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A Note From Your Coordinator

Dr. Richard Siciliano

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Our 18th AFACCT Conference was another memorable and successful one. Held on January 10 and 11 at Carroll Community College in Westminster, the annual conference attracted a total of 319 people. Our keynote speakers—Dr. Linda Suskie of the [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#) on Thursday, and Dr. Deborah Adair of [QualityMatters.org](#), on Friday—spoke to the theme of assessment: “Proving and Improving Teaching and Learning.”

On behalf of the entire AFACCT Board of Representative, thanks go to Alan Bogage from Carroll CC who coordinated the two-day conference, and to the staff and faculty at Carroll Community College for their hospitality and assistance in making the event a huge success. I must also express my gratitude to each of the presenters who gave informative, creative, and entertaining presentations. (Be sure to logon to the [AFACCT Conference Proceedings 2008](#), featuring many of those presentations).

In addition, I thank all the AFACCT representatives who worked the registration desk, answered questions from their faculty colleagues, and simply did what had to be done to make the Conference '08 a success. And finally, I must mention the support AFACCT receives from the Chief Academic Officers of Maryland Community Colleges (M4CAO), particularly, Dr. Timothy Keating, Vice President of Academic Affairs at the College of Southern Maryland, who is the liaison to



Richard Siciliano

AFACCT. Without their support, the annual AFACCT conference would not be possible.

And now to next year's Nineteenth Annual AFACCT Conference, hosted by Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Maryland. Scheduled for Thursday and Friday, January 8 and 9, 2009, the conference will focus on the theme of “Living and Learning: The Dynamic Interplay Between Life Experience and Learning.” Proposals are now being accepted for presentations that may explore questions such as the following:

- How do our life experiences shape the way we teach?
- How and when may sharing our personal stories with our students enhance their learning?
- How do students' experiences affect the ways they learn?
- Can we expand global awareness by building on students' life experiences?
- When is it productive to use the narratives of student's lives in class assignments and discussion?
- What kinds of experiences can we create in the classroom to improve student learning?

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We invite you to submit articles on your classroom teaching/learning successes, current educational topics that you want to share, and your professional achievements. Send photos related to your article and one of yourself for publication. We invite articles from all disciplines.

“A Note From Your Coordinator”

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- Does service learning create “real life” references that may be impossible to achieve in classroom learning?
- If we stop learning, do we stop living?
- How many ways can we connect the students’ daily living to their learning?
- Where can instant messaging, blogging, wikis, and virtual worlds like SecondLife broaden students’ experiences and learning?
- How many ways can we connect the students’ daily living to their learning?

As AFACCT has always encouraged, along with these, other topics are welcome. You are invited to give a 45–minute presentation on any related topic. Consider using the conference as a forum to share your ideas with colleagues from around the state. You may also participate with a Web/Poster/PowerPoint display, a format that does not require you to give an oral presentation. Or, if your faculty organization or affinity group wants to reach a statewide audience, consider holding your regular meeting during the conference, and let us schedule that meeting so it does not conflict with presentations within your discipline. And, of course, your organization will be listed in the *AFACCT Conference 2009* program. Suzanne Spoor, AFACCT representative from Anne Arundel CC, is the site coordinator of next year’s conference, and she is eager to help answer questions you may have. Check out the *Call for Proposals* at the AFACCT web site: <http://www.afacct.csm.edu/>.

The *AFACCT Conference 2009* program will be featured in the November 2009 issue of *Communitas*, and in the months ahead, AFACCT representatives will be sharing information about the conference, the call for proposals, and registration. Please plan to join us January 8 and 9, 2009, at Anne Arundel Community College.



Donors of the AFACCT Annual Conference Giveaway

For the past five years at our annual AFACCT conference, we have been fortunate to distribute weekend stays at Ocean City hotels, tickets to live theatre productions in the Washington, D.C./Baltimore area, valued specialty books, and other gifts—all to winners of our Giveaway. Annually, we have acknowledged the donors of these generous gifts on our AFACCT website at <http://www.afacct.csm.edu/conference18/donors08.htm>. We also wish to thank our donors by name in this issue of *Communitas*.

The **Dunes Manor Hotel** and the **Grand Hotel**, both in Ocean City, have each donated weekend stays for two people.

The following local theatres have also been generous in donating complimentary tickets for their spring and summer productions: **The Bay Theatre Company**, **Folger Theatre**, **CenterStage**, **Ford’s Theatre**, **Olney Theatre Center for the Arts**, **The Shakespeare Theatre Company**, **The Studio Theatre**, **Theatre Project**, and **Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company**.

These publishers have been gracious to donate a wide variety of books to our Giveaway: Allyn and Bacon/ Longman, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, and, in particular, Prentice Hall, A Pearson Education Company, which also helped sponsor our Thursday conference breakfast. We also thank our brother and sister community colleges and their bookstores for contributing souvenirs and miscellaneous items to our annual conference Giveaway.



Meet A New AFACCT Rep



Jeff Reitz
Garrett College

Jeff Reitz teaches mathematics at Garrett College (the Pluto of Maryland's community college system). His professional interest is in reforming the general education mathematics curriculum so that it better serves the needs of students in a wide variety of disciplines. He is a strong advocate of teaching quantitative reasoning, a thinking tool that is essential for fully understanding the social, economic, and environmental issues of the day. By stressing interdisciplinary connections and problem solving in real-world contexts, he hopes students will come to appreciate the value of mathematics in their academic, professional, and civic lives.

In his spare time, Mr. Reitz enjoys the abundant outdoor recreational opportunities available in Garrett County. Hiking is one activity he does several times a week throughout the year, while in the warmer months he enjoys bicycling, kayaking, swimming, and bird-watching. Above all, he has a strong desire to be close to the natural world. A quiet and reserved man, he has been known on occasion to astonish others with his talent for singing—whether it is rocking out at a karaoke bar or performing a Verdi aria on a concert stage.



Fostering Innovation and Training at Harford Community College

Christel Vonderscheer

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Established in the fall of 2005, the Instructional Resource Center (IRC) is a collaborative effort between the Office of the Vice President for Instruction and the Division of Library and Instructional Resources. It is designed to provide a high quality learning environment for both credit and noncredit faculty and encourages the exploration of new approaches to teaching and learning in an atmosphere of investigation and innovation.

Funds were allocated to redesign a suite in the library and to purchase hardware, instructional software packages, and furniture. One of the three rooms is dedicated to technology; the other two serve as faculty meeting areas for brown bag lunches, presentations, or informal social networking. Expenditures for growth and material replacement are now incorporated into the budget structure of the division.

Since its inception, the IRC usage and sponsored activities continue to grow. A hands-on facility, it allows faculty and staff to experiment and create course content with the assistance of highly trained staff; the staff consists of five technicians/instructional designers. Three of the five staff members also teach in online, hybrid, and face-to-face format. IRC staff services include one-on-one consultation with instructors to design creative course material for all



Christel Vonderscheer
Harford Community College

formats of instruction (online, hybrid and face-to-face), providing access to new instructional software options, and assistance with student learning outcomes and assessment reporting. The IRC also offers an array of workshops, both in the use of technology and pedagogy, and sponsors webcasts and other presentations of interest to faculty.

In addition to training, the IRC also acts as a clearinghouse for professional development opportunities and provides a comprehensive library of instructional material in print and non-print format. Best of all, it provides a comfortable meeting place for faculty to exchange ideas and best practices. In our Teaching and Learning series and brown bag lunches, faculty discuss such issues as academic publishing, student learning outcomes assessment, copyright and fair use, and classroom management.

Tech and Talk Day

Each year, the IRC sponsors Tech and Talk day, the most recent one being held on January 9th 2008. This is a full day geared toward faculty development. Each year, attendance grows, and feedback is very positive. As one faculty remarked, "probably the most informative

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“Fostering Innovation and Training”
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Carrie Dorman

and useful mini-conference I’ve ever attended. Hooray for Tech n’ Talk Day!” Of course, the “yummy food” was also mentioned on many evaluation forms. This year several presentations focused on the use of Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking sites and their use in the classroom. Since students are using these tools on a regular basis in their personal interaction, faculty would like to “meet them where they are.” Other popular presentations included games and their use in teaching complex ideas and relationships, classroom response systems such as i-clickers and Turning Point Technologies and Google docs.

Faculty Initiatives

At the start of the spring 2007 semester, the IRC introduced “Instant Intro Day” for faculty who wanted to incorporate a video introduction in their online courses. Participating faculty were asked to write a 1–5 minutes script which was then recorded using a digital video camera. The footage is then captured and edited using programs such as Adobe Premier, Apple Imovie, or Final Cut Express. At that point, the file is converted to a flash video file using

Adobe Flash. On the first offering, only a few faculty members were brave enough to face the camera, but the program caught on and we now have about 10 instructors who are using an “instant intro” in their courses.

Tired of typing comments in your online students’ papers? Faculty often cites this as a major drawback when teaching online. Professor Bill Stiffler in the English department provides audio feedback. Using short audio clips in your feedback has many advantages over text and helps “humanize” comments to students. Professor Stiffler states: “Using a human voice can be inspiring for students and can help them develop a more accurate picture of the instructor’s personality.” His students loved it, and several other instructors want to pilot it in their courses this semester.

Professor Laura Hutton is working with IRC technician Carrie Dorman to create a game for her course “Children with Behavioral Challenges.” Carrie, an avid gamer, had been experimenting with Second Life and other simulation software. Using the Neverwinter Nights role playing toolset, they are creating a classroom environment with students acting in an inappropriate manner who will only respond to the instructor when



Meeting Room



Videotaping Session
(L) Loraine Bright, Professor of Paralegal Studies (R) Greg Priebe

the appropriate approach in correcting the behavior is selected. The idea is to allow students the opportunity to experience and interact in this type of classroom situation while learning in a safe environment. Professor Hutton is writing the script for the scenario, and Carrie is programming the actions and results around her script.

All in all, the Instructional Resource Center at Harford Community College has been a success. Usage continues to grow, and faculty are the driving force through more and more requests for creative usage of technology and faculty facilitated sessions. Now, if we could just offer “Happy Hour,” it could also become a social hub like no other.



Dr. Bonnie Cutsforth–Huber Sings with the Rome Festival Opera

An Interview
with

Dr. Bonnie Cutsforth–Huber
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Dr. Bonnie Cutsforth–Huber

Editor: What artistic credentials and experiences do you have that prepared you to sing with the Rome Festival Opera.

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: I began studying voice, performing and competing in vocal competitions at the age of 5, and I haven't stopped since. I hold both bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance from the University of Saskatchewan and Southern Illinois University, respectively. I went to Graz, Austria, in 1999 to study at the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS), which was a very valuable experience. AIMS is an intense program for singers interested in performing careers. Singers have voice lessons, voice coachings, and stage movement and audition technique classes every day for six weeks, and in that environment, singers can improve their skills very quickly.

After I returned from Austria, I decided to go back to school and expand my horizons. In 2004, I obtained my Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Kentucky, and it has served me well. I think performers have a bit of an edge when they have a deeper understanding of music history. In my experience, conductors respect singers who not only work hard, but know something about what they are performing. During my

time at the University of Kentucky, I continued to study voice and to hone my skills as a performer by singing with Cincinnati Opera and Kentucky Opera. When I moved to the Eastern Shore in 2004, I continued to do recitals and to perform with different organizations, most of which are in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C. area.

Editor: Describe your successful audition for the Rome Festival Opera.

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: I auditioned to sing with Rome Festival Opera in the summer of 2007. The company stages two operas every summer and has been doing so for over 30 years. Auditions are held each year either in person in New York, or by recording. I played the role of Marcellina in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Marcellina is one of the "comical" characters in the opera. She spends most of the opera obsessed with Figaro, who she has tried to blackmail into marrying her, only to find out that he is actually her long lost son! Besides being great singers, the members of the cast were also wonderful actors, which made my job a lot easier. It is very difficult to play a comic role when the other singer/actors don't give you anything to play with or feed off of. The opera ran for one week, and was accom-

panied by the Rome Festival Orchestra. The cast and the orchestra included people from 9 different countries.

Editor: Did you perform in any other musical events during your stay in Italy?

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: Yes, Singers in The Rome Festival Opera were also given the opportunity to perform in other concerts with musicians from the Rome Festival Orchestra. I participated in two of these concerts. One was a concert of opera arias in which I sang "*Che faro senza Euridice*" from *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Gluck, and "*Habanera*" from *Carmen* by Bizet. In the second concert, I performed Maurice Ravel's *Chansons Madecasses* and was accompanied, in addition to piano, by a cellist and a flautist from the orchestra. I also performed two songs by Johannes Brahms and was accompanied by piano and viola. All performances were performed out of doors in the heart of old Rome because of the intense heat and humidity. Very few buildings are air-conditioned, so opera companies tend to move their summer performances outdoors in the evening hours. The only downside was we had to rehearse in the outdoor heat during the day, which was very trying at times.

Editor: Do you have any plans to perform again in Italy?

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: I am returning to Rome in summer 2009 to play the role of Carmen in the opera *Carmen* by Georges Bizet with the same opera company.

Editor: How would you characterize your experience with the Rome Festival Opera?

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: The Rome Festival Opera is an excellent opportunity for singers to "get their feet wet" in the European operatic scene, especially singers who are just beginning an operatic career. It has been a springboard for

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“Dr. Cutsforth–Huber Sings in Rome”
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many great singers. The same company also sponsors a chorus and a ballet; so even choristers and dancers can share in the Rome experience.

The company encourages its cast to get out and experience the culture and flavor of Rome and to bask in the same magnificence that has inspired so many great composers, artists, and sculptors. The company paid for entrance fees into some of the great Roman sites, such as the Colosseum, St. Peter’s Basilica, and the Vatican Museum. So many of the great sculptures of art work, however, can be seen for free in many different piazzas in the city, and people in the company were always helpful in telling people where they could find these works of art.

Editor: Since your return from Rome, in what musical events have you performed?

Dr. Cutsforth–Huber: After I returned to the USA, I performed as the alto soloist in J.S. Bach’s *St. John Passion*, with the Bach Concert Series in Baltimore, in George Frederic Handel’s *Messiah* with the Clarendon Chorus and Orchestra, and also in *Messiah* with the Annapolis Chorale. I have also appeared in Giuseppe Verdi’s *Macbeth*, and Umberto Giordano’s *Andrea Chenier* with Amici Opera in Philadelphia. I will also appear in Verdi’s *Othello* and Vincenzo Bellini’s *Beatrice di Tenda* with Amici Opera in October.

Editor: Thank you, Dr. Cutsforth–Huber for sharing your operatic experiences with us. We wish you the best in your performance career.

Note: To hear Dr. Cutsforth–Huber singing an aria from *Carmen*, click on the icon:



Letters From Ukraine

Dr. Ray Johns

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February 5, 2008

Susan, my wife, and I arrived safely in Kiev on February 2 at 1:00 PM Ukrainian time —about 18 hours after leaving home. Ukraine is seven hours ahead of U.S. EST, so by our internal clocks it was only 6 AM. Susan was able to sleep on the plane, but I was not. My friend Slava (Viacheslav Semiletko) met us at the airport at about 2:00 PM to take us 75 kilometers south of Kiev to the city of Bila Tserkva.

This is the location of the university where Susan and I will live and teach. I will teach Environmental Economics, Research Methods, and American Cultural History. The last course was a surprise and I have had no time to prepare material. Susan is going to teach conversational English, either at the university or at the Kyiv Institute in Bila Tserkva. For many students here, it is a rare opportunity to study and practice English with an American.

Our flights—Washington to London and London to Kiev—were as pleasant as lengthy flights can be. We had a bit of panic at London Heathrow airport as our plane landed at Terminal 4 and our outgoing flight was leaving from Terminal 1. We only had about 1.5 hours to change planes—which may seem like a lot of time, but although we were able to catch a bus to Terminal 1, it was a considerable hike to our departure gate, and neither



Dr. Ray Johns

Susan nor I move about as fast these days as when we were younger. Our plane left for Kiev at 8:05 AM British time so we had breakfast on the plane. It was probably the best airplane meal I ever had—scrambled eggs, a sausage link, fried ham, a roll, orange juice, fresh fruit, and coffee. At the Kiev airport an attendant, observing Susan on her cane weary and in pain, offered to help. He took us through passport control and customs ahead of others, and then got a cart and helped us with our luggage to the upper level to meet Slava. He was a Godsend for us both.

Leaving Kiev we traveled south to Bila Tserkva. There is construction everywhere in Kiev of very modern apartment and office buildings. They are being constructed with the latest technology and excavating equipment. Near Bila Tserkva, Slava stopped at a motel/restaurant where we had a delightfully cozy lunch of soup, bread, ribs, and tea. Our dining room was actually a separate little building, a sort of combination log cabin/gazebo. Slava then took us to our apartment and we unpacked. Later, Slava took me to a new supermarket and he bought us some survival food. Then to bed and wonderful sleep until about noon the next day, Sunday. That evening Slava and Lena, his wife, had us to their house for supper, and it was a wonderful meal of caviar, salads, three kinds of meat, potatoes,

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Letters from Ukraine

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grape compote, brandy, cake, and coffee. We had a splendid evening discussing the situation in Ukraine since the Orange Revolution.

February 12, 2008

We are now settled in, have adjusted to the seven-hour time difference, have purchased most of the necessary household items we need, laid in a supply of food staples, and will start to teach our classes next week. Living here requires a great deal of walking and that has taken its toll on both of us. Yet the walking allows us to see many interesting things in a completely different culture. My newest surprise is how unafraid the birds are of humans. I was told they move into the city during the winter in order to get food. But I walked right through flocks of sparrows, pigeons, or crows, and they ignored me.

Contrary to what I told everyone before we left, the winter here has been mild this year. There was no accumulation of snow when we arrived and we have only had one light snow in the past week. Even the natives are amazed at the mildness of the winter. Of course, it is very cold, probably close to zero on some days, with occasional warm spells. The warm spells are not really good as I got a taste of what Napoleon experienced in his retreat from Moscow. The black earth turns into mucky "goo" when we have a thaw and not enough time for earth to dry out. We have to cross the river Rus on a high bridge to get to the university. When we first arrived it was frozen over and there were men ice fishing. Now it has thawed a bit and there are large puddles of water on the ice and the fishermen have fled for their lives.

Bila Tserkva, as well as the rest of



Susan and Ray Johns

Ukraine, has experienced remarkable growth since the Orange Revolution in 2004. There is now a very large supermarket with probably more variety than U.S. supermarkets. Of course, the Ukrainians have a different diet than Americans. There is a great selection of whole fish. I find the smell and the bloody tubs a bit repulsive, but the Ukrainians evidently like this selection of dead marine life. Sometimes on the street, I even see tubs of live fish. There is also a great selection of meat, including all kinds of sausage. Quite different from our supermarkets, there is a lot of beer and liquor. Another difference is the splendid varieties of bread, rolls, and cakes. Of course, their diet is structured around bread instead of meat. There are also many other new stores, including computer stores, clothing stores, and flower stores. What is more surprising is the increase in the number and types of automobiles.

About one in four cars are SUVs, both American and Asian makes. I also notice that when Ukrainians get an SUV, they become just as aggressive in their driving as do Americans. But it is good that Ukraine is developing, and it is easier for us to live here with so many more stores.

Clothing fashions include some surprises. The older folk tend to be short

and chunky and wear dark clothes, heavy coats, fur hats, and boots. The young men wear black and are a bit rough and rural. The young women are the real surprise. They are very slender, have long hair, much makeup, and wear boots, often-times knee length, in various colors. What came as a real shock was that many of them dress as young women did in the U.S. in the 1920s. It looks as though we have traveled back in time and are surrounded by "flappers." They wear "bucket" hats pulled down on their heads, fur boas and fur collared coats, short skirts and patterned hose, and lots of high-heeled footwear. I do not think they know anything about American fashions of the 1920s; this evolved with more money to spend and a desire for new and attractive fashions.

On Friday, Slava invited us to a memorial service for a Ukrainian poet, Vasiliy Sharov, who died last year at age 51. Many people gave readings of his poetry, several pieces were set to music, and his mother and an Orthodox priest spoke. After the service there was a small party for the participants. We all stood around a table and ate sausage, cheese, ham, and chocolate candy, and drank toasts of vodka and brandy. We were both given carnations. On Sunday, Slava took us to a wooden Orthodox church, to a Catholic church where we saw a baby baptized and a car blessed, and then to a dam on the Rus River designed to provide a reservoir of water for Bila Tserkva.

February 19, 2008

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the classes is that they do not have a schedule of classes each semester, as do American colleges. For my Research

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Methods course, they are scheduling three lectures together the first week and then two together two times the second week. The third week is undecided. My American Culture course has turned into an American History course, and it will meet for two lectures the first week and the second week is yet to be determined. There is no schedule yet for my Environmental Economics course.

To function in a Slavic culture gives a clear insight that American culture is very German. We are very well organized, with much forward planning and clear-cut guidelines and schedules to direct the progression of events. Slavic cultures just let things happen as they will and do not get too excited about forward planning. This was clearly illustrated in Stalin's defense against the German army. He had plenty of manpower, so he just used infantry frontal attacks continuously. The slaughter was terrible, but he had enough men to continue this silly tactic against German armor. The Red Army entered Europe

through the Dukla Pass from Poland into Eastern Slovakia. The Germans had both sides of the valley fortified with gun emplacements as well as air cover. The cemeteries today give some indication of the high casualty rate for the Red Army, but they eventually did overrun the German army. So, I think I will eventually teach my classes, but I must be patient.

Construction in Ukraine is very high quality in both materials and workmanship. Yet after a building is constructed, they don't take care of it. Maintenance is almost nonexistent, except for routine cleaning. The dormitory we are living in is literally falling apart. We assumed it had been built as an apartment building during Soviet times, perhaps 50 years ago. Slava told me it had been built about 10–12 years ago as a dormitory. The plumbing in particular is inferior to what we are accustomed. They use steel pipe and weld it together, rather than copper or plastic pipe and join it with various kinds of connectors. To go around a corner, they don't use an elbow. They just heat the pipe with a torch and bend it. Their electrical system is 220 watts and very scary. The receptacles and switches in the walls are well done, but the light fixtures themselves often display exposed wires.

Last Thursday evening (Feb 14) our friends Helen and Sergei, who had taken us to Kiev in November 2005, invited us for supper. As always, it was an evening of drinking and eating. They had vodka, wine, and fruit juice to drink. There was pork cutlets, mashed potatoes, cabbage salad, ham salad, several kinds of pickles, and ice cream and cake for dessert. We started eating about 6:30 and finished about 9:30 when we insisted on going back to our apartment. On Sunday afternoon Slava and his wife Lena took us to a forest and river south of Bila Tserkva.



There was snow on the ground; it was very cold, and the river was frozen over. Even so, it was beautiful in the woods and we took some pictures of each other. To get to the forest we went through a village that Slava estimated was 300–400 years old and perhaps some of the cottages are that old. Even so, they all still have crank wells and outhouses. Of course, they would have been repaired and improved as time went by. It is so satisfying to observe and learn of another culture. It was a nice excursion, but we were glad to back in the warm flat again.

[The remainder of Dr. Johns's letters from Ukraine will be published in the September 2008 issue of *Communitas*.]

