

THE RUSSELL
KIRK CENTER
NEWSLETTER

- Annette Y. Kirk
President, Russell Kirk Center
info@kirkcenter.org
- Editor: Benjamin G. Lockerd
lockerdb@gvsu.edu
- Editorial Assistant:
Kristina Persenaire
knpersenaire@yahoo.com
- RKC Assistant:
Danielle Richmond

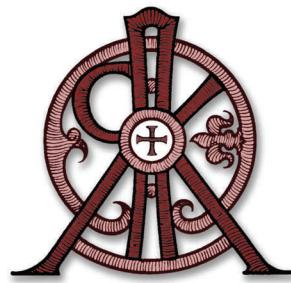
Inside this issue:

Wilbur Fellows Update	2
Kirk in National News	2
Rufus Fears: Influence of Kirk	2
Selected Activities from 2009	3
Solzhenitsyn and the Moral Imagination	4
George Nash: Reappraising the Right	4

Donations to the Russell Kirk Center may be sent to:

P.O. Box 4
Mecosta, MI 49332

Permanent Things



Number 15 Fall 2009

www.kirkcenter.org

RUSSELL KIRK IN NATIONAL NEWS



Jon Meacham

In his May 23, 2009, *Newsweek* editorial, "A Modest Case For a Burkean Boomlet," Jon Meacham recollects a trip to Piety Hill that he took twenty years ago. He was accompanying Southern writer Andrew Lytle to a conference held in Mecosta. He says that he was there mainly to "make drinks in the evening and coffee in the morning for Mr. Lytle, then 86, and his old friend Cleanth Brooks."

While at Piety Hill, Meacham encountered Dr. Kirk, who queried him about what he was reading. Meacham, at the time, was engrossed in the Victorian politics of Anthony Trollope's novels. Meacham says, "Then, looking at me with a genial intensity, he [Kirk] said solemnly that Victorian politics were all well and good, but one must know Burke, of course. Everyone must know Burke."

Meacham goes on to discuss how Kirk's 1953 book *The Conservative Mind* was "instrumental in popularizing the 18th Century Irish politician-philosopher." He was reminded of this long-ago conversation with Russell Kirk by a recent statement of Republican National Committee chief Michael Steele. Steele, addressing state GOP chiefs, said, "For me the Republican Party owes its moorings to Edmund Burke, William F. Buckley and Ronald Reagan. For each of them conservatism must always respect reality, effectively assess the times, and become relevant to them. Thus is our charge." (continued, p.2)



First row, from left to right: Annette Kirk, Andrew Lytle, Kenneth Cribb, Cleanth Brooks, Russell Kirk; Last row, 5th from right: Jon Meacham.

FALL 2009 WILBUR FELLOWS

A welcome and orientation was held at the Kirk Center in September for new and returning Wilbur Fellows:

Returning Fellow, and Michigan native, Joseph Stuart is currently a Ph.D. candidate completing a doctoral dissertation on “Christopher Dawson and His Idea of Religion” at the University of Edinburgh.

Laurie Malashanko is writing a thesis on “Aristotle’s *Poetics* and the New Critics’ Interpretations of His Thought.” She will be receiving a Licentiate in philosophy from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.

Joseph Corey is spending a gap-year at the Kirk Center preparing for graduate studies in history. He hopes to study at Oxford or St. Andrews University.



Front Row: Laurie Malashanko, Annette Kirk; **Back Row:** Vigen Guroian, Joseph Stuart, Joseph Corey, and Gary Gregg

RUFUS FEARS INFLUENCED BY RUSSELL KIRK



Dr. J. Rufus Fears is the David Ross Boyd Professor of Classics at the University of Oklahoma. Fears earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University and is a Fellow with many distinguished organizations, such as the American Academy in Rome, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation.

On November 13, 2008, Dr. Fears addressed an audience at Grand Valley State University on “George W. Bush and Lessons of Imperial Rome.” In his opening statement, Fears remarked how pleased he was to see Mrs. Kirk in the audience. He then spoke of how influential Russell Kirk had been in his life:

Russell Kirk shaped my life—I think without his ever knowing it. I was an assistant professor at Indiana and quite determined to spend my life on the most important of all research—on the Ruler Cult of ancient Rome—and to determine whether or not the Romans believed their emperor was a god. And that’s what I was going to do. Then I heard him [Kirk] lecturing on the philosophical historian. From then on I realized that there was more you could do in life and actually you could grow intellectually, spiritually, and morally.

Dr. Fears is a frequent lecturer at the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies at Grand Valley State University.

KIRK IN THE NATIONAL NEWS (CONTINUED)

Joe Scarborough, former GOP Congressman and current host of MSNBC’s *Morning Joe* and ABC Radio’s *The Joe Scarborough Show*, also mentions Russell Kirk in his May 7, 2009, *Time* magazine article, “How the Republicans Can Come Back.”

Scarborough outlines several suggestions for the Republicans in the wake of recent losses. He says, “The first thing Republicans must do is move past the current definition of *conservative*. Let’s face it. American conservatism is now associated with wasteful spending, military adventurism and ideological conformity.”

Scarborough suggests that it is time to hearken back to a more Burkean understanding of what it means to be a conservative: “For the better part of 200 years, conservatives followed a different path. British statesman Edmund Burke was the movement’s founder. A fierce critic of the French Revolution, Burke had contempt for rigid ideologues of all stripes and instead attached conservatism to restraint, custom and convention. Burke’s thinking can be summed up easily: Respect reality. Understand the age you’re living in, and understand its facts.”

The article concludes with an admonition to Republicans to “embrace first principles” and to “revive what Russell Kirk called ‘the forgotten genius of conservatism.’”



Joe Scarborough

~ Kristina Persenaire

RUSSELL KIRK CENTER: SELECTED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS-2009

March 21: Public Seminar featuring a talk by Dr. Tim Weldon, Professor of Philosophy, University of St. Francis, titled "Earned Decadence, Redemption in Ruin: Haunting Sin and Holy Virtue in Russell Kirk's *Ancestral Shadows*." Robert Asch, Wilbur Fellow at the RKC, also presented "We Are All Socialists Now: Lord Roseberry and the Death of English Liberalism."

April 25: Public Seminar on Orwell, Kirk & Tocqueville. Speakers were John Rodden, University of Texas at Austin ("George Orwell's Literary Siblings"); Bruce Frohnen, Ohio Northern University School of Law ("Tocqueville: Beyond Liberalism and Conservatism to the Moral Imagination"); and Jim Person, author of *A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* ("The Ancient and Honorable Pastime of Snapdragon: An Introduction to the Fiction of Russell Kirk"). Attendees included local professionals, scholars and university students as well as visiting scholar Jay Murray (Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Davidson College).

May 23-27: Visiting scholar Jonathan Jones pursued research at the RKC for his dissertation at Texas A&M University on "A Rhetoric of Moral Imagination: The Persuasions of Russell Kirk."

May 30: Conference for the New Centurions on Russell Kirk's political influence and present political concerns. The Honorable Joanne Emmons spoke about how Kirk's influence helped her in the Michigan State House and Senate. Professor John Pafford spoke on the

relevance of Kirk's ideas to the political process. Jim Person gave a brief talk introducing Gleaves Whitney's two-part presentation on present political concerns. Darrin Moore of the New Centurions invited twenty of this year's 100 program participants for this full-day program.

July 5-11: Visiting scholar Lucien Ellington, Senior Fellow of The Wachman Center and UC Foundation Professor of Education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, used the library resources to research Kirk's philosophy of education in preparation for founding a center on the renewal of education with Wilfred McClay at the University.

July 11: Public Seminar titled "Burke on America" presented by Jeff Nelson, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer at Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Attending were leaders from both the academic and corporate world and interested people from the general public.

August 20-23: A co-sponsored program of the

Intercollegiate Studies Institute and Liberty Fund on the topic of "Civility and Liberty: American Universities and the Principles of Liberty in the Twenty-First Century." Facilitators were: Steven E. Grosby, professor of Religion at Clemson University, and Ralph Hancock, professor of Political Philosophy at Brigham Young University.

August 27-30: A co-sponsored program of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute and Liberty Fund on the topic of "Liberty and Responsibility in the History of American Education: American Universities and the Principles of Liberty in the Twenty-First Century." Facilitators were: Timothy Fuller, professor of Political Philosophy at Colorado College, and Charles Glenn, professor of Educational Administration and Policy at Boston University.

September 18-23: Visiting scholars Lee Edwards, distinguished historian at The Heritage Foundation, and John Rodden, U. of Texas at Austin, came to the RKC to pursue research.

September 19: Public Seminar on "Kirk, Frost and Modern Ideology": Lee Edwards, Heritage Foundation, "Is Communism Dead"; John Rodden, University of Texas, "The Sword of Vocation: Russell Kirk and the Adventure of the Freelance Intellectual"; Peter Stanlis, "Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher."

October 10-13: McConnell Center conference on "Imagining our Future: Utopia, Ideology, and Tradition in the Modern World: Burke, Kirk, Solzhenitsyn." Presenters: Gary Gregg (Mitch McConnell Chair in Leadership, University of Louisville), "Leadership and the Moral Imagination"; Bradley Birzer (Russell Amos Kirk Chair in History, Hillsdale College), "The Priest, The Prophet, and the King: How the Moral Imagination Destroyed Communism"; Vigen Guroian (professor of Religious Studies, University of Virginia), "Imagination and Tradition in Edmund Burke"; and Edward Ericson (professor emeritus of English, Calvin College), "The Moral Imagination of Alexander Solzhenitsyn."

October 30-31: Program of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute on Edmund Burke. Lectures included: George Nash, historian and lecturer, "The Burke Revival"; Peter Stanlis, Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Emeritus, at Rockford College, "Burke on The Natural Law and The Natural Rights Traditions"; Ian Crowe, Editor of the *Burke Newsletter*, "Burke, the Free Society"; and Vigen Guroian, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, "The Christian Humanist Tradition."

Meeting of the New Centurions



**THE RUSSELL
KIRK CENTER
NEWSLETTER**

The Russell Kirk Center
P.O. Box 4
Mecosta, MI 49332

Phone: 231-972-5590

Fax: 231-972-8078

www.kirkcenter.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hon. Joanne Emmons,
former Michigan State
Senator
Chairman

Dr. Jeffrey O. Nelson,
Senior Vice President,
Intercollegiate Studies
Institute
Vice Chairman

Annette Y. Kirk, The
Russell Kirk Center

Dr. Benjamin G. Lockerd,
Professor of English, Grand
Valley State University
Secretary

Kevin P. Shields,
Automatic Data Processing,
Inc.
Treasurer

SOLZHENITSYN AND THE MORAL IMAGINATION

A major publishing event was celebrated at the Russell Kirk Center on October 12, 2009. Edward Ericson, Professor Emeritus of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, and renowned scholar of the life and work of Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), spoke on Solzhenitsyn's novel *In the First Circle* (released October 13, 2009, by Harper Perennial). Announced in the *Wall Street Journal* by Ericson, the launch of this book is significant because it is the first uncensored edition of Solzhenitsyn's greatest work of fiction.

First written between 1955 and 1958, *In the First Circle* was much censored by the Soviets before it was published in a hastily translated English edition in 1968. Now with the help of the author's most trusted

translator, Harry T. Willetts, here for the first time is the complete, definitive English edition of Solzhenitsyn's powerful classic.

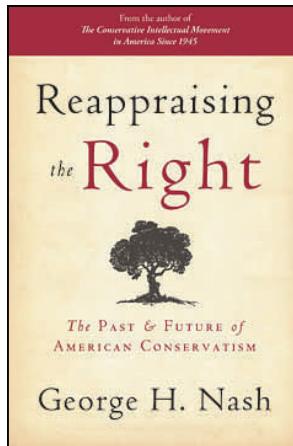
On the website Amazon.com appears the following description of the book: "Moscow, Christmas Eve, 1949. The Soviet secret police intercept a call made to the American embassy by a Russian diplomat who promises to deliver secrets about the nascent Soviet Atomic Bomb program. On that same day, a brilliant mathematician is locked away inside a Moscow prison that houses the country's brightest minds. He and his fellow prisoners are charged with using their abilities to sleuth out the caller's identity, and they must choose whether to aid Joseph Stalin's repressive state—or refuse and accept transfer to

the Siberian Gulag camps . . . and almost certain death."

Ericson spoke at the Russell Kirk Center Library to McConnell Center students from the University of Louisville. He noted that Russell Kirk had a profound influence on him, preparing him to approach Solzhenitsyn's moral universe. In fact, Kirk's emphasis on the "moral imagination," that quality that allows human beings to see reality in moral terms, became a foundation for Ericson's own worldview. Ericson noted that Russell Kirk and Alexander Solzhenitsyn had been the two greatest influences on his intellectual life.

~Joseph Stuart, Postdoctoral Wilbur Fellow at the Russell Kirk Center

GEORGE H. NASH: *REAPPRAISING THE RIGHT*



The Intercollegiate Studies Institute recently published *Reappraising the Right: the Past and the Future of American Conservatism*, by George H. Nash, Senior Fellow at the Russell Kirk Center. Nash addresses questions of the current state of the conservative political and intellectual movement. ISI Books describes Nash's text as follows:

"[Nash's book] provides a bracing perspective on conservatism's present predicament by reexamining the roots and achievements of the contemporary American Right."

"Drawing on more than thirty years of study and reflection, *Reappraising the Right* ranges far and wide. It showcases Nash's brilliant insights on such conservative luminaries as Ronald Reagan, William F. Buckley Jr., Russell Kirk, and Whittaker Chambers.

"Nash then turns directly to the question of the hour: the future of the conservative movement. With a perspective liberated from the provincialism of the present, he provides an enlightened and enlightening assessment of the prospects for American conservatism. Nash frankly analyzes the causes of

the Right's present discontent and the dangers that lurk ahead, but also reminds readers of hopeful portents that conservatives have overlooked."

In his chapter on Russell Kirk, Nash says that the "significance [of Kirk's book] for American conservatism was to demonstrate that intelligent conservatism was not a mere smokescreen for selfishness. It was an attitude toward life with substance and moral force of its own. . . . After the appearance of *The Conservative Mind*, the American intellectual landscape assumed a different shape. Kirk's tour de force breached the wall of liberal condescension. He made it respectable for sophisticated people to identify themselves as men and women of the Right."

~Kristina Persenaire