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Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In an age when it is fashionable to compartmentalize our lives, one of the results might be that we tend to think of co-workers only in connection with our current employment. Recently, an ex-college president from The Netherlands told me that his most traumatic moments actually came after he left office: his old friends, or so he thought, rarely came around. He had mistaken his instrumental usage to others for friendship, he suggested.

By contrast, a most striking aspect of membership in the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations is the long-term friendships that most members develop with their colleagues. Yes, we are all interested in the study of civilizations, but to many in this society it is the human value of our colleagues that draws us with equal strength. We want to go to the annual meetings, and one of the major draws is the chance to see our old friends again.

For many of us, this means friends of several decades duration. Given the increasing rapidity of career changes and geographical mobility, these friendships are ours to cherish wherever we live and work.

As a result, when colleagues die, we are struck with special force. It is not simply someone we once worked with in the department back there; rather, it may be a scholar whose opinions we valued down through the years, whose paper we looked forward to hearing each year, whose intellectual challenges have honed our own ability to think and grow. The losses of these colleagues, and friends, are therefore quite painful.

Laina Farhat-Holzman, whose hard work on this journal is without peer, suggested that we might ask for reminiscences of our friends and colleagues to be placed in this issue's Editor's Note. We all thought it was a wonderful idea. So late in March I sent out an email to everyone in the association whose electronic address I had. A number of our colleagues responded.

Their responses, occasionally abbreviated a bit, are as follows.

Dr. Midori Rynn, a long-time member and officer of ISCS, former editor of this journal, and a professor at The University of Scranton, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, writes of Dr. Roger Williams Wescott:

It was when I was a graduate student at Michigan State University in 1957, I believe, that I met Dr. Roger Wescott for the first time. He was a member of the Social Science Department there. He was a man of fine looks, and I thought that he was perhaps a little aloof. His main

interest at that time was linguistic anthropology. Although I worked closely with his department's faculty members, and also with Anthropology professors, I never really came to know him well at MSU.

When I came to the University of Scranton in 1975, because of my former colleague, Dr. Carol Bourg, from Fisk University, I joined ISCSC. I was pleasantly surprised when I saw Dr. Wescott at the annual meeting – a long time since MSU days. Later, I was voted to chair the nominating committee for ISCSC president and, actually, I nominated Roger Wescott.

My thinking was that he deserved that honor and recognition for what he had done for the organization in the earliest period, i.e., bringing ISCSC from Europe to the U.S., and that the honor was long overdue. That is, I did not understand why he had not been its president long ago.

When my recommendation went through and he became ISCSC president, I was happy that I was able to assist him in a variety of ways because I was serving the organization as Secretary/Treasurer as well as the editor of its newsletter.

Also writing of Roger Wescott, Mary Anderson Bogle writes:

It is a cliché to refer to a man as "a scholar and a gentleman." Probably not very many men really deserve that description, but I think the words are beautifully appropriate when referring to Roger Williams Wescott.

I met Roger in the fall of 1967 when I enrolled as a special student at Drew University to take a course in General Linguistics. My husband John and I had just moved to New Jersey, too late for me to find a suitable teaching position for that school year. I had been a happy and successful English teacher for many years, and I looked forward to being a student for a little while to learn about something quite new to me. I had reservations about it all, however, and I promised myself that if the professor was not a good teacher, I would withdraw.

Roger far exceeded any standard of good teaching. He knew his subject, and he taught with wit and integrity. At the end of that semester, I eagerly enrolled in his next linguistics course. Meanwhile, my husband and I became acquainted with Roger and his wife Hilja on a social basis. I loved hearing Roger tell people that I was one of his best students. As a linguist, he labeled me "a generalist."

I began teaching English in a business school and soon became involved in writing textbooks for the Baltimore publisher whose texts I had been using. Now and then a question would arise that went beyond my knowledge—and it was always Roger to whom I referred. He never failed me!

I soon realized that although there might be many other experts who knew more about language than I did, Roger was the only one of my acquaintance with such knowledge.

As time went on, my husband I retired and moved from New Jersey to the South. Roger and Hilja also retired, and they moved to Connecticut. We kept in touch by occasional letters, and in 1993 when John and I were visiting Connecticut, we had dinner with the Wescotts. That evening Roger recruited us to join ISCSC, and we planned to join the group at the convention in Ireland in 1994. We enjoyed hearing Roger speak, and we shared several meals with him and Hilja during that trip.

We expected to attend other conventions, but as Frost wrote “way leads on to way” and we never did get to another one. We continued our connection by occasional correspondence until Roger’s death. One of the last messages we had from him was his reply when I had sent him an advertisement from Opera News that was in a language not quite Spanish and that I suspected was Catalan. The easiest way to learn was to ask Roger — and he quickly confirmed my suspicion!

I shall continue to miss being able to “ask Roger” when my own knowledge of language is lacking! It was indeed a privilege to have him and Hilja as our friends, and it is a pleasure to reminisce about him.

Donald N. Levine, Peter B. Ritzman Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, writes of the late Dr. Benjamin Nelson, himself a professor of sociology and a titanic figure in the creation of ISCSC in the United States:

Ben Nelson was a key figure in recovering Max Weber’s vision of the comparative study of civilizations, when contemporary sociology seemed bent on reducing his work to micro-processes and comparative study of nations at best. It was his understanding, enthusiasm, and erudition that persuaded me to become a member of ISCSC early on and kept me on the books ever since.

My letter seeking comments brought the following response recently from Rita Kavolis, the wife of our distinguished long-term president and scholar, Dr. Vytautas Kavolis, about yet another member, Dr. Corinne Gilb.

You sent me very sad news.

Just a few years ago I had the pleasure and privilege to meet Corinne Gilb and hear her and Prof. Talbutt at the ISCSC meeting sharing their views on Vytautas in a session entitled "Kavolis Remembered."

I am deeply saddened by Corinne Gilb's death.

Also writing of Corinne Gilb, Laina Farhat-Holzman recalled as follows:

I traveled from San Francisco to Tokyo with Corinne Gilb for the ISCSC conference several years ago. We spent the many hours of this flight talking about things that interested us both.

What fascinated me about Corinne was the burden she said she carried—to live up to her ancestors. She felt that such distinction in her progenitors always moved her to try for excellence—and that nothing less than her total energy was required for this task.

This is so different from the usual American view that we can all reinvent ourselves and that we all share the same range of ancestors—from duchesses to horse thieves. Corinne was unique and unforgettable, and unflaggingly hard-working.

Matt Melko, another pivotal long-time member of the society and prominent scholar of comparative civilizations, wrote in to comment on both Dr. Art Iberall and Dr. Corinne Gilb:

As you will see, I knew Ibbey better as a person, but never understood his work. Though I thought Corinne too cautious, I did understand her work.

As for Iberall: the organizational meeting of the ISCSC-U.S. at the AAAS meeting in Philadelphia, Dec. 1971. This man comes in, listens awhile, pushes his glasses up on his nose and says: "Hey You Guys. You're talking about what we're talking about at (a physics session) down the hall." And then, excited, began the first of thirty-one years of explanations of what the similarities and relationships were. Only one person at the meeting, David Wilkinson, ever understood him.

He never believed I didn't understand, simply had not the education or the capacity.

Some things I did understand:

"See, Man is a natural phenomenon."

"Believing is Seeing."

"Other things, besides physics, not. Look, there are three kinds of guys, right? The No-Names, the Whatchamacallits, and The Other Guys."

Still, I have used those classifications.

Thinking he must be a baseball fan, and that he had spent a long time in Pennsylvania, when he came to speak at Wright State, David Orenstein and I took him to a Phillies game in Cincinnati. It turned out he wasn't a baseball fan. But he talked the night away about the physical properties of ball, bat and field; baseball as a metaphor, the Meaning of Baseball, and how baseball was like what he was going to talk about in his lecture.

When I was staying over at his house in Darby, Pennsylvania, at one a.m. the phone rang and he talked to somebody in California for an hour about the brain.

One of our secretaries, hearing the Bronx accent, asked who this Dr. Iberall was. I told her he was the head of the Pennsylvania Mafia. She was impressed. I told him this sometime later and the next time he called he said, "Is this Shirley? How ya doin'?" And after a little chat. "Well, listen, Shirley, don't let anybody there give you any trouble. If anybody gives you any trouble, just let me know." She was impressed. And I made sure not to give Shirley any trouble.

His health deteriorating, he insisted on making the trip all the way from California to Jamaica, his wife and daughter in anxious attendance. And he put on a great show, challenging every speaker at every session he attended, as full of beans as he had ever been.

If you read David Wilkinson's article on Globalization in this issue of the CCR, you will note that Iberall is richly cited in the bibliography, and you will get some idea of the impact Iberall did make on the study of civilizations.

As for Corinne Gilb, her life involved years of migrating from her California home to teaching at Wayne State University, the city university of Detroit. She became director of the city's planning department while she continued a lifetime of participation in academic conferences throughout the world.

The pragmatic and theoretical interacted with each other. Not every city planner has Umma or Benaras in mind when coping with urban development.

She loved to ask questions. "What are the links between selfhood, values, human ecology, social, economic and political structure, community and physical environment? What is the role of culture in the linkages? What are the connections between space/time constructs and all the rest? What connects the person to the universe?"

Her insights were distinctive. She thought, for instance, that city parks and house lawns provide connection for the city dweller with his or her rural roots. Or that there has been a movement in time from sacred places to holy people as concepts of God widened.

Her death tragically prevented her from completing a series of books on cities in history, only the first of which, *On Ancient Cities*, had been announced for publication.

Michael Andregg, at the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minnesota, is another long-time member of ISCSC. He sent in these touching comments on Robert Hanson, a member who died in June of last year.

Robert Hanson and his partner Diane from beautiful Boulder, Colorado, became regular features at ISCSC meetings. They were quieter than some. He would give his papers on linguistic issues, and she would attend many sessions, be ever gracious, but not say a whole lot unless asked. I came to know them gently over ten years.

In Jamaica at our 2002 ISCSC meeting, I went swimming among the coral, watching fish in about six meters of water. After awhile I started returning, but another old friend came by, so I went out again to watch out for him.

Returning toward shore again, Bob Hanson came by. He was an avid snorkeler according to Diane. We exchanged a few words about currents, and corals, and fish. I thought about staying out with Bob too, but by now I was really too tired for deep water.

Joseph Drew

So I came in. Bob never did. We searched the rest of the day, but that was it for Bob Hanson. He'd had some heart problems, and he'd told me earlier that a previous cancer had returned with vengeance, and that the prognosis was pretty grim. And he truly loved to swim in the ocean.

So maybe he chose to meet a kinder end on that beautiful day in Jamaica. And maybe fate took him unassisted. I'll never know, but still, I wish I'd been a big younger myself, and had gone out to the deep water a third time. Because Robert was a gentle guy, and I liked him and Diane a lot.

From Prof. Algis Mickunas of Ohio University comes this:

Prof. Vytautas Kavolis was one of the major figures in founding and running the ISCSC scholarly organization. After Nelson, he served as its president, and under his tenure he extended greatly the range of scholarly members and activities of ISCSC.

He is known for his immense scholarship and contributions in comparative civilizations and his unique studies of specific topics, ranging from comparative moral systems, symbolic designs of evil, and social histories of aesthetics, all the way to symbolic designs of structure and energy manifested in diverse historical periods of distinct civilizations.

Those of us who have known him benefitted greatly from his scholarly counsel and personal collegiality.

What is less known in Western scholarly circles is the contribution he made to the country of his birth - Lithuania. He was and continues to be the most influential figure in the understanding of liberalism - a thesis he formulated in his youth that served to maintain intellectual openness among thinking Lithuanians in the diaspora and, after the demise of Soviet Union, in Lithuania.

There, he became a mythological figure and taught in the three major universities: Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda. Apart from his thesis on liberalism, his scholarship concerning Lithuanian cultural history is considered ground-breaking and is used by generations of younger scholars in sociology, literature, semiotics, and aesthetics as a standard.

While he is sorely missed, his thinking is alive and well.

I, personally, have always liked the view that we shall all meet again. If there is validity to that, I am sure that at some point many of us will amble into the room in the heavenly abode where the ISCSC annual meetings will continue, with all present, vigorously debating. Of course, if you want to stay in the dorms, it is not so expensive, if past practice is any guide.

Thanks to everyone who responded.

Joseph Drew
Prague, Fall, 2003