

## HOW TO TAKE AND PASS THE ATA CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

*James Walker*

*Language Chair for Russian-English Certification*

At the most recent ATA conference, Marina Aranovich, English into Russian Language Chair, and I gave a presentation on the English-Russian and Russian-English certification exams, the purpose of which was to encourage more people to take the exam and to help them assess when they are ready to do so. There was a great deal we wanted to cover and it did not all fit into the time available. I am glad to have this opportunity to summarize my advice for taking and passing the exam.

- It is very hard to study effectively for the certification exam. The best preparation is experience in translating.
- Take the practice test first. This is the best way to find out if you are ready to take the exam. You don't necessarily need a passing grade on the practice test before taking the exam, but you should come reasonably close, understand your mistakes and learn from them.
- Bring enough dictionaries to cover the possible range of passages: general, business, legal, technical and medical. In addition to bilingual dictionaries, it is a good idea to bring monolingual dictionaries for both the target and source language. However, the exam is not a vocabulary test. Terminology should not be a major problem; the passages should not contain any really obscure or overly specialized terms. Don't waste too much time worrying about two different ways of saying the same thing; probably either one will be all right.
- Assuming that you have sufficient translation experience and have taken the practice test and done reasonably well on it, you should approach the exam with confidence. While the certification exam is not supposed to be easy (it is not designed for beginners), it is well within the capabilities of an experienced professional translator.
- Relax! The graders are not looking for an ideal translation, just an OK translation without too many demonstrable errors.
- The passages are short. Read through them first before you begin translating.
- As with any type of writing, the first sentence is particularly important. Errors there do not count any more than elsewhere, but you do want to make a good first impression.

- Avoid unnecessary risks. Error points can be given for translating either too literally or too freely, but you are more likely to get into serious trouble with translations that are overly creative, rather than conservative. Quality points can be given for exceptionally good renditions (up to a maximum of three points), but free translation is not worth the risk unless you are very sure that you can convey the complete and accurate meaning of the original. This is not to say that some sentences do not need to be recast, which is one of the translation skills to be tested.
- Proofread carefully. Recently, an otherwise competent translation omitted an entire, short, but nontrivial sentence, which made the difference between pass and fail. This is an extreme example, but it is not uncommon to see errors that are obviously the result of carelessness, rather than misunderstanding. Ideally, you should have time to read through your translation of each passage twice: once to look for omissions, misspellings, incorrect punctuation and other readily apparent mistakes, and again to see if your translation makes sense and sounds reasonably natural in the target language.

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# AdmInitions

Joseph Bayerl  
SLD Administrator

I would like to use the *SlavFile's* first issue of 2006 to extend my best wishes for a happy and rewarding new year to the membership of the Slavic Languages Division.

On behalf of the SLD, I would also like to welcome new members. The ATA's policy of allowing its members to join any division at no additional cost has introduced a new dynamic. For my part, I am looking forward to participating to some degree in at least two additional divisions. These are divisions in which I have had a general interest that simply has not risen to the level of opting for membership in the past. I hope that others whose passing interest is in Slavic Languages will find their participation in the SLD, to whatever extent they choose, to be meaningful and satisfying.

At the ATA conference in Seattle, SLD attendees discussed a number of initiatives that will require sustained effort through the coming year. Of course, as the Russian saying goes, **инициатива наказуема** (*initiative is punishable*). In other words, any changes and enhancements we make will rely upon the small and large efforts of SLD members.

On the list at Seattle were suggestions for fostering more and better contacts among Division members. Specifically, we talked about building on the *Yahoo!* forum and about holding regional meetings and events that would satisfy ATA continuing education requirements. That they would also aim to be enjoyable and rewarding social events goes without saying. There is also a need to update and expand the SLD's web page. I would like to invite members to contribute their thoughts and specific suggestions, either to me directly or in the forum.

Meanwhile, I want to acknowledge the superb effort that continues to go into the SLD's traditional mainstays, the annual conference and the quarterly *SlavFile*. Based on my personal observation and all accounts, the events held in Seattle (formal and otherwise) continued in the SLD's high tradition. As to the merits of the *SF's* contributors and editors, I think that seasoned readers will agree that they have consistently made this newsletter one of the ATA's finest. Among the changes that result from the ATA's change in division membership policy is that division newsletters will no longer be distributed in paper copy. However, I hope that, in adapting to the electronic version, SLD members will take advantage of opportunities to pass the electronic versions of the *SF* to their friends and colleagues.

Please feel free to contact me directly on any matter pertaining to the Division (my e-mail address is [b@yerl.net](mailto:b@yerl.net)).

With warm regards and best wishes,

Joe

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

## FROM THE EDITORS

This first *SlavFile* issue of 2006 will also be the first one not to be distributed in hard copy to our members. From now on you will receive an e-mail message from ATA Headquarters when each issue is available, which will contain a link to that issue. This change is the result of a decision made by ATA that affects all divisions, most of which have already been distributing their newsletters exclusively electronically for some time. While the *SlavFile* staff would have preferred to continue sending out hard copies, this is certainly a decision we can live with, and it even has some advantages. First, we will no longer need to produce issues with multiples of 4 pages, which sometimes has involved deferring articles to a later issue or coming up with relatively redundant filler announcements (don't pretend you haven't noticed them). We will also never again have to worry whether a longer SF issue will put the Division over budget, and we will be able to include articles in the Slavic languages along with their English translations in the same "package." We will now be able to publish color illustrations, and you can enjoy them on your computer screens. Most important from our point of view, it will now be easy for members receiving an issue to forward it to non-member colleagues and friends who are likely to find it interesting. We encourage them to do so!

ATA's new restriction on newsletter distribution is related to the new offer of unlimited division membership as an automatic benefit of joining ATA. We asked Mary David, Chapter and Division Relations Manager, whether she could estimate the extent to which this policy has added to SLD membership and received the following answer.

Regarding the membership numbers: At the end of January 2005, the SLD had 331 members. As of this afternoon (January 12), the SLD has 450 members. If we include in today's count those division members who have not yet renewed their ATA membership, the SLD has 650 members as of this afternoon. Previous SLD member counts by year: 2003 = 476; 2004 = 416; 2005 = 458.

As we go to press, an additional 12 members have joined the division. Considering that many ATA members fail to renew for the year at the very first opportunity, new SLD members may well number several hundreds. If members

take our suggestion to forward issues to friends and colleagues, the number of new readers may be even higher.

### WELCOME NEW READERS!!!!

If you are not a member of the Slavic Language Division, and have received this issue as a forwarded e-mail, feel free to forward it further and even to consider joining our organization. Whether or not you do, we would love to hear from you. As we always have, we welcome articles from non-members and virtually every issue asks for reader response on a number of topics brought up in columns. As a start, it would be intriguing to find out who our new readers are. We invite you to send us a paragraph about yourself, specifying your particular (or general) interest in Slavic translation. We promise to publish all that we receive. Articles in a Slavic language are accepted but must be accompanied by an English translation. Such translations and all other articles will be edited. If there is any topic you would particularly like to see covered in *SlavFile* please let us know.

New readers whose primary interest is in a Slavic language other than Russian, and the rest of you as well, will certainly have noticed the paucity of material dealing with these languages (which we refer to acronymically as SLOTR). We are trying, really we are! We particularly encourage submissions concerning non-Russian Slavic languages. We are delighted to announce that Genowefa Legowski ([bartlego@yahoo.com](mailto:bartlego@yahoo.com)) has agreed to become our Polish Editor, while Olga Collin ([olgacollin@msn.com](mailto:olgacollin@msn.com)) will be our new editor for Ukrainian. I am sure either or both of them would much appreciate anything sent to them pertaining to those languages. Meanwhile, we are actively seeking editors for the other Slavic languages. We ask that an editor write or obtain (reprints are fine if permission is obtained) a minimum of two articles/columns a year. The editor should be a member of SLD and a present or former translator/interpreter of the language he or she is representing. Those are the sum total of the requirements, except for willingness. It is not a difficult job, especially for those who have many contacts or an interest in developing them. Contact Lydia or Nora at the addresses on the masthead.

### SLD COOKBOOK???

Does anyone else have any interest in the production of an SLD cookbook featuring favorite Slavic and Slavic inspired recipes (including those of non-Slavic nationalities of the former Soviet Union) to be published (possibly e-published), ideally, in time for the next conference? Would readers interested in working on production of such a work or simply in contributing recipes write to Lydia at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)?

## Б У Р И М Е

### на ужине Славянской Дивизии в Сиэтле

As established readers of *SlavFile* know, Vadim Khazin always produces a “bouts-rimés” poem, in which he is supplied with pairs of rhymes and shortly thereafter comes up with a poem utilizing all of them, while the rest of us are eating, drinking and making merry at the Slavic Division dinner. Here is this year’s product. Vadim wishes to acknowledge the minor amendments made by *SlavFile* editors to a few of his English lines.

Растут в лесу вокруг берёзы,  
И не пришли ещё морозы;  
    Хотя уже давно не лето,  
    Но нами ещё всё не спето.  
Ещё на лицах есть загар...  
И вот пришли мы – не в амбар,  
    А в ресторан, и здесь уют,  
    And tables full of fancy food.  
The air here smells a little rosy,  
And overall it’s very cozy,  
    И не шумел пока камыш;  
    И если б вдруг сюда малыш  
Пришёл с рассерженным отцом –  
И наглецом, и гордецом,  
    Both would be happy, and the boy  
    Would get from Dad a pretty toy.  
Admiring Seattle’s Needle,  
On top of which some fiddlers fiddle,  
    We may not think (while staying here)  
    What is the Russian for a weir,  
Or hickory, or jinx, or slug;  
What option should you choose for plug;  
    И по-английски как крыльцо  
    Иль обручальное кольцо,  
So that your text is smooth, not rough,  
Containing no distasteful stuff.  
    With cheeks as red as wine, not yellow,  
    Successful lady, guy or fellow,  
Ты будешь героиня иль герой,  
И скажешь неприятностям: «Долой!»

Consuming honey, never wax,  
And changing daily both your socks,  
    Ти будеш у свой уяві  
    Героем п’еси чи вистави,  
Not failing or in the translation lost,  
And will increase your rates, and fees, and cost.  
    И даже пусть заказчик будет вредный,  
    И лоб его не прошибить вам медный,  
Докажете ему вы, кто дурак,  
А кто – вперёд лишь движущийся рак.  
    А за окном пусть гром, или град, иль снег, –  
    Продолжите успешно вы свой бег,  
So your translations come out clean  
И никакой не выйдет комом блин;  
    Не перепутаете, кошка где иль кот,  
    И не напишете наоборот.  
Or else you could be badly hurt  
If you're not wary and alert.  
    And you, considering yourself a master,  
    Could suddenly meet with disaster,  
И в белый день наступит полный мрак,  
Если такой вы совершите брак...  
    But everything is promising meanwhile,  
    As we can see from our prominent *SlavFile*  
Under the leadership of Лида Stone  
For whom there’ll never be a clone.

Vadim Khazin 10 ноября 2005 г.

**American Translators Association’s  
47th Annual Conference  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
November 1-4, 2006**

**Conference Presentation Proposals are due by March 10, 2006.**

**Proposal forms can be found at the ATA website:**

[http://www.atanet.org/conf2006/abstract\\_online.htm](http://www.atanet.org/conf2006/abstract_online.htm)

Reminder: When you are asked on the proposal form to “Please select the appropriate subject/language” for your presentation, if you do not select Slavic Languages, your presentation is likely to conflict with other SL sessions. If your presentation is primarily intended for those who work in a Slavic language, make sure that you are listed as an SL presentation. Your presentation can be cross-referenced with another area (Medical, Financial, etc.).



## AN INEXACT SCIENCE AND THE TERMINOLOGY TO MATCH Review of “Medical Translators and Medical Dictionaries”

The 2005 Annual Susana Greiss Lecture

Presented by Svetolik P. Djordjević

Reviewed by Nora S. Favorov

Every now and then, as I sit at my desk trying to find the English equivalent of a Russian term in my source text, about 15 minutes into my quest—after having checked 4 or 5 paper dictionaries and conducted 27 Google searches of various combinations with other terms, none of which hit pay dirt—I start to fantasize that if I ever win the lottery (which is extremely unlikely, since I don't buy lottery tickets), I will create the Nora Favorov Lexicography Fund. This fund would pay a few eager and gifted lexicographers to devote themselves to creating quality Russian-English-Russian dictionaries in a number of fields. Ideally, this fund would even have a budget for consultants—specialists actually working in all these fields. And my lexicographers would be able to jump on a plane whenever necessary and fly to a clinic in Omsk or a factory in Tobolsk and get a good look at the thingamajigs with the mysterious names and observe the cryptically named procedures that have yet to be catalogued by the noble lexicographic profession.

Unfortunately, our lottery winners tend to spend their effortlessly earned fortunes in other ways (as hard as this may be for me to understand). We translators and interpreters are forced to rely on a few selfless and possibly slightly “touched”—certainly a diagnosis of mild obsessive-compulsive disorder would be in order—soldiers of lexicography, usually forced to cram hours of relentless research into whatever spare time their day jobs leave them, littering their home offices with piles of index cards, interrogating beleaguered specialists in one field or another on the intricacies of terminology in their profession, covering dining room tables with long lines of dictionaries, textbooks and encyclopedias in multiple languages to compare descriptions of things, processes and structures.

We in the SLD have been honored to have at least three such soldiers speak as our annual Susana Greiss lecturer: Kenneth Katzner, author of Wiley's *English-Russian, Russian-English Dictionary*, in 1999; Patricia Newman, whose vital collaboration made possible the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of Ludmilla Callahan's *Russian-English Dictionary of Science and Technology*, in 2000; and now in 2005, Svetolik P. Djordjević, author of a French-English Dictionary of Medicine and two soon-to-be-released dictionaries—an English-Serbian medical dictionary and a Croatian- and Serbian-English medical dictionary, containing over 45,000 entries each. (A fourth Greiss lecturer/soldier should probably be mentioned, although she is not a lexicographer in the strict sense of the word. Genevra Gerhart's *The Russian's World* and *The Russian Context* certainly demanded a similar sort

of dedication, not to mention dining-room-table cluttering.)

In keeping with the traditions of the Greiss lecture, Mr. Djordjević made his personal story a part of the talk. He talked about growing up in a rural corner of the former Yugoslavia. His father had a cheese making business—a business that does not permit “days off,” since cows, goats and sheep require milking daily. Djordjević and his siblings were allowed to attend school, but when they were home they were always working. This accounts for the workaholicism that later in life allowed (compelled?) him to come home from his full-time job and put in an extra 40-hour work-week compiling dictionaries.

And not only did he put in the labor, but, as his presentation made clear, his endeavor was imbued with a level of thoughtfulness that we translators know is almost always absent in the compilation of dictionaries. It is clear that translators make the best lexicographers. It was gratifying, for instance, to hear him describe the differences between his French-English medical dictionary and his south Slavic dictionaries. Common sense dictated that the former not include “filler words,” those annoying cognates that clutter most medical dictionaries. (The examples he gave us of filler words in the French dictionary included ligament = ligament, muscle = muscle, and veine = vein.) As there already was a sizable French-English dictionary in existence, he did not waste paper on repeating what had been done, but filled in the gaps. Because there were fewer resources to start with for translators working between Serbian/Croatian and English, his two south Slavic medical dictionaries will be more thorough, fundamental texts.

Our speaker earned a number of degrees (including an MA in theology and a Ph.D. in Russian literature) and worked a number of jobs (including teacher, minister, taxi driver, mechanical draftsman, and house painter) before becoming a full-time translator with the Social Security Administration.

Mr. Djordjević has been a medical translator, primarily from the Slavic languages and French into English, for several decades. Over these years he became increasingly aware of the inadequacies of available bilingual dictionaries. We are certainly all well aware of these inadequacies. What I for one was not aware of is that even the most reputable monolingual medical references can lead us astray. In his talk (and in the article he published in the conference *Proceedings*), Djordjević provided examples of errors in

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## AN INEXACT SCIENCE *Continued from page 5*

and inconsistencies between the stalwarts of medical reference works, *Stedman's* and *Dorland's*, with additional examples from *Gould*, *Mosby's*, and *Taber's*.

Focusing primarily on *Stedman's* and *Dorland's*—the two most popular medical references—our speaker outlined the basic differences between the two. As Djordjević states in his *Proceedings* article, “*Dorland's* has a larger number of entries and includes proprietary drugs,” while “*Stedman's* has more synonyms and more psychiatric terms, and a section called WordFinder, which is a master cross-referencing system.”

This portion of the talk was structured around an excellent Power Point presentation (for which our speaker credited SLD member Paula Gordon, who is also assisting him in editing his South Slavic dictionaries), featuring a discussion of differences between dictionaries and explaining why he decided to structure his as he did. It also included illustrations of errors and inconsistencies in *Stedman's* and *Dorland's* in ascending order of peril to the translator (and of course, potentially, to practicing medical personnel as well). We were shown examples of (a) terms that one reference listed as “obsolete” while the other did not (with no obvious tendency of one work to rate terms obsolete more often than the other—each rated terms obsolete that the other considered current); (b) examples of certain synonyms assigned to a term by one work, with different synonyms assigned to the same term by another; and, most frightening of all, (c) examples of identical terms with differing definitions. Compare, for instance the differing definitions of Lane's or Lane Disease—a discrepancy that struck Djordjević 25 years ago and played a role in triggering his lexicographic fervor.

<i>Dorland's</i>	<i>Stedman's</i>
Lane('s) disease	
Chronic intestinal stasis; small bowel obstruction in chronic constipation.	A condition characterized by asymptomatic symmetrical palmar erythema; syn. <b>erythema palmare hereditarium</b>

I must admit that I found the extensive catalogue of disagreements between these two reference works quite unsettling. Djordjević's point is well taken: translators should never feel satisfied that they have the correct term just because they found it in one or even two dictionaries or reference works. If the field we are translating in is unfamiliar (and we are all forced to expand the horizons of our competence from time to time), we must check numerous sources—basically “read up on” our subject—before we can be certain.

Of course with more dictionaries like the ones our speaker is producing, this would be less of a problem. But obviously this is not merely a problem with reference works. Reference works reflect, or should reflect, professional usage. The examples of inconsistencies we saw between reference works must certainly reflect inconsistencies in the usage of medical professionals. Nonetheless, it all boils down to the same thing: if we want to avoid embarrassing and possibly harmful errors, we must check multiple sources and always be aware of the inaccuracies (even, mistakes) that creep into even reputable reference works.

Now, if only we could persuade Mr. Djordjević to spend his retirement years compiling a good Russian-English medical dictionary...

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## MINUTES OF THE SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION (SLD) ANNUAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 11, 2005, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

*Jennifer Guernsey*

[NB: Contact information has been added by the editors of *SlavFile* to make it easier for prospective volunteers or those wishing to provide input to contact the appropriate parties. Email addresses for individuals with \* after their names can be found in the masthead on page 2.]

The meeting was called to order by outgoing Assistant Administrator Nora Favorov,\* the agenda was accepted and the minutes of the last year's meeting were approved. Nora announced the results of the uncontested election of a new administrator and assistant administrator. Joseph Bayerl,\* the new administrator, was not present. New assistant administrator, Elena Bogdanovich-Werner,\* was introduced.

Nora briefly reviewed the purpose of divisions and what the SLD administrators in particular had done over the past year. She mentioned the organization of conference activities, the newsletter and the website. In addition to these basic functions, there is the potential for a division to do more. One possibility is to use the division as a clearing-house for the creation of glossaries that would be vetted by a number of experienced translators in given fields. Contributing to such glossaries could potentially earn continuing education points. Volunteers are needed to spearhead this effort.

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# ATA Conference in Seattle

## MINUTES *Continued from page 6*

Lydia Stone\* reported on the *SlavFile*. The *SlavFile* found a new printer in 2005 that does an excellent job in a short turnaround time. The *SlavFile* published four issues in 2005 totaling 76 pages. Lydia thanked copyeditors Jen Guernsey ([jenguernsey@att.net](mailto:jenguernsey@att.net)) and Christina Sever ([csever@proaxis.com](mailto:csever@proaxis.com)) for helping to greatly improve the quality of newsletter copy. Lydia announced that the terms of the SLOTR (Slavic Languages Other Than Russian) editors had expired and new editors were being solicited. Genowefa Legowski\* has volunteered to be editor for Polish. (Since the meeting a Ukrainian Editor, Olga Collin,\* has agreed to serve.)

SLOTR editors are also needed for other languages. They are asked to provide the *SlavFile* with at least two articles per year, which they can write themselves, solicit from others, or obtain permission to reprint from other sources. Lydia asked for a volunteer to write a newcomers article about the present conference. She also mentioned the possibility of putting together an SLD/*SlavFile* cookbook. Regular features in 2005 included Liv Bliss' "Beginner's Luck," Jen Guernsey's "Nuts and Bolts," the new feature "Baffle Boris" (soon to be complemented by an idiom column by Joseph Bayerl), and Elena Bogdanovich-Werner's series on mistakes non-native Russian speakers make in Russian. There were also three articles by Polish translators and one by a Georgian translator. There were nine poems, including Vadim Khazin's annual Burime, and a folksong, tons of website addresses and two software reviews. There were a total of 35 articles, with 12 by new contributors.

Paula Gordon reviewed the situation with Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian certification. Croatian <> English certification is now established, and one person has been certified. A workgroup has been established for Serbian <> English certification. Graders are being assembled and undergoing training. The Bosnian certification group needs a chairperson. Interested parties should contact Paula ([dbaplanb@dca.net](mailto:dbaplanb@dca.net)). For the first time this year Croatian had a colored dot for name badges. Paula had requested South Slavic representation at the networking session and job bank, but due to an error there was only Croatian representation. Paula encourages anyone interested in writing South Slavic-related articles for the *SlavFile* to do so.

Vadim Khazin ([vadkhazin@cs.com](mailto:vadkhazin@cs.com)) spoke about the effort to add Ukrainian to the certification program. For English into Ukrainian they have enough interested people and have applied to ATA. They have a group of graders doing their best to meet the requirements. Vadim stated that the certification process is being made more complicated by ATA. He hopes that by spring E>U certification testing will be approved. For Ukrainian into English they have enough interested people, but not enough organizers and graders. They are still looking for volunteers.

The outgoing administrator, Alex Lane, was not present at the meeting. Nora Favorov emphasized that grassroots/volunteer efforts are what is needed to get things done, like establishing new language pairs for the certification program.

Nora asked whether anyone present had thoughts about the desirability of an SLD-only forum for discussion of SLD matters. To some extent, the Yahoo Russian translators club serves as a meeting place for SLD members, but is obviously of less interest to SLD members working in other languages. A forum could be set up for all members, possibly associated with the website. In the past such forums drew little activity.

Dina Tchikounova ([dina@broadreach.biz](mailto:dina@broadreach.biz)), a member from Connecticut, has volunteered to redesign the SLD website. She would like to add more interactive capability, but would like more input. Any ideas/assistance would be welcome. Contact Dina ([dina@broadreach.biz](mailto:dina@broadreach.biz)) or Nora Favorov\* if you are interested in getting involved. The current idea is to add reference links, glossaries, and terminology. Paul Gallagher suggested basing a blog at the website; Nora suggested he talk to Dina. Audience members commented that a blog would have to be monitored; Paul responded that monitoring might not be necessary, and that we can establish a membership list to limit access to the blog.

There was further discussion of using the division as a clearing house for glossaries. Nora pointed out that if good glossaries were placed on our website, it would increase visibility both for the division and for any involved members. Nadia Oparista suggested using the ProZ KudoZ system as a model. Lydia reported that Boris Silverstein is attempting to get the ATA board to allow CE credit to be awarded for glossary contributions. (Boris ran for ATA Board of Directors [and won] on a platform of increasing the ways in which people can get CE credit without necessarily attending conferences.)

Nora stated that it would be desirable to get an SLD CE committee going. Volunteers would work on ways for members to get CE points without leaving their homes; anyone interested should contact Nora,\* Lydia,\* Boris ([bms36@yahoo.com](mailto:bms36@yahoo.com)), or the new administrators.\*

Nora raised the possibility of the SLD holding a mid-year conference. Such a conference could focus exclusively on Slavic languages—whichever languages for which volunteers could be found to organize presentations and for which sufficient attendance could be assured. Organizing such a conference would take a lot of work. Volunteers are sought to take on such an endeavor. Anyone with an idea about a good site should contact the administrators, even if they are only able to contribute minimally to organizing the event. The first thing to do might be to survey members using *surveymonkey* to see what geographic location and

*Continued on page 9*



## MY NEW EXPERIENCE AT AN ATA CONFERENCE

*Kathleen Davis*

This November I attended an ATA Conference for the first time, and I must say I was most favorably impressed. A number of things immediately caught my attention, many of them because they were completely different from any other (non-linguistic) conference I ever attended. I separate these into several categories, as follows: (1) the layout of the Seattle Westin Hotel and how it contributed (or didn't) to the progress of the conference; (2) the quality and number of the lectures/talks presented and how they contributed; (3) the people I met and talked to; (4) the edibles made available to the conference attendees in the way of coffee, snacks, and food; and (5) my view (as a newcomer) of the Slavic group. These are not in any particular order of importance.

As a background aside, my experience at conferences in the past has been with technical and scientific associations, as well as conferences at which zillions of businesses had exhibits to present their equipment and hardware. I am a translator of Slavic and Germanic languages in the technical and scientific fields.

### (1) Hotel Layout

I found the layout of the rooms at the Westin to be somewhat confusing at first, but the ATA conference program was an immense help. Having the conference proceedings on four different floors seemed the perfect setting for a logistic nightmare, but it worked out rather well. In only a few cases was the result less than satisfactory, when too many people wanted to attend a talk, and there just was not enough room for everyone to have a seat. In one case, the room was so packed that people were sitting on the floor and pressed against the walls. The talk, however, was definitely worth the literally stifling atmosphere.

For the talks in the larger rooms, where the audience was generally much larger, there was still an opportunity to stand or sit in the back and to leave if the talk was not quite as anticipated. Compared to other conferences, I found that almost everyone came in time to hear the beginning of the talk and stayed to the end. Attendees at scientific conferences often seem to attend only to meet their colleagues and not to listen to the presentations in their entirety, and people are constantly getting up in the middle and leaving, which must be very frustrating to someone who has spent the time to prepare a good presentation.

### (2) Presentations

I found the number of presentations just amazing; there was something for me every day, enough to keep me hopping. In fact several times I was forced to choose between presentations of interest to me that happened to be scheduled at the same time. I also thought the qual-

ity of the talks was excellent. Most of the presenters were experienced in speaking to audiences, and they seemed to be expert in their subjects. I divided my time among Slavic presentations, computer-related topics, and ones related to technical/scientific material. I also tried to attend any presentations that had to do with translation for government agencies, which represents the majority of my own work.

The only thing that bothered me quite a bit about the presentations was that the titles did not always correspond accurately to the topic presented. The abstracts in the ATA conference program did not always adequately describe the talk that was actually presented, so it was hard to tell in advance whether a presentation would be of interest to me. I innocently sat down at several talks which turned out not to be what I thought the title implied (of course, that may not have been the impression of the presenter). Rather than sit through and suffer, I opted to sneak out and go late to another talk that I hoped would be more to my benefit.

### (3) Conference Attendees

I was able to speak several times with presenters (other than asking questions at the end of the presentation) and found that they were both pleasant and interested in discussing side issues. This contrasts with my experiences with presenters at scientific conferences, who often appear to feel themselves well above their audience and act quite snooty. I also spoke with a number of the attendees who were not presenting and was pleased to find them interested in numerous topics and all-around good conversationalists. I met some of the attendees at talks and others at the various gatherings, such as the initial get-acquainted reception, over coffee in the morning, at lunches, and at the Slavic Division dinner. Some of the people I met will, I'm sure, continue to be good colleagues. The conference was a wonderful networking experience for me. This was enlightening for someone who began translating years ago when I worked at home alone and was in contact with real people only over the phone or by mail (this was back in the Middle Ages, B.C. [before computer]).

### (4) Food Offerings

The fact that coffee was almost always available during the day was a lifesaver for me. I am a coffee-holic and tend to drink coffee all day long. But aside from the presence of coffee, the food offerings were, I thought, outstanding. The selection at the welcome reception was very broad (although I heard some say that the plates were too small). But for a general feed that wasn't billed as "dinner," I thought it very good. The food was tasty (I didn't try the alcoholic beverages, as I was staying across the Bay and had

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# ATA Conference in Seattle

## MY NEW EXPERIENCE *Continued from page 8*

to hike to the ferry to get home). I could have gone back for more, but I was rather overwhelmed by the pace of my first conference day and was quite tired.

I was also able to sample the hotel restaurant food—one day for lunch and one day for breakfast. I must say that for the price the food was out of this world. The final banquet was also rather good, although somewhat pricey (but then hotel dinners usually are).

But the best dinner, need I say it, was the Slavic dinner. Treats of every Slavic sort on the tables, conversations of the best in a variety of languages, smiles on the faces of all—kudos indeed to all those who spent many hours of preparation and hard work to make the event memorable. And special thanks, again, to the kind couple (Editors' note: our spies report that these Samaritans were Jim and Genevra Gerhart) who left early and went out of their way to cart me back to catch the last ferry across to the other side of the Sound. (I made the ferry in time, thanks to their efforts above and beyond the call of duty, and didn't have to spend the night on the doorsteps of Seattle.)

### (5) The Slavs

Last but definitely not least, I throw out my first impressions of the Slavic Division as a whole. Unfortunately I missed the newcomers' lunch because of a scheduling conflict. Thus, my first meeting with everyone was at the annual division meeting, although I had seen some members before at various presentations. The level of expertise

amazed me, and everyone who spoke up seemed to have the best interests of the group at heart, even if there were points of contention. I was able to put faces to names I had seen in the *SlavFile*, and I was somewhat surprised at the broad range of specialties and venues represented. True, almost everyone seemed to work with Russian, but there was strong representation of the other Slavic languages. I hope that many of the languages of the former USSR will eventually be represented too, if they are able to find no other home.

In all, I was most delighted with the ATA Conference in Seattle. The variety and range of topics presented, of translators and interpreters attending, and of areas of specialization and interest strongly and favorably contrasted with my previous experiences at other conferences and meetings. Perhaps it is because, as translators and interpreters dealing with such a broad range of subjects, we tend to see the world not as a narrow, confining place concentrated in one area but as a continuum from one area to the next and one country to the next, which finally encompasses us all in a giant circle.

Kathleen Davis is retired from the US Naval Reserve after 22 years as a linguist, working with Russian, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and Macedonian. She retired from the US Civil Service as an engineer after 21 years working on overhauls of submarines and aircraft carriers. She has been a self-employed translator for more than 45 years, translating Slavic technical and scientific materials into English, and currently resides in Vallejo, California. She can be reached at [kathleen.davis7@att.net](mailto:kathleen.davis7@att.net) or [kpDavislinguisticsanalysis@att.net](mailto:kpDavislinguisticsanalysis@att.net)

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## MINUTES *Continued from page 7*

what topics would attract the largest number of attendees. Christina Sever volunteered to look into the possibility of setting up a prototype midyear conference in the Northwest in 2007. Any northwest SLD member who is interested in helping to make this happen please contact her ([csever@proaxis.com](mailto:csever@proaxis.com)).

Nora turned to plans for the conference in New Orleans November 1-4, 2006. Volunteers are needed to organize the banquet. Nora encouraged people to submit presentation proposals and reminded them that they are usually due in February or March, so it's not too early to start planning. She reminded people to make sure they ask that their presentation be listed under the SLD if they want to assure that their presentation does not conflict with other Slavic presentations. This year a Russian-oriented medical presentation conflicted with our annual Susana Greiss lecture, forcing people interested in Slavic medical translation to miss one of the two very interesting sessions. Members were asked to suggest topics for presentations next year.

Suggestions included:

- Comparative translation of English into a variety of Slavic languages—a way for members to get acquainted with the different languages
- Oil and gas terminology
- Medical terminology
- Issues encountered by translation editors
- Theory of translation, psychological ramifications
- Sports idioms.

The meeting concluded with everyone in the room briefly introducing themselves.

## “Words and Values:

## Factors Affecting Translation of Patient-Centered Medical Documents”

Presented by Dr. Elena N. Levintova

*Reviewed by Christina Sever*

Dr. Levintova’s presentation at the Seattle ATA Conference centered on the factors that affect descriptions of disease and treatments in patient-centered documents, and how translators and interpreters can improve their work by understanding them. These factors involve the social, psychological and ethical differences between cultures, in this case, between Russian and American culture. Her presentation was illustrated with examples of difficulties encountered during her 20 years of experience translating medical documents. One might think that accuracy is the over-riding factor in translating these texts; however, her presentation reminded us that we need to be aware of many levels in order to create socially, linguistically and culturally sensitive translations.

These multiple levels are particularly important in translating patient-centered documents, which include insurance company documents, informed consent forms, drug and medical device inserts, social service documents and health education brochures and leaflets. In contrast to doctor-centered documents using medical terminology, these must be translated into language that is simple enough for people without any medical education to understand. They may seem to be self-explanatory to the translator, but they are closely tied to the U.S. cultural and/or social paradigm, and terms must be translated into Russian with careful consideration of the differences in values and traditions and with respect for political correctness when necessary. An example of the latter would be translation of the word “obesity” as “ожирение.” The words “излишний вес” or “тучность” would be more precise and less offensive.

Words such as “infarction” for heart attack, or “radiculitis” for inflammation of spinal nerve roots, as might commonly occur in a whiplash injury, are rarely if ever used by an American patient in English, but their translations, инфаркт and радикулит are common household words and well understood in Russian.

Dr. Levintova emphasized the importance of noticing the different terminological fields used in these documents and if, when and how they overlap, being careful to translate into common language where appropriate or into the correct legal, insurance or medical terms where necessary. Translators must be aware of necessary sacrifices and identify priorities in decision-making based on risks related to health, legal considerations, marketing or political correctness.

The factors influencing a translator’s word choice include social, psychological, legal, ethical, medical and traditional ones. Tradition, as well as psychological and social

factors, is involved in choices relating to advertising. For example, there was a strong negative reaction to the introduction of advertising feminine hygiene products on television in Russia. Psychological factors may also be involved in translating information about medicines or diagnoses. Disclaimers may be frightening for Russians, who are accustomed to having possible or likely outcomes only vaguely referred to, if at all. Americans are used to reading that a medicine they are about to take or a surgical procedure they are about to undergo might cause their death and are apt to be more blasé about such disclaimers. Nevertheless, the English into Russian translator may not leave out these indications for ethical reasons, and there would be legal consequences to omitting them. At another level, a doctor may use the term “запущенный рак” to describe an advanced stage of cancer, but a better translation for the patient to hear would be “продвинутая форма рака.” The translator may not want to frighten the Russian patient any more than necessary, but legally, s/he must protect the client and the patient by not omitting shades of meaning that may have legal consequences. In every case, at every level, there are difficult and complicated choices to be made.

Dr. Levintova did an excellent job of describing these factors and their effect on translation. Her slides were very well done and depicted useful examples for improving translations. Luckily, for those Russian translators who missed this presentation, she will likely be repeating and/or expanding on this important topic at future gatherings.

Elena N. Levintova, a native of Russia, received her doctorate in general linguistics from Moscow State Linguistic University and taught for eight years at Tver State University. She has lived in California since 1996 and currently works for the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, where she heads a department within the Curriculum Development Division, developing online language skills enhancement curricula for Arabic, Chinese, Korean and Russian. She has been translating from English to Russian for 20 years, specializing in medical texts.

Christina Sever of Corvallis, Oregon is a certified Russian into English translator who was a founding member of SLD. She was the first editor of *SlavFile* and currently serves as copyeditor. She can be reached at [csever@proaxis.com](mailto:csever@proaxis.com).

# A LESSON IN PLUNGING IN

by Nora S. Favorov, outgoing SLD Assistant Administrator

Some time back in 2000 I received a phone call asking me if I would consider replacing Jim Walker as SLD assistant administrator. I was quite new to the SLD. I had been to two conferences and had been published a couple of times in the *SlavFile*. Although a number of long-time SLD members had taken me under their wing (I roomed with Susana Greiss, SLD's founder, at my very first conference), I still had not quite gotten over that feeling of being an interloper among a bunch of old friends and experienced translators and interpreters. At that point I had only been translating full-time for a couple of years. The phone call and my response to it (I said "yes") left me feeling a bit uneasy. A few months later, when health issues compelled SLD administrator Natalia Kissock to step down as well and I was "promoted," I started to get really nervous.

Since then I have served 6 years as either assistant administrator or administrator of the SLD. With the ascendance of Joseph Bayerl and Elena Bogdanovich-Werner to these exalted positions, I end my tenure. I would like to take this opportunity to say just a few words about what my "yes" has meant to me.

The benefits of having served as an officer in the SLD are of two kinds. The first has to do with the experience I acquired. Frankly, I would have to say that this experience (like the work involved) is rather modest, although valuable. Those of us who sit at a desk and translate all day long as independent contractors don't have much to manage (in the business sense of the word). Having a modest budget to look after and a few administrative responsibilities did help me feel that the skills I'd acquired over my years in the "real" workforce were not atrophying too rapidly. I felt—rightly or wrongly—that if I suddenly had to go out and look for a regular job, I could present myself with a greater degree of confidence, having conducted our annual meetings and taken care of my other duties, than I otherwise would have.

The second kind of benefit of serving the SLD is far more significant. In our business—especially for us freelance translators—networking is critically important. As Kevin Hendzel pointed out in his *SlavFile* article "How the Translation Industry is Like the Movie Industry" (Fall 2004), it is in the nature of the beast (the translation industry beast, that is) that most agencies (and others hiring translators) like to hire based on referrals and word of mouth. For this reason, I have to admit that because of the visibility afforded by becoming actively involved in the SLD, my unpaid volunteer service turned out to have its very real material benefits. The people I met and came to know well through my SLD activities really helped me establish myself in the profession and expand my client base.

Lastly, it was just fun working with fellow SLD members, being (often) the first point of contact for new mem-

bers, becoming involved in the *SlavFile*, spending time with our annual Greiss lecturers, being mentored by past SLD assistant administrator and past ATA president Ann Macfarlane, working with ATA staff (especially ATA's charming, good-natured and efficient division liaison Mary David), and getting to know administrators from other ATA divisions.

There is much I would have liked to accomplish as administrator that I didn't get done—there was just never time. But many hands make light work, and I hope that enough of us will get involved in the future so that we can finally realize some of the projects I've talked about over the years, especially establishing the website as a terminology resource for Slavic languages (and in the process creating an opportunity for our members to earn CE credits by building and vetting those glossaries). Please read through the minutes of our annual meeting in Seattle to learn more about this and other projects. As my last official act as SLD Administrator, I urge you to get involved and reap the benefits.

## RESPECT FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES (NOT TO MENTION ACCURACY) IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL

The following correction appeared on the Washington Post "KidsPost" page of January 18, 2006. "Correction: Yesterday's KidsPost story about how languages change started with the sentence, 'Language must seem pretty easy.' Apparently not for us! We got the way of saying 'good morning' wrong in Spanish, German, Dutch and Russian." It should be noted in the Post's favor that they, apparently, got the other three examples, English, Chinese, and Greek right, or at least no one had yet called to correct them. Incidentally, the putative Russian greeting they originally cited was "Хорошее утро!" What gets us here is not so much that they didn't bother to ask a native speaker (and native speakers of at least Spanish are considerably more common in the Washington area even than Starbucks), but that by asking they probably could have gotten the correct phrasing from four out of five people who had taken the first year of any of these languages. Would such an error level have occurred in any other capital of the developed world?? We suppose the only explanation is that a computer translation program was considered more reliable than a human informant.



# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

My linguistically talented husband, buoyed by his success coining the word *ridiculis* for my backache, came up with an even more useful term when he met me in Seattle after the recent ATA conference – *ubicolous*, used to refer to something that is ludicrously common. Since we were bird watching, the original context was a certain species of ducks abundant in the Northwest, but we soon found the word could be even more aptly applied to the gourmet coffee places that seem to be replacing every other kind of urban amenity.

Speaking of my backache, I think I have figured out why the diagnosis of radiculitis is so much more common in Russia than it is here. As my orthopedist explained it to me, the term is used for radiating back pain when no specific etiology can be found. In my case this lack of specificity was accepted only after the expenditure of a small fortune in various high tech x-rays failed to reveal, for example, a slipped disk, a growth, a particularly advanced case of osteoarthritis, etc. In the former Soviet Union and current RF, I suspect this throw-up-the-hands diagnosis is provided initially, without recourse to all the x-rays.

To continue with the endlessly fascinating subject of my ailments, I recently saw the ophthalmologist, who told me that I have an eye condition that may complicate cataract surgery somewhat. No big deal! Par for the course! The interesting thing was that this condition is only at all common among people of Scandinavian descent. To my surprised rejoinder, “But I’m a Slavic Jew!” the doctor just shrugged. Friends and relations with greater interest in ethnic history have suggested either some Varangians in the 9<sup>th</sup> or subsequent centuries or one of Charles XII’s men subsequent to Poltava may have taken a more than intellectual interest in one of my undoubtedly remarkably beautiful female ancestors. At any rate, what with my Russian back and my Swedish corneas, I am considering founding the discipline of *ethnopathology* and offering myself as its first subject, for a suitable fee of course

I have been considering jazzing up this column by adding a gossip feature. For my first juicy tidbit, for example, I could write: “What respected member of SLD very nearly had to produce a 21<sup>st</sup>-century variant on the time-honored excuse, “the dog ate my homework,” after the family pet fox relieved itself on the computer monitor, rendering it unfit for translation work?”

Perhaps I am getting rather far afield and should address myself to something a little more relevant to translation. Here’s something. For decades, I have been wondering about the virtually universal English translation of *культ личности* as *personality cult*. Certainly, it is not personality as we understand it in this country that is being referred to. Why, I thought, is it not called cult of the individual? When I finally remembered to bring this point up in con-

versation, it was pointed out to me that this phrase was already associated with the glorification of individualism supposed to be rampant in the U.S., which is, of course, even more dissimilar to *культ личности* than the current translation. What is it that Tolstoy calls the theory he is debunking in *War and Peace*? The “great man theory of history,” I believe. Perhaps “cult of the great man” is a better translation than either of the others.

In first year Russian, a fair amount of fuss is made about the fact that Russian uses double negatives. However, this difference from English has never caused me (or anyone else, I suspect) significant problems in translating. Until now! I was working on translating a Russian children’s poem based on the somewhat overworked joke that children create a character called nobody on whom to blame their misdeeds. Here is the next to last stanza:

—НИКТО - ужасный сорванец!  
Сказала строго мать. -  
Его должны мы наконец  
Примерно наказать!  
НИКТО сегодня не пойдет  
Ни в гости, ни в кино!  
«Никто», Б. Заходер (last two rhyming lines not cited)

Clearly, this cannot be translated as is because of the unavailability of the double sense in English. After racking my brain to find a phrasing that would have this sense, I concluded that the only thing to do would be to change punishment to reward. Here is my attempt:

Mom said, “No matter how we yell  
NOBODY won’t reform!  
For once let’s try to treat him well.  
It can’t do any harm.  
This weekend, who will watch TV,  
Or go out to the zoo?  
And who’ll get cookies with his tea?  
NOBODY, that is who!

I was moved to consider the Russian word *умиление* and its allied forms by the following notable lines in yet another children’s poem: *На опилках; до слез умиляя народ/ Танцевал неизвестный ему бегемот*. I haven’t thought much about this word for a while, but I used to encounter it frequently when I was reading 19<sup>th</sup> century literature. I remember believing that it had no English equivalent, perhaps something I had been told and didn’t question. Now, however, I wonder about this. Let’s see what the dictionaries on my shelf have to say. Ozhegov and the 1984 four-volume Academy Dictionary give essentially the same definition: “Нежное; теплое чувство возбуждаемое чем-либо трогательным.” *Му 1964 17-volume Academy*

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## SLAVFILE LITE *Continued from page 13*

Dictionary says, “*Чувство, состояние растроганности, нежности к кому-; чему-либо; любование.*” The 1978 *Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* gives “emotion and tenderness” as the basic definition, while “*прийти в умиление*” is defined as “to be moved.” Katzner’s latest edition simply gives “deep feeling, deep emotion” for the noun, but uses “moved” and “touched” to define the verbal and adjectival forms.

The question here seems to me to be not whether *умиление* can be translated into English; clearly it can be. All one has to do is use a verbal circumlocution: *I was moved* rather than *I felt умиление*. To my mind the issue is whether or not the failure of English to provide a nominal form corresponds to a similar lack in the semantic domain. In other words, where a Russian would say *умиление* or use a corresponding verbal form, are we moved to some specific definable emotion or just to emotion (even tender emotion) in general? To try to operationally define this term, one might start by saying that *умиление* is the emotion that in its strong form, at least in sensitive individuals, causes tears that are neither those of personal joy, nor of grief or pain. Such tears are mentioned in virtually all the fine print of the dictionary definitions and are intimately associated with the *умиление* word family and English usages of *moved* and *touched*. Leaving aside the issue of dancing hippos, we might cite the following potential sources of tears: watching someone else’s wedding; a story in which a worthy person triumphs over obstacles at the end; a beautiful piece of music; a tribute tangible or intangible to oneself; small children behaving beautifully and innocently; listening to Martin Luther King’s *I have a dream* speech; etc., etc., as being examples of things that might bring on a feeling of *умиление до слез* or being moved to tears. Do the emotions evoked by these situations have something specific in common, and does this differ from the emotions evoking tears of joy or sadness? It seems to me that they do, although they are, I think, closer to joy than to sorrow. After all, the tears a sensitive soul may shed at her own wedding can be attributed directly to happiness. Perhaps, this commonality can be described as an emotional appreciation or recognition of the (rare) instances of justice, or rightness, or beauty in the universe, without that appreciation being linked to one’s own personal loss or gain. I know I am not putting this very well, but it is the best I can do at the moment. Shades of Gumilev’s *Sixth Sense*. Any comments?

Exactly one reader replied to the “English Words We Love to Hate” feature in the last *Lite Column*. Jen Guernsey writes,

BTW, my own pet peeve word is *impact* used as a verb. As in, “The legislative changes are expected to impact the standard of living.” We have a perfectly good word, *affect*, that has fallen out of favor, as it has been pushed out by *impact*. As my husband says, “Teeth impact. Missiles impact. Changes do not impact.”

I am far too thick-skinned to allow this less than overwhelming response to my idea for a feature to hurt my feelings. However, there does not seem to be much point in my nattering on about topics of interest only to me. If any readers really do want to hear me discourse on peculiar new uses of the words *edgy* or *ethnic*, the use of the word *literal* to mean *figurative* or the loss of any discernible meaning for the word *freedom* as a result of its overuse by polemicists at all points of the political spectrum, just let me know. I am ready to do so at the drop of the proverbial hint. We would love to publish reader comments on similar issues, actually on any word-related issues at all.

**The ironies of history or WWPT (what would Peter think?)** From a recent *Washington Post* column by David S. Broder: “Indeed, if you look at the names on the marquees along Nevsky Prospekt, you could believe that the vision of Peter the Great has been realized. His capital is—at least commercially—at the center of Europe. All the great names of retailing, from Tiffany to Mercedes-Benz, can be found in the blue of neon that illuminates the night sky.” Call me a romantic but somehow I do not quite accept that the *great* in *великих дум* is of the same order as that in the *great names of retailing*. But who knows? Perhaps it could be argued that what Peter was dreaming of really was some 18<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of a Benetton on every corner.

**SlavFile Lite recommends:** two websites which probably will not help you with your work, but may well give you some pleasure. <http://lel.khv.ru/poems/poems.phtml?ctg=24> contains the text for hundreds and hundreds of Russian children’s poems and songs. The site [http://www.uni-bonn.de/~dbuncic/fauxamis/start\\_un.htm](http://www.uni-bonn.de/~dbuncic/fauxamis/start_un.htm), suggested by Mike Connor, contains lists of false and semi-false cognates across pairs of Slavic languages. This would have saved my father from saying “God bless you” for “thank you” when he was traveling in Yugoslavia and makes very interesting reading besides.

In our last issue Nora asked readers to send in Slavic U.S. license plates, some of which can be found on page 20. I had an interesting experience recently when my *PEREVOD* Toyota followed a *TRANSL8R* license plate down the George Washington Parkway for at least 10 miles. What are the chances of that happening? The request for Slavic license plates reminded me of the late 1970s when I used to get my daily exercise in Boulder, Colorado by hiking up the paved road to the mesa west of my house. This road, leading as it did to a wonderful view, was fairly heavily traveled by tourists and I would say that at least 30% of the cars that passed me had California license plates and at least 30% of these contained a transliteration of a very rude word in Russian. I managed to restrain myself from asking the cars’ occupants whether they had any idea what their license plate was implying in Russian. But I have often wondered if anyone ever brought this to the attention of the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

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Speaking of restraint, have readers of this column noticed how commendably little I use it to brag about my children and grandchildren, all of whom, of course, are extraordinarily brag-worthy. Do you think then I might be allowed a small brag about my second cousin twice removed? (I believe, but am not sure, that in Russian he is my *внучатый племянник* of some degree.) Grisha (Gregory Razran, my father's namesake) came over from St. Petersburg when he was a teenager and at 28 has earned a Ph.D. in American literature/creative writing and has already published his second poetry chapbook in English. Here is one of his poems that perhaps will be of special interest to Slavists and evidently describes a real event in the life of his father, my cousin Misha.

#### Dad Meets Richard Nixon

You were twenty-five  
And didn't even know mom yet.  
That warm Thursday in June,  
Old Nixon showed up at your factory –  
A brief stop in Leningrad,  
Before heading on to Moscow.  
He walked through the huge guilds  
With the neurotic plant director  
At his side, and took special interest  
In the 29-ton tractors that had just gone into production.

You were just a brigadier, but somehow,  
The director decided to pull you out of the crowd.  
The workers in oil-stained overalls gave way,  
As the two of you approached the president.  
The boss introduced you as Comrade Razran,  
“A champion of socialist labor.”  
You were practically glowing,  
As Nixon shook your pale hand and said  
In broken Russian, “honored to meet you.”

The next moment he was gone.  
You stood at the same place for a while,  
While the workers patted you on the back  
And made jokes.  
You told me that Nixon was “friendly, but creepy.”  
“He had a big nose too,” you said.  
Watergate was six months away.

From *Five Happy Gypsies* published by Foothills Press, 2005. Reprinted with kind permission of the author.

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- If you think you did well on the exam but do not pass, you might want to invest another \$100 for a review. The original decision is very seldom overturned in a review, but it has been known to happen. In other words, graders sometimes make mistakes too, in spite of all our training, preparation and safeguards. And at least a review will let you see your mistakes, so you won't make the same ones again.
- Don't give up after just one try. Many certified translators took the exam more than once before passing. In my experience, it is well worth the effort.
- We do not use test passages that contain a bizarre or incongruous detail or a sentence that completely contradicts the remainder of the passage. If your translation includes such an incongruity (for instance, the statement that Allied planes dropped “artificial food potatoes” on Germany [a real example]), look at the original and your dictionaries again; you have probably made an error.
- Pay attention to the translation instructions. If, as they usually will, the instructions say to translate for a general or lay audience, do not use abstruse, highly technical or learned terms in your translation if you can possibly help it. If a grader does not recognize a term in a translation meant for the general public, you will probably lose at least a point for “register.”
- Unless you are sure your handwriting is clear, have someone not familiar with it check it for legibility. If your final t's look like r's or your punctuation marks are not distinct from the previous letter or the dots over your i's are undetectable, you need to know this in advance so you can avoid needless error points.
- It would be well worth your while to review Lydia Stone's article in the Fall 2004 *SlavFile*, which includes a sampling of errors by previous test-takers and explains the grading system.
- Good luck!

Jim Walker, the Chair of the Russian-English Certification Graders group, is a scientific and technical translator who lives in rural Georgia. Jim served as SLD Assistant Administrator in 1999 and 2000. He has a background as an itinerant fruit picker. Jim can be reached at [perevod@ellijay.com](mailto:perevod@ellijay.com).

# BAFFLE BORIS

*Boris Silversteyn*

Since my last column readers have sent me several challenging/baffling expressions, which I will consider at a later time, but here I would like to use my (and your) time to share readers' suggestions for idioms I "un-baffled" (translated)—and in some cases failed to un-baffle (find an idiomatic Russian equivalent)—in previous issues of *SF*.

So here we go.

English	Russian	Suggested by
<b>Readers' translations of un-baffled idioms</b>		
Take it or leave it	Дают - бери, бьют – беги	Kevin Kelly
	Не нравится - не бери Не нравится - не ешь	Inna Persits-Gimelberg
	Если нет, мы спокойно уйдем	Lydia Razran Stone <sup>1</sup>
<b>Readers' translations of idioms I failed to un-baffle</b>		
Push the envelope	Пытаться выйти за границы возможного Расширять границы возможного <i>тех.</i> Эксплуатировать с превышением допустимых величин Дерзай! Дерзни! Сними шоры! Будь мужчиной <sup>2</sup> !	Olga Burukina
	Не останавливаться на достигнутом Протолкнуть чьи-то документы, идеи, дело	Inna Persits-Gimelberg
	Испытывать терпение (в частности, родителей)	Anatoly Podobedov
Like it or lump it	Нравится - не нравится	Olga Burukina
	Не нравится - не бери Не нравится - не ешь	Inna Persits-Gimelberg

Olga Burukina sent in several proverbs and idioms, but instead of baffling me she provided her own translations:

English	Russian
Get someone's goat	Выводить из себя
Run with the hare and hunt with the hounds	Служить и нашим и вашим
First catch your hare then cook it	Цыплят по осени считают Не говори гоп, пока не перепрыгнешь
Let sleeping dogs lie	Не буди лихо, пока оно/лихо тихо
There is life in the old dog yet	Есть еще порох в пороховницах
Every dog has his day	Будет и на нашей улице праздник

I'd like to know your opinion/suggestions and to receive additional baffling idioms. Please write me at [bsilversteyn@comcast.net](mailto:bsilversteyn@comcast.net)

1 From the Russian movie *Vodka & Lemon*. "Take it or leave it" was the English subtitle for Если нет, мы спокойно уйдем; the situation – prospective buyers at an informal market offering the seller their "final price".

2 Olga comments: "(for men only)"

# SOVIET ORPHANS OF WORLD WAR II: TRANSLATION ASPECTS

Rachel Green

This past June, our televisions and newspapers were filled with programs and articles commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. Most of the attention focused on D-Day and American participation in the liberation of Europe. Americans are rightly proud of this involvement, but are unfortunately prone to forget the devastation on the Eastern Front, devastation unequalled either before or since. While estimates vary and the exact number will probably never be known, some 30 million Soviets—soldiers and civilians, men, women, and children—died as a result of World War II. With such staggering numbers, it is safe to say that virtually every family in the Soviet Union lost at least one of its members. The doctoral dissertation that I am in the process of writing at the University of Chicago is focused on one aspect of the war in the Soviet Union that, as yet, has been largely overlooked by historians—the hundreds of thousands of children who were left orphaned by the war.

In my dissertation, I deal with how both the Soviet state and Soviet society attempted to solve this problem of orphaned children. In its public rhetoric in the press, the Soviet government attempted to show that it was providing a good upbringing for these children in its system of orphanages. Orphanages were described as “large families.” The children were well fed, well dressed, and had a loving relationship with their *воспитатели*. The reality of orphanage life was, of course, quite different. While I believe that most *воспитатели* were decent, well-intentioned people who did their best to provide for their *воспитанники*, they were ill equipped in every sense for a tremendously difficult job. Most had little or no pedagogical experience. Especially during the war and immediate postwar years, orphanages were overcrowded and poorly supplied. Not only did they lack things like games and school supplies, they were deficient in basic necessities such as furniture, bedding, adequate food, heat, and appropriate facilities in which to house the children. Orphanage staff received poor pay and few material benefits. They were not, for example, allowed to eat the food in the orphanage cafeteria along with the children, but were supposed to provide their own meals. Considering their poor wages and the fact that many orphanages were located in rural areas far from any place where one could acquire food, it is not surprising that theft in orphanages by staff members became an epidemic. It was not uncommon for orphanage directors, *воспитатели*, and other personnel to take food from the orphanage intended for the children.

Not only did *воспитатели* face extremely difficult material conditions, they were working with a group of children traumatized by their wartime experiences and the loss of or separation from their parents. Many *детдомовцы* had been evacuated from areas that had come under

German control. Leningrad children had suffered through the siege and subsequent starvation of their city. Some children had had their parents or other family members killed right before their eyes. Understandably, many orphanage children exhibited signs of psychological trauma. Some children became extremely withdrawn and skittish, while others became aggressive and undisciplined. Lacking the training and experience to deal with psychologically traumatized children, some *воспитатели* reacted with frustration, sometimes even violence, when unable to cope with or manage the behavior problems of their charges. The result, unfortunately, in too many cases was physical and verbal abuse.

Lest I give the impression that orphanage life was all grim, let me reiterate that most orphanage personnel probably did the best they could to provide materially and emotionally for children in orphanages under incredibly difficult circumstances. Many orphanage directors and their staff worked hard along with the children to cultivate kitchen gardens so that everyone could have more food. *Воспитатели* often organized small celebrations and treats for the children on holidays. Many children did develop close, even lifelong, relationships with one or more of their caregivers. By the mid-1950s, when the Soviet economy had rebounded somewhat from the devastation of the war and many of the war orphans had left the orphanage, material conditions in orphanages improved considerably. One Leningrad orphanage even had a TV in the mid-1950s. When I interviewed Maia Aleksandrovna, who spent seven years in an orphanage beginning in 1945, she repeatedly told me that she could say nothing bad about her orphanage. They were well-fed and well-treated. Hers was just an ordinary orphanage, she insisted. I believed what Maia told me about her orphanage, but there was a sadness that permeated her replies. Finally, she admitted in so many words that while her orphanage had been a good one, it could not replace a family. Whether they lived in an orphanage with good conditions or bad, all orphanage children yearned for attention and a family of their own.

I have used several Russian words in the last few paragraphs that have presented me with puzzling translation problems. *Воспитание* and related words like *воспитанник* and *воспитатель* are impossible to translate in a way that adequately expresses their full meaning. *Воспитание* can somewhat adequately be translated as upbringing, but *воспитанник* and *воспитатель* are more difficult. How does one put into English the idea of person who provides an upbringing for a child in all senses of the word, who molds a child in a particular way? How does one translate the person on the receiving end of this upbringing? *Детдомовцы* is another word that presents a translation issue.

*Continued to page 17*



One could translate this as “orphanage children,” but this fails to convey the pejorative connotations of the word. I have seen the word repeatedly used as a generalization about the character of all orphanage children, implying that all of them are ignorant, worthless troublemakers. For practical purposes, I will provide footnotes in my dissertation with explanations of the full meaning of these words, but in the body of my text, I will have to make do with less than adequate translations or just leave the words in transliterated Russian, knowing that most of my readers will have knowledge of Russian.

A large part my dissertation also deals with orphans who did not go into the system of orphanages, but instead were fostered or adopted, either by friends, family members or strangers. These children comprised a roughly equal number to the number in orphanages. Language and translation issues play a particularly large role in my discussion of adoption. In both English and Russian contexts, language and social interactions mark adoptive families as different from biological ones by the use of modifiers such as “adoptive,” “real” and “natural.” In Russian, the most neutral, even somewhat positive, term for adopted children is *приемные*, which gives a sense that these children have been specially chosen or selected. Adoptive parents spoke of bringing war orphans into their families *как родных*, or “like their own.” In the worst case, an adopted child might be labeled as *чужой* (alien or different; not really ours). Once again, it is impossible to supply translations for these

terms that convey their full meaning. “One’s own” or “biological” cannot possibly express all the facets of *родной*. I cannot adequately convey in translation the important significance in Russian culture of the opposition of *родной* or *своей* and *чужой*.

Over the last several years as I have formulated my dissertation topic, conducted research, and begun the process of writing, I have had to puzzle over and attempt to answer innumerable questions. Many of these questions have involved translation issues. I have studied countless documents, examined many interview transcripts and conducted several interviews myself, all in Russian. As I conducted research and now as I write my dissertation, I am constantly checking myself to make sure that I have understood a document correctly and that I translate any quotes that I incorporate into my text as accurately as possible. Completing a dissertation takes years of work, including countless hours of boring grunt work. I have been extremely fortunate to have a topic that continues to fascinate me. I also feel very lucky to have a deep love for and fascination with language. As frustrating as it can be, I love that languages can be so different and that there are so many words in each language that are essentially untranslatable. My passion for my topic and my love of language keep me engaged and challenged as I slog through the rough work of writing my dissertation.

Rachel Green is a Ph.D. Candidate in Soviet History at the University of Chicago. She currently lives in Seattle and expects to complete her Ph.D. by June 2006. She can be reached at [rfgreen@uchicago.edu](mailto:rfgreen@uchicago.edu)

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# END OF LIFE ISSUES:

## BELATED REPORT ON MATERIALS FROM A 2004 CONFERENCE PRESENTATION ON MEDICAL TRANSLATION

*Part I: Materials developed by Elana Pick*

From the Editors: One of the sessions at the 2004 ATA Conference in Toronto was presented by Nora Favorov, Irina Markevich, Elana Pick (in absentia), and Lydia Stone, and dealt with a grab-bag of medical translation issues that these presenters had encountered in the course of their work. Somehow, SlavFile neglected to recruit a reviewer and publish a review for this session, for which we humbly apologize. Since two of the panel participants were SlavFile editors, this may be an example of the shoemaker's barefoot children phenomenon. It is certainly too late to review this presentation in the conventional sense, but, rather than deprive readers of potentially useful information, we have

decided to publish the materials prepared for the session over several SlavFile issues. The first installment was developed by Elana Pick in the course of providing translation and interpretation dealing with the very sensitive end of life issues. Elana wishes to acknowledge that the idea for producing this material for Russian translators came from an article and presentation by Rafael Rivera, MD, Administrator of ATA's Medical Division.

Elana Pick, of Brooklyn, New York, is a Russian<>English translator and interpreter specializing in legal and medical interpretation and translation. She is certified for English into Russian and can be reached at [creativeserv@att.net](mailto:creativeserv@att.net)

<p><b>Advance directives</b> An advance directive is a document by which a person makes provision for health care decisions in the event that, in the future, he/she becomes unable to make those decisions. There are two main types of advance directive—the “Living Will” and the “Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care.”</p>	<p><b>Заблаговременные распоряжения (пожелания)</b> пациента об оказании ему (ей) медицинской помощи в возможной ситуации в будущем, когда они сами будут не в состоянии принять решение.</p>
<p><b>Assisted suicide</b></p>	<p><b>Помощь при добровольном уходе из жизни</b> Содействие в совершении самоубийства</p>
<p><b>Attorney for health care</b> Health care surrogate/proxy/agent</p> <p><b>Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care</b> A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is a signed, witnessed (or notarized) document in which the signer designates an agent to make health care decisions if the signer is temporarily or permanently unable to make such decisions. Unlike most Living Wills, the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care does not require that the signer have a terminal condition.</p> <p><b>Living will</b> A Living Will is the oldest type of health care advance directive. It is a signed, witnessed (or notarized) document called a “declaration” or “directive.” Most declarations instruct an attending physician to withhold or withdraw medical interventions from its signer if he/she is in a terminal condition and is unable to make decisions about medical treatment.</p>	<p><b>Законный представитель интересов пациента в ситуации принятия решения об оказании медицинской помощи</b> <a href="http://www.medlinks.ru/sections/199.htm">http://www.medlinks.ru/sections/199.htm</a> <a href="http://www.cenunst.bsu.by/humanrights/documents/document.v.121.shtml">http://www.cenunst.bsu.by/humanrights/documents/document.v.121.shtml</a> Назначение лица, уполномоченного в вопросах лечения</p> <p><b>Доверенность</b> (подписанная при свидетелях или нотариально заверенная) пациента другому лицу на принятие решений об оказании подписавшему медицинской помощи в случае, если сам подписавший документ пациент не в состоянии сделать это сам или признан недееспособным.</p> <p><b>Распоряжения на случай терминального состояния</b> (подписанные при свидетелях или нотариально заверенные)</p>

*Continued on page 19*

<b>Beating heart cadaver</b>	<p><b>«Респираторный мозг»</b> - зафиксированная смерть мозга при искусственно поддерживаемом сердцебиении.</p> <p>Смерть мозга — это состояние, когда происходит тотальная гибель всего головного мозга, при этом с помощью реанимационных мероприятий искусственно поддерживается функция сердца и кровообращение, создающие видимость жизни.</p>
<b>CPR</b>	<b>Искусственное дыхание</b>
<b>Clear and convincing evidence</b>	<b>Неопровержимые и убедительные доказательства</b>
<b>Coma</b>	<b>Кома, сноподобное состояние</b>
<b>DNR (Do Not Resuscitate)</b>	<b>Отказ от проведения реанимационных мероприятий</b>
<p><b>Death</b></p> <p><b>Brain death</b></p> <p><b>Whole brain death (WBD)</b></p> <p><b>Clinical death = heart lung death</b></p> <p><b>Legal death</b></p> <p><b>Natural death</b></p> <p><b>Non-natural death</b></p>	<p><b>Физиологическая смерть</b> – необратимое прекращение физиологических процессов в клетках и тканях</p> <p><b>Смерть мозга</b></p> <p>Необратимое прекращение деятельности головного мозга (необратимая, тотальная гибель всего головного мозга)</p> <p><b>Клиническая смерть.</b> Клиническая смерть является обратимым состоянием, и сам по себе факт прекращения дыхания или кровообращения не является доказательством наступления смерти.</p> <p><b>Объявление человека умершим.</b></p> <p><b>Естественная смерть, ненасильственная смерть</b></p> <p><b>Насильственная смерть</b></p> <p><a href="http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki">http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.kardio.ru/patients/illness_5.htm">http://www.kardio.ru/patients/illness_5.htm</a></p>
<b>Death with Dignity Act</b>	<p><b>Закон о достойной смерти</b></p> <p><b>Закон о принятии смерти с достоинством</b></p> <p><b>Закон о праве на смерть с достоинством</b></p>
<p><b>Euthanasia</b></p> <p><b>Active euthanasia</b></p> <p><b>Mercy killing</b></p> <p><b>Passive euthanasia</b></p>	<p><b>Эвтаназия</b> – в переводе с греческого «легкая смерть» являет собой «содействие» врача больному в совершении самоубийства с применением сильнодействующих медицинских препаратов.</p> <p>Лишение жизни безнадежно больного или умирающего (Multitran)</p> <p>Лишение жизни безнадежно больного или умирающего из сострадания</p> <p>Неоказание помощи безнадежно больному или умирающему из сострадания (Multitran)</p>
<b>Health care provider</b>	Медработник или учреждение, предоставляющие (обеспечивающие) медицинское обслуживание

Hospice	Хоспис, больница для терминальных (неизлечимых) пациентов
Life sustaining treatments/methods	Методы и процедуры, поддерживающие жизнь (жизнеобеспечение)
Palliative care  Palliative medicine	Паллиативный уход (паллиативное лечение) Паллиативная медицина <a href="http://anthropology.ru/ru/texts/katyukhin/tanatos5.html">http://anthropology.ru/ru/texts/katyukhin/tanatos5.html</a>
Patient Self-Determination Act	Закон о свободном волеизъявлении пациента Закон о праве пациента на самостоятельные решения
Persistent vegetative state (PVS)	Устойчивое вегетативное состояние <a href="http://med-lib.ru/spravoch/neurol_spr/n0066.shtml">http://med-lib.ru/spravoch/neurol_spr/n0066.shtml</a>

## A LICENSE FOR BILINGUAL PUNS

In our last issue we asked readers to tell us of sightings of Slavic themed U.S. license plates. So far we have accumulated the following list (after due consideration we have decided not to print obscene entries, amusing as some of them are):

**В МОСКВУ**  
**ВОТ ОН**  
**НЕТРЕЗВ**  
**НОМЕР 1**  
**КАРАВАН (on a Dodge Caravan)**  
**КРАСОТКА**  
**МХАТ**  
**RUSALKA**

We will continue to publish these as long as they are contributed. If we have neglected to publish an acceptable one you already sent, we are sorry, please resend.  
Address contributions to Nora at [norafavorov@bellsouth.net](mailto:norafavorov@bellsouth.net).