

Reminiscences of Vassily V. Nalimov

EUGENE GARFIELD

Chairman Emeritus, Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, PA (USA)

In January 1997, my dear friend Professor V. V. Nalimov died in Moscow. From the moment I heard about his death from his beloved wife and colleague Zhanna Drogalina, I knew that I would be called upon to comment on his life. Contemplating that task was painful, and made even more so, since I could not be present in Moscow at the time of his burial. In June 1997, a marvelous testimonial from “colleagues and friends” appeared in *Scientometrics*, the journal he helped to found.¹ Then in September 1997, Zhanna and I visited his gravesite together.

On February 22, 1982, I wrote a tribute to Vassily.² And on August 2, 1993, another short essay appeared as an introduction to a tribute by Angela Thompson.³ Both essays are included here in the reference list.

The 1982 essay states that we met at the Moscow Book Fair in 1977 but I believe our first encounter was much earlier in the 60s when I lectured at VINITI where he was employed for a short time. We in the West certainly knew of his work and read translations of his book on “Scientometrics,” the term he invented.

In an attempt to briefly amplify these comments, I examined our voluminous correspondence files. This reminded me that during our long association, I was privileged to be able to send him dozens of obscure book titles. He not only identified these titles himself, but also the relevant booksellers as well. He was a voracious consumer of their catalogs. His encyclopedic knowledge of these works never ceased to amaze me. Much of our correspondence concerns four of Vassily’s books which were published by ISI Press and are mentioned in my essays. None gave me greater satisfaction than his *Realms of the Unconscious*,⁴ though I must confess *Faces of Science*⁵ is also one of my favorites. Copies of these and his other works are available from Panigada Press.⁶

Vassily's charisma and personality had a mystical quality that is difficult to capture in writing. Of the many scholars and scientists I have met in my lifetime, none touched me in the way he did. Here was a person who had survived incredible pain and suffering yet retained a child-like innocence. In spite of his terrible experiences, or perhaps because of them, his outlook on life was always positive. He was an inspiration to all those who met and experienced him. It was a great privilege to publish part of his voluminous work but even more so to be able to call him a beloved friend.

References

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Address for correspondence:

EUGENE GARFIELD

Chairman Emeritus, Institute for Scientific Information

3501 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA

E-mail: garfield@codex.cis.upenn.edu