

# Vera Andreevna Richter

1936–2015

The dipterist community was saddened by the loss of Professor Vera Andreevna Richter (born August 28, 1936; Fig. 1), who passed away in St. Petersburg, Russia on February 7, 2015 after suffering a stroke the week before. Vera was an active participant at last year's International Congress of Dipterology in Postdam, Germany and her sudden death a few weeks ago was especially disturbing to those of us who had just seen her months before at the congress.

Vera Richter will best be remembered by readers of this newsletter for her nearly 50 years of research on the systematics of the Tachinidae. Born in Armenia to two eminent Soviet coleopterists, Vera followed in her parents' footsteps in becoming an entomologist. She graduated from university in 1958 and began her lifelong tenure at the Zoological Institute in St. Petersburg (then as Leningrad) that same year. She began in a technical position at the Institute, obtained her Ph.D. in 1965, a D.Sc. degree in 1988, and a professorship in 2003 (Korotyaev & Ovtshinnikova 2015).

Vera's first paper on Tachinidae was, not surprisingly, a study based on specimens she had collected in her homeland of Armenia the year before (Richter 1967). Vera rose to prominence as a tachinidologist in the 1970s with the publication of over twenty taxonomic papers on the Tachinidae, many focused on the faunas of Mongolia and Transcaucasia. Her knowledge of the fauna of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia was, by the end of the 1970s, second to none and this led to her being asked by the European specialist Benno Herting for assistance with the distributions of tachinids in these regions for inclusion in his landmark catalogue of the Tachinidae of the Palaearctic Region (Herting 1984).

Vera's publications throughout the 1980s to the present mostly concerned the tachinid fauna of the former Soviet Union but she also had a keen interest (shared with her Canadian colleague Monty Wood) in species with Holarctic distributions (e.g., Richter & Wood 1995). Over the course of her career, Vera published approximately 120 papers on the Tachinidae and described about 130 tachinid species. Through her efforts our knowledge of the Tachinidae in the vast area of the Palaearctic Region east of Europe and west of Japan was significantly improved. Among her most significant contributions to tachinidology were the Tachinidae chapters in *Contributions to a Manual of Palaearctic Diptera* (Tschorsnig & Richter 1998) and *Key to the Insects of Russian Far East* (Richter 2004).

On a personal note, Vera Richter was among the few tachinid specialists I have known since my earliest days of studying these flies. Communication was difficult at first, with all correspondence

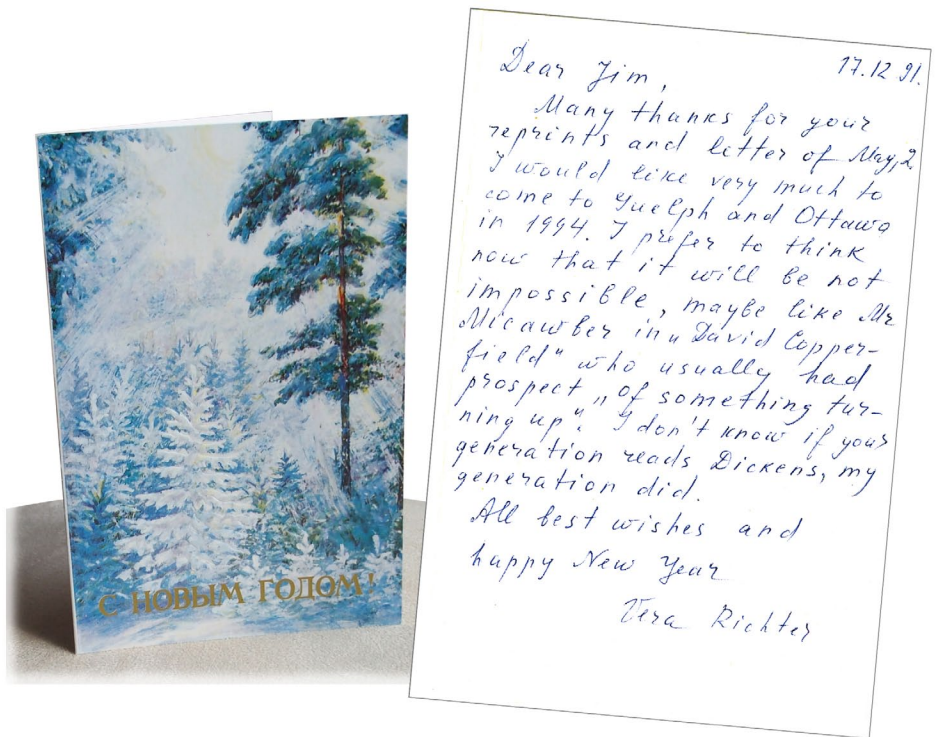
passing between us as letters sent through the mail and crossing the "Iron Curtain" into and out of the Soviet Union. The cost of postage was a concern for letters and reprints passing in both directions and this contributed to our infrequent early exchanges. I was thrilled to learn in 1991 that Vera had hopes of attending the International Congress of Dipterology in Guelph, Canada in 1994, with the news reaching me in the form of a note written in a Christmas card (Fig. 2). Vera eloquently compared herself to a character in Dickens' *David Copperfield* who "usually had prospect of something turning up" as a way of expressing her optimism about attending the congress. This card conveys a sense of the broad education Vera must have received as a young person, despite the hardships of growing up in Armenia during and shortly



**Figure 1.** Vera Richter during the 4th International Congress of Dipterology in Oxford, UK, September 1998.

after the Second World War. Vera's hope "of something turning up" came true and she not only attended the congress in Guelph but also spent a few days in Ottawa visiting the Canadian National Collection, where she was primarily hosted by Monty Wood. I have no pictures of Vera from that trip but I have included herein a picture from each of the two subsequent congresses she attended, the Oxford congress in 1998 (Fig. 1) and the most recent congress last August in Potsdam (Fig. 3). Vera will be missed by her colleagues and friends throughout the world.

More complete biographies of Vera Richter are being planned by her colleagues in the Zoological Institute in St. Petersburg.



**Figure 2.** Christmas card sent to the author in 1991 in which Vera likens herself to Mr. Micawber in Dickens' *David Copperfield*, in reference to her chances of attending the 1994 International Congress of Dipterology in Guelph, Canada.

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**Figure 3.** The patriarch and matriarch of tachinidology, Monty Wood and Vera Richter, at the congress dinner during the 8th International Congress of Dipterology, Potsdam, Germany, on 13 August 2014.

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