be.

Keep up the great work!  
Cheers, Jim Shipp

**OFFERS OF WORK FROM EMPLOYERS  
AND CLIENTS ARE PUBLISHED FREE**

# Б У Р И М Е

на вечере Slavic Division of the ATA  
Phoenix, Arizona, Русский детский сад  
7 ноября 2003 года

Editors note: Our conference would not be complete without Vadim Khazin's Burime, which he composes "to order" at our banquet from end rhymes supplied to him by the assembled company. Here is this year's effort.

Славянская Дивизия – ну, здравствуй  
И в АТА по-прежнему ты царствуй.  
And let our new leader, Alex Lane,  
Never have pretext to be sad or to complain.  
Пускай дают работы уйму нам агентства,  
Зная, что в АТА имеем членство  
И что здесь все, даже последний старый хрен,  
Его активный, деятельный член.  
It doesn't matter whether he's a girl or boy,  
And if translation is a hobby or a toy;  
Let us survive an unintentional canard  
And not be scared by a gun or a petard.  
Хотя мы в АТА меньшевики  
И в переводе навсегда ученики,  
We have already many areas mastered  
And no one's ever seen us plastered.  
И если предстоит нам перевод,  
Не будем мы стоять полсутки у ворот,  
And our blood will never really clog,  
Even if we are barked at by a dog.  
Мы выпьем чай, его закусим мы печеньем,  
Включим компьютер плюс его приспособленья,  
А чтоб расслабиться, мы примем стопку водки,  
И если есть в окрестностях молодки,  
We will pretend we are falling madly in love,  
And each of us is an unassuming dove,  
And our dream would be to travel to Niagara,  
Not necessarily consuming some Viagra,  
И, коль получится, get the lady in кровать,  
И там всю ночь безропотно лежать,  
Assuming she is not a проститутка  
And you have eaten жареную утку...  
So let our Division – our creation –  
Prosper, as well as the entire Association,  
И призываю весь Дивизии народ:  
К новым свершениям, стремительно вперёд!  
До скорой встречи (это значит «pronto»)  
В славном канадском городе Торонто!  
Vadim Khazin

## THE (NEW) ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Alex Lane

Happy New Year to all!

As I write this, just about two months have elapsed since the Conference in Phoenix, and there are a mere 9 months until the next Conference in Toronto. It'll be here – and we'll be there – before we know it.

I came away from the Phoenix conference in a buoyant mood, due primarily to having attended a number of interesting sessions and, of course, having renewed old acquaintances. A new wrinkle in the Division's Conference program was a well-attended post-Conference forum, during which attendees shared their opinions about the proceedings at the Phoenix Conference (there were some disappointments) and made suggestions for the Toronto Conference. (see the forum write-up on page 12).

Continuing education as a requirement for continued ATA certification was the subject of many conversations at this year's conference, with some members swearing by the new requirement, and others swearing at it. All such discussions aside, the requirement has been adopted, and if I came away from the Conference with one thought on the subject, it was this: the ground rules for *satisfying* the requirements have not been etched in granite. This basically means that we in the SLD have a tremendous opportunity – and flexibility – to devise various ways to meet the requirement, gain new knowledge, and maintain professional contacts, all without breaking the bank or requiring copious investments of time.

The idea of a midyear conference has been broached, but with less than nine months left before Toronto, planning for any midyear events will have to make some quantum progress very quickly if the events themselves are to occur. For my part, I am investigating the possibility of taking a leaf from some programming conferences I've attended in the past, but it would be premature for me to say anything more right now.

I know that sounds somewhat weaselly, but it occurs to me that progress in this and other directions will not be the result of the efforts of any one individual or small group; *real* progress can only come through the active participation of the SLD membership. Do *you* have an idea for a midyear event? (Mini-conference? Seminar?) Do you have any experience organizing such events? Would you like to follow up on some ideas that have already been proposed (e.g., writing online course modules)? There is plenty to do.

Let us hear from you!

*Note: Nora Favorov and Lydia Stone have new contact information; see masthead on opposite page.*

# BEGINNER'S LUCK

*Liv Bliss (perennially novice translator)  
Lakeside, Arizona*

A former boss of mine contacted me not long ago. After years in translation management, he was recently back on the job market and was trolling for advice on becoming a freelance translator. One of the things I told him was this: "It's a hugely bipolar profession, in that the brickbats can be lavish but so can the bouquets." In other words, the ideal independent translator has an almost unattainable combination of tough mind, thick skin, tact, and sensitivity.

And it occurred to me that—amid all the invaluable counsel on dictionaries, web sites, self-marketing, and accounts receivable—maybe we don't talk enough about the human side of this business. What translators\* lack, I thought, is a place among their peers to vent, a place to ask the embarrassing questions, a place to seek solace. An advice column. Yes indeed, what this world needs is one more advice column. So, without further ado...

## **Dear Miss Nomer,**

I am a freelance translator with secret doubts about my output. Talking to others in the business, I get the impression that their output, computed weekly or even daily, is bigger than mine. Tell me the truth: does size matter?

*Disconcerted in Dubuque*

## **Dear Disconcerted,**

I'd be wrong to tell you that it doesn't. We all need to put food on the table, after all, and deadlines are not usually elastic. Within reasonable limits, however, you should concentrate less on quantity and more on quality. In fact, I've sometimes found that translators with truly eye-popping output do not have fully satisfied clients, and that's what separates the sheep from the goats. If you keep hearing that your output is seriously undersized, however, it may just be that you're still a little unseasoned. In that case, everything should improve as you gain more experience. Or you could look into various output-enhancing tools (translation memory, computer-aided translation), but always remember that they're no substitute for the intelligent use of what Mother Nature gave you.

## **Dear Miss Nomer,**

For a long time I have felt different, and I am beginning to think that I may be bilingual. My family doesn't understand, of course. They have often told me that no one needs more than one language. Can you help me?

*Wondering in Winnetka*

## **Dear Wondering,**

I can try. The fact of the matter is that, while many people would be miserable without more than one language, very few can correctly call themselves bilingual. Having been raised, as you obviously were, in a monolingual environment, it's very unlikely that you are. And it's certainly better not to go around claiming to be bilingual when you're really not; it could get you into situations from which even Miss Nomer couldn't extricate

you. My advice to you is to forget about the bilingual thing and just appreciate your second language for what it is—a prize, a challenge, a key to other worlds, and a terrific way to make a living.

---

---

*When I want your advice, I'll give it to you.*

Lyndon B. Johnson, 36<sup>th</sup> President of the United States  
(or possibly Molly, of the Fibber McGee and Molly radio show)

---

---

## **Dear Miss Nomer,**

I am between a rock and a hard place. I am in a Catch-22. I am stuck at square one. Yes! I can't stop using clichés, but—even worse—clients won't take up with me because they say I don't have enough experience. But if they won't take up with me, how can I get the experience?

*Puzzled in Passaic*

## **Dear Puzzled,**

Miss Nomer is staggered that someone as inexperienced as you claim to be has the linguistic wherewithal to broach such a voluminous subject in so few words. OK, then. For starters, if you haven't already read Susana Greiss' encyclopedic article in the October 2003 ATA Chronicle (with more to come in the November/December issue), stop messing around and read it. If there's anything—anything at all—left unsaid after that, we can talk again later.

## **Dear Miss Nomer,**

I am in a long-term relationship with a client who is, to put it politely, unpredictable. I am always walking on eggshells around him, and never know when he's going to go off on me over something that I didn't do. He has never actually broken it off (although he has threatened), and he is certainly a good and reliable provider. But do you think I should break up with him?

*Bruised in Buffalo*

## **Dear Bruised,**

Well, it all depends. You didn't get into such an intense relationship without some kind of written agreement—did you? Very well, then, assuming that you are in a properly documented commitment, take a close look at the small print. If the agreement is easily voidable and you are prepared to face the loss of income and the possible wear and tear on your reputation, go right ahead. It doesn't sound as though he's going to let go of you easily, though, and you probably don't want to end up battling it out in court. I would consider holding on until the term of the agreement is up or its purpose has been achieved. Then you should be able to walk away as friends. Meanwhile, look on the bright side: this experience is teaching you tolerance, forbearance, and when to leave some things unsaid. That will stand you in good stead for the less fraught relationships in your future.

---

\*And what about interpreters? I hear you cry. Good question. Let the interpreters among you step forth and, trust me, they will be heard.

*Continued on page 6*



# The Case for Being a Lazy Bum and Scavenger

Konstantin Lakshin's ATA-Phoenix Presentation: No Translation Needed!

Reviewed by Nora Seligman Favorov

Of course he wasn't criticizing me, personally (he doesn't, or at least didn't, even know me), but I still felt the sting of reproach when, early on in his presentation, Kostya Lakshin drew his audience's attention to the tendency of some translators to take on the role of creative writer, moved to interpret and improve the text they have been given to translate. Soon I was comforted, however. I did not fit onto the wrong side of the distinction he was making: the translator as creative writer (bad) vs. the translator as lazy bum and scavenger (good). Translators who see themselves as creative writers feel it is not enough to translate; they are compelled to fully express themselves and their deep understanding of the text at hand. They set out to *enhance* the original text. Lazy bum translators think, "I have enough trouble expressing myself. Good that I don't have to do this in translation," and are ready to make use of existing, generally-recognized terminology. I can proudly proclaim that I'm as lazy as they come and enjoy nothing more than beachcombing cyber shores for existing terminology, or better yet, reaching for treasures already stashed away in my trove of dictionaries and reference books.

Our presenter drew inspiration for his talk from the father of modern physics, Isaac Newton, whose assertion "Hypotheses non fingo" is usually translated in Russian as «Гипотез не измышляю» and into English as "I do not invent hypotheses." Newton's refusal to make inferences or assumptions that could not be corroborated through observation of the physical world can, in Mr. Lakshin's opinion, provide a model for the serious translator. «Переводов не измышляю!»—this should be our watchword. Don't guess at the intention of the author of your source text, even if a bit of interpretation might improve the readability of your final product.

The specific phenomenon that our presenter was drawing our attention to was the tendency of some of his fellow native Russian translators to create neologisms structured after the English terminology of the source text to express things and ideas for which perfectly good Russian words already exist. Instead of pausing to wonder whether the phenomenon of a "price list" might have aided Russian commerce for centuries, many have felt compelled to treat this term as representing something uniquely Western (thus spawning the now widely used прайс-лист) and impossible to express with a старое русское слово such as прејскурант. Well, okay, our presenter would be the first to admit that in many cases our excessively creative and insufficiently lazy colleagues were reinventing a wheel that had already been re-

invented during a previous influx of foreignisms into the Russian language (the eastern Slavs have been trading with Germans since at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century, so прејскурант—which according to my *Словарь русского языка* comes from the German *preiskurant*—probably really is a pretty старое русское слово). Is it really necessary to come up with a new set of terminology for every period of foreign influence? No, our presenter declares. Not only is it not necessary—at times it is downright foolish, misleading and even dangerous.

The audience were presented with a table of Russian terms that had recently entered the language (and thrived) and asked to ponder into which of the following categories each of these neologisms fell:

*Continued on page 6*

General and Business Terminology	
Neologism	Existing Terminology
аксессуары	принадлежности
прайс-лист	прејскурант
офисная техника	оргтехника
кондиционер для волос	бальзам для (ополаскивания) волос
слот	разъем (установочное место)
пеко	байховый
оригинальная упаковка	заводская упаковка
саммит	встреча на высшем уровне
маскара	тушь для ресниц
спонжик	губка
планинг, органайзер	ежедневник
объем прически	пышность
деликатная стирка	бережная стирка
объемные ресницы	пышные ресницы
консенсус	согласие
одежда прет-а-порте	готовая одежда
дедлайн	срок
пресс-релиз	заявление для прессы
презентация	доклад, открытие
бизнес	хозяйственная деятельность, предпринимательство, предприятие
супервайзер	руководитель
менеджер	руководитель
номинация	разряд, категория, раздел
брокер	маклер
интервью	собеседование
промоушн	раскрутка (NEW)
нюсмэйкер	знаменитость
клиент	заинтересованные лица
консервативно	осторожное, для неблагоприятных условий, заниженный, с запасом
проверка данных дю дилиженс	экспертиза
разумный	обоснованный целесообразный
тайм-менеджмент	рациональное использование времени
мерчендайзинг	искусство сбыта
управление по человеческим ресурсам	отдел кадров, управление кадров
конфиденциальная информация о пациенте, конфиденциальная медицинская информация	информация, составляющая врачебную тайну
профессиональный инженер	инженер высшей категории

Continued from page 5

- a) Needed—there is no substitute Russian word for the concept behind it;
- b) Helpful—it helps to make a relevant and important distinction between similar things or concepts (космонавт-астронавт, for instance);
- c) Optional—does not add anything except for a certain fashionableness or ease of use;
- d) Hazardous—the neologism misleads the reader.

He then showed us the same list, now with the corresponding traditional (for lack of a better word) equivalent (see table). I expect that our speaker was preaching to the choir and generally found his audience to be in agreement with his translations, but you could sense the heat of many neurons firing as the audience pondered it, as well as a few signs of sympathetic recognition, not to mention a few guilty cringes and few baffled looks (is байховый really the equivalent of Pекое?). Had we had the time, I think we could have paused at this point and spent several hours just discussing this list, despite the fact that there was general agreement over it.

I found one момент (now here's a usage of an Latinate word I think we should steal back from the Russians) particularly interesting. The term промоушн (which seems to comprise events, contests, displays, distribution of free, in-store samples, etc., for the purpose of drawing consumer attention to some product), while still in wide usage in the world of Russian business, is now competing with a Slavic-based neologism: раскрутка. These two terms seem to have slightly different usages: the first 10 hits on Yandex for раскрутка all involve website promotion, while most hits for промоушн are links to companies that promote merchandise. Furthermore, my 1998 *Толковый словарь русского языка конца XX в.* indicates that the term раскрутка is usually applied within the framework of show business (promotion of an album, a singer, etc.). The usage of each term seems to be evolving and they may both eventually carve out a permanent niche for themselves in the language, but

Technical Terminology	
Neologism	Existing Terminology
спецификация специфицировать	технические условия, технические характеристики, технические данные, нормирование
номер изделия	артикул
схема технологического процесса технологическая схема	схема структурная схема функциональная
схема обвязки и КИП	схема функциональная схема принципиальная (полная)
спецификация процедуры сварки	технологическая карта технология сварки
описание	наименование
предупреждение	внимание, опасно для жизни
фанкойл	доводчик
кривые эксплуатационных характеристик насоса	расходно-напорные характеристики насоса

it is refreshing to see the emergence of a native son (or daughter in the case of this feminine noun) to take on the foreign interloper.

Whether or not we (professional translators) bear the responsibility for absurdities our presenter points out, such as ни при каких обстоятельствах не (as a translation of “under no circumstances” when строго воспрещается expresses this thought по-русски), doors labeled тянуть-толкать (when к себе and от себя have served so well) or хранить вдали от детей when generations of Russian parents have known exactly what to do when told беречь от детей, it is certainly the *process* of translation that has gone astray. I'm not sure that I can agree that the first Russian to coin the terms супервайзер or слот was actually insufficiently lazy—seems to me that's a pretty slothful approach to translation—but I and the rest of the audience was certainly grateful to Konstantin Lakshin for bringing this issue into sharper focus. I don't think we're done with this subject and am hoping for a No Translation Needed Part II in Toronto.

Nora Favorov is assistant administrator of the Slavic Languages Division and a freelance translator living in Chapel Hill, NC and specializing in the areas of literature, public health and the humanities. Her contact information can be found in the masthead.

## BEGINNER'S LUCK *Continued from page 4*

**Dear Miss Nomer,**

I think I'm addicted to www.multitran.ru. At first I was using it only a few times a week, but now I run it constantly, and I feel as though I can't live without it. The new perspectives it has given me on old familiar words are simply intoxicating. And when it goes down, as it so often does, I find myself just sitting there, staring blankly at my screen. Am I beyond help?

*At Risk in Atascadero*

**Dear At Risk,**

You may be, but it might comfort you to know that you're certainly not alone. Multitran, as long-time users know, needs to be handled with great care. Never lose touch with your instincts, for they will tell you when Multitran is simply leading you up the garden path, which can happen often. As to the downtimes, which

I agree can be painful in the extreme, I can think of two options. One is to acquire your own standalone copy, as our then-Assistant Administrator (now Administrator, all hail!), Alex Lane, discussed in the previous issue of *SlavFile*. Don't blame me, however, if that only deepens your dependency. The other is to use www.lingvo.ru to fill that aching void on your screen. But be wary. Lingvo addiction is a whole subject on its own.

**Dear Miss Nomer,**

I suffer from a fear of certification.

What can I do?

*Intimidated in Indianapolis*

**Dear Intimidated,**

It's here, my dear. Get used to it.

If you have any questions—more serious or far sillier questions—for Miss Nomer, please send them to me and I'll make sure she gets them. You can reach me at [bliss@wmonline.com](mailto:bliss@wmonline.com).

# ATA-SSLI Update

*Paula Gordon, Editor for South Slavic Languages*

I am pleased to report on the annual conference activities of the Initiative to Establish New South Slavic Language (SSL) Pairs for ATA Certification.

Six initiative members attended the conference and there were two SSL presentations. Attendance at the presentations was sparse (not unexpectedly), but engaged (not unexpectedly!). We met a number of colleagues working in SSL pairs and added a few names to our mailing list.

We organized a South Slavic Languages "Sajam knjiga" (book fair), a rather spur-of-the-moment event, at which we perused some essential reference books (some of which were needed for the Croatian grader training sessions, and some of which members brought specifically for purposes of "show and tell") and shared information about language resources for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. We had a nice time – thumbing through dictionaries and enjoying wine and cheese. Imagine sitting in the library with a glass (ahem, bottle!) of wine and good friends... We have compiled a bibliography of some of our favorite and most useful books, and we welcome additions to this list, which I will send by E-mail to anyone wishing to receive it (contact dbaPlanB@aol.com).

Members of the Croatian Language Workgroup (Co-chairs Marijan Bošković and David Stephenson, and 3 graders) attended grader training workshops at the conference. ATA guidelines for establishing new language pairs state that at least one grader must attend training before a new pair can be approved, so the Croatian Language Workgroup (CLW) is in good shape in that regard. Terry Hanlen, ATA Certification Program Manager, and Lilian Novas van Vranken and Celia Bohannon, Certification Committee Chair and Deputy Chair, respectively, were extremely supportive, and included the CLW in all scheduled grader activities. The CLW also received many offers of practical assistance from other language workgroup chairs and graders regarding passage selection and grading guidelines. The Croatian Language Workgroup is well on the way to establishing Croatian into English and English into Croatian certification programs. Our proposed timeframe envisions our first Croatian exam sittings occurring at next year's conference in Toronto.

The Serbian and Bosnian Language workgroups have yet to be formed. What is needed are people with appropriate credentials to step forward and volunteer as Language Chairs for these languages. As of 7 January, we have signed up the required 50 candidates for Serbian > English, and need only 3 more for English > Serbian; we have 46 documented candidates for Bosnian > English and 36 for English > Bosnian. Question-

naires are still coming in, so the fact that we do not \*yet\* have the required 50 candidates for some pairs should not discourage potential Language Chairs from stepping forward.

Finally, I am pleased to report that our initiative is getting a great deal of attention within ATA – we are the first in a while to succeed in getting the required number of potential candidates for a new language combination, and three other language groups have asked us for advice (Nordic, Chinese and Middle Eastern Languages).

Wish us success!

Hold the presses!

Newsworthy last-minute addition: We have just (21 January) met our 50-candidate goal for two more pairs – English > Serbian and Bosnian > English. Thanks are due to committee member Inela Selimović, who recently stepped forward to organize the Bosnian Language Workgroup and who has been promoting the initiative among her contacts and colleagues. The latest flurry of activity brings our total response to 95 potential certification candidates, compelling proof of interest in establishing certification for these languages.

Paula Gordon may be reached at dbaPlanB@aol.com

## Have you been published?

We would like to compile a list of all our members' publications to be included on the SLD website. Whatever the genre or subject matter, we'd like to hear what our members have in print. Please send author, title, publisher and date of publication to [norafavorov@bellsouth.net](mailto:norafavorov@bellsouth.net). In the area of literary works, please inform us of any translations you have completed, whether or not they have been published.

## Coming Soon: The SLD Membership Survey

SLD members will soon be receiving an online survey. The survey is designed to teach us something about ourselves as a group (profile our membership in terms of education, national origin and specialization, determine how we Slavic translators are doing professionally, how we hunt down terminology, where our work comes from, etc.). We hope you will take the time to complete it. The results will be shared with the entire membership through the *SlavFile* and should be interesting for us all. If you have not received a survey by the end of March, please contact Nora Favorov at [norafavorov@bellsouth.net](mailto:norafavorov@bellsouth.net)

# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

The other day, Lena, a Russian former ESL student of mine, dropped by to solicit my help in translating her Maryland marriage certificate into Russian—one more component of the endless paperwork she is having to complete in order to keep her 21-year-old physically handicapped daughter in this country for the treatment she needs. This translation went smoothly until we got to the blank where Maryland demanded to know Lena's relationship to her then-future husband. Somewhat taken aback, I quickly figured out that Maryland, usually such a progressive state, must be concerned about preventing marriages between close blood relatives. When I voiced this conjecture to Lena, she said, "Oh, that is what that question means." Evidently the official who helped her to fill in these blanks several years ago had asked her to define this relationship, and Lena, lowering her eyes in embarrassment, had stammered out, "Well, we're getting married, we're in love."

This time, when Lena came, she brought me a gift certificate to the supermarket where she knows I shop. Previously, after a series of translations for which I refused to take any money, she sent me a gift certificate for a massage at the local day spa. Also this year, someone whom I had helped out linguistically on a daylong, but pleasurable, task presented me with a Coach scarf, easily the most elegant piece of clothing I have ever owned. This has got to stop: in my attempts to help out people toward whom I feel warmly and from whom I would be uncomfortable accepting money, I am causing them not only expense, but considerable extra gift selection effort. From now on, unless someone is truly destitute, instead of saying that I would not dream of taking any money, I will name the lowest non-ludicrous figure I think I can get away with, thus forestalling considerably more expensive thank-you gifts.

At the ATA conference this past November, in conversation with a Russian-born accredited translator and certified interpreter, I described some of the tricks I use to get my foreign students to better approximate English vowel sounds. Despite the fact that her speech is much more intelligible than that of even my advanced students, she seemed pleased to hear about these techniques and claimed they were useful. I have thus decided to share them with other readers. 1) The best way for non-native English speakers of a variety of flavors to pronounce short *i*, as in *little* or *pill*, is to pronounce the word as if there is no vowel at all, only consonants. 2) The best way to learn to pronounce English short *a* like a North American is to hold your nose and intone repeatedly, "Will that be cash or charge?" 3) Finally, you can get yourself to generate the short *u* sound in, for example, *up* or *but* by hitting yourself with discernible but not excessive force in the stomach, preferably after a good meal.

For almost three years, my husband and I have been serving as the surrogate U.S. parents of a young woman from Peru who came to this country to learn English and make her way in the world. Like a number of the foreign students who have stayed with us over the years, Nancy is a cultural sponge and rapidly

assimilated from us not only United States customs, but our own idiosyncratic traditions and those acquired as a result of my Russian heritage. If we do not remember to sit down for a minute before trips, even relatively short ones, she is sure to remind us, afraid that otherwise bad luck might befall us. After she returned from a visit home to a small Quechua (Inca) Indian city in the Andes where her family is relatively prominent, I confirmed what I had suspected: Nancy had introduced this custom when saying goodbye to her numerous relations, friends and other connections. If it survives, how will a future anthropologist explain the existence of Russian custom in the middle of the Andes? I suppose there must be some category for "cross-cultural contamination," although "contamination" seems terribly harsh for this sort of borrowing.

Since all the cooking in her family was done by servants (as someone at the ATA conference put it, in South America even the servants have servants), Nancy acquired most of her beyond-basic cooking skills from me. My own cooking repertoire is approximately one quarter nouveau Russian, one quarter pan-Hispanic, one quarter Colorado hippy and one quarter everything else. Nancy happily adapted and soaked up skills; even the best restaurants couldn't have had such a willing and companionable *sous chef*. About a year ago she married, and now her Salvadoran husband requests and receives mushrooms with dill and sour cream alongside his *pupusas*. Thus do cultures swirl together and meld like marble cake batter.

Every once in a while, my linguistic preoccupations pay off in unexpected ways. This afternoon I got an email purportedly from Paypal (a system for making online payments that are deducted from your credit card or checking account). The message told me that my account was about to expire and that, to prevent this, I had to enter my personal data in an appended file. Trusting by nature, I probably would have docilely done this, if I hadn't noted that the message, which started out, "We regret to inform you that your account is about to be expired in next five business days. To avoid suspension of your account you have to reactivate it by providing us with your personal information," contained a number of what we Russian-to-English certification graders would classify as 1- and 2-point errors. My attention thus attracted, I began to feel suspicious and quickly ascertained that this was indeed not only a scam but a virus that would spread among members of my address list. Chalk one up for grammar freaks!

I use Paypal to pay for things I buy on eBay, some of which are Russian books. Occasionally I send messages to sellers of such who have made errors in their listing serious enough to interfere with sales, e.g., the seller of Russian Books of "Tiles" as opposed to "Tales." Recently, I tactfully wrote to a seller in the Russian book category that he might have more success if he stopped listing a particular book as having been authored by Aleksey Thick, but instead used the writer's actual Russian last name—Tolstoy. He graciously thanked me, saying he was glad to learn that his book had been written by the famous Leo Tolstoy(!).



Some excerpts from a September 2 article in the *Washington Post* on a jury trial in Moscow.

“The first time the jurors came back with their verdict, the judge told them they hadn’t done it right. They forgot to rule on one of the charges and made a mess of trying to alter the language of one of the others. So he sent them out to try again.

“A few minutes later, the jurors came back. The judge looked at their decision, shook his head and pronounced it incomplete again. He sent them back a second time. And then a third. And a fourth. And a fifth.

“The rueful jury foreman shrugged his apologies. ‘It’s the first time,’ he called out. ‘The first pancake is always messed up.’

“Yet change does not come easily. Even the [defense] attorneys were absorbing alien concepts. Conviction requires a simple majority of jurors here. Told during a break that U.S. juries must rule unanimously, the defense attorney...seemed astonished and translated that into the Russian context. ‘Then,’ he exclaimed, ‘you only have to buy one.’”

Vladimir Klishko and Elana Pick kindly wrote to tell me that the reason I could not find Luis in any dictionary as referring to syphilis was that it had been spelled wrong in the documents I had been translating—the correct spelling is Lues and indeed is readily found in the appropriate dictionaries. Vladimir, in addition to Misha Ishenko, also informed me that I had misspelled the phrase to *wit*. This was not a typo; I believe I have been blithely misspelling the word all my life and am very grateful to have been set straight. Happily, with the two new copyeditors we have recruited, such errors should become more of a rarity in *SlavFile*.

I came across the following early Lermontov poem in a 1930 article by the famed psychologist Vygotsky on creativity that I was translating for a psychology journal. I could not resist the challenge of putting it into verse, especially since the poetic technique of enjambment has always fascinated me. The English version you see here owes a great deal (perhaps as much as half) to Tim Sergay, whom I frequently enlist to help me polish my poetic translations. I am sure that it is considered a truism that collaborative poetry is not possible, but evidently this does not apply to translations, which are already a collaboration between the original author and the translator.

Холодной буквой трудно объяснить  
Боренье дум. Нет звуков у людей  
Довольно сильных, чтоб изобразить  
Желание блаженства. Пыл страстей  
Возвышенных я чувствую, но слов  
Не нахожу, и в этот миг готов  
Пожертвовать собой, чтоб как-нибудь  
Хоть тень их перелить в другую грудь.

I seek in vain cold letters to reveal  
My battling thoughts. No sounds yet made by man  
Can compass all the yearning that I feel  
For bliss. And though I try, I never can  
Convey the lofty flame with which I burn  
In words. I’d sacrifice my life to learn  
How some mere shade of these might be expressed  
So they could lodge within another’s breast.

Happy New Year, everyone!

# Translator Profile

## Introducing Our New Copy Editor

*Editor’s note: If you have found fewer distracting typos and inaccuracies in this issue of SlavFile, you have our terrific new copy editor, Jennifer Guernsey, to thank. We asked Jennifer to introduce herself.*

My name is Jennifer Guernsey and I am the newly minted copy editor for the *SlavFile*. I have been a freelance Russian>English translator for over 15 years, but until recently translating has taken a back seat to my various other careers. In my first career I worked as a word processor and technical editor; in my second, as a tour escort for groups of Americans traveling the USSR; in my third, as a State Department contractor managing the processing of Soviet refugees; and in my fourth, as a research assistant, technical writer, and right-hand man for an ex-Soviet biological weapons specialist. So if there’s something you need to know about punctuation, travel, refugees, or anthrax, I may be able to help!

I began translating professionally shortly after I received a B.A. in Russian from the University of Michigan. The pre-medical coursework I had completed would, it turns out, come in quite handy in my translation career. My first translation work, performed for a (deservedly) paltry sum, involved translating lengthy scientific monographs handwritten by recent Soviet émigrés. Fortunately, I could call on the authors themselves for assistance. “I’m sorry, sir, I’m having trouble reading this paragraph.” “Yes, my apologies, that was the part I wrote while I was lying in bed.” I then translated patents for a Patent and Trademark Office contractor. When that company’s contract was not renewed, my translation work mostly dried up, but as a new mother working part-time I had plenty else to do, so I let my translation career languish for a couple of years. I decided about a year ago to forgo my biological defense job to concentrate anew on translating. My work covers a variety of scientific and medical topics, but weapons of mass destruction still loom large in my professional life—my major clients are in the nuclear and chemical weapons fields. In conjunction with my latest career change, I’ve upgraded my ATA/SLD status from “quiet lurker” to “actively involved.”

Jen can be reached at [jenguernsey@att.net](mailto:jenguernsey@att.net).

# The Slovist

Raphy Alden

I no longer have the pleasure of going out on interpretation assignments, so for this issue of *SlavFile* I have used my old notes.

I don't know how you would translate/interpret the examples below. I can only write about how I did it. Here we go:

It was one of those speeches made by a manager who had power and quite a bit of influence within the company, and offering biting criticism was his favorite pastime.

*За последние несколько недель компания наняла несколько уродов...* Turning to me, he said, "I hope you understand what I mean by *урод* here." You can hope all you want, I thought, but I am the one who needs to either find the right word if it is stored somewhere in my memory, or make one up, or even use descriptive interpretation (I call it making a detour). In any case, all I could come up with was: *The company has hired some freaks lately.*

В компании появился новый слесарь-сантехник, вообще неизвестно кто и откуда.

*A new plumber that came from nowhere and whom nobody had known before has been hired.*

Этот тип с очень необычным именем – Гамлет...  
*This individual with the unlikely name of Hamlet...*

Не кривя душой скажу, что...  
*I will not play the hypocrite and will be straight with you* (looking back I realize that *will be straight with you* is redundant).

Как поется в песне: что не сложилось больше не сложишь.  
*As the song goes: If it didn't work out the first time, it never will.*

Как дела, многоженец? (to a 31-year old man who just married for a third time) *How are you, Mr. Polygamous?*

Его ревматизм мучает *He is afflicted with rheumatism.*

Moscow 2002. After successful negotiations (it does happen sometimes, you know) and a good dinner, both parties (Americans and Russians) decided to play pool. Everybody was in a cheery mood, and that's when it started—telling jokes. I love telling jokes myself, but the major challenge here was making the other party (i.e., those who listened to the jokes) laugh. I had a real hard time with this one:

Husband: Honey, how about a quickie?

Wife: Quickie as opposed to what?

Муж: Дорогая, как насчет по-быстрому трахнуть? У меня есть пара минут.

Жена: Пара минут! А что у нас это когда-либо длилось дольше?

Well, the Russians did laugh, so I said to myself, 'mission accomplished.'

## Not good enough

*Вам нужно притереться друг к дружке* (to two accountants working in the same room and not liking it a bit). I really didn't know how to interpret притереться to my satisfaction, so I just said: *You really need to get to know each other better.* Which is not nearly as good as it should be, so please send me your suggestions at raphael\_ag@hotmail.com.

## A Crash Course in Experimental Design and Statistics for Biomedical Translators:

Lydia Razran Stone's Presentation at the 44<sup>th</sup> ATA Conference

*Reviewed by Boris Silverstejn*

*The editor of SlavFile and presenter would like to thank Boris Silverstejn not only for his review, but for valuable additions to her presentation and especially for correcting numerous typos in her handout.*

I like ATA Conferences—enjoying the company of old friends, meeting interesting new people, and yes, attending various presentations. The schedule usually leaves few chances to go to presentations outside the SLD program, but I'm not complaining. Our program is always diverse, educational (did somebody say *continuing education*?) and informative.

Lydia's *Crash Course* was just that—and more. Presented in her trademark, unassuming manner—and, on her suggestion, in a nice outdoor setting on the hotel's West Terrace, instead of a stuffy third-floor room—it was well-attended and received with great interest.

This *Course* was based on Lydia's "first career" as an experimental psychologist, which involved a year of teaching statistics as well as her decade-long experience of translating biomedical documentation for NASA, and she shared it generously with us. It centered around a handout in the form of a chart listing English terms, their definitions drawn from assorted statistics books, and their Russian, German, French and Spanish equivalents.\*

Lydia began by mentioning that she had given a similar presentation in 2002 at the ATA Medical Seminar in Chicago and that her audience then had been split into basically two categories—those who knew much more about math and statistics than the presenter, and those who knew much less. This was probably the situation in Phoenix as well; nevertheless, this time (and, I'm sure, back in 2002, too), both categories of listeners came out with their old knowledge renewed and a good helping of new knowledge. And all were impressed with the depth of Lydia's own knowledge of the subject. A lively discussion helped clarify some obscure concepts.

There is no need to list here each and every of the 79 terms provided. A sample from the handout is reproduced here and the entire list will be available on the SLD website.

The only "problem" I have is with the title of the presentation. I think the word *Biomedical* might be misleading (the covered subject area was much broader) and should have been omitted. Although some terminology was pertinent primarily to the biomedical field, the majority of the material pertains to general statistics and would be helpful to **any** translator.

I wonder what's in store for Toronto.

\* The German terms were supplied by Ted Crump, French and Spanish by Shari Lama.

English	Simplified definition	Russian
analysis of variance, ANOVA	A statistical test that can be used on between- and within-subject and multifactor designs to test significance of differences obtained.	дисперсионный анализ, метод Фишера
baseline level	The initial measured level of some feature of the subjects before the experimental treatment	фон, исходный уровень
between group variance	The amount of variance among all scores in an experiment accounted for by effects of the experimental manipulation.	факторная дисперсия (дисперсия между группами)
confounding	A situation in which an un-manipulated independent variable varies systematically with the manipulated variable so that the effect of the confounding and independent variable cannot be separated.	смешивание (факторов)
counterbalancing	Systematically varying the order of conditions or treatments between or within subjects so that sequence- or time-related effects are evenly distributed among all conditions.	уравновешивание
error bar	A line drawn through a point representing an observed value on a graph to indicate the confidence interval	зона заблуждения
experimental condition	Any of the different conditions of an experiment; or just the one involving the manipulation of interest.	вариант опыта, комбинация условий
experimental group, experimental treatment	Subjects that have undergone (or will undergo) the experimental treatment. Group applies to between-subject designs and treatment to within-subject designs.	основная группа, подопытная группа, экспериментальное условие
experimental treatment or manipulation	What the experimenter does to the subjects the effect of which s/he is trying to study.	экспериментальное воздействие; комбинация условий
mean (don't use average)	X (with horizontal line above it) a descriptive measure of central tendency, sum of all scores divided by number of scores.	среднее
median	A descriptive measure of central tendency; the middle score or 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile.	медиана
mode, modal value	A descriptive measure of central tendency; the most common score.	наиболее вероятное значение
multifactor experiment	An experiment in which more than one independent variable is used.	комплексный эксперимент
normal (human) subjects	In medical experiments, individuals who have not been diagnosed with disease and have no obvious signs thereof.	практически здоровые люди
population	The potential units for observation from which the sample to be observed is drawn.	генеральная совокупность
rejection region (acceptance region)	A set of values of the test statistic that are contradictory to the null hypothesis and imply its rejection (the set of values that imply failure to reject the null hypothesis)	Область неприятия (приятия) гипотезы
reliability	The consistency with which the same operations yield the same measurement.	надежность
standard deviation	s, a descriptive measure of variability within a sample; the square root of the variance.	среднеквадратическое отклонение
standard error of the mean	$\sigma$ , estimated standard deviation of means of a set of samples, obtained by dividing the standard deviation by number in each sample	среднеквадратическая ошибка среднего
statistical test	A set of operations on statistics generated by an experiment designed to assess the significance of a stated hypothesis.	критерий (статистический)
statistically reliable or significant	Of a difference between two (+) statistics from two (+) different samples, of a magnitude such that the probability that the samples were drawn from the same population is less than some predetermined level.	значимый, достоверный
there's a trend (in the results)	The results are not statistically significant but we are going to talk about them as if they are.	проявляет тенденцию
trial or test	A single "session" in an experiment in which a subject is exposed to a manipulation.	опыт; проба
t-test	A test statistic used to test the difference between two means, especially if samples are small. It is not legitimate to use multiple t-tests to test the differences between means two by two in a multifactor or multilevel experiment. Student is the test developer.	t-критерий (метод), критерий Стьюдента, Стьюдентизация
using ANOVA; using a t-test	From the names of the test developers Fisher and Student.	по Фишеру; по Стьюденту
validity	Whether the operations performed measure what they are purported to measure.	валидность

Sources for chart: All languages: Rasch, D. Biometrisches Wörterbuch (9 languages), VEB Deutscher Landwirtschaftsverlag, 1987; Russian: Lydia Stone; Kovalenko, E. G. English Russian Terminological Dictionary on Experimental Design, Zhivoy Yazyk, 1995. Definitions, Assorted statistics books. Errors: Lydia Stone.

# Slavic Language Division Post-Conference Forum

November 8, 2003

by Christina Sever and Nora Favorov

This year, for the first time, the SLD conducted a forum at the end of the annual ATA conference. The purpose of the forum was to critique SLD events at this year's conference and plan for the following year's conference in Toronto. Additionally, Alex Lane, the division's new administrator, used the forum to brainstorm solutions to problems that might arise for our membership in connection with ATA's upcoming continuing education requirements.

## Planning for Toronto

Our 2003 SLD conference lineup was plagued by cancellations, one of which, through a breakdown in the chain of communication, was completely unknown to us, resulting in a roomful of people eagerly awaiting a presentation on *Thesaurus Techniques in Multilingual Terminological Project Support*, despite the fact that the presenter had already informed ATA that he would not be able to make it to the conference. Presenters of two other sessions were also forced to cancel (*Slavic Game Show* and *From the Ground Up: Translating and Editing Complex Structures in Russian Texts*). It was suggested that some one be in charge of keeping track of such cancellations and reacting to them in time to adjust the program. For instance, some existing presentations could have been given more time, and impromptu terminology forums could have been organized.

Those present were asked to suggest sessions for Toronto. The following possibilities were introduced:

- Terminology sessions in workshop, rather than lecture, format. Terms should be distributed to participants in advance;
- Panel on translation tools with audience participation;
- "Something fun" like an idiom session or game show. One proposal was for a cultural literacy game show, in which Russians devise questions for Americans and vice versa;
- Session on politically correct terminology in a Slavic language (or languages);
- Mistakes English speakers make in Russian and vice versa.

Nora Favorov announced that she would use the SLD survey scheduled to go out to members this winter to help determine the interests of members. Nora mentioned that some divisions have program committees in charge of arranging for their divisions' conference presentations. Anyone interested in serving on such a committee was (and is) encouraged to approach Alex or Nora. It was also suggested that sessions could be recorded, either in audio or video format.

## Continuing Education

Alex told those present that he had heard concerns from members about the new ATA requirements for continuing education credits to be accumulated in order to maintain certification (as of January 1, 2004 the new term for the ATA credential held by those who have passed what used to be called an accreditation exam). As stated on the ATA website:

Starting January 1, 2004, currently certified members will have to earn and keep track of continuing education credits, as determined by ATA, in order to maintain their certification credential. Certified members are given three years to accumulate 20 hours of credit, with a maximum of 10 hours in any given year. The first reporting of credits will occur in 2007, which means that you do not have to report anything until then.

All newly-certified members will have to complete one hour of ethics during the first period after certification. This requirement can be fulfilled by either attending a workshop at the annual conference or one that will be available online.

Alex pointed out that ATA is very open to whatever ideas divisions or individual members might have about establishing ways to meet the CE requirements. Not everyone lives near a university or can afford the time and expense involved in attending conferences, and we division members need to devise ways that allow our diverse membership to demonstrate that they are continually improving their qualifications in ways that are productive and not overly burdensome. The first step, Alex suggested, would be to form a Continuing Education Committee to look into the various possibilities and coordinate with ATA to ensure that whatever we come up with will meet their requirements. Please contact Alex if you would be willing to serve on such a committee. Initial suggestions included:

- Developing on-line courses. Members could obtain CE credit by either creating or completing on-line course modules. ATA would certainly help solve technical problems.
- Conducting a mid-year conference. Nora informed us that we would need at least 60 people to break even on such an event. It was felt that we should look into co-sponsoring a mid-year conference with another division and hold it at a university to keep costs down. There is also the possibility of opening up such a conference to non-ATA members. A sub-committee should be formed to investigate and/or pursue this possibility.

Members are encouraged to step forward and volunteer for one of the committees being formed: the Continuing Education Committee, the committee to explore the possibility of a mid-year conference, and a conference program committee. Please contact Alex ([words@galexi.com](mailto:words@galexi.com)) or Nora ([norafavorov@bellsouth.net](mailto:norafavorov@bellsouth.net)) if you are willing to serve.



# The Interpreter Interpreted/Psychoanalyzed

or

## Why Interpreting May Make You Crazy and What to Do about It

*Basic text of a talk given at the ATA Conference in Phoenix, AZ, 2003*  
by Laura Esther Wolfson

*Editor's note: We are publishing the complete text of this talk presented at the last ATA conference under the aegis of the Interpreters Division, since it was scheduled opposite the SLD's Greiss lecture, preventing some of our members, who ordinarily would have flocked to it, from attending. A previous version of this talk was delivered to the New York Circle of Translators and its text published in their newsletter.*

I must tell you up front that I have nothing of pragmatic value to say to you today. I will not be talking about: how to become an interpreter; how to become a better interpreter; how much to charge for your work; how to run your business. And I will definitely not be talking about what reference works and translation tools you absolutely must have in order to be a sophisticated, cutting-edge, high-precision, technologically with-it, international, localized, globalized, multilingual, native-speaking, quality-controlled language services specialist.

Sorry, I have been looking at too many translation company websites lately.

No, my presentation today will be a bit like one of those animated documentaries on public television in which the viewer seems to be floating in a little boat upstream through someone's veins and arteries and learning about the functioning of various internal organs.

But, you will be glad to hear, minus the visual aids.

Today we are going to peer into the mind of the interpreter, and see how it is affected by the activity of interpreting. And it won't be pretty. In fact, the first part may seem a bit grim, but if you just hang in there, I will reward your persistence and loyalty with the requisite happy ending.

### I. THE INTERPRETER AS DEPRESSIVE

Interpreting can result in its practitioners experiencing depression. Why?

One model of what the interpreter does is to create a sort of culvert in her mind, through which words and ideas pass, unimpeded, like industrial run-off, from one side of a road to the other, in this case the language barrier. An effect of this process is that the interpreter's mind and lips serve constantly as the temporary dwelling place for a stream of ideas and utterances which are, not infrequently, alien to her, but which, even if they are not alien, never hang around for long. The interpreter becomes a sort of intellectual boarding house or bus station. The traces of all of these utterances mingle in all sorts of strange ways and ultimately disappear. Interpreters have highly-developed short-term memory, but short-term memory is just another name for long-term oblivion. Thus, the interpreter has as her constant traveling companions a sense of alienation and transience.

Christine Brooke-Rose, an experimental writer, herself raised in a trilingual diplomatic family in Geneva, said in an interview about her post-modernist novel entitled *Between*, about a simultaneous interpreter: "...it's all the language, the lunatic empty speech-making of all the different congresses, political, sociological, literary and so on and of course, the actual languages, all jostled together..."

So, among the interpreter's primary challenges as a human being, she must

- 1) maintain her sense of identity and
- 2) not give in to a cynical attitude (though it may be supported by her reality) that all is fleeting, and that many statements are not backed by actions.

Among the utterances the interpreter is regularly called upon to convey are promises and commitments, frequently when the two parties to the discussion are economically or politically unequal and the more powerful partner is promising some sort of aid. Different interpreters may be hired to work the later meeting where the promises are or are not kept. When you interpret promises over and over and are not present to see them made good upon, it is easy to assume that most promises are broken.

And perhaps that is true, but one shouldn't make the assumption unless one is sure.

### II. ALIENATION

The interpreter may experience a sense of separateness from others (in part because she is in a different field from those she is interpreting for) and also because she does not belong completely to either side of the language barrier (and is thus mistrusted by both sides). Furthermore, it is common for interpreters to determine their own worth by the rank of the people they work for and how much they travel for their work, rather than through a sense of their own value. This may cause alienation from self.

It is common for interpreters to be caught in webs of cultural misunderstandings, with each side looking to them expectantly to justify its own position and explain that of the other side—another source of alienation.

### III. STRESS

Interpreting triggers stress in all sorts of ways unimaginable to people who have never sat in the interpreter's booth. There is the risk of making a crucial error, obviously, but also:

- a. that of being corrected for a mistake you haven't made by someone less knowledgeable about the language – this could be a matter of a mere false cognate – and then the interpreter is torn between defending her rendition vs. letting it pass (especially if the person doing the correcting is of high rank);

*Continued from page 14*

## The Interpreter Interpreted *Continued from page 13*

- b. trying to interpret while being interrupted;
- c. the difficulty of concentrating during cross-talk;
- d. that terrible, oncoming train feeling that comes when someone says something you cannot understand (and it happens to everyone...) – sometimes this even happens when the speaker is speaking your native language!
- e. the *delightful* experience of interpreting to an audience containing many bilinguals and feeling that your every word is being second-guessed by at least a dozen people...;
- f. speakers who are culturally insensitive or insult their audience (especially stressful if the speaker and you have the same native language, for that makes you feel somehow more responsible for his offensive statements);
- g. speakers who say things like: “I have 3 things to say, they are both very important, and here it is...” What do you do with a sentence like THAT?

All of the abovementioned can lead to the following state (taken from a previously unpublished essay of my own):

“Interpreting assignments can be marked by arid, painful stretches, which sometimes last for hours, or perhaps they merely seem to, when interpreting resembles a form of utterly gratuitous torment. Torment, because at these times, the act of interpreting feels like a blade slicing deeply into the spongy but resistant matter of the brain – the act of interpreting is like a machine whose functioning has gone terribly awry with no one nearby to fix it or throw the ‘off’ switch, and cogs are grinding, grinding against each other until the friction is almost unbearable and finally, gaskets begin to blow, blackened bits of springs pop out and clatter on the floor and a sulphurous, dry burning smell fills the air.

“It goes without saying that in no way does the *quality* of the interpreter’s work suffer during these hellish periods and that she gives no outward sign of what is happening. The listeners are as oblivious to the interpreter’s agonies as the ancient Romans were when, as was their wont, they would celebrate military victories by dining at groaning boards placed, along with the benches on which the celebrants sat, on the bodies of prisoners of war who were, as the evening’s festivities unfolded, slowly crushed to death under the dreadful weight of feast, feasters and furniture. The victors ignored or did not notice their victims’ screams. The interpreter cannot scream.”

Yes, it is true: sometimes interpreting reaches such a pitch of difficulty that the interpreter, without noticing how or when, begins looking upon the speaker as a kind of sadist, forgetting that the reasons he or she is devising opaque circumlocutions at top speed have absolutely nothing to do with increasing the interpreter’s suffering.

So, what is the answer? Hint: it is not talk therapy and it is not pharmaceuticals. In fact, it does not cost any money at all.

1. Maintain your mind richly stocked with knowledge and thought and different registers of language – current events, great literature, slang, stirring oratory, human contact – so that the act of interpreting does not leave you feeling depleted and worthless.

2. Have a broad network of professional contacts, where, ideally, the line between a colleague and a friend is a blurry one;
3. Never lose sight of the

### Three Important Interpreting Life Lessons:

- a. Interpreters have contact with people all up and down the social ladder: treat them ALL the same, simply and with respect. High-ranking people are weary of sycophants and fawning, and will value your simplicity; the humble, accustomed to being ignored and patronized, will value your respect;
  - b. Interpret the feeling, not just the words;
  - c. Even diplomats and heads of state do not always know which fork to use, so do not castigate yourself for not knowing, either.
4. Ask the client for the working conditions you need:
    - Reasonable hours;
    - An interpreting partner to share the workload;
    - Preparation materials;
    - Decent acoustics;
    - A speaker who does not go unreasonably fast;
    - Acceptable pay.

Some of these conditions should be requested before the job; others may be requested (politely!) while the job is going on when it becomes apparent that they are not being met.

In determining, requesting and receiving the conditions needed to do a good job, the interpreter becomes, instead of the suffering creature described above, laboring on in silence and pain, someone for whom the act of interpreting is often sheer pleasure, that state psychologists know as “flow.” At these times, the interpreter is completely focused on her task, at one with it. As the poet William Butler Yeats wrote, “Who can tell the dancer from the dance?”

During these periods of flow, the interpreter is oblivious to time’s passage. A characteristic of this state of flow is that when in it, the interpreter is startled somewhat whenever she feels that tap on her shoulder or other non-verbal sign from her colleague indicating that thirty minutes have elapsed and the moment is again at hand when she must relinquish the microphone and take a break. She is thinking, where did the time go? Who needs relief when work is going this well?

Like dolphins performing at Sea World, *le mot juste* rises up over and over and breaks through the surface of the unconscious mind, curves in a graceful arc, in proper sequence, at just the necessary speed, through whatever invisible medium it is (does it have a name?) that fills the space intervening between unconscious mind and speech organs. In a word, all is going swimmingly.

Conclusion: in spite of my vivid description of interpretation’s difficulties, the occupation’s pleasures are greater than its pain, otherwise we wouldn’t do it.

*Continued on page 15*

I like to think that our lives have a purpose, and that much of it, however far beyond our knowing it may lie, consists in the influence we have on others, whether through lifelong relationships or brief, seemingly chance crossings of paths. Through his volunteer work, I am sure that Bill has touched the lives of most of the readers of these lines, whether they knew him or not. But even more than his service to our organizations, so many of us were touched by his personal presence. He was a man of character and good humor. I suspect that his efforts on behalf of ATA and NCATA were largely motivated by Bill's obvious enjoyment of people. Bill seemed unusually comfortable with himself, and this tended to put everyone he met at ease. Everything he did, he did with enthusiasm, and his greatest enthusiasm seemed to be for people.

Ann Macfarlane says, "I learned my trade as a grader under his tutelage, and no one could have asked for a better teacher. Bill brought knowledge, detachment, humor and insight to the task. Our discussion at Austin in 1994 stands out particularly in my mind—кинематика had been translated as 'cinematics.' Bill was both convulsed at the idea of Hollywood intruding into a discussion of the physics of motion, and compassionate toward the hapless candidate who had made the error. Another passage used рубить in a metaphorical sense. I had gone with the broad metaphor and proposed an unacceptable 'crush' as the English translation—the literal meaning has remained with me always after seeing Bill swing away with his imaginary axe."

Emilia Balke told me that she was seated at the same table with Bill during the SLD dinner at an ATA conference. "I mentioned that I was going to Washington in a few months. Bill gave me his card and told me to call him when I went. The following year in January or February I went to Washington, DC for business. He helped me find a hotel, came and picked me up at the airport and took me to the hotel. Then he, his wife and I had dinner at a Russian restaurant. We spent a very enjoyable evening together. They talked a lot about their travel and their time in Russia."

My first encounter with Bill Keasbey was entirely anonymous. When I took the practice test for the accreditation exam in 1996, it was returned to me with some very encouraging comments, which gave me a good bit of confidence when I went to take the exam itself. As it turned out, I needed that confidence, since I found the exam considerably more challenging than the practice test had been.

Later, when I became a grader myself, I had the pleasure of working with Bill. After working as a grader for some time, I asked Terry Hanlen, ATA's Accreditation Manager, why I never received any practice tests. "Bill grades all the practice tests," I was told. It was only then that I knew who had given the encouragement that was so important to me at a decisive point in my life. I never mentioned this to Bill, and, if he even remembered the kind words he had written, he could not have known to whom they were addressed, since the exams and practice tests are not identified to the graders by name. It was simply Bill's nature to be helpful in any way possible to everyone he encountered.

Since his death, I have talked to many people about Bill. They all share a great respect and fondness for him, and almost everyone mentioned how well he danced. In fact, he had enjoyed folk dancing since his college years. Bill and Doramay participated in a Finnish folk dancing performance group during their years in Helsinki and in other folk dancing groups when they returned to this country. Bill seemed to live as gracefully as he danced.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Doramay Keasbey, two children and six grandchildren and many, many friends and admirers

Anyone wishing to make a contribution in Bill's name may do so to the Sierra Club.

Special thanks to Mrs. Doramay Keasbey for providing so much of the information given here about Bill's life.

---

### The Interpreter Interpreted *Continued from page 14*

The interpreter is like a character in a fairy tale by the author of the *Wizard of Oz*. This character, Princess Langwidere, has a collection of 30 different heads, all beautiful, all different, some pale, some dark, some olive-skinned, some freckled with red hair, some snub-nosed, some hawk-nosed, with different personalities, and each morning, she decides which head she will don that day, fulfilling a universal dream of leaving self behind (different from losing the self), living different lives in different settings.

Here is a snippet of dialogue between two other characters about this princess, which could apply almost equally to interpreters:

"I cannot say what she looks like," says one character, "though I have seen her twenty times. For she is a different person every time I see her."

"That is strange," said Dorothy. "Do you mean to say that so many different princesses are one and the same person?"

"Not exactly," came the reply. "There is, of course, but one princess, but she appears to us in many forms, all of which are more or less beautiful."

"She must be a witch," exclaimed the girl.

"I do not think so," said the other. "But there is some mystery connected with her, nevertheless."

Like the princess, interpreters wake up every day and say, "Who am I going to be today?" Not, which hat am I going to wear, but which head am I going to wear? That of diplomat, businessman, judge, criminal? This is, I think, something people in other professions may envy.

But the trick, of course, is to change roles and settings in a way that is productive and pleasurable: to change heads...without losing your mind.

# SLAVFILE

Newsletter of the Slavic Languages Division  
of the American Translators Association  
225 Reinekers Lane  
Alexandria, VA 22314

“ Очень вредный (и столь же распространенный) способ перевода состоит в переписывании английского термина русскими буквами: пул, паттерн, obsессия. Обычно это оправдывается требованием точности и невозможностью передать все «оттенки смысла», якобы содержащиеся в термине. В действительности за этим стоит плохое знание отечественной и английской терминологии, неумение понять истинный смысл слова и желание придать тексту модный заграничный вид. Оттенки смысла может передать только слово, глубоко укорененное в языке, рождающее богатые ассоциации, при этом сходные у всех носителей языка. А какие ассоциации рождает у русского человека слово пул? Читая текст, изобилующий словами такого рода, человек обычно испытывает глубокое удовлетворение. Он чувствует, что его прямо таки распирает от новых знаний. Чувство это обманчиво. На самом деле он скорее лишается того, что он знал о предмете под старым названием. ”

Д. В. Самойлов

О переводе медицинского текста

Cited by Konstantin Lakshin in his ATA Conference presentation *No Translation Needed!*