Dora Van Vranken

Dora was born in the former Yugoslavia into an ethnic German/Hungarian family. She grew up in a multicultural community speaking first Hungarian, then German and eventually Serbian. With Nazi Germany’s 1941 occupation, she shifted from a Serbian to German-taught school. Her education came to a complete stop during Tito’s communist takeover in 1944 and the subsequent internment of all ethnic Germans. In the fall of 1946, she along with four siblings successfully escaped from their respective forced labor camps and fled by way of Romania and Hungary to Austria. Reunited, eventually, with her parents and youngest siblings in Vienna, her family immigrated to the US in 1949.

Upon arriving in Pasadena, CA, her disrupted education, which had briefly resumed in Vienna, was once again put on hold. She first had to learn English and work full-time. Beginning with night classes in 1957, she graduated from Pasadena City College with an AA degree and honors in English Literature and Art History. Married and with a two month old daughter, Krista, she continued her studies at Pomona College in Claremont. She graduated in 1959 cum laude with a BA in German. She had her second daughter Nadine when she was offered a four-year scholarship at Stanford University and began that fall in German studies. With her coursework, (including an informal minor in Humanities), student teaching, and doctoral exams, and her dissertation on Shleiermacher’s Hermeneutic Theory in its early stages, she accepted President Armacost’s invitation of a position in the German department at the University of Redlands. In the fall of 1965, she embarked on a long and happy teaching career at Redlands as a professor of German Literature and Language. She received her PhD in 1973.

Her tenure at the U of R, which ended in 1999, included opportunities to teach German Literature course in translation in both Comparative Literature and at the Johnston Center. In addition she had a stint teaching hermeneutic theory in the Honor’s Program, as well the privilege of serving with me (David Bragg) in the fall 1985 semester in the University’s Salzburg program. In 1986 she founded the Faculty Forum, which continues to this day as a valuable contribution to U of R discussions of contemporary topics.

2004 she moved to the bay area to be closer to her daughters and she lives in beautiful Sonoma County.

**Scholarly-Creative Work**

Since her retirement in 1999, she has published a translation from German into English of the *Duino Elegies* by Rainer Maria Rilke. She has written a book length narrative and a collection of five short stories.

The translation of the *Elegies* was a collaborative project with Roger Pierce, PhD, the spouse of Alexandra pierce, and former Music Faculty member at the U of R. Their
translation is the finished products of a painstaking two-and-a-half year revision (2008-2011) which includes a foreword, the translated poems, and nineteen pages of translation notes. The forward lays out their translation principles, establishing their place in the range of translation philosophies and practices. It is a conservative one that tries to render the original as faithfully as possible without sacrificing Rilke’s artistry or neglecting the poetic requirements of English. The translation notes touch on such elements as leitmotif, lineation, syntax, and rhythm, ambiguity and context. They also discuss and demonstrate in detail the consideration sand principles informing their translation choices.

The translation has had a favorable reception, most notably by the critic Dr. Marjorie Perloff and Emeritus-Professor and scholar Dr. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer. Despite the number of existing translation already available, Roger and Dora are confident of the virtue of their version. Amongst those virtues are the translation notes, and sound translation of words and metaphors, and the challenging preservation of Rilke’s lineation and syntax.

Other creative work Dora’s has done since retirement include her collection of five short stories (1999-2002), and The Seventh Chime, a book length narrative recently completed. The stories, “Herr Alfonso,” “The Venetian Mirror,” and the “Lost Dinars,” are from early events with persons in the first two becoming victims of Nazi persecution. “Lost Dinars” is written in three parts and depicts the evolving mistrust and estrangement between neighboring families against the backdrop of political developments in the region. “Memorial Day Story in Prospect Park” and “The Amoir” are based on experiences in Redlands. “The Seventh Chime” narrates the escape, primary of Dora and four of her siblings from labor camps and their encounters as fugitives on a journey to safety and eventual freedom. The story is told describing compassionate and risk-taking individuals along the way. With the accompanying historical date, it serves as a window into Yugoslavia’s virtually unknown chapter: the execution of a policy of ethnic cleansing against its German citizenry which preceded by more than four decades the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo. Putting the final touches on these pieces is her project for 2012.

The things make Dora a fine recipient of our award for creativity and scholarly works in retirement.