

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 4.

JANUARY 2005

Old Russian New Year's Celebration

St. Petersburg Yacht Club, 11 Central Avenue

Saturday, January 15, 2005

Reception 6PM – Welcome 7:15PM

Dinner 7:30PM

Dance to the Music of the Fabulous Dazzlers

Honorary Chairpersons:

The Honorable Mayor Baker and Mrs. Rick Baker

It's not too late to make your reservations. But if you have been waiting, now is the time to act. Please fill out the form on the inside of the back cover, and send in your reservations. It would also be advisable to call 727-867-9148 or 727-864-8235 to leave us a message that your reservation will arrive by January 10, 2005.

Conferences on the Siege of Leningrad

January 27, 31, and February 7, 2005

Too many Americans are not familiar with the suffering of Leningrad during WWII. Many textbooks ignore or hardly mention the importance of the suffering and the heroic defense of the people of Leningrad, the city that now shares our name, St. Petersburg. This city has earned the name "Hero City" and we think it is appropriate for the people in St. Petersburg, Florida to know about the difficulties of our namesake city during the dark days of WWII. We have therefore organized three conferences on this topic at local colleges, and we invite all members and friends of *Russian Heritage* to attend at least one of these events, and bring your friends.

Some of our Russian friends say that it may be too painful to recall these dark days. We see this primarily as a learning experience and a chance to celebrate the 61st anniversary of the end of the siege. It is also a chance to meet several guests who survived these events as children, aged 4-8, and went on to live productive lives. All events are free and open to the public, except for the opening luncheon of the Eckerd Symposium. For more information, see pages 2-6. We hope to see you all at one of these very special events.

If you call 727-864-8235, and indicate which event you will come to, you are entitled to a free prize at the conference of your choice.

Eckerd College Symposium

Children of the Siege: Remembering Leningrad in WWII
Monday, February 7, 2005

During the 900-day siege of Leningrad during the war, the city was virtually surrounded, with its supply lines cut. Daily artillery fire and bombings by the Germans further threatened the population. It is estimated that more than a million people perished from cold, starvation, disease, and enemy action. But Leningrad did not fall.

Participants in this symposium include several who as children, aged 4-8, survived this siege and went on to have productive lives (see below). You can meet them and hear their stories on February 7, 2005 at Eckerd College.

12:00 Luncheon. President's Dining Room.

Welcome and introduction of the participants.

The fee of \$25 covers lunch, all afternoon and evening sessions, and a book of readings by participants in the siege. For more information, and to make reservations for the luncheon, call 727-864-8235 by February 3.

1:30-2:45 Video Presentation and Discussion.

Documentary film, *Cities at War: Leningrad, The Hero City*.

2:45-3:00 Intermission

3:00-4:00 Special papers (Student, Faculty, Visitor Readings) on Siege topics

4:00-5:30 Russian Feature Film: *Once There Was a Girl*. Discussion.

During the 900-day siege of Leningrad in WWII, two little Russian girls learn to deal with the everyday crises of the war situation. (1945. In Russian, with English subtitles).

6:00-7:00 Supper available in CEC Dining Room or in nearby restaurants.

7:30 Symposium Panel Presentation

Welcome: Dean Lloyd Chapin

Welcome and Presentation: Rick Baker, Mayor of St. Petersburg, and/or Carl Kuttler, President of St. Petersburg College, and Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation.

Panel Moderator: Bill Parsons, Professor of History and Russian Studies

Participants: "Children of the Siege" Ilya Fonyakov, poet;

Ella Fonyakova, artist and writer; Lidia Bobrovskaya, designer; and Irena Nemchonok, professor of Russian at USF.

(Including readings, reminiscences, and video highlights.)

All sessions will be in Miller Auditorium at Eckerd College, except for the luncheon. All afternoon and evening sessions are free and open to the public. The evening program is part of the College Program Series. An exhibit of artwork and artifacts connected with the siege will be in Miller Auditorium during the symposium.



SIEGE OF LENINGRAD 1941-1944: THREE CONFERENCES

Thursday, January 27, 2005, 1-4 pm

St. Petersburg College at the Leepa-Ratner Museum,
Tarpon Springs

Monday, January 31, 2005, 6:30-9:30 pm

University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Monday, February 7, 2005, noon-9 pm

Symposium at Eckerd College

Agenda:

- ↓ Siege exhibits: artifacts and images
- ↓ Siege documentary video
- ↓ Panel Discussion and presentations on siege topics
- ↓ Readings from memoirs and poetry

Participants:

- Children Survivors of the siege from Leningrad/St. Petersburg
- College and university professors
- Honors students
- Community leaders

*Sponsored by Russian Heritage, St. Petersburg, Florida; Eckerd College;
SPC Honors College; USF Honors Program*

For more information, call 727-864-8235, or 727-712-5247.

Participants in the "Siege of Leningrad" Conferences

Our guests from St. Petersburg, Russia include several outstanding individuals who were children during the "Siege of Leningrad" and who survived to tell their stories.

Ilya Fonyakov is the Deputy Chairman of the St. Petersburg Writer's Union, and the Chairman of the Poetry Section. He has published more than 40 books of poetry, literary criticism, and translations. He worked as a correspondent for *Literaturnaya Gazeta* from 1957 – 1974 in Siberia, and then returned to Leningrad/St. Petersburg. He has just edited a bi-lingual book of Peter Meinke's poems, many of which he translated. Ilya survived the first year of the siege, and was evacuated through Lake Ladoga to Western Siberia. One of his siege poems is below.

Ella Fonyakova is a writer and an artist who survived all 900-days of the siege, and wrote a novella "That Winter's Bread" based on her siege diaries. Her novella was published in 1971, and has been translated into Bulgarian, Estonian, German, and English. A chapter from her work is found on page 5. Ella has had a number of art exhibits in Russia and abroad, and will show some of her siege paintings at the time of the conferences here.

Lidia Bobrovskaya is another survivor of the 900-day siege, and the designer who will be preparing the exhibit of siege artifacts and photographs. She has lived all her life in Leningrad/St. Petersburg.

Irena Nemchonok is now a professor of Russian at the University of South Florida. She was born in Leningrad, and was evacuated in the fall of 1941. She returned to Leningrad, and had a career as a teacher and a television personality. She has written a short memoir about her childhood during the war (see page 6 for excerpts), and also several stories about the siege.

Members of the official city delegation from St. Petersburg, Florida that went to Russia in 2003 will be present at each conference, and we are hoping that Mayor Rick Baker and Carl Kuttler, President of St. Petersburg College and Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation, will be in attendance at the Symposium at Eckerd College.

Other members of *Russian Heritage*, local professors, and honors students will also participate.

I WILL NOT FORGET

I will not forget that January
Over the frozen Neva,
Or that *sukhar*, that dried rye bread,
That was warped from the drying.

But it was so good.
It was dry like dynamite
And it boomed like thunder
In your ears when you bit it.

A soldier gave it to me.
He was tall and blond.
He said something about his son.
But I wasn't listening: I just bit.

That great misfortune
Must not be repeated.
But that January, that frost, that snow,
And that tall man
Are always with me now.

Beautiful words are nothing;
And oaths are not needed.
But the warped *sukhar* of the wartime
Will never be forgotten.

Ilya Fonyakov

Я НЕ ЗАБУДУ

Я не забуду тот январь
Над замершей Невой
И тот сухарь, ржаной сухарь,
От высушки кривой.

А был он все-таки хорош,
Сухой, как динамит.
В ушах, когда его грызешь,
Как будто гром гремит.

Его солдат мне подарил,
Высок и белобрыс.
О сыне что-то говорил.
Я плохо слушал: грыз.

Не повторится пусть вовек
Великая беда.
Но тот январь, мороз и снег
И тот высокий человек
Со мной теперь всегда.

Слова красивые – пустяк,
И клятвы не нужны:
Он не забудется и так –
Кривой сухарь войны.

Илья Фоняков

Rameau's "Tambourine"

From the novella That Winter's Bread, by Ella Fonyakova

Papa is away from home almost all day. He is part of a concert brigade, and the brigade plays six concerts a day. Papa and his artist friends drive around town in an old bus from one end of the city to the other, going to factories, hospitals, and even right to the front. Now that is very close. The Germans are in the closest suburbs of Pavlovsk, Pushkin, and Peterhof, and they have reached the edge of the city itself.

But today there are no concerts. Papa is at home. I am reading "The Prince and the Pauper" by Mark Twain and papa is playing on the violin. In order to please me, he is not working on "Paganini's secret", which requires endless monotonous exercises, but he is playing with inspiration "Tambourine" by the French composer, Rameau. The melody of this dance is so simple and beautiful that it makes me shiver and want to cry. For some reason I feel sorry for papa. Recently he has become very thin, and his black shaggy eyebrows darken his long pale face.

"And didn't mama order us to drop in at the store to get some cereal for our ration cards?" asks papa thoughtfully, suddenly putting down his violin.

And in fact there had been such an order. Yesterday in the newspaper *Leningradskaya Pravda* appeared the long awaited information "From the City Provision Department". In this report it gives the following monthly norms for November:

- a. meat and meat products – 200 grams.
- b. cereal – 200 grams.
- c. flour mixed with cereal – 200 grams.

From our neighbor "on the right" we learned that millet cereal has been delivered to the store where we were assigned to buy food. Anna Stepanovna herself saw them unloading the sacks. And a line began to form early in the morning.

Papa takes his string shopping bag, puts on his long winter coat, and leaves. Just three minutes later I hear him stamping his feet in the entranceway. Why did he come back? Did he forget something?

"I forgot! I forgot!" papa cries, running around the room. He puts the shopping bag and his hat on the sofa, and puts his violin on his shoulder. "Your father is such a fool! A real fool! I played it right before, and then I forgot! Now listen to this!"

"Ta-ta-ra-ta, ta-ta..."

BOOM!!! A strong explosion is right next to us. Papa, his violin, and I rush to the window. Oh my God! The shells hit the building on the corner. Smoke is pouring out of the rubble where our store had just been. What happened to the people who were standing in line?

Papa's face changes:

"And you could have been there, Lenchka!"

And what if papa had not returned in such a strange and unexpected way? And why did he do it? What made him do such an inexplicable thing?

"Rameau's 'Tambourine' saved you," I say to him.

So many examples of such fantastic luck accompanied the people of Leningrad in these times!

Anything but War

by Irena Nemchonok

Sixty Years Later (Tampa, USA 2001)

"Anything but war" – it seems of such relevance in view of the current situation in the new millennium. For my son and even more so for my grandchildren, WWII is history. My heart is bleeding when I think of the fate of our children and children all over the world, should there be a WWII. We have to do everything not to let it happen. "Anything but war".

In the Bathroom (Leningrad-1941) It is so scary to be at home alone. . . Now all I hear is "tic-tack, tic-tack" coming from a radio. And I hope that the "tic-tack" doesn't stop because if it does that means a voice will soon follow with: "Attention, Attention! This is an air-raid, go to the bomb shelter." To me it sounded like, "Go to the bathroom." Only in the bathroom, I felt safe. Our bathroom is small and so am I—no bomb could hit us. . .

It was the night of June 22, 1941. I remember that night very well, it was very loud and we jumped up and ran out in the street. The plane was flying so low above us, we could see the enemy swastikas on the wings, and it was firing. It all seemed like a nightmare and I hoped I would wake up soon. . .

The day before, everything was so good. Vacation started for my parents and we all went to our *da:cha*. It's not too far from Leningrad. The weather was beautiful and it was supposed to be like that all summer long. However, it was all over that same day when we heard on the radio: "The war has begun". . .

Everything was out of the ordinary; everything had changed in one day. Different colored blankets hung over windows so no light lit up the streets. Many windows had white crosses of paper glued on them so during bombing the glass windows would not break.

By nighttime, it was clear that my dad was leaving for war. He was a military doctor. My mom began to work at the hospital. Even my *babushka* was helping wounded soldiers. My nanny also left for the war. "Why do they need my nanny?" I asked myself, and many other questions filled my head and were left unanswered. Everyone was too concerned with the war and how to win it. "And what about me?" I ran to the bathroom every time I heard an air-raid siren. They were more frequent now than ever.

"In the Basement" (Archangelskoe near Moscow – 1941)

It is hard to believe that above us there was a beautiful mansion with big windows, beautiful furniture, and a beautiful façade with wonderful gardens. We are beneath this mansion, in the basement, where it was dark and where the water heater makes us very hot. My mom was trying to move me as far away from the heater as possible. Everyone was saying that we might not get hit by the bomb itself, but "the heater could explode and the water would boil us alive." I started to imagine us "boiling alive" and again I wished I were in my hiding place in our small bathroom. . . The Sanatorium was very beautiful, but very soon the war got here too. The Germans started to bomb Moscow. My mom decided to move farther east, to Saratov.

"At the Hospital" (In Saratov - 1942)

My mother frequently worked nights at a hospital. I always loved it when she worked the night shift because I could sleep in her office on a little couch. The room reminded me of our bathroom in Leningrad. It was small and dark, containing only an x-ray machine, a desk and a little couch. I would stay there those nights that she tended to patients. We had no apartment in Saratov. . .

At the hospital, there were plenty of wounded. The beds were even in the hallways. I also started to help the wounded by either giving them water or fixing their pillows. They also liked it when I read poems or sang to them. I was very nervous when I was performing, which made me feel like a real actress. Even though I didn't understand the words, I still repeated them because the soldiers liked it: "Germany, we are sewing the thread for your shroud and we'll weave our curse in it." Everyone who was able to clap, started to applaud, but when I was singing *Tyomnaia Noch*: "The dark night separates us, my darling," I could see tears in their eyes.

Another misfortune came: air strikes began in Saratov and we were moving again, this time to the Urals.

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 15, 2005 **Old Russian New Year Celebration** at St. Petersburg Yacht Club.
(see page 1 for details)

January 27, 31, and February 7, 2005 **Three Conferences on the Siege of Leningrad During WWII.** (see pages 1-6)

March 2, 2005 **The Spirit of St. Petersburg Balalaika Trio** performing at the Palladium Theater in downtown St. Petersburg. (see below)

March 16 – 20, 2005 **SPIFFS 30th Anniversary Folk Festival at Tropicana Field**
This year's theme is "Festivals and Holidays Around the World." We will be needing volunteers who are willing to help.

April 2005 **Planned showing of Films About WWII on the Eastern Front**
We can use your advice. Two classic Russian films that are being considered are "The Cranes are Flying" and "Ballad of a Soldier". Do you have other favorites? We may also consider a double feature, with one Russian and one American film about these events on the Eastern Front. Suggestions welcome in our PO Box, or at 727-864-8235.

May 7, 2005 **Business Meeting & Program Celebrating the End of WWII in Europe.**
Time and Place will be announced in an upcoming newsletter.

Russian Heritage Balalaika Concert

7PM Wednesday, March 2, 2005
Palladium Theater, 231 5th Ave. N.

featuring

The Spirit of St. Petersburg Balalaika Trio

A trio of talented musicians will delight the Palladium Theater audience with a program of classical music played on Russian folk instruments, and traditional Russian folk music performed in native costumes.

The first half of the program will include chamber music with a special Russian flavor, with popular pieces by Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach, Strauss, and others. The second half will feature some of the most popular Russian folk melodies and dances, including one section where the trio will perform with Suzanne Pomerantzeff's Russian folk dancers.

The artists include Svetlana Nikonova on the Domra, Vladimir Zakharevich on the bayan, and Andrei Savaliev on the bass balalaika. The trio is now performing with the Washington Balalaika Society, but they come from our namesake city of St. Petersburg, Russia.

General Admission \$15, Seniors \$12, Youth \$5.

Siberian Husky – Hero from Siberia

Form follows function. And, like the other examples of Russian canines previously discussed, the Siberian Husky follows this axiom to a tee. Sibes, as they are called by dog people in the U.S., are furry enough to withstand the harsh Siberian elements, and speedy enough to be considered the racers among northern breed sledge dogs. Their Alaskan kin, the Alaskan Malamute, is much larger and considered the dog for hauling heavy freight. Their Russian counterparts in the northwest, the snowy Samoyed, are considered medium weight endurance dogs. The smaller, slighter Siberian is known for its speed.

In fact, there is a statue of a famous racing Siberian Husky - Balto - in New York's Central Park. In 1925, a husky team delivered lifesaving diphtheria antitoxin from Nenana to Nome, Alaska, to halt the spread of a diphtheria epidemic among children. The race for life was a relay of multiple husky teams consisting of 100 dogs, the combined teams traveling 674 miles in minus 60° weather. Balto led the final team which arrived at its destination with torn, bloodied pads. The children of Nome were saved and Balto became a symbol of canine heroism. That same Russian dog remains a hero to American children who read the story each year in school.

The Siberian Husky originated in the north eastern most part of Siberia among the Chukchi people. Their home was on the Asian shore of the Bering Strait. Chukchi language is Paleo-Siberian and in the same family of language as the Alaskan Eskimos. The Chukchi had two subgroups - reindeer and maritime. Reindeer herders lived inland and traveled with the herds similar to the western Samoyed people. The maritime Chukchi lived on the coast and subsisted on sea mammals (seals walrus and whales) and fish. According to the Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain, the Siberian Husky "was expected to travel fairly quickly for long distances, pulling a moderate load in low temperatures while not eating their masters out of house and home." The result was "a dog which retained the pack living and hunting attributes of the wolf, while being unaggressive and affectionate toward people."

In appearance, Siberian Huskies are much like wolves. Their coat is double and medium in length and its color ranges from black to pure white. Their eyes are brown or blue or both. Often confused with Alaskan Malamutes, they can be easily differentiated in two ways: Malamutes always have brown eyes. Malamutes are up to 27" at the shoulders while Siberian Huskies are a maximum of 23". The Siberian Husky is robust, easy going, friendly with all humans - thus a poor guard dog but a great family pet.

This concludes the series on Russian dogs. When I first met Russian Heritage members, I was surprised that when the topic of dogs arose (as it usually does with me), they spoke only of French Poodles, English Bull Dogs, Japanese Chins. It was (and is) my humble opinion that Russia has provided the world with some of its most magnificent dogs. With the exception of the Black Russian Terrier, they are not man-engineered but simply a product of their natural function. Dogs have no politics. They are simply and beautifully what they are. So when someone asks you about dogs, be proud of the Russian breeds. They are, after all, a very special part of Russian Heritage.

-Peggy Newton

If you are interested in more information or in meeting examples of Russian Breeds (Black Russian Terrier, Borzoi, Samoyed, Siberian Husky) and others, plan to attend the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship being held this year at the Tampa Convention Center on January 15 & 16. In addition to the dog show which features the top 20 ranked dogs in each of 150 breeds, there will be a huge exhibit called Meet the Breeds where each breed will have a 10'x10' booth with educational materials about the breed, living examples of the breed, and experts there to answer questions.