

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

VOLUME X, ISSUE 5

FEBRUARY 2006

Tatiana Vondersaar and Margo Catsimatidis Honored at 10th Anniversary Old Russian New Year's Celebration!

The Tenth Anniversary Old Russian New Year's Party at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club on January 15 was a special event, with 326 party-goers celebrating the Old Russian New Year with dining, dancing, and an elegant party atmosphere. Tatiana Vondersaar and her daughter, Margo Catsimatidis, were honored this year for their contributions to *Russian Heritage*, for their service to the Russian-American community in St. Petersburg, and for their role in promoting Russian culture on a large scale. Margo was also cited for her special fund-raising work for Alzheimer's Research and for Greek scholarships. The emcee for the evening, President Carl Kuttler of St. Petersburg College, who is the Honorary Consul for the Russian Federation to the State of Florida, presented beautiful plaques with the seal of the state of Florida to the special honorees, and Congressman Mike Bilirakis read excerpts from his speech in Congress highlighting the achievements of Tatiana Vondersaar and *Russian Heritage* (see page 4).

The evening started off with an introduction of dignitaries, including Mayor Baker, our honorary host for the evening, a champagne toast to the "old" New Year, and a presentation of Russian folk dances by the Suzanne Pomcrantzceff dancers. The dinner entrees featured chicken "Zolotoy Petushok" or Salmon "Zolotaya Rybka". Following dinner a short video program presented scenes of Russia to the music of "Lara's Theme" and the Russian National Anthem performed on Red Square, followed by comments by Boris Marchuk, special assistant to Russian Ambassador Ushakov from Washington.

The Dazzlers provided exciting music for dancing, and a Russian theme was introduced by special Russian songs by Mary Stenov and Emil Katz. The Russian nesting dolls and Russian noisemakers added another special touch to the Russian-ness of the evening. Finally, the fantastic raffle provided outstanding prizes to lucky winners, including a cruise to Mexico in November 2006 (see related story on page 7), and \$1,129 for our scholarship fund. We especially thank Tatiana Vondersaar, Margo Catsimatidis, emcee Carl Kuttler, Congressman Mike Bilirakis, Boris Marchuk, and all the volunteers who put in many hours to prepare and carry out this spectacular event.

"MARCH MADNESS" RUSSIAN STYLE COMES TO TAMPA BAY

Student Musical Ambassadors from St. Petersburg, Russia, the Russian Heritage Ensemble's tribute to Shostakovich, the Florida Orchestra's *Russian Extravaganza*, YEVTUSHENKO, a dynamic Russian folk music duo, SPIFFS.....Details inside this edition.



The St. Petersburg Folk Ensemble
directed by Suzanne Pomerantzeff



S NOVYM GODOM!
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Congressman
Mike Bilirakis



Doris Marchuk



Mayor Rick Baker and
Emcee Carl Kutler



Presentation of Plaques to Tatiana Vonderaar, and
Margo Casimatidis. Also present in photo, Tom Johnston,
John Casimatidis, Evelyn Bilirakis, and Carl Kutler



Mary Senov

PRELUDE TO "MARCH MADNESS"

February 26, 2006. **Blini at St. Andrew's Orthodox Church.** The celebration of Maslenitsa, with the serving of Blini (Russian pancakes) will take place right after the liturgy at the Trapeza (Fellowship Hall) at the Church, 4668 15th Avenue South in Gulfport. \$25.

February 26, 2006. **Maslenitsa Celebration in Tampa.** This celebration is sponsored by the Russian Department at USF and will be held in the USF park on Fletcher Street just east of the University of South Florida near the Hillsborough River from, from noon to 4:00. Blini will be served.

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February 28, 2006. **RUSSIAN HERITAGE PRESENTS . . .**
"FOCUS ON RUSSIAN MUSIC AND DANCE" AT THE PALLADIUM . . .
 253 Fifth Avenue North, St. Petersburg.

Ekaterina Gumenyuk, Musical Ambassador from St. Petersburg, Russia on the piano;
Dmitry Serebrennikov, Musical Ambassador from St. Petersburg, on the violin.

and

The St. Petersburg Folk Ensemble directed by **Suzanne Pomerantzeff**

This will be a night to remember, with talented youth musicians from Russia playing their favorites, and a dance program by our own local "Ambassadors of Russian Culture". Those who met and heard our Musical Ambassadors from the Conservatory School in St. Petersburg in 2004 will not want to miss this opportunity to experience these two new rising stars of classical music. And those who saw the Russian Dancers perform at the Old Russian New Year's Party, or with the St. Petersburg Balalaika Trio last year, or at SPIFFS in recent years will want to see again this exciting dance extravaganza.

7:30 pm, Tuesday, February 28, 2006. Adults: \$12; Seniors: \$10; Students: \$5.

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SPIFFS (St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society) Will Hold Its Annual FOLK FAIR MARCH 22-26 in Vinoy Park

Russian Heritage will participate in the 31st Annual SPIFFS Folk Fair. We are now planning our exhibit on the theme "Russian Culture in America". The March Newsletter will have many more details on the nature of our booth. It will be located in a *Russian Heritage* tent in the Vinoy Park in downtown St. Petersburg. We are planning to serve Russian foods this year, working together with the people from "St. Petersburg's Nights" Restaurant. Anyone with ideas, or wishing to volunteer to help with this project should contact Zina Downen, our representative to SPIFFS (727-399-1713).

From the Congressional Record: December 14, 2005

IN RECOGNITION OF TATIANA HORUNOWYCZ VONDERSAAR AND RUSSIAN HERITAGE

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

of florida

in the house of representatives

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Tatiana Horunowycz Vondersaar and Russian Heritage on the occasion of the 10th Annual Russian Heritage New Years Celebration, January 15, 2006. Mrs. Vondersaar's contributions to the Russian community have touched countless lives. It is a pleasure to pay tribute to this illustrious community leader and, of course, to all Americans of Russian heritage who have offered so much to our great Nation.

There is no doubt that America has become great because the American people are great. Coming from all parts of the globe and from humble beginnings, the average American is a priceless gift to our society and world. Without the common citizen, America would not have assumed the uncommon role she enjoys among the nations of the earth. Among these citizens are the proud and humble people of Russian heritage who are precious gems in the American mosaic.

I can think of no better example of this unique heritage than Tatiana Horunowycz Vondersaar, who has tirelessly promoted Russian heritage among the citizens of the great State of Florida. Mrs. Vondersaar is a former president and board member of the Russian Heritage located in St. Petersburg, FL. The Russian Heritage was established to preserve and promote Russian heritage, culture and educational programs among family, friends and neighbors.

Volunteering her time and talents to better the lives of others, Mrs. Vondersaar has been active on numerous committees and boards. She represented the St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society, SPIFFs, promoting Russian heritage and culture. Mrs. Vondersaar has worked with the Police Athletic League and educated students about the influence of Russian customs and traditions. She has lectured at St. Petersburg College and volunteered her time at the Salvador Dali Museum. Mrs. Vondersaar has served as a translator for Russian immigrants for the public defender's office, assisted the elderly, and participated as an active and leading member at St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Church. She also has served as treasurer of the Association of Russian Cadets, and board member of the Russian American Club.

Mrs. Vondersaar and her husband Lee, a courageous veteran of World War II, are the proud parents of 6 children, 14 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

I want to commend Russian Heritage and its President Bill Parsons for their leadership in raising awareness of the rich contributions of Russian Americans to the United States. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring all Americans of Russian descent and particularly Tatiana Horunowycz Vondersaar, whose spirit and dedication serve as a model of commitment to us all.

"March Madness" of Russian Culture

Saturday, March 4, 2006. "Russian Extravaganza" by the Florida Orchestra.

Tchaikovsky: Suite No. 4, "Mozartiana"

Prokofiev: Violin Concerto No. 1;

Mussorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition.

Sunday, March 5, 2006. Russian Musical Ambassadors, **Ekaterina Gumenyuk and Dmitry Serebrennikov** performing in concert at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Largo. 4:00 pm.

Tuesday, March 7, 2006. Russian Heritage Ensemble. "Celebrating the centennial of Shostakovich" at the Palladium Theater, as part of the Encore Series. 7:30 pm.

Shostakovich: Piano Trio.

Shostakovich: Preludes for Violin and Piano.

Schnittke, Prelude in Memory of Shostakovich.

March 14, 2006 - 7:30 pm

Poetry Reading: Yevgeny Yevtushenko, acclaimed Russian poet, filmmaker and political activist, will read his poetry at The Studio@620, located in downtown St. Petersburg at 620 First Avenue South. Tickets are \$13 for adults and \$10 for students.

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Russia's most famous living poet, was born near Irkutsk in Siberia in 1933. He was a leading member of the "new generation" of Russian poets of the 1960's, and became famous for such poems as *Babi Yar* and *Heirs of Stalin* which had political messages. He has continued to write political verse, love lyrics, and playful poems. He also has written several novels, such as *Wild Berries* (1981) and *Don't Die Before You're Dead* (1995), the second, a novel about the 1991 coup in Russia. He is also an accomplished filmmaker, directing the film *Kindergarten* (1984) and *Stalin's Funeral* (1990). He now teaches courses in Russian and European poetry and film at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma.



Yevtushenko will present a lecture in the Presidential Series entitled "**Every Wall is a Door: Ten Centuries of Russian Poetry**" in the Miller Auditorium at Eckerd College at 7:30 on Wednesday, March 16, 2006. Free and open to public.

March 18 and 19, 2006. A Dynamic Duo of Russian Folk Instruments. Tamara Volskaya on domra and Anatoly Trofimov on bayan. March 18 in Port Charlotte; March 19 in Punta Gorda. Details in March newsletter.

Caucasian Ovcharka

Another in a series about Russian dogs.

Last Fall, Russian Heritage hosted a group of visiting Russian judges and lawyers at Eckerd College. For the meal, a Russian visitor was placed at each table of Russian Heritage members. I was fortunate to be across the table from Lilia Ilina. When I mentioned my Russian Samoyed dogs, I saw her eyes light up. After the meal, we put our heads together and shared pictures - she of her cherubic faced son at their dacha. She was trying to describe their dog in very good but not entirely complete English as I was listening with very non-Russian ears trying to determine what breed she was describing. We promised to write to each other about our dogs. I did send her an e-mail but then completely forgot about it until I received a very special Christmas card.



Karlson with Lilia's Son

In the card from St. Petersburg, Russia, decorated with the Snow Princess and Father Frost, were pictures of Lilia's son and dog with a letter describing the dog and the breed. Lilia wrote that her dog, Karlson, pulls her son's sledge in the winter snow.

"Our dog is sheep-dog Caucasian (wolves killer). These dogs usually live in Russia in Caucasian Mountains. There are no standards for these dogs. They are wide. It's difficult to train, but it is a great housekeeper (guard dog).

Our dog lives in the street (in the country). Last winter, the temperature was 1-40° C. at daytime but the dog was in the street and it was ok."

With that description, I was able to search the internet for more information about the Caucasian Ovcharka (Caucasian Mountain Dog). It is a breed which originated in the Caucasian Mountains and the steppe regions of northern Caucasus and Astrakhan. While conventional wisdom dictates that they originated sometime during the Middle Ages, more recent information uncovered in the form of a skull may place their origin in the Stone Age. They weigh between 70 and 160lb. and are 26-32" at the shoulders - a great woolly dog! The dogs in the mountainous regions are more massive and bear like and those on the steppes are rangier, leggier and have shorter coats. The coats can be gray to fawn to brindle and occasionally white. By nature, they are protective, territorial, suspicious, trainable and willing workers. Amazingly, they are family oriented and good with children. They are hardy dogs and deal very well with extremes of temperatures. In the United States, they are registered by UKC and the American Kennel Club is beginning to collect breeding records on them.

So now that we add the Caucasian Ovcharka to our list of Russian dogs - Samoyed, Siberian Husky, Borzoi, Black Russian Terrier - we can even more fully appreciate Russia's great contribution to the canine world. And I certainly appreciate a fellow dog lover's sharing her dog's story from so many miles away. Thank you, Lilia.



Lilia with Karlson



Karlson

-Peggy Newton

Russian Heritage Cruise: Nov. 30 – Dec. 4, 2006

NOW is the time to sign up for the *Russian Heritage Cruise*! Only a limited number of cabins are being reserved at the special price of \$413.50 per person on this Carnival Trip to Mexico. For further information, and for application forms, call 727-864-8235, or refer to the November newsletter. So far we have about six cabins reserved. Those participating in the cruise will help plan the special "Russian" program. All participants will receive a free "Russian Heritage" t-shirt.

RUSSIAN DOG BOOTH TAKES "FIRST PLACE" AT THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS IN TAMPA

The Samoyeds (beautiful white dogs who herd reindeer and pull sleds in Northern Russia) and their Exhibition Booth captured the spotlight in Tampa while we were celebrating the Old Russian New Year at the Yacht Club. The booth featured the snowy environment of Russia, with painted scenes of the life and times of the Samoyeds of the north. In the booth were the dogs, and their owners dressed in Russian and native costumes. Congratulations to Peggy Newton, our *RH* secretary who helped design the prize-winning booth. See also her story about Caucasian Ovcharka on page 6.

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

Membership Dues for 2006

All who are interested in Russian culture are welcome to join Russian Heritage by simply paying the yearly dues. Members receive newsletters and discounts on certain events such as the Old Russian New Year Celebration.

On your newsletter label, the last year for which you have paid is written.

Please mail your
WITH THIS FORM COMPLETELY FILLED OUT to:

Russian Heritage
PO Box 14552
St Petersburg, FL 33733

Please check one:

- Student \$ 0 Individual \$ 15 Family \$ 20 Sponsor \$100 or more

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