

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

SARRA KLIACHKO (1895 - 1979)

Sarra Kliachko Sabsay (nee Litt), an Emerita Assistant Professor of Russian at Stanford, and a long-time member of, first the Asiatic and Slavic Department, later the Modern European Languages Department, and, finally (in retirement) the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, died of heart failure Friday December 7, 1979 at Pleasant View Convalescent Home in Sunnyvale. There was no funeral service and her body was cremated and ashes scattered over the sea, in accordance with her wishes.

Sarra was born in the town of Simferopol in the Crimea in Southern Russia. She graduated from the St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) Conservatory of Music, having majored in piano, and shortly thereafter married a fellow musician, the Russian cellist Samuel Kliachko. That was before the Revolution of 1917. In 1919, the Kliachkos with their infant daughter Mura left Russia, via Odessa on the Black Sea, and landed near Constantinople (now Istanbul) in Turkey. They spent two years in Turkey and Greece leading the somewhat uncertain existence of refugees. In 1921, they received an invitation and visa from the United States, and settled in New York, where a year later their second child, son Savel, was born.

In the early thirties, the Kliachkos moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There Samuel Kliachko continued his career as a concert cellist and Sarra continued with her own career as a teacher of the piano, and also lectured on music for RCA before various organizations.

Samuel Kliachko died in 1941, and Sarra continued her activities as teacher and lecturer on music.

With the entrance of the United States in World War II, Sarra began her second career as a teacher of the Russian language (her native tongue) on the staff of the ASTP at the University of Iowa, in Iowa City. In 1944, she joined the faculty of the Russian Department of the Navy Language School at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and became one of the outstanding teachers on the faculty of over fifty native speakers of Russian. By that time, she decided to make Russian language teaching her principal occupation. In 1946, she joined the faculty of the newly-created Department of Asiatic and Slavic Studies at Stanford as Instructor in Russian. In the same year she married Mr. David Sabsay (though, for professional reasons, she retained the name of Kliachko), and settled with her new husband in Palo Alto. She found the time to continue with her own graduate studies, and obtained a M.A. degree in French under the guidance of the late Professor Lemaitre, there being at that time no graduate program of Russian Studies at Stanford. Some time later, she was promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor of Russian. Mr. Sabsay died in 1964, and Sarra became a widow for the second time. She retired as an Emerita Assistant Professor of Russian in 1965.

This brief outline of Sarra Kliachko's career does not begin to convey the richness of her personality, her devotion to her task as a teacher of Russian, her rapport with her students and

colleagues, and the many varied aspects of her character. It may be safely stated that everyone who came in personal contact with Sarra Kliachko up to the time of her retirement felt the impact of those qualities.

Her post-retirement years were less happy because of various ailments (which, though possibly present, were not noticed by her while she was active and busy). Eventually she was placed in a convalescent home. Toward her end in 1979, she hardly recognized anyone around her.

Her daughter Mura, with her own family, lives in Los Angeles. Her son Savel is on the staff of SRI, and resides in Sunnyvale with his wife and two daughters.

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