In Memoriam

WILLIAM B. EDGERTON
March 11, 1914–February 8, 2004

William Edgerton played a major role not only in Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures of Indiana University Bloomington, but also as a national and international figure of great importance in the study of Slavic languages and literatures. He served 11 years and two terms as chair of the department during its critical early years of building and consolidation (from 1958–1965 and 1969–1973).

One can best get a true sense of Edgerton’s long and highly productive career by realizing that it consisted of three essential components, each of which he excelled at and in which he made his international reputation.

First was his humanitarian service during World War II as a relief worker for the Society of Friends. This brought Edgerton into contact with several Slavic languages in the former Yugoslavia and in Poland. During this period, he was among those credited with discovering evidence about children who were deported from their home countries by Nazi Germany.

The next major theme of Edgerton’s career was his untiring work on behalf of Slavic studies. After changing his academic focus from Romance languages to Slavic following his wartime experiences, he received his Ph.D. in Russian literature from Columbia University in 1954. He taught at Penn State University, the University of Michigan, and Columbia University before moving to Indiana University in 1958. One can immediately appreciate Edgerton’s importance in the field by noting that he was a founder and the first president of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS). He played a similar role on the Joint Committee on Slavic Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. He also helped found the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants, the forerunner of the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). From 1958 to 1978, he chaired the American Committee of Slavists and served as one of only two American delegates to the International Committee of Slavists. Thus it is clear that Edgerton played a unique role in the establishment of many institutions that today are taken for granted.

Beyond Edgerton’s humanitarian service and crucial role in founding many scholarly U.S. organizations was his research and accomplishments in the Slavic field. He was the author of important publications on Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Leskov and used his knowledge of Romance languages to write about Spanish and Portuguese responses to these great Russian authors.

Bill Edgerton was a friendly and helpful colleague, always pleasant and willing to offer his time and assistance. He liked to encourage his younger colleagues in their scholarly pursuits and always displayed the good humor and warm smile that many of us will forever remember about him.

—Ron Feldstein
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, IUB

NICOLAS SPULBER
January 1, 1910–January 2, 2004

Nicolas Spulber joined the IU Department of Economics in 1954 and devoted himself to the university in an official capacity for 26 years before retiring in 1980. He was appointed distinguished professor of economics in 1974. Even after his retirement, he continued to devote himself to research and publishing. Of his 18 books, 5 were published since retirement. In May 2002, he made his first trip in 60 years back to his homeland, Romania, to receive an honorary doctorate from Romania’s National School of Political Science and Administration, which was presented to him by President Ion Iliescu (see International News, November 2002).

Born in Romania, Spulber was educated there and pursued a career in journalism as a foreign correspondent and editor, working in Eastern Europe and France for 16 years before rejoining the academic community. He received his Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research in 1952 and then studied at the Center for International Studies at MIT before coming to IU. He is remembered by his colleagues as one of the few who could talk about Italian literature, conflict in Indonesia, and Hungarian cooking with the same depth and interest as when he was speaking of economics.

“Nick had a great love of and interest in Romania, our native country,” his colleague and friend, Christina Illias, recalled. “Because of that, he took a special interest

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On the second day, there was a panel discussion with four presenters. Robert Quinn discussed the role that scholars and writers play at critical times in a country’s development and the need to temporarily protect them by providing safe havens, so they can write freely about their views and opinions. Quinn is the director of the Scholars at Risk Network based at New York University, which has hosted two Burmese scholars in the past. He encouraged his listeners to suggest other Burmese intellectuals who might benefit from this program.

Yuki Akimoto of the Bank Information Center addressed the very practical considerations of international financing of large dam projects. Peter Riggs of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund also monitors international financing and warned of a “gold rush” of donors when Burma eventually undergoes its transition to democracy. He emphasized the crucial role that the Burmese Parliament should play by taking control of international financing contracts and making strategic decisions about which projects, such as human resource projects, should be supported only by grant money (as opposed to loan money).

Chris Merrill, director of the International Writers Program at the University of Iowa, spoke of the program’s work and encouraged the participation of more Burmese writers.

Concluding the workshop was Julie Sell of the Economist magazine, who led a lively group discussion summarizing the range of issues and actors involved in a transitional democracy and what lessons the Burmese participants should take with them from the workshop. To facilitate information sharing and networking among the OSI alumni, CIEDA has developed a Web site for the alumni. For further information, contact Carol Myint, program officer; telephone: (812) 855-3948; e-mail: cmyint@indiana.edu.

—RMN

Global Groove musicians invite Burmese students to join in.

www.burmesescholars.org