

LYDIA T. BLACK, PH.D.



1925-2007



Cover Photo: Lydia at Kenai Fjord, July, 2002 by Lydia's Grandson, Andrew McEvoy.



**Excerpt from St. Catherine's Prayer at her Execution, 305 A.D.
(found among Lydia's belongings):**

O Lord Jesus Christ my God, I thank Thee that Thou hast set my feet upon the rock of patience . . .

Lydia was born in 1925 in the Soviet Union. This was a time and place far removed from the American experience. Her family was, before the Revolution, what we Americans would call 'middle class' – they were doctors, teachers and engineers. Her "grandmother" wasn't her biological grandmother – she was, if Lydia-the-child understood correctly, her mother's fourth cousin; she was the last living member of a branch of the family which had achieved noble rank, and as such, in the Soviet Union, she had nowhere to go but to Lydia's home. It was Lydia's grandmother who infused her with stringent standards for personal comportment and a respect for the power of knowledge and education. Her grandmother instituted an educational regimen which included two days per week of speaking Russian, two days per week of speaking French and two days per week of speaking German. On Sundays, the family could relax and speak Ukrainian. It was decreed that Lydia would study English in school. Lydia's grandmother would take her to the 'secret church', hosted by three elderly women – the KGB eventually did arrive to arrest them.

Lydia's childhood home was maintained by Lydia's mother Olga, a pedagogist, who, because of her "bourgeois" credentials, had been assigned work in a hazardous chemical plant. This work entitled the family to one egg, one kilo each of butter and sugar per month. Lydia's birthday cake was the monthly egg's yolk beaten to fluffiness with a spoonful of sugar, and even as a successful American academic, her eyes would gleam when she thought of her childhood birthday treat.



Lydia, her aunt and her mother

Lydia's father was executed when she was eight years old (the family was never sure if it was because he was a "bourgeois" engineer, the anti-government joke he told at work or his grumbling at a bar about his having "a score to settle" with the government), at which point the Soviet government classified Lydia as an "enemy of the people". Inadvertently, the Soviet government aided Lydia because by declaring her an enemy of the people, she was forced to maintain straight As from the age of eight on in order to avoid being sent to factory work after the age of 13 – thus, she learned to study assiduously and thoroughly, a handy habit for her adult career.

World War II reached Russia in June, 1941, when Lydia had begun her summer break by staying with her grandfather in the countryside. She made her way back to Kiev, only to have her mother die in a sanatorium of tuberculosis six months after the invasion. Her grandmother had died several years earlier, and with food hard to come by in the city, Lydia, her aunt and a toddler cousin went into the countryside. Lydia would describe the evening a kindly farmer allowed them to stay in his barn for the night, bringing them each a boiled potato and pickle for supper. Years later, Lydia would laugh and say, "My mouth still waters when I think of a boiled potato and pickle!"

It was in the countryside that Lydia was picked up and conscripted into forced labor for Germany. However, her memories of Germans focused on those Germans who, despite their government's stated ideology, reached out to help her – the young German soldiers who buried her under their winter field coats when the Gestapo examined papers – she didn't have any – on the train, the elderly policeman at the train station who, without batting an eyelash, kindly gave her correct directions to reach the safe house address she had been given. She rarely spoke of the drunken German soldier who left three silver dollar-sized scars on her upper arm, the German guard whose displeasure motivated the older women in her labor unit to persuade her to escape in order to save her, and she never spoke of the Germans who conscripted her into forced labor. Her comment on American criticisms of Germans was always, "Americans don't know what it means to live under dictatorship."

At war's end, Lydia was in Munich, part of the American sector. She got a job scrubbing toilets in American officers' quarters. In the course of her housekeeping duties, she would talk with the pleasant young officers, and through their acquaintance and their realization that Lydia could speak six languages (she had learned Polish during the war) Lydia became a translator at the UNRRA's displaced children's camp. Lydia began earning her keep by serving as the communications link between UNRRA staff and the parentless children housed at the camp. It was there that she met American and British women who would become lifelong friends (all of whom have preceded Lydia in death), including the Montana-born lady doctor who would become a surrogate grandmother to Lydia's own children.



Lydia in Germany

In her off-hours, Lydia, who planned to study pedagogy like her mother, began taking classes with fellow refugees at the university organized by the refugee professors awaiting their departure from the Munich area. It was on the tram going to and from classes that she met the man she would marry, Igor A. Black. Their conversations on the tram eventually lead to all-night dancing at parties with fellow Russian refugees, another source of lifelong friends, and then marriage. Their first daughter, named Olga after Lydia's mother, suffered the fate of many children and adults living in post-war Germany; she died in a measles epidemic two weeks

before enough antibiotics to stop the epidemic arrived. In the meantime, Igor and Lydia had decided to apply to emigrate to the United States as the victorious Allies began operations to clear Germany of its huge refugee population and to comply with Stalin's demand that all Russians be returned to the Soviet Union. Lydia, with her status as an "enemy of the people", and Igor, who was classified as a "traitor" because of his POW status, watched with horror as American G.I.s would round up Russians for forcible repatriation to Stalin's Soviet Union; their status of awaiting U.S. visas protected them, and when they received permission to enter the United States, they left Germany.

Excerpt from "Loneliness Prayer" (found among Lydia's belongings):

O God . . . set my feet upon Thy rock of remembrance, That I might love more kindly Thy insecure creatures . . .

Lydia and Igor arrived in the U.S. in 1950. Sponsored by a lovely couple in New Jersey, Igor, whose English was limited, worked as a gas station attendant, practicing his English on unsuspecting motorists, while Lydia found work as a store's bookkeeper. Having mastered English, Igor and his young wife moved to Michigan, where Igor resumed his studies and completed his B.S. The young emigrés migrated to Cambridge so that Igor could pursue his graduate studies at M.I.T. Lydia and Igor were blessed by the birth of two little girls during this period of their lives, Anna and Maria.



Igor, Lydia, Anna and Maria

From Margaret Kamath:

I am a very inquisitive person and when I see something which is out of the ordinary or unnatural (to me, at least) I must find out what is going on. Such was the case when I met your mother. I had only very recently moved to an apartment in Cambridge after returning from India in 1953. There was no playground near where we lived so I went on a hunt for play area. I found one and Lydia at the same time.

Lydia, Anna and Maria were at one side of the playground and a group of women with children in the same age range were at the other. Kids always mix together if they are free to do their own thing...but those other children were

not crossing the playground. I went over to your mother and introduced myself and asked what was going on that her children were not playing with the others, or vice versa. In Lydia's typical droll manner, she smiled up at me and said, "You know Russians are bad people... and I am Russian." That did it for me! We became good friends, sharing our experiences in life, splitting our household chores by alternately taking care of each other's children, having lunch together, putting the kids down for naps in whichever apartment they happened to be in.

Lydia and Igor were very determined to make it on their own and would accept no help from anyone which they could not reciprocate in some way. They went to the Farmer's Market in the late afternoons on Saturday, when the price for vegetables was drastically reduced, to make ends meet. This strong ethic bound us together even more as friends. To my knowledge their one strongest friend was Marjorie Smith, the doctor serving in Germany when your parents were there...

Lydia was always full of quiet energy, vibrant cheer... everyone became happier in her presence. The gardens she made after you moved to Harvard, Mass. were always responsive to her touch, and food always seemed to appear like magic. I never knew her to have a "down" day, although I'm sure she must have had some.

... I have always admired her strength and determination after your father's death. She overrode all odds.

... few are as active as Lydia has been for years – she is a remarkable person. For me, she is closer than a real, blood sister.

Their time in Cambridge was followed by a house in Texas, where their fourth daughter, Elena, was born, and where they were the proud owners of their first house and a German shepherd named Spike. From Texas, they returned to Massachusetts, eventually buying a house outside of Boston (in Harvard). They had dogs, cats, rabbits and Dolly Madison (a goat). There was a vegetable garden, flowers, a rock garden, a small orchard, and Lydia became Vice President of the Harvard Garden Club. One of her favorite memories of Massachusetts gardening was the all-Massachusetts Garden Club meeting held in Boston. Given the era in which it occurred, the ladies in attendance all wore hats and white gloves. The keynote speaker made a reference to the importance of 'fertilizer', prompting a white-gloved hand to be raised. When acknowledged, in the distinct tones of a well-bred Yankee New Englander, the question asked was: "Do you mean 'manure'?" Ah, well, perhaps you had to be there...

Igor and Lydia's fifth (and final) daughter, Zoë, was born during this time. However, within three years, the family suffered a great blow. Igor died in 1969, leaving Lydia alone with three teen-aged daughters and a toddler. With her older daughters' consent, Lydia returned to school as a full-time college student at Northeastern University, where she was told that there was no longer a degree to be obtained in pedagogy. Lydia became a history major. She then pursued a master's degree in Anthropology at Brandeis University and followed it up with a Ph.D. from University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where she again garnered friends she would retain for the rest of her life. Her first publication, an article in *Arctic Anthropology* on the Gilyak, was published in 1972.

**Excerpt from A Mother's Prayer for Her Children
(Distributed at the Kazan-Ambrose Women's Hermitage in Shamordino
– found among Lydia's belongings):**

*O God!... they are Thy children ... May they be enlightened with knowledge
beneficial for mankind ...*



Lydia, neighbor Kate & Zoë

In June, 1973, Lydia and her youngest daughter, Zoë, arrived in Providence, Rhode Island, where Lydia was to begin her academic career, teaching Anthropology at Providence College. Her faithful Dodge Dart which had been with them since Harvard disappeared, and Lydia took the bus to and from work. Church, an hour and a half's drive away, was an occasional treat for which she would rent or borrow a car. She and Zoë would walk to the grocery store to get a couple of days' worth of groceries, and when not working, she turned her hand to enlivening their apartment house's grounds with flowers in the front yard and vegetables in the back yard.

As a single mother, she tried to ensure her young daughter's safety and well-being despite not being at home to meet her from school. In the summers, she managed to organize the weddings of her two oldest daughters and to travel to the Aleutians to do field work. Church was all around her then as in every village, it was no more than a two-minute walk, and on her first trip to Unalaska, after meeting the beloved Father Gromoff and attending services at the Cathedral, she had a mission: to examine the Bishop's House designed by Saint Innocent. It was this confluence of spiritual and intellectual loves in the midst of the beauty which is Alaska and among a Native People who have demonstrated such grace, strength and faith which provided her with a sense of purpose which uplifted her and those around her.



Lydia in Unalaska

From Okalena Lekanoff-Gregory:

I can still picture the day when I came home from school and our moms were sitting down drinking tea, and I think you were there at the table as well. It was just like it was yesterday, they both had the biggest smiles I can ever remember. My mom always wanted me to stay in touch with your mom. She was so fond of your mom! As we are too!!! She is like the maternal grandmother to my two children. I hope you and your sisters don't mind. My two kids have grown to love her like their own grandmother. That's why they call her babushka Lydia. I am honored that your mom let my kids call her that as well ... I know she loves our church. And, we are honored that she loved our church and us Aleut people as well.

From a Friend:

... I cannot remember a day in my 30 years of Orthodoxy that you were not in it ... I want to thank you for all you have done for my family and the Aleut people and Church in general ... and [you] are so special to so many people. You touched so many lives and we love you ... I was so happy when my son, Jeremy was honored to have one of his masks on your book. And Patrick's ivory carvings. The boys and I spent many hours taking pictures of the carvings on my kitchen table, which was good for all ...

From Pat Pletnikoff:

... you have always been strong, you have always kept me going when I spoke [of] serious issues to the Aleut People [When you were in Providence], I wrote to you and asked you to come to Alaska to help us ... I read your materials about Veniaminov and the Aleuts, and I asked you to come to teach us – to teach, from faith and history, the strength of the Aleut. You surprised me, and you came and did it, but I think our God directed you to us. You have labored, you have given of yourself, and you, my friend, have blessed us with your coming to us ... You gave me more than you gave yourself ... I will never be able to thank you enough for all you have done for me and my Aleut People. You

responded, my friend, to a simple man. You took care of [someone] who wanted something more for his people. You helped me, and Lydia, I love you for that. I have always loved you for helping the Aleut People and our cause spiritually and history. You, my friend, are the Aleut History and Culture. I love you for all of that. You taught me – I shall not forget.



Lydia at the beach

Lydia began her academic career as a professor in Rhode Island. In her 11 years there, she published 18 books and articles on subjects as diverse as Saints Innocent and Iakov, Fathers Iosaf and Gideon, Arctic cartography and maritime disasters, Aleut and Konyag history and culture, the interaction between environment and culture. Her most influential works during this period were *Aleut Art* and the translations of Saint Innocent's Notes regarding Unalaska and Saint Iakov's Journals regarding Atkha.



Lydia and her first granddaughter Jenny

Having shepherded Zoya and her teen-aged friends on numerous trips to the beach throughout high school and having become a grandmother of four (with two more to come), when Zoya left for college, Lydia left Rhode Island to take up her new post as a professor at University of Alaska-Fairbanks. There she continued her dedication to uncovering the history and culture of Alaska's Native Peoples. She also found time not only to worship at Church but to help build one, for which the Church recognized her service officially in 1992.



Lydia conducts a seminar in her living room.



Lydia with James Ketz, Ph.D. recipient Katherine Arndt and close colleague Richard A. Pierce and Dr. Arndt's parents

Several of her Providence College students kept in touch - some followed her into Anthropology, others followed other paths but cherished her friendship. This pattern of inspiration mixed with mutual respect and warmth continued at Fairbanks.

From A Fellow Researcher:

If she had not prodded and supported, encouraged and assisted me, I am certain I would never have completed my doctoral work. I owe that degree to her. She is an amazing, talented and brilliant woman, unique in all the world.

She became Professor of Anthropology Emeritus at the May, 1998 commencement ceremony at UAF. Gordon Hedahl, Dean of CLA at the time, wrote the nomination:

Lydia Black is internationally known as a scholar, with significant contributions to our understanding of Russian America and Alaska. She received the Distinguished Teacher Award, White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and is a Fellow of the Academy of Sciences of Russia, Institute of History. She has been an active and prolific scholar with numerous grants, articles, books and monographs to her credit. Her service with Alaskan Native peoples is also noteworthy; and her recent shepherding of the Veniaminov Bicentennial Project is a prime example of the energy, dedication and care which she devotes to the achievement of excellence and the creation and dissemination of knowledge.



Her retirement from teaching in 1998 was marked by a huge party filled with friends and colleagues. Those who could not attend sent greetings from all over the country.



From William Fitzhugh, 1998:

If we had such things in the US I would nominate you a 'national treasure' ... an anthropological Maya Angelou ...



On the occasion of honoring Lydia Black
 THE BRITISH MUSEUM 25 April 1998

WE CAN'T IMAGINE THAT, AS RENOWNED A SCHOLAR AS DR. LYDIA BLACK IS, THAT SHE EVEN KNOWS WHAT THE WORD "RETIREMENT" MEANS. WE JUST FIGURE ITS GOING TO GIVE HER MORE TIME TO MAKE SURE THAT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PAY BETTER ATTENTION TO THEIR ALEUTIAN COLLECTIONS. DR. BLACK'S LIFETIME OF IMPECCABLE SCHOLARSHIP HAS FORCED THE ALEUTIAN SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY --- OFTEN AGAINST THEIR ENTRENCHED PERCEPTIONS & BELIEFS --- TO "BUY INTO" HER INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY AND ART (OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!) HER ARGUMENTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PERSUASIVE.... WHY LYDIA COULD SELL REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS TO ESKIMOS!

BE THAT AS IT MAY BE, THE SMITHSONIAN'S ARCTIC STORES (the summer boat at Broughton Island c 1900 CENTER WOULD LIKE TO WISH LYDIA: KAEPKOHO ZDOROVIA, TYERDOSTI DUKHA, I DOLGICH LET ZHIZNI!)

Published by British Museum Publications Ltd ET 105
 Printed by P J Day Ltd London SW20
 Fondly & --- Stephen Loring, Igor Kupnik & Bill Fitzhugh



Straightening an icon



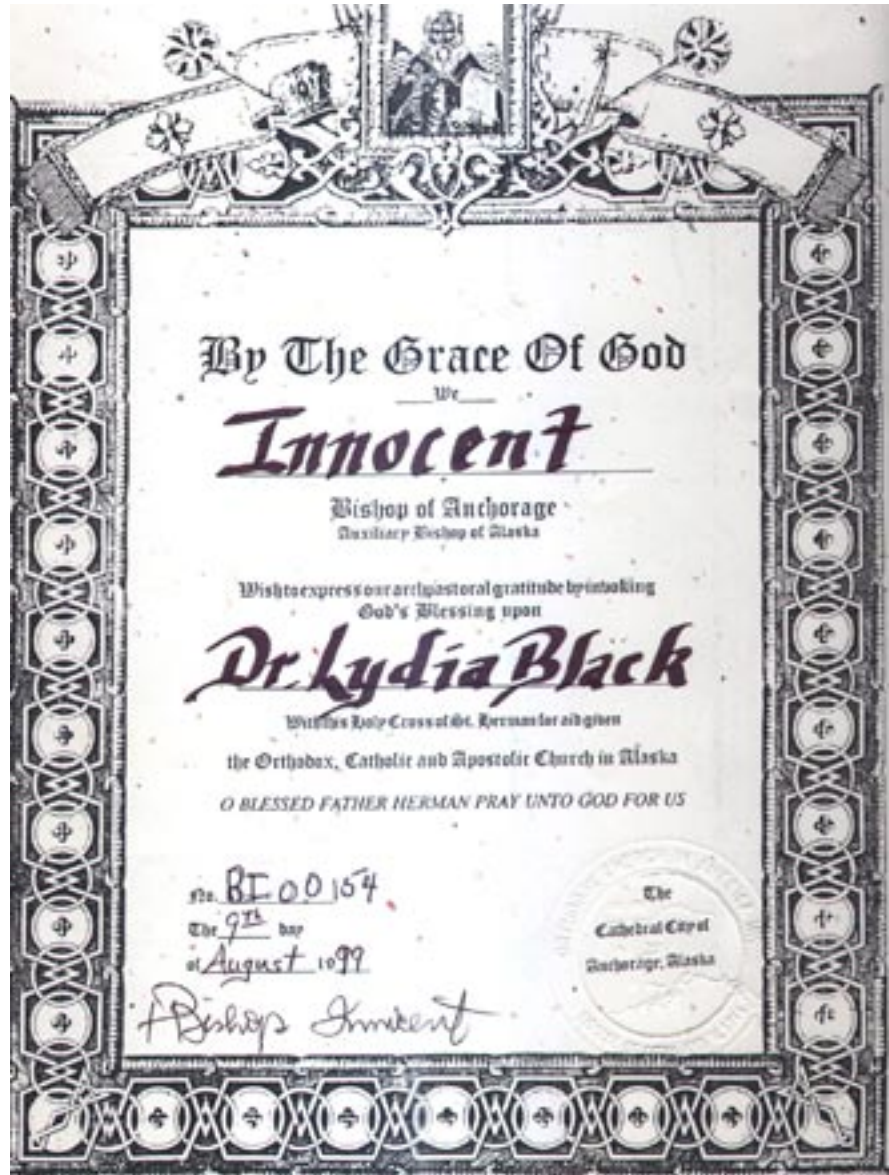
With book conservator Artemis BonaDea and local reporter



With fabric restorer Grishkova



With Librarian of Congress James Billington



During her time in Fairbanks (14 years), she published another 35 books and articles. While they elaborated on themes which were continuous during her career, they branched out to include detailed discussions of the Yupik, Saint Herman, the Finns and Russian fur trappers, and more of her work discussed symbolism, ethnography and ethnohistory in general. Her best remembered books from this era are *Glory Remembered* and *A Good and Faithful Servant*.

Her retirement brought further achievements as she had been invited to St. Herman's Theological Seminary to bring order to their rather chaotic collection of books, documents and artifacts which represented important pieces of Alaska's history and culture. Her contribution to the Church was recognized, and she received the Cross of Saint Herman. She was busy inventorying and obtaining funds and experts to assist in preserving the Church's unique and important collection, but occasionally found time to travel to an occasional conference or write.

Her former students continued to write and let her know of their doings.

From student Arthur:

... you were my greatest teacher who has opened many doors ...

Two years after retiring from teaching, she received a great honor from her colleagues. From the acceptance speech by Molly Lee for Lydia's Alaska Anthropology Association's Lifetime Achievement Award:

I only wish she were with us so that you could witness the "hurrumph" that is her usual response to praise of any sort. It speaks well for Lydia Sergeivna that she's not present, however, and that well past her seventieth birthday, professional commitments have kept her away . . . Professor Black's scholarly contributions are legion. She has written widely on the history and anthropology of Russian America, on Russian exploration, and on the Aleuts and the Aleutian Islands. [She] is also a translator of international reputation, specializing in the literature of early Russian exploration. Her translations made available to northern specialists for the first time works of Hieromonk Gideon, Iakov Netsvetov, and perhaps most importantly the dairies of Father Ioann Veniaminov . . . Dr. Black has conducted fieldwork throughout the Alaskan Interior and the Aleutian Islands and at several sites in the Russian North. Her warmth toward Alaska Native people is evident at her dinner parties when, as she heaps platter after platter of piroshki and other Russian delicacies on the table, she regales her guests with tales of the summer she was invited as a guest aboard a Yukon river barge. Not content with watching the scenery pass by, she volunteered to be ship's cook while she traveled the length of the river, stopping at every village along the way. She counts the friends she made on this trip among the hundreds she remembers with her annual Christmas cards, each written in her old-fashioned . . . cursive . . . she continues to pursue her scholarly interests from her headquarters at the Russian Orthodox Seminary in Kodiak. At the seminary, she enjoys breathing new life into a small museum and sifting through a vault jam-packed with the moldy records . . .

The following year saw her in San Francisco, recognized by the country of her birth as a human bridge between Russia and the United States. The Russian government awarded her the Order of Friendship.

The next year, as many are aware, brought personal devastation as the new Bishop of Alaska abruptly evicted her from the Seminary where she not only worked but lived; the wound he inflicted was deep, but Lydia continued to offer her skills, knowledge and insight to those with a sincere interest in learning about the history of Alaska and its Church. Almost immediately, she found herself teaching again – Saint Innocent's Academy entered her life. These young men and women, guided by Father Paisius, were eager to learn, and Lydia found great joy in teaching them Russian and Alaskan history. Lydia and her students shared the peace which sincere belief brings.



At the San Francisco Consulate

The Year 2003 brought the honor that she valued most of all – an invitation to speak at a conference at Valaam Monastery, celebrating completion of renovations there. It gave her great happiness to speak at the home monastery of Alaska's Saint Herman, and her spirit soared there.

Meanwhile, Lydia had been working on a project which she had conceptualized more than a decade earlier – a concise and accessible summary of the Russian period in Alaska. The year 2004 saw the publication of *Russians in Alaska 1732-1867*, and as of February of this year, www.amazon.com had 142 reviews, all of which give it five stars! The professional reviews were excellent as well.

In 2005, Lydia was recognized by her fellow Alaskans through Alaska's Governor, receiving the 2005 Governor's Award for the Arts & Humanities. From Alutiiq Museum's nomination:

We recommend [Lydia for the Award] for her unique contributions to Alaskan history and their lasting impact on the lives of Alaskans ... Her outstanding scholarship, her knowledge of Russian society, and her personal connection to the Russian Orthodox Church, have provide[d] Alaska with unusually rich access to its heritage. She has given us forgotten and hidden pieces of our history, reuniting us with information inaccessible to most ... her work has significantly enriched knowledge of Native Alaskan history ... allow[ing] Native people to reach beyond living memory into the daily lives of their ancestors at one of the most profoundly influential points in Native history. [She] will tell you that some academics have criticized her for ... not writing about the ills ... Her response is "... My job is to remind them of their glory." This respect for Native Alaskan people infuses [her] scholarship ... She is not only one of Alaska's foremost scholars, but a valued partner in the modern Native heritage movement ... by returning this information to Alaskan communities, she has promoted the exploration of human experience that is central to all ... Her scholarship is a shining example of how the humanities can have a positive, lasting influence on the people they seek to interpret ...

From the Smithsonian Institution, Museum of Natural History, Arctic Studies Center December, 2005 Newsletter:

[We are pleased to pass along the news of the honor recently received by Lydia Black, published in Alutiiq Museum Bulletin, Fall 2005:7]

Our warmest congratulations to Dr. Lydia Black who received the Governor's Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Humanities in October. Sponsored by the Alaska State Council on the Arts, the Alaska Humanities Forum and Governor and Mrs. Frank Murkowski, this prestigious award recognizes an individual who has done exceptional work promoting the exploration of the human experience ... Dr. Black's research on the Russian period of Alaskan History has helped Alaskans to see Native societies at the dawn of Western conquest, and understand both traditional culture and the forces that changed it. For Alutiiqs who seek to understand their heritage and to reawaken traditions disrupted by conquest, Dr. Black's work is an unparalleled gift. She has advanced cultural awareness, encouraged understanding, promoted cultural pride and fostered respect for diversity ... We are honored to work with Dr. Black and so pleased that she received this well-deserved recognition ... She currently lives in Kodiak, where she continues to research Russian and Alaskan history and anthropology and to assist the Alutiiq people.

During 2006, Lydia continued to work on four ongoing projects: a book co-authored with friends and colleagues Richard Dauenhauer and Nora Marks Dauenhauer on the Battles of Sitka (due out summer, 2007), a book on the settlement of the Kodiak archipelago with Donald W. Clark (due out late 2007), a book on the history of Orthodoxy in Alaska with Barbara Sweetland Smith, and she finished up a translation of her good friend Alexei Postnikov's Russian book on Alaska's cartography. Her youngest daughter and son-in-law moved to Kodiak to be with her in August, but unfortunately, Lydia's health began to deteriorate rapidly.



Lydia meets Zoë and Chris at the airport

The start of 2007 saw Lydia weak and spending most of her time in bed. However, Lydia maintained her optimism and good cheer. She received flowers almost daily from around the world during her illness, and her daughter would read her email to her and send off Lydia's dictated responses. Lydia would regale visitors with stories, and often, if you stopped by, there was a virtual party going on in Lydia's bedroom. Friends

from all over Kodiak volunteered to take care of her, visitors flew in from Fairbanks, Unalaska and other parts of the State. They, too, would show how much they loved and appreciated Lydia by volunteering as caretakers. Saint Innocent's Academy sent teams of two every night so that Lydia would have assistance and her daughter and son-in-law could sleep. Lydia would sometimes wake up in the middle of the night ready to discuss religion, politics or history; sometimes, she'd wake up and ask for a hamburger. As Mrs. Tallino put it, however, Lydia was "peaceful" and faced her immobility with good cheer and no complaints. She appreciated each person for the unique individual they are, and she was thankful for the love and tender care which those who kept her company in her final days lavished on her.

From her cousin, Katherine Ilachinski:

... I sent her a book in Russian in which she is mentioned ... Not that she needs any advertisement – she is very well-known – but I am very proud of her achievements ...

From Katherine Arndt:

Thank you for letting us spend some time with you. Despite the current circumstances, there were many hours of conversation in which we could still hear the same Lydia of the past 20 years or so.

From Molly Lee:

It's impossible for me to imagine you flat on your back ... your wonderful spunk is still fully in evidence.

From Barbara Sweetland Smith:

... Please know of my tender regard for you and for our long friendship. I send you many prayers ...

From Alexei Postnikov:

I am very touched by Lydia's care for my book, which shows how strong a will and love for science she has preserved till now ... [Lydia's reply: What, none of the animals sent their greetings? My feelings are hurt ...] Sandra and Misty tried hard to get my attention, when I had been writing to you, but I did not understand that they were sending you their warmest regards and love ...

From Hild Peters nee Sandstede:

Please pass on to Lydia my warmest regards ... I used to speak quite a bit with her when I worked in the Office of International Programs. She always had a twinkle in her eye and it was a pleasure to spend a bit of time with her. She was kind to me and came to my wedding when I married my first, late husband.

From Jerah Chadwick:

I am writing to express my gratitude and appreciation to you, for your scholarship (I am rereading Veniaminov while on sabbatical as I write this) and passion for learning, teaching, and life. I've always admired you for your no-nonsense honesty and directness as well as your humor, and I know all of us whose lives you touched – as a teacher, scholar, mentor and friend – are so much richer ...

From Carol Urness:

... I have always admired you as one of the strong ones, who can overcome anything! ... The journey to Kamchatka is among the best memories of my life, and I know that Mom (now nearing 91) feels the same way. You were then a bridge between the Russians and the others – as you have been throughout your academic career ... [in regard to a new book Dr. Urness has been working on] of course, one of the issues that came up was the form of transliteration. “I’m going to follow Lydia Black in her recent book,” Peter Ulf said. “Good choice,” I replied. ... Every morning I get up and put on my watch and the silver cross I got in Kamchatka. Makes me remember that trip, my Mom, you and a lot of good memories. ... I send you thanks for your friendship; admiration for your scholarly work; love the special person that you are to me and to many others.

Written by Dorothy Urness’ daughter Barbara:

... You and mother met in Kamchatka at a wonderful time in your lives. She remembers you fondly and is praying for you ...

From John R. Bockstoe:

... You are such a special person; Roamayne and Johnny and I are thinking of you and remembering that wonderful time aboard Belvedere in Sitka in 1983.

From John Middleton-Tidwell:

I hope you remember our first meeting in Nelson Graeburn’s office in Berkeley was framed around an argument about the uniform in the Kashavarov water-colour. Sergei Serov looked quite surprised that we would expend so much effort on such a small detail, and that has come to define what I admire about you most, your exactness and attention to detail in all your works. I can’t tell you ... how profound an inspiration you have been to me with Russian-America studies, and how terribly proud I was to stand on the same stage with you at the Russian Consulate-General in San Francisco ... we stood in the centre of the Hagia Sophia, we were standing in “Heaven on Earth” ... [and I] realized that without people like you in my life, such richness would not have been possible. Thank you for opening so many doors, for keeping the flame of inspiration alive, and for passing it along so generously to others.

From her friends and former neighbors:

We have wonderful memories of the time we lived next to you. We miss you and remember you always. With love and great respect, Daniel, Katia & Vladimir

In her retirement, in addition to the books already mentioned above, professionally Lydia continued to keep up with her younger colleagues, publishing another 13 articles and books in nine years. In addition to *Russians in Alaska*, her works *Orthodoxy in Alaska* and *The History and Ethnohistory of the Aleutians East Borough* represent significant contributions to the literature regarding Alaska and its history and culture. It was also while residing in Kodiak that Lydia’s appearances in documentaries about Alaska increased. Probably the best-known of these was *Conquest of America/Northwest Episode*.

From William Fitzhugh:

Your mom is indeed a treasure; she also was a dynamo! I loved every minute we were together ... memories of a most valuable friendship and personal fondness.

From Lydia's family:

We want to thank all those who, upon hearing of Mother's illness, extended their love and friendship through messages, flowers and visits. We thank those who, in tenderness, helped care for her in her final days. We pray for their and their loved ones' health and happiness. We also take this opportunity to express our wish that the work which Mother accomplished in restoring and preserving Alaska's past will not be forgotten.



Lydia at her grandson Kevin McEvoy's wedding in 2004 with (front row) daughter Maria McEvoy, granddaughters Jennifer and Jessica Treiber and (back row) daughter Zoë Pierson, granddaughter Catherine McEvoy, daughter Anna Treiber and granddaughter Mary Ellen McEvoy.

In Memoriam



In gratitude for the truly Christian spirit in which they offer aid and comfort to their fellow man and in tribute to Lydia's commitment to those who seek knowledge, the family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made to:

Saint Innocent's Academy
P.O. Box 1517
Kodiak, AK 99615





Lydia and a visitor standing in front of the memory quilt crafted by friends, students and colleagues on the occasion of her retirement.
