



CONTENTS

- 1 A Note From Your Coordinator**
Dr. Richard Siciliano
College of Southern Maryland
- 2 Welcome to Anne Arundel Community College**
Dr. Suzanne J. Spoor
Anne Arundel CC
- 3 Meet the Newest AFACCT Rep**
- 4 Teaching and Learning in China**
Dr. Juliet Smith
Chesapeake College
- 5 Using the Distinction Between Fact and Interpretation to Promote Intellectual Development**
William Peirce
Prince George's CC
- 8 Letters from Ukraine, Part 2**
Dr. Ray Johns
Hagerstown CC
- 9 Poetry Today**
Henry Sloss
Anne Arundel CC

A Note From Your Coordinator

Dr. Richard Siciliano
College of Southern Maryland
La Plata, Maryland
richs@csmd.edu

Welcome to *Communitas*, the official newsletter of Maryland's Association of Faculty for Advancement of Community College Teaching (AFACCT). For faculty new to Maryland's community college system, allow me to introduce AFACCT and explain the role we play. During its 24 years of existence, AFACCT has provided opportunities for professional development throughout the state. At the start of every year, and before faculty return to their campuses for their spring semester, AFACCT organizes a statewide conference and holds it at a centrally located community college campus. For hundreds of faculty members throughout Maryland, the annual AFACCT conference represents an opportunity to develop their professional skills and knowledge, to share research and expertise, and to network with others in their teaching disciplines.

This past year's conference, held at Carroll Community College in January 2008, focused on the theme of "Proving and Improving Teaching and Learning." Along with peer presentations on this theme, many other presentations explored topics of equal significance and currency. If you have not yet seen the 2008 Conference Proceedings, you are urged to go online and read this publication. It provides an excellent glimpse of the range of topics discussed at our conferences. As for next year, plans are now being implemented for AFACCT's 19th Annual Conference set for January 8 and 9, 2009, and hosted by Anne



Richard Siciliano

Arundel Community College, in Arnold, Maryland. Conference'09 will focus on the theme "Living and Learning: The Dynamic Interplay Between Life Experience and Learning," a particularly intriguing topic and quite different from previous conference themes. Our first keynote speaker is Dr. Ray Johns, retired professor of Economics, whose passion for both world travel and teaching led him this past winter to Ukraine, where he taught university courses in Environmental Economics, Research Methods, and American Cultural History. His experiences were recounted in his "Letters from Ukraine," some of which were published in the May 2008 issue of *Communitas* and in this issue. Plans are being finalized for our second keynote speaker, and more details about the speakers, as well as the entire conference, are provided on the AFACCT 2009 Conference web site. The Call for Proposals for the AFACCT 2009 Conference is now available online. The proposal deadline is September 30, 2008. The theme of "Living and Learning..." provides great latitude for prospective presenters, and we welcome presentation proposals on any related topic.

continued on pg. 2.....



Newsletter of the Association of Faculties for the Advancement of Community College Teaching

Published
3 times a year:
September
November
May

See the AFACCT website at
<http://www.afacct.csm.edu/>

Staff

Dr. Richard Siciliano
Executive Editor
Dr. Stan Kajs
Managing Editor
Deborah Reilly
Editorial Staff Member

Send articles to Stan Kajs at
skajs@chesapeake.edu

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” *continued from pg. 1.....*

For some suggestions for topics, go to the AFACCT 2009 Conference web site. In addition to being host to peer presentations, the AFACCT Conference gives faculty members of particular disciplines, such as mathematics or developmental studies, an opportunity to hold their meetings during Conference’09. If interested, simply complete a proposal form, and AFACCT will provide the space. So, mark your calendars for January 8 and 9, 2009. Please join us all at Anne Arundel Community College for the 19th Annual AFACCT Conference.

AFACCT 19 th Annual Conference <small>Association of Faculties for Advancement of Community College Teaching</small>	
Registration	<p>Living and Learning: The Dynamic Interplay Between Life Experience and Learning</p> <p><i>Hosted by...</i> <i>Anne Arundel Community College – Arnold, Maryland (main campus)</i></p> <p>January 8 and 9, 2009</p> <p>Call for Proposals</p> <p>Registration Fees (until December 15): Full Conference (2 days): \$100 Thursday: \$75 Friday Only: \$25</p> <p><small>Online registration will be available from October 21, December 10, 2008 after that registration will be available on site at the conference.</small></p>
Program	
Directions	
Lodging	
Donors	

Click on the image above to access the AFACCT Conference Website.



Welcome to Anne Arundel Community College

Suzanne J. Spoor, Ph.D.
Professor of English
Anne Arundel Community College
Arnold, Maryland
sjspoor@aacc.edu



Anne Arundel Community College cordially welcomes attendees of the 2009 AFACCT conference. We are happy to afford community college faculty from all over Maryland the opportunity to meet, exchange ideas, share their research, and investigate together this year’s conference theme: Living and Learning: The Dynamic Interplay Between Life Experience and Learning.

A vibrant academic community that can boast of award-winning programs in hotel and restaurant management, dance, and interior design, Anne Arundel Community College is proud of its many achievements. AACC’s nursing program had a pass rate of 95 percent in December 2006, and its Physical Therapist Assistant graduates and Radiologic Technology students had a 100 percent pass rate in 2007. Anne Arundel Community College is the only community college to have won the National Council for Continuing Education and Training’s “Exemplary Program in Workforce Develop-

continued on pg. 3.....

Welcome to AACC
continued from pg. 2.....



Dr. Suzanne Spoor

ment” award four times—the latest one in 2006 for its Words for Work program that helps teach Spanish-speaking students key words and phrases needed to move into better jobs. In 2006, AACC received the West Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce’s “Nonprofit of the Year” award, which recognizes a nonprofit organization that has developed close partnerships with the business community as a way to achieve its overall mission.

With learning as its central mission, Anne Arundel Community College strives to embody the basic convictions of the American democratic ideal: that individuals be given full opportunity to discover and develop their talents, energy, and interests, to pursue their unique potentials and to achieve an intellectually, culturally, and economically satisfying relationship with society. We believe that such opportunity should be easily available and readily accessible to all Anne Arundel County residents.

The College was established on January 2, 1961, as a comprehensive community center of higher learning. The college opened in September that year for 270 students in late afternoon and evening classes in temporary quarters at Severna Park High School.

AFACCT Communitas

Dr. Andrew G. Truxal became the College’s first president. The College moved to its own 165-acre Arnold campus in September 1967. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, now known as Middle States Commission on Higher Education, awarded AACC full accreditation in April 1968.

During the tenure of AACC’s fourth president, Dr. Thomas E. Florestano (July 1, 1979 until June 30, 1994), the campus expanded to 230 acres and grew in enrollment, programs, and services as a comprehensive community college. The College has continued its expansion since then, with the four-story Arundel Mills facility on August 4, 2003, a completely renovated Student Union on the Arnold campus in fall 2003, and its Center for Applied Learning and Technology on August 25, 2004.

With the arrival of Dr. Martha A. Smith on August 1, 1994, came a new vision for Anne Arundel Community College: that it would be among the first in the nation to meet the call for higher expect-



tations, to rethink the way institutions of higher learning educate their students in order to respond to the challenges of a global economy, and to make our students among the best prepared citizens and workers of the world.

Our students make up the life of Anne Arundel Community College, and their learning gives the College purpose.

Welcome to our campus!



Meet the Newest AFACCT Rep



Dr. Edward Taft
Frederick Community College

Dr. Edward Taft received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Rhode Island in 1992 and has been teaching English at Frederick Community College since January 1994. His doctoral dissertation is an analysis of the work of poet, novelist, and organic farmer Wendell Berry. The dissertation is an interdisciplinary work that combined literary analysis, science, agricultural technique, and cultural and historical study. Ted’s main focus, however, has always been on his students. He has a reputation as an exceptionally student-centered instructor and has been five times nominated for Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers. He has taught Developmental Writing, Writing Composition, Introduction to Literature, American Literature, World Literature, Short Story, Poetry, and Novel courses. He also teaches in the Honors Program at FCC and has had several students give successful presentations at Honors conferences. Ted is currently Chair of the College Senate at FCC.



Teaching and Learning in China

Dr. Juliet Smith

Assistant Professor of Developmental Studies/English
Chesapeake College
Wye Mills, Maryland
jsmith@chesapeake.edu

My trip to the other end of the world began at 4:00 am on June 25 when I groggily arose from my bed in Easton, Maryland and ended when we touched down at Pudong International Airport in Shanghai at 2:00 pm on June 26th China time. But, of course, that moment was just the beginning of another incredible journey. Eyes wide, mouth agape, I tried to take in the massive skyline, innumerable pedestrians dodging cars, and endless construction sites in this city of over 16 million, a city a thousand times larger than my home town back on the Eastern Shore. As James, my tour coordinator noted, “China’s size is more than I could easily comprehend.”

I would add to that statement that China’s history, beauty, the graciousness of its people, and, of course, economic development are equally incredible.

How did I get the opportunity to experience such an amazing country?

In 2005, Queen Anne’s, one of the counties Chesapeake College serves, established an economic/educational/cultural partnership with Suzhou China. In 2006, Chesapeake joined this partnership, and in the summer of 2007, Chesapeake faculty were offered the opportunity to tour and teach in China. In the summer of 2008, Greg Farley, Associate Professor of Biological Science, and I were the two fortunate faculty who spent 25 days traveling, learning, and teaching.

We were treated to extraordinary experiences, such as viewing the terra-cotta



Dr. Juliet Smith

warriors in Xi’an and watching the Shanghai Acrobatic Troupe perform. We learned how to make dumplings with Mrs. Hwang, a local resident in Beijing, and toured Lingyin Temple, a very large and wealthy Buddhist temple in Hagzhou.

During the last two weeks, we conducted workshops with the elementary school teachers from the Cangling School district and high school teachers from the Number 10 Middle School in Suzhou. Both groups of participants teach English as a foreign language. Before traveling to China, Greg and I researched the Chinese educational system and talked with our colleagues, Drs. Fee and Welsh, about their experiences from the previous year. We learned that students begin primary school at age 6. They then move into lower middle school at age 12 and upper middle school at 15. We learned that the Chinese school curriculum heavily revolves around a series of stringent nationalized exams. Every school uses the same text books, and the curriculum is nationalized; the school day lasts from 7:00 am to about 5:00 pm with a two-month break in the summer (July 1 to September 1). Students sit in class listening, taking copious notes, without actively participating or asking questions.

But the teachers in Suzhou taking these workshops were eager to learn how American teachers take a more cooperative, student-centered approach to education.

My colleague and I **showed** them how

by modeling participatory practices in our workshop sessions. For example, the first day we surveyed our students about what they wanted to learn regarding the English language, teaching in American schools, and American culture. We found participants were eager to learn songs, dances, games, and skits to help enliven their English lessons. They wanted to know how to keep their students’ attention, what kind of language was appropriate in different circumstances, and how much American teachers earn.

We adjusted our lesson plans in order to address their questions. Furthermore, at the end of every day, we asked them for written feedback on what they enjoyed and one suggestion for the next day’s session. We introduced them to the concept of performance-based assessment and gave them sample rubrics.



With the elementary school teachers, we did lesson plans around American holidays. Dividing the class into four groups, we set up learning stations incorporating the four different skills of language learning: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. We taught them how to make different holiday crafts, thus incorporating the creative aspect frequently found in elementary schools. We showed them clips of American movies and cartoons with subtitles featuring different holidays. We taught

continued on pg. 5.....

Teaching and Learning in China

continued from pg. 4.....



The author with colleague Greg Farley, Greg's wife, Ann, and Karl, our volunteer classroom assistant standing before the Tiger Hill pagoda, the "Leaning Tower of China" in Suzhou.

them simple songs to teach their students.

With the group of high school teachers, we discussed constructivist theory, engaged in critical cross-cultural comparisons between U.S.A and China and held mini-debates around the one-child policy; this resulted in a very thoughtful, lively discussion—and indoor smoking restrictions that are becoming common place in Beijing and other major cities.

We introduced the concept of “millennial” students and showed ways we incorporate technology into our teaching by using podcasts and computer-based class discussion.

Although some of the teachers were reluctant because they were self-conscious speaking English in front of native speakers or uncertain how to engage in open active discussion, as opposed to sitting quietly in neat rows, we found that constant persistence along with gett-

ing them out of their seats helped. We encouraged their efforts and evinced respect and curiosity by asking frequent questions about Chinese culture, by learning how to say Chinese phrases—much to the class's amusement — and by engaging their favorite activities, such as origami and Chinese jump rope.

We truly had a cultural and educational exchange with our Chinese colleagues. What is more important is how our respective students will benefit from our experience. As one participant wrote in her final evaluation, “The materials and activities you provided for us will interest my students a lot and introduce something new and fun to them. Hopefully, you will bring your students all that you have experienced in China so that they will have a better knowledge about China too.” I certainly plan to do so.



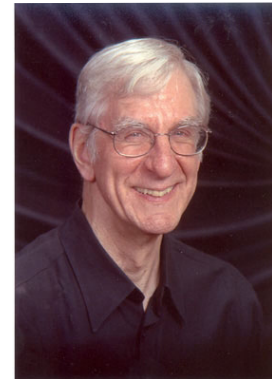
Three participants argue for the "one child policy," a mini-debate we held in our workshop with the high school teachers.



Using the Distinction Between Fact and Interpretation to Promote Intellectual Development

William Peirce

Professor of English (Retired)
Prince George's Community College
Largo, Maryland
wpeirce@bverizon.net



William Peirce

Students arrive in college with a good many misconceptions, including the following:

- That questions have right or wrong answers.
- That facts are statements that are true (the right answers).
- That knowledge is out there some where for them to discover.

Asking students to distinguish between “fact” and “interpretation” is a useful way to dispel these misconceptions and to move them to higher stages of intellectual development. In the Perry or Belenky models of intellectual development, at higher intellectual stages students accept that experts disagree, that disciplinary knowledge is constructed and not discovered, and that they have the responsibility to use reasoned

continued on pg. 6.....

Fact and Interpretation

continued from pg. 5.....

judgment to construct their own knowledge, choosing from the differing explanations offered by expert authorities in their disciplines.

Asking students to identify facts and interpretations in a short list of items is a useful strategy for successful professors to employ to help move students to these higher intellectual stages. In my argument and persuasion course, I ask students to decide which of the following statements are facts and which are interpretations. Try it yourself before reading further.

1. Timothy McVeigh bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City.
 Fact Interpretation
2. Smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy.
 Fact Interpretation
3. The population of the United States in 2000, according to the Census Bureau, was between 281-284 million people (depending on whether the actual count or adjusted count is used).
 Fact Interpretation
4. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
 Fact Interpretation
5. The speed of light is 186,282 miles per second.
 Fact Interpretation
6. The sun revolves around the earth.
 Fact Interpretation
7. The earth revolves around the sun.
 Fact Interpretation
8. Women, African Americans, and Native

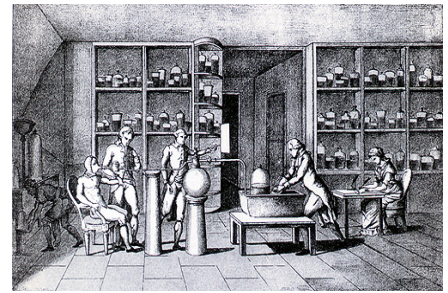
Americans have been treated unfairly by white men in America during previous centuries.

- Fact Interpretation
9. George W. Bush won the 2000 Presidential election.
 Fact Interpretation
 10. A “fact” is anything I believe is true.
 Fact Interpretation

Facts Are Settled Interpretations.

In my first-year classes, students do not agree about these items, so they look to me for the correct answer. In reply, I tell them that there are problems with the conventional definition of a fact: a statement that is “true” or that can be “objectively verified.” Truth and fact are not always the same. This discussion is about fact, not truth.

First, I explain to the students that there are degrees of objectivity. Second, there are different notions of what “verified” means. Third, there are limitations of the instruments used to verify, limitations of the observations made, and limitations of the observer making them. For example, in the 17th century it was a scientifically proven fact that phlogiston was the substance that made things burn. Burnable substances like wood were believed to be rich in phlogiston, which was released into the air during the burning process. Once the phlogiston in the wood was gone, the wood could not burn, as proved by the existence of ashes, which would not burn because the phlogiston was used up. Phlogiston was a fact corroborated by a good many scientific experiments — even Joseph Priestley’s. Priestley did not know he had discovered oxygen because his theory of dephlogistonated air explained what he observed quite satisfactorily. Antoine Lavoisier’s experiments replaced the phlogiston fact with the new scientifically proven fact that heat was a weightless fluid consisting of particles of caloric—a



fact soon replaced by the findings of James Joule that led later to the formulation of the first law of thermodynamics in the mid-nineteenth century.

Fourth, and most important, a “fact” has a context; usually it is used to support a claim. A fact supports a claim only if the reader accepts it as a fact. If a reader/listener/juror does not accept a proposed “fact” as a fact, the fact will not convince the reader/listener/juror to accept the claim. If an interpretation seems supported by overwhelming evidence, then the question is settled and regarded as a fact (such as Timothy McVeigh’s guilt, the dangers of smoking, and the population of the United States). If the interpretation seems not settled, then it cannot be used as a fact to support a claim.

Knowledge is Constructed.

If you lived in Europe in the fifteenth century, I tell my students, you and all the other educated people would know for certain that the earth is the center of the universe. The rest of the universe revolves around it, around you. The scientific community provides the theory, equipment and instruments, investigative procedures, and mathematical formulas that conclusively prove this fact. Your own observation confirms this truth; every day you see the sun revolve around the earth in an east–west direction. Furthermore, your religion and theology confirm the truth. Your sacred

continued on pg. 7.....

Fact and Interpretation

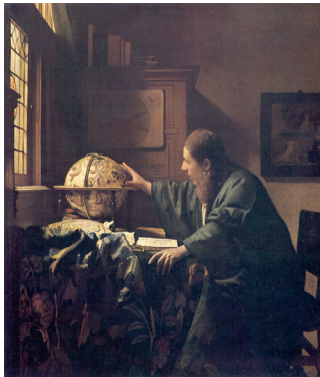
continued from pg. 6.....

texts support it, as interpreted by your church officials, who explain the moral and ethical implications of this truth. You live your life by this truth; you plant and harvest, navigate the oceans, understand scientific arguments, confirm your self-worth, assure your soul's salvation.

But although the sun revolves around the earth in the fifteenth century, in the sixteenth the earth revolves around the sun. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Copernicus published his theory and evidence that the earth, in fact, revolved around the sun. In the early seventeenth century, Galileo's observations with his telescope and his calculations supported the new theory; and by the end of the seventeenth, Kepler and Newton had confirmed the new truth. In the fifteenth century, it was true that the earth was the stationary center of the revolving universe. In later centuries, it was not true. Educated people eventually became comfortable with the new truth and developed new ways to plant and harvest, navigate the oceans, understand scientific arguments, confirm their self-worth, and assure their soul's salvation.

The difference between the two facts in items 6 and 7 in the box above is explained by the differences in the ways of knowing employed by scientists and in their perceptions of reality: the theory, equipment and instruments, investigative procedures, and mathematical formulas. How the ways of knowing employed by scientific disciplines change has been described in the now-classic *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas S. Kuhn (1970). Knowledge is constructed by disciplinary communities: interpreted, accepted, and then modified or replaced.

To sum up, the distinction between a fact and an interpretation is a perception that varies among the perceivers. In my view, ALL "fact" were first interpretations. Any-



thing now considered "fact" began as an interpretation. If we consider a fact "objectively verified," then we regard it as a fact. If we consider the evidence for a hypothesis overwhelming, then we regard it as a fact (for example, that smoking causes health problems). The facts in the box above were first interpretations (and maybe for some people still are) until people accepted them as facts.

So, the items in the list are facts OR interpretations, depending on whether someone considers the issue settled or not in a context. A fact is not a certain truth; what makes a fact "fact" is that it is a noncontroversial, accepted statement. (Notice also the role of language in establishing a fact.)

Students Move to Higher Intellectual Stages.

For some students, this discussion about fact and interpretation is intellectually transforming. For these students, it is the first step towards the disturbing realization that truth is not a certain thing out there for them to discover by reading the authorities. Most students begin to move beyond Perry's first stage of intellectual development: dualism (authorities know all the correct answers.). Some now start their move beyond Perry's second stage, multiplicity (people have a right to their own opinion: who is to say who is right?) because they see that truth can be uncertain. Many begin to see the importance of scrutinizing an interpretation carefully before accepting it. Accepting

item 10 (A "fact" is anything I believe is "fact") imposes the responsibility of being a critical thinker, of evaluating evidence and reasons.

The fact/interpretation poll—suitably revised for one's discipline—is a useful device for engaging students in learning how the discipline constructs knowledge, what counts as evidence, what is considered "proved," what is considered "probable," and what it takes to disenfranchise a settled belief.

References

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. V., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of Knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: HarperCollins.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed., enlarged). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Perry, W. G., Jr., (1970). *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A scheme*. New York: Holt.

More articles on the teaching of disciplinary thinking can be found at the website of the Maryland Community College Consortium for Teaching Reasoning:
<http://academic.pg.cc.md.us/~wpeirce/MC-CCTR/>



Letters From Ukraine, Part 2

Dr. Ray Johns

Professor of Economics (Retired)
Hagerstown Community College
Hagerstown, Maryland
Ray_J@hagerstowncc.edu



Dr. Ray Johns

February 26, 2008

Last Tuesday (Feb 19) the university had a program celebrating the founding of the university 400 years ago and the current upgrade from a state to a national university. It was a very interesting program with lots of folk costumes, folk singing, and folk dancing. They had a brass band that played very loud and an orchestra of violins and mandolins. When the brass band played the Ukrainian national anthem “Ukraine Is Not Dead Yet,” everyone stood up and sang with gusto. The most interesting dance was one of boys dressed in World War II uniforms dancing with girls in ball gowns. This was in commemoration of the graduates who died in combat in World War II. They had their pictures on a screen beside the stage. An Orthodox priest spoke and a choir from the local Orthodox church sang. There were many award certificates given, as well as flowers and baskets of fruit and wine. The end of the program involved a quartet and an accordion leading the audience in clapping and singing folk songs.

On Wednesday (Feb 20) the Linguistics Dept. had a 50th birthday party for one of the faculty. The Ukrainians do know how to throw a party. There were many presentations and then mountains of food—sausage, ham, cheese, bread, orange and lemon slices, caviar, olives, pickles, and candy. Yuri, a faculty member and friend from seven years ago, kept busy pouring champagne, brandy, and wine. He is finishing a Ph.D. at a university in Kiev. He was a bit too generous with the brandy, and I am afraid I drank too much. Susan had fun talking to the English speaking faculty and Johann, a young teacher from Potsdam, Germany. He is working here as a substitute for military service.

On Thursday (Feb 21) we went to a literature and music awards ceremony in the White Church. They have a marvelous organ. The program included four girls in Arabic dress doing a dance, a group of girls in folk costumes singing, a boy about eight years old in a jester’s costume with two sticks connected by a string balancing and tossing a spinning object, a young woman with four hula hoops doing amazing things including handstands and tumbling, and a variety of children dancing and singing. This is also an art gallery and we saw some nice bark pictures.

On Saturday, I went to a program for the Ukrainians who served in World War II. It started at a statue in front of the university of a Red Army soldier falling in combat. The rector spoke and several people put flowers on the base of the statue. Then we walked about eight blocks to the park commemorating the World War II victory. There is a large obelisk with five fierce looking soldiers charging the enemy at the base. There were a number of veterans there. I was able to get pictures of three officers in their WWII uniforms. Several people spoke and then there was the usual laying of flowers at the base of the monument. Many of the WWII veterans were weeping—perhaps remembering lost friends.



Map of Ukraine

Click on the map to hear the Ukrainian National Anthem.

March 4, 2008

Spring is in the air in Ukraine. On Tuesday (Feb 26) it was warm and sunny. The center of the river was flowing free of ice. To my surprise, as I was walking across the bridge, there were three large beautiful swans swimming down the river. On Wednesday (Feb 27) I saw two of them again flying over the bridge heading upstream. It was a beautiful sight.

I now have two of my classes going—American History and Culture and Research Methods. There are about thirty students in the first class and only a dozen in the second. But that is good because I need interaction about Research Methods and I get more of it in a small class. It is interesting that the girls are all fashionably dressed in high-heeled boots, patterned hose, and colorful clothing while the boys are all dressed in black and wear shoes with pointy toes. They are even more pointy than our cowboy boots. I was told it is just a fashion fad. The students seem more serious than they did seven years ago when I last here. I am fascinated that many American fads have made their way to Ukraine. Many girls have pierced lips, noses, and eyebrows; and some boys wear their hats backwards or sideways. Even so, I am satisfied with my classes and believe

continued on pg. 9.....

Letters from Ukraine, Part 2
continued from pg. 8.....

I will do some good this semester. Johann, a 20-year old from Potsdam, Germany lives across the hall from us. He eats dinner with us about four times a week. He is here teaching German in lieu of mandatory military service. When he returns to Germany in August, he hopes to go to medical school. We have some very interesting conversations with him.

Wednesday (Feb 27) was a very special day. Susan got permission to play the piano in the university auditorium. It is a Russian-made piano with rounded keys and a nice tone. At home she likes to play about two hours each day. So she has really missed playing here. As a reward for allowing her access to the piano, she played “It’s A Long Way to Tipperary” and “Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag” for me. I do love the songs from WWI and the 1920’s.

Ukraine has been losing population from emigration and from the Chernobyl disaster. So the government is now paying people to have children. For the first child they receive \$1,600, for the second \$5,000, and for the third \$10,000. This amount is not given in a lump sum, but in installments.

The warm weather continues—maybe spring is on the way. It has even stayed warm enough to dry up some of the mud. On Thursday (Feb 28) and Saturday (Mar 1) we went to the Central Market (10 acres outdoors) and bought some more household supplies. We can buy anything there, new or used. Friday (Feb 29) we went to the supermarket to buy food. We assumed we would both lose weight here. I did when I was here in 2000–2001. But food is so plentiful now, and Susan is such a good cook that we may be eating better than at home. We eat lunch in restaurants frequently and have discovered that they all have French fries. With them we usually get a pork cutlet covered in cheese and mushrooms—quite tasty. Along with draft beer, it makes a nice



lunch. I also join Slava frequently in the university cafeteria for lunch. We usually have cabbage or pea soup, beet or cabbage salad, bread, a fried ground meat patty, pasta or buckwheat, and tea.

Another cultural difference here is how they mark restrooms. Women’s restrooms are marked with a high-heel shoe and men’s with a hat and cane. We have begun to use some of the public transportation, mini-buses and taxis. The mini-buses only cost 30 cents, but the drivers drive like they are in a demolition derby. Slava also drives us a good many places as his time schedule allows.



Poetry Today

Henry Sloss
Professor of English (Retired)
Anne Arundel Community College
Arnold, Maryland



Uneasy Patriots

The trouble with Goliath is that he has no friends, only admirers of his size and his success.

A dubious entourage of stooges, bodyguards, and groupies whose interest is in their own well-being.

And there are those close to him who say his motives are suspect at best, his moods better kept off-camera.

Still he is that Goliath whose very existence argues for God’s favor—you’d be vainglorious, too.

Who can blame us for being of two minds when he fights another underdog, even though we’re Philistines?

