

RUSSIAN HERITAGE

VOLUME XI, ISSUE 1.

SEPTEMBER 2006

Russian Culture in the Last Week of September

Fall Meeting: Susan Haig of the Florida Orchestra *Sunday, 3:00 pm*, September 24 at Eckerd College*

The first meeting of the fall season will be a general meeting for all members and friends of Russian Heritage at Eckerd College on Sunday, September 24 at 3:00 pm*. Susan Haig, the Associate Conductor of the Florida Orchestra will be featured in a program that focuses on the current cultural and musical scene in Russia, and the upcoming season for the Florida Orchestra. Susan was in St. Petersburg and Moscow from late July to mid-August, attending a Master Class for conductors at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. She has a special interest in nineteenth century Russian music, and she will be presenting the music of Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and others with the Florida Orchestra in a series of coffee concerts on Thursday mornings in the coming season.

Eckerd student Hayley Borck, our student ambassador who studied Russian in St. Petersburg and Moscow this summer, will also give a short report.

The meeting will be in the Pelican Room of the CEC Building (Continuing Education Center), just to the left of the entrance, after you pass the traffic circle at Eckerd College. The program is free and open to the public. Zakuski and beverages will be served.

*The summer newsletter indicated that the meeting would begin at 4:00. The correct time for the meeting is 3:00 pm, with the Board of Directors meeting at 2:00 pm.

We encourage each member and friend of Russian Heritage to bring one or two favorite recipes for our planned Russian Heritage Cookbook.

The Florida Orchestra Performs Many Russian Classics This Season

Van Cliburn plays Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1", Monday, September 25 at the Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg, Florida. This is the "grand opening" for the newly remodeled theater. Hear this piano legend perform the work that won him the Gold Medal at the First International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, and made him an icon in Russian-American cultural contacts for the last half century. For tickets, call the Florida Orchestra: 813-286-2403 or 1-800-662-7286.

Opening Night for the regular season: **Shostakovich: Symphony No. 7 (Leningrad!)** Saturday, October 7 at 8:00 pm at the Mahaffey Theater; Sunday, Oct. 8 at Ruth Eckerd Hall.

Coming in January: Tchaikovsky's Sixth *Symphony (Pathétique)* & *Violin Concerto*.

Russian Conversation & Culture: Class Begins September 30

Nadia Yevstigneyeva offers 8-week non-credit course in Russian at Clearwater Campus of St. Petersburg College on Saturday mornings beginning September 30. Details on cover.

Yevgeny Onegin: Discussion and Film in October

A focus in October will be Pushkin's *Yevgeny Onegin*. In Russia there are three official Pushkin holidays: the anniversary of his birth (June 6, 1799), the anniversary of his death (January 29, 1837); and the anniversary of the opening of the Lyceum where he studied (October 19, 1811). We want you to think about Pushkin on October 19, and to come to see the film *Onegin* at Eckerd College on Friday, October 20. The film will be shown in the Miller Auditorium at 6:00 pm. It is free and open to the public.

But so that you will enjoy the film as much as possible, we are suggesting that you read, or re-read this Russian classic before hand. AND we invite you to a discussion of Pushkin and his masterpiece at 4:00 pm at Eckerd College. We will have a panel, including Professor Victor Peppard, from USF, and Bill Parsons, Professor Emeritus from Eckerd College. After this presentation you can get a bite to eat on campus, or at a restaurant near by, and enjoy the film at 6:00 pm.

More details about this Ralph Fiennes film of love and obsession will appear in the October newsletter, but mark your calendars now.

SPIFFS International Ball: October 27

SPIFFS (The St. Petersburg International Folk Festival Society) will hold its annual International Ball at Banquet Masters on Friday, October 27. The cost for members of Russian Heritage will be \$25 for dinner and dance. Because this year's ball is so close to Halloween, participants are encouraged to come in costume, black tie optional, or dressy attire. Call 727-867-9148 to make reservations, or sign up at the September meeting.

SPIFFS is facing difficult times. We will report on plans for the SPIFFS Folk Festival at the meeting on September 24.

Russian Heritage Cruise, November 30-December 4, 2006.

The deadline has passed for signing up for the Russian Heritage four-day cruise to Mexico on the Carnival Ship "The Inspiration". The response indicated that this was not one of our best ideas, and we had to cancel the Russian performer who we was scheduled to perform. Those who have signed up will certainly enjoy the cruise, but it may have less of a Russian flavor than we hoped to provide.

Old Russian New Year Celebration: January 13, 2007

Make your plans now to attend another spectacular celebration of the Old Russian New Year! This is one of our major events of the year, and this year's ball is expected to be one of our best ever. Official invitations will be sent out in October, and the full details will appear in the October newsletter.

The Magazine "Russian Life" Begins its 50th Year!

The September issue of "Russian Life" marks the fifth decade of the magazine's publishing history. We include an interesting article called "The Babushka Factor" on the following page which appeared in the July Issue. See if you can identify a significant error in this article, report it to our PO Box or web site, and win a prize!

The Babushka Factor

Understanding the *babushka* factor is key to grasping many things Russian. Often one of the first Russian words foreigners know, they pronounce **бабушка!** with gusto. Which is easy, since it is so simple, compact and colorful. But little do they know that this word is steeped with cultural connotations.

The *babushka* is omnipresent in Russian folklore, culture and even economics. In the mid-1990s, analysts often talked of "the *babushka* segment" of the economy - the lines of *babushka*-pensioners selling "impulse-buy" items near metro stations. This "segment" once accounted for 40 percent of total Russian retail tobacco sales.

Pushkin's *babushka*, Anna Rodionovna, unwittingly participated in the creation of many literary masterpieces, through her retelling of fairy tales to her soon-to-be famous grandson. Mikhail Lermontov's *babushka*, Elizaveta Arsenieva, was also instrumental in the brilliant, yet short-lived, military and poetic career of her beloved Misha.

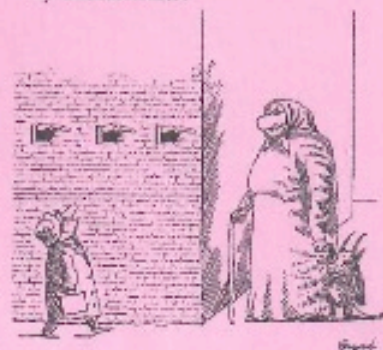
Бабушка has many tender, diminutive suffixes - e.g. **бабуля** - yet they are not always used tenderly. "**Самому не хватает, бабуля!**" ("I don't have enough [money] myself"), a New Russian was overheard replying to a begging **бабушка** outside a McDonald's. And the hero of the film, *The Meeting Place Cannot Be Changed*, Vladimir Sharapov, mimicking folksy speaking habits, would say over the phone: "**Ну спасибо тебе, бабенка!**" ("Thanks a lot, you old woman!")

Perhaps the rudest way to address an elderly woman is to call her **бабка** (**бабки** in plural), but not to be confused with

бабки or **бабульки**, slang words for money). To wit: "**Что ты ворчишь, как старая бабка?!**" ("Why are you as grumpy as an old woman?") In the same vein, when you feel like "sending somebody to hell," you can send him **к чертовой бабушке** - "to the devil's grandma." Tennis megastar Marat Safin once lobbed out a rather crude *babushka*-related proverb to deride those who were second-guessing his performance at the Kremlin Cup tournament. To a bewildered crowd of international journalists, he proclaimed: "**Если, если... Если бы бабушка была дедушкой, у бабушки были бы яйца...**" Which can be mildly translated as, "If grandma were a grampa, she would have all of grampa's parts."

That *babushka* is normally seen as a font of truth has given rise to other, more socially-acceptable idioms, such as "**Бабушка надвое сказала**" ("it remains to be seen," or literally, "*Babushka* was ambiguous, so we can't take anything for granted"). When someone is really sure of something, it is good to say, "**И к бабке не ходи**" - (literally, "I'm so sure of this, you don't even have to ask grandma.") Synonymously: "**и к гадалке (fortune teller) не ходи**."

What about the humorous and elegant proverb, "**Вот тебе, бабушка, и Юрьев день?**" Yury's Day was an annual holiday of sorts when unencumbered Russian serfs could leave their landlord without explanation and move to live under another landlord or settle in virgin lands. Ivan the Terrible banned Yury's Day in the late 16th century, tying serfs to the land and taking away one of the few freedoms



Russians then enjoyed. Thus was the proverb born. Ever since, it has been used to express a disagreeable surprise resulting from governmental resolutions or decisions.

Finally, when Russians talk about someone who wants to spite someone, allude to their own detriment, they say, "**назад бабушке отморозить себе уши**" ("to freeze one's ears to spite the *babushka*"). This proverb evokes the classic situation where a *babushka* forces a recalcitrant grandson to put on his hat before going outside in winter... But, once he is out of the house, he takes off the hat to spite his grandma, only to freeze his ears and catch cold. A synonymous expression is "**назад бабушке отрезать себе ухо**" ("to cut off one's ear to spite *babushka*"). Or, as you say in English, "to cut off one's nose to spite their face."

When the famous impressionist Vincent Van Gogh in 1888 cut off his right ear, he doubtless had nothing against his *babushka*. It is believed he did the deed in an act of self-loathing or disease-ridden rage. (Another theory has it that his right ear was cut off by his friend Paul Gauguin in a drunken brawl.) Be that as it may, Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with a Bandaged Ear*, where he wears a bandage and a fur *shapka* of sorts, is now worth fabulous **бабульки** - a few million at least. **И к бабке не ходи!**