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Vytautus Kavolis: Personal Friend and Mentor

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the crisis of the World Wars.)

We remember him as very sweet, and a wonderful father. How he loved those summer Lithuanian retreats, and how he looked forward to the liberation of Lithuania. How excited he was when it happened! He was a man of great learning, remarkable insight and a Baltic sense of humor. He will be greatly missed.

Mathew Melko, Edmund Leites

Vytautas Kavolis: Personal Friend and Mentor

I first met Vytas at the ISCSC meeting in Northridge, California nearly two decades ago. I can still see him walking down the hallway between sessions with his head down, hands behind his back and his sport coat draped casually over his shoulders. This became a common sight to me at the annual ISCSC meetings and I must admit that for the next dozen years or so I found Vytas to be an enigma: scholarly, aloft, intimidating with his silence, and yet, one who commanded respect.

It wasn't until I became co-editor of the MDUL/Comparative Civilizations Review. MDNM/ (CCR), which necessitated frequent contact with him, that the true Vytas began to appear. Not only did I find him to be a scholar of the highest magnitude, but he was a shy, charming, individual who had an undying love for the ISCSC and a paternalistic attitude toward the journal that defies exaggeration. He had nursed the CCR from its infancy and would brook no infringements on its integrity.
Vytas and I talked frequently regarding the CCR and while he was respectful of my views, he was unwavering in his commitment to the "comparative" aspect of the journal. I recall a discussion we had one evening over dinner regarding my decision to publish an article of sound scholarship that lacked, in his opinion, "sufficient comparative analyses." When asked, "What do you do when you come to press-time and lack adequate 'comparative' copy," he leaned across the table, rounded his lips and said in his usual quiet demeanor, "you write it." The periodic articles you've read in the CCR bearing Vytas' byline were not the work of a self-serving editor, but his adherence to a principle that he held to be sacred to the ISCSC: it must be comparative! The man carried a vast knowledge of civilization in his head; he could write upon demand, and the articles were good.

With the exception of Carroll Bourg, who handled the printing of the CCR for so many years, few members of the ISCSC will ever appreciate the editorial skills of Vytas. His copy of the journal was always meticulously edited, but his blue-line could be extremely bewildering to his co-workers. As a scholar of the "old school" Vytas never joined the computer age. All corrections and printing instructions were added in long-hand. However, once you followed his instructions regarding additions, deletions, rewording, shifting of copy, changes in print-type, etc. a mediocre manuscript miraculously blossomed into a praiseworthy article. Countless members of the ISCSC who have published in the CCR owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Vytas. I readily acknowledge my indebtedness to him for the editorial skills he passed my way; all of which would have been lost had he been a computer-slave like the rest of us.

In contrast to his solemn, serious appearance, Vytas also had his whimsical side. My favorite moment occurred one morning during breakfast when an overly zealous waitress assured him that the establishment could provide the breakfast of his choice. I immediately saw the impish gleam appear in his eye. After waiting for me to order my cholesterol-enriched fare with black coffee, he ordered an array of exotic fruits with a glass of warm
goat's milk. The predictably stoic manner in which he placed his order left the waitress speechless, which delighted Vytas all morning.

The ISCSC has lost one of its staunchest supporters and I've lost a mentor and friend. It was an honor to have served with him and my condolences go to his family.

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