



William E. Harkins

William Harkins was an expert in many areas and a versatile and innovative Slavist. In honor of his multifaceted contribution, we are establishing a colloquium that celebrates the cultural as well as disciplinary variety within the Slavic field. The new Harkins Colloquium, run by graduate students, will provide a forum beyond the classroom in which they pursue their intellectual interests. The aim is to reimagine Slavic studies both by drawing our own faculty and students together and by enhancing our links to individuals and groups beyond the department. Funds will be available for graduate students to pursue initiatives of collective interest, host speakers, gather informal groups, or organize more formal events. Donations toward the establishment of this colloquium may be sent to the Department of Slavic Languages, Columbia University, 1130 Amsterdam Avenue, Mail Code 2839, New York, NY 10027, attention: John Lacqua. Checks should be made out to Columbia University with "Harkins Colloquium" in the memo line.

William E. Harkins, 1921–2014

William E. Harkins, professor emeritus of the Department of Slavic Languages at Columbia University, died on May 17, 2014, at the age of 92. Among Slavists, Bill Harkins was a true renaissance man: an expert on Russian prose, a specialist in Slavic folklore, one of the first American scholars to do serious work in Czech literature, the author of a monograph on Karel Čapek, a translator from Czech, the author of the *Dictionary of Russian Literature*, the author of a Czech language textbook and coauthor of a widely used textbook of Russian grammar, and a promoter of regional studies. Generations of Columbia students remember him fondly for his contribution to their training on all these fronts, as well as for his good will, his attention to their development as writers, and his having made them attuned to the interplay of word and image in Slavic culture. In 2000, his students and colleagues in the field honored him with a Festschrift volume entitled *Depictions: Slavic Studies in the Narrative and Visual Arts* (edited by Douglas M. Greenfield). His colleagues were profoundly grateful to him for his generous service to the Slavic Department, the Russian Institute, the University, and the Slavic field at large. He played an important role in making Columbia an important center for Slavic studies.

Born in 1921 in State College, Pennsylvania, William Harkins received his B.A. degree from Pennsylvania State University. After military service, he did his graduate work in the Slavic Department at Columbia and received his doctorate in 1950. His dissertation, published as a book, was *The Russian Folk Epos in Czech Literature, 1890–1900*. Professor

Harkins taught in the Slavic Department at Columbia for the next forty years. One colleague who had worked with him for forty years described Bill Harkins as "absolutely honest" and "always kind," noting that Bill "always bore far more than his fair share of the burden, administrative, pedagogical, and emotional, of working together with a group of people different enough from one another to make a strong department." At Columbia, Bill Harkins was chair of the Slavic Department and director of the Russian (now Harriman) Institute, in addition to serving in or on a number of other organs, including the University Senate and the Committee on Instruction. He was very active in professional associations in the Slavic field at large and served as president of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. His work in promoting Czech studies at Columbia and at large deserves particular mention.

Bill Harkins's commitments and activities extended beyond the Slavic field. He had a special interest in Japanese prints and served twice as the president of the Japanese Art Society (formerly Ukiyo-e Society).

Survivors of William Harkins include Hideo Kidokoro, his longtime companion; John W. Harkins, his brother; two nieces, Mary Ann Williams and Rebecca Candelario; and many cousins and grand-nieces and grand-nephews.

A memorial service will be held at Columbia on Friday, October 17, at 3 p.m. at the Harriman Institute, International Affairs Buildings, 420 West 118th Street, 12th Floor.