TRANSCRIPTION

OF

RECORDED INTERVIEW

DATE INTERVIEW TAKEN: May 22, 2013

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Transcription of Recorded Interview of

DR. ROMAN PETRYSHYN, taken on the 22nd
day of May, A.D. 2013.

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Appearances:

Ms. Debra RussellInterviewer
Dr. Roman Petryshyn

Transcribed from Recording by:
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(RECORDED INTERVIEW TAKEN WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2013)

DR. ROMAN PETRYSHYN, INTERVIEWED BY DEBRA RUSSELL:

MS. DEBRA RUSSELL: Thanks for doing this interview, Roman. I really appreciate it.

I was thinking maybe we could start with you helping us to understand the nature of your work in the Centre and how you came to do this work.

DR. ROMAN PETRYSHYN: Well, you know, as I think about the last 14 or 15 years, I realize that the Peikoff Chair and the Western Canadian Centre for Deaf Studies has had a very similar trajectory as my centre.

We were both imagined and brought into existence in the era of multiculturalism when the Federal and Provincial Governments were supporting minority cultures in Alberta.

And I came to learn in talking with Michael over the years about how the Centre came to be that it was the same process. He followed the same process that I followed, but we didn't know each other. We were doing the same sort of thing and even with the same person in the Federal Government that was helping us, but independently of each other.

And it was only in later years that I came to realize that we both ended up having endowed chairs with centres devoted to a particular field of study.
So in my case, I helped to create and still run the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre at MacEwan University, and our purpose is to encourage research and then act on that research to intervene in a development process, particularly in Ukraine but also with the Ukrainian community here in Canada.

So over the years, we've been involved in projects -- in a variety of projects. We've been involved in business education in Ukraine; in transferring nursing curricula out to Ukraine; agri business, so we've had exchange of farmers and so on. All of this done not solely on our own resources, because we're a very small staff, but in partnership with content experts in each of these areas.

So my centre is in the business of doing applied research, understanding where there's a possibility for a project, looking for funds, looking for people to carry out the project, putting the whole team together, and then carrying out those projects to make a difference.

And in a variety of fields I think both in Canada and Ukraine, our centre at MacEwan has had some impact. And I like to think that we've done that in the field of deaf studies, and we'll continue to be doing it for a few more years at any
rate.
So that's how our two centres have come to work
together for almost 15 years now.
DEBRA: And your centre is older than 15
years though?
ROMAN: We were created in 1987. When
was --
DEBRA: '86.
ROMAN: '86, yes. So almost
simultaneously. But as I say, we didn't know of
each other or even that we were doing this. I think
it was just in the spirit of the times that the
government and community politics was such that
minority cultures were being supported.
And I ran with that idea in the Ukrainian
community, and of course Michael Rodda ran with that
idea, you know, in the field of deafness and hard of
hearing studies.
DEBRA: And is there a centre that's like
your centre in any other place across Canada?
ROMAN: No. There is here at the
University of Alberta a number of other centres in
Ukrainian studies, so we have -- there's a centre in
modern history, contemporary history; there's the
Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies that
incorporates a variety of such projects in language
education and folklore studies.
But there is not a research and development centre devoted to engaging with contemporary issues, so ours is the only one really in Canada.

DEBRA: Wonderful.

ROMAN: Yeah.

DEBRA: And so then it sounds like in that course of history, your paths crossed, and you and Michael met perhaps through Ihor. I'm not sure.

ROMAN: Yes.

DEBRA: Can you describe a little bit about how that happened?

ROMAN: Well, we were a fairly young centre initially focussing on Ukrainian Canadian projects in dance and culture and choral music and so on, in the arts in particular. But in 1991, the Soviet Union, which had been an enormous political entity with 15 different republics in it, essentially dissolved almost overnight in the space of a few years. What some people would call an empire, really a state of over 250 million people and so on, so something that rivalled the United States in power at the time, it simply collapsed on its own inefficiency and bankrupted itself as a country, financially and morally in many respects, politically.

And out of that emerged independent countries,
15 independent countries, one of which was Ukraine, and perhaps the most westerly oriented of all of the other countries that made up the Soviet Union. So when that happened, there began a lot of contact between west and east because travel in the Soviet Union had been very limited since World War II, at the end of World War II. And people needed to meet each other and needed to simply understand how these two societies might interact in the future.

And my centre at that point turned its attention to working with projects in Ukraine, and we engaged, as I say, in the agri business area with business education and so on and continue to do that to the present time, because the need continues to be there to modernize their educational system and westernize it so that it's a more democratic and a more open society.

So it was at that point that one day a lady walked into my office and started talking to me about her brother, Ihor Kobel, who worked at the School for the Deaf in Lviv, and asked if there was any way that our centre might make it possible for him to come to Edmonton and to engage the deaf community here and to compare their system of education with the one here.

So I agreed, and Ihor Kobel traveled to
Edmonton and spent a considerable amount of time with the Alberta School for the Deaf. And during that visit, came and visited the University of Alberta and met Michael Rodda. And so it was this third person, his presence, that brought Michael and myself together and brought our centres together to a working relationship.

And as I say, the rest is history, because Michael and I in many ways found it very easy to work with one another. I think I could understand his passion and his commitment to his field, and he certainly was open to learning about mine. It was an ongoing learning process for both of us, but I very quickly understood that he was an individual of great commitment but of sort of -- I might even call him a warrior for his field.

He fought absolutely the good fight in a pragmatic way.

DEBRA: Yes.

ROMAN: Everything -- he had been through many struggles to achieve the Centre, to create the Peikoff endowment, and I have no doubt lost as many as he perhaps won, because that's just simply the nature of that kind of role, that you don't win them all.

But we understood each other, and he -- he showed an immediate willingness to travel, to engage
his students in this field of deafness in Ukraine; and he showed a willingness to -- you know, to learn, to be open to all these experiences, new experiences.

So I think we just hit it off and began trying to see where this would go, this combination of deafness and learning about the former Soviet Union and how we might intervene in that society.

DEBRA: And so then what was the first project-oriented work that you did together in Ukraine?

ROMAN: Well, with Ihor Kobel's stimulating us to visit Ukraine, we decided in 1999 to visit Ukraine. And really there were two institutions that we were able to visit at the time: One was Ihor Kobel's school. We needed to actually visit the School for the Deaf in Lviv, which is in western Ukraine; but then we also needed to visit the university that Ihor graduated from with his second degree in Deafness Studies, and that's the Dragomanov National Pedagogical University in the city of Kyjiv.

As it turned out, that university is -- the prior was the one and only prior university dealing with deafness at the time. Much has changed since those years, but there was -- at the centre of their system was this university and these programs.
And so we met with them and met with the leader of their program, Dr. Formachiva, who in February, I think, of 2000 then returned to visit here --

DEBRA: Yes.

ROMAN: -- and came with their most senior person, Yamachenko, who actually was the leading authority who created the new Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine after independence.

DEBRA: Okay.

ROMAN: There's a lot to explain here, but the Soviet system was organized on a vertical basis, and we needed to learn how to operate in that system because decisions around changes to curricula, changes to programs, rested in the hands of a small group of people at the top of the pinnacle.

So change had to come from top down, and so knowing that, they both came to Canada where Michael introduced them very much to various programs we have in deafness studies here in Edmonton and particularly talked to them about sign language --

DEBRA: Okay.

ROMAN: -- and the importance of sign language. The reason being is that the Soviet system had taken on a philosophy that emerged in the 1920s, as I understand it, of lip reading as the primary way of teaching.
And being a very bureaucratized system, once they had accepted that philosophy, they simply carried it forward for the next 70 years. It was very difficult despite people trying there to modernize and change their form of pedagogy. It was very difficult to do away with those original principles.

And so when we arrived in Ukraine, I always like to tell the story about how when you enter a school, there are ten rules that are posted on a board, and there is one of the rules clearly written that sign language was disallowed as a language for the educational process for teaching.

Kids of course communicated in sign language --

DEBRA: Of course.

ROMAN: -- and Michael could see that and many of the teachers communicate with the children, but formally the State had banned sign language as a form of communication in the teaching process.

So Michael, I think, had decided then that that was something that he was going to change. And from the very beginning, he advocated for both with Dr. Formachiva and Yamachenko to accept sign language.

As it happened, Dr. Formachiva never did change her opinion --

DEBRA: No.
1 ROMAN: -- and I think still holds it to this day.
2 DEBRA: Well, when we speak about warriors, I suspect that word would describe her as well.
3 ROMAN: Yes. Michael never gave up on her. You know, for a dozen years or more, he maintained relationships and kept trying to persuade her.
4 But Yamachenko on the other hand, even though he was older and so on, seemed to be supportive as soon as he could see the outcomes of teaching through sign language.
5 And so what happened after this initial visit was that we decided to do several things: First of all, we decided to organize a summer camp. And Formachiva to her credit assisted Michael fully. They arranged a beautiful location, Artec, which is a children's youth centre in Crimea. And they had parents and teachers and students all come together. Really an unheard of practice prior to that.
6 It seems a very simple idea to westerners of course and normal practice in the west, but it was not normal for Soviet teachers of the deaf to consider the opinions of parents and certainly not to listen to children.
7 And the fact that Michael would bring them
together in a recreational environment allowed people to interact as people and to appreciate each other, but then also to begin to learn various methods for teaching children through games and so on. He demonstrated various techniques from western pedagogy for them.

So this turned out to be the beginning of a series of summer camps that went on for over ten years and camps that were held all over Ukraine that involved perhaps as many as -- well, well over a thousand children and parents.

DEBRA: That's impressive.

ROMAN: And what happened is that the parents and the kids really took to this idea of using sign language; the children quite naturally, because they already were users of sign language.

And when Canadian students like Anastasia Benza or, you know, others showed up -- Michael always argued that they should come on these trips, that he always made a point of involving students.

And when the deaf kids in Ukraine met young people signing from Canada, they found a way to communicate very quickly; and the Ukrainian parents were absolutely shocked by this idea that foreigners could communicate with their children when they as parents for years from the birth of their child very often were not able to communicate. And they
couldn't understand why that was so or why their
system didn't encourage sign language.

So parents very quickly became advocates for
sign language, and Michael of course knew that this
would happen. And these summer camps made it
possible to start a movement, really an action by
parents where they began to learn more about signing
and advocate for it. And of course there were many
teachers in these schools that became supporters of
the parents and advocates themselves of using sign
language.

And so that was -- that was a very major
contribution, I think, that Michael made, because
once -- once signing became legitimated by the
presence of these Canadians and professors to boot,
there's no stopping it. It's gone forward, and it's
continuing year after year to earn its place in the
Ukrainian society, particularly in the deaf
community.

DEBRA: How did you fund those camps?
ROMAN: How did we find them?
DEBRA: How did you fund them? Like,
where did that money come from? I mean, it's no
small task to organize summer camps.
ROMAN: Yes, yes. Well, again, this is
something that with Michael's help, we created a
society, just a non-profit society called the Canada
Ukraine Alliance for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

DEBRA: Okay.

ROMAN: And these two societies carried the responsibility for organizing summer camps and funding them. The Ukraine side carried the responsibility for the organization. And I must say, their schools also carried -- provided in kind contributions in food and various different ways and bussing costs and so on in Ukraine.

But it was the Canadian side that provided the cash or the money that was needed to cover those areas that weren't covered by the schools in Ukraine.

And so over the years, with the help of good people in the community here in Alberta in particular, but not only Alberta -- people helped us from other places, including the Canadian Society for the Deaf that processed our tax receipts and so on -- but in general we provided about $5,000 a year for over ten years to allow these camps to be run.

And it was a very good investment, and it had its effect. There's no doubt it's had its effect, and I believe it's still a very useful mechanism if one wants to make a social change.

DEBRA: Yes.
1 ROMAN: And, you know, using a recreational environment to decide on a course of action with people returning home intent on achieving something before next summer, it's a good strategy, and it worked well.

6 DEBRA: And the power of parents.

7 ROMAN: And the power of parents, absolutely. There's no stopping them once they make up their mind.

10 There's a lot still to be done of course, because the Ukrainian Sign Language was not -- was not documented. With the exception of a couple of pamphlets that had been produced during Soviet times, there were no handbooks or guidebooks or -- that was before video and before the Internet of course, and so there really were no educational materials or resources.

18 DEBRA: Which is interesting, because Russian Sign Language has had some early research that parallels the American Sign Language in the late '60s, but again western and eastern worlds, no exchange of information.

23 ROMAN: Yes. It's a great shame, and it's something that we regretted that scientists and researchers didn't have freedom of communication and freedom of access to each other, because I'm sure both sides could learn much from each other, as was
the case with this whole project.

But Michael suggested that we begin to videotape people signing, various kinds of communications. And I remember buying this small video camera, because the Ukrainian side didn't have the resources for it.

And so they began to make videos and began to classify and categorize them, until you came along and really took that project and mentored the Ukrainian side.

In 2004, it should be said that the contact that Michael had made by doing this work with Professor Bondar at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences -- Bondar headed the Institute for Special Pedagogy where Deafness was located, and he was a very progressive person and had agreed to come to Canada and visit Michael in 2004.

And at that time, we signed an agreement between the University of Alberta and MacEwan University and Dragomanov University and particularly the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences.

And so once the Academy was fully committed to advancing the cause of deaf studies, Professor Bondar created a research laboratory. It initially had eight positions, and I can recall, Debra, you insisting that half of those positions be given to persons who are deaf or persons who are fully fluent
in sign language.

This too was a big shock for Professor Bondar to employ people in these research institutes, which is considered a very high level, of people who had perhaps no university training or perhaps some university training, but certainly not postdoctoral training and research.

But the authority that Canadians had developed had grown to such a level that Professor Bondar listened to the advice he was given. He did employ people in this new research laboratory who relied on sign language and began formally to do videotaping and research on Ukrainian Sign Language.

And that too, I would say, is something that has been continuing since it's been started and is now part of the research -- a permanent part of the research agenda and structure of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences; which it should be said then led to sign language being allowed as a language of education, for two hours a week albeit.

So far it's only two hours a week, but it is now permitted by regulations of the Ministry of Education as a language for teaching purposes in the boarding schools where deaf students reside.

DEBRA: Those are major changes.

ROMAN: Those are major changes. And --

DEBRA: And started from --
ROMAN: So not only did sign language get legitimized and established with the parents, it has been now recognized as a legitimate subject for research in the institutions devoted for this purpose.

So these are -- these are very significant changes which I do not believe will be reversed. On the contrary, they seem to be spreading and growing and gaining strength as teachers of the deaf begin taking advantage of these new openings and these new opportunities.

So out of all of this process has come an association of teachers of the deaf in Ukraine. As I understand it, it's a national group, unlike Canada. We don't have such a national group in Canada.

DEBRA: We don't have it.

ROMAN: And they are very much advocates for the advancement of this field.

So in all of these ways, Michael truly was a champion for the deaf students in Ukraine and teachers as well, and he brought -- he brought his expertise and his willingness to be open to all these experiences and to kind of roll with it year in, year out, for -- as I say, for close to 15 years.

He worked at this while he was at the
University of Alberta. Then once he retired, he came over to MacEwan University and continued to work at this with the Ukrainian Centre at MacEwan University.

DEBRA: I don't think Michael ever really retired. You know, I think he may have moved institutions, but I don't think he retired. And one of my memories of being with Michael and you in Ukraine the first time I went is that work is what he did. And so I think we began our mornings at 7, and we held meetings and traveled around and did the work of the project. And if we collapsed into bed around 10:30 at night, that was an early evening, it seems to me.

But he was tireless, it seemed like, in that work --

ROMAN: Yes.

DEBRA: -- and yet could touch everyone from students to the highest level of political influence.

So can you tell me a little bit about how he and you then became academicians?

ROMAN: Yes.

DEBRA: Where did that come from, and what is that?

ROMAN: Well, the concept of an academician in the former Soviet Union and still is
present in the independent Ukraine has to do with the structure of how education is structured. So unlike North America, in the former Soviet Union and in some European countries, teaching and research are formally divided into two systems.

So teaching takes place at colleges, universities in Ukraine, as it does here; but in Ukraine, there's an entire system devoted to research so that in general it's in every field. So it would be in physics, in the sciences, you know, in law, in medicine. There are separate what are called academies.

And these are pyramids of structure, because the universities, colleges being at the bottom of the pyramid with students and professors, but out of that come a small group of people who enter into this research structure.

So in addition to what role they might offer by way of teaching, they have a separate title as researchers who prepare Ph.D.s in research in the field as opposed to teachers in the field.

So an academician would be someone at the top of his field and a member of the Academy -- of his own academy, of medicine, of law, or pedagogy; and would have perhaps a hundred, 200, some might have as many as 500 researchers under them; separate facilities, separate budgets devoted solely to
So the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences is a category that relates to the field of education of deaf students, and Michael was nominated as an international member of the Academy.

DEBRA: Are there many international members?

ROMAN: No. There are very few. In fact, the Academy itself I think has 120 members for Ukraine --

DEBRA: Right.

ROMAN: -- Ukraine being a country of, say, about 46 million today with hundreds of post-secondary institutions. So you can imagine that if you're in the circle of 120 people --

DEBRA: Yes.

ROMAN: -- in this research system, that you have prestige and an ability to operate that others do not.

The Academy also has a special role in advising the Government, education being a Federal jurisdiction in Ukraine, advising the Ministry of Education about changes it might make to its system.

So that when an academician and his institute of course and the research that goes into this kind of recommendation puts forward a series of ideas to the Ministry, those are listened to very carefully.
And so Michael was able to influence people at the very top of this pyramid about sign language, about the need to study sign language and document it, about the need to speak to parents about the early detection of deafness, about the social model of deafness as well as the medical model of how it might be looked at and dealt with.

He was able to work very closely with Professor Bondar and other people at the Academy to communicate some of these ideas. This is that process of legitimation I talked about earlier, that it's because of Michael's status as a professor in Canada and his publications and so on that allowed him to speak on a peer basis with people in the Academy. And they thought highly enough of the recommendations and work that he did to offer him this honorary appointment, which he accepted and I think surely deserved.

DEBRA: It seems like both of you surely deserved that honour. And it's clear that both of you operated from a systemic point of view; you know, that from what you have described, individual projects were important, but it seemed like both of you stood back and said, What would be the largest way to impact a society?

And so it seems like you've worked the political processes, the government processes, the
economic processes to bring around sustainable long-term change as opposed to a short-term project change.

ROMAN: Yeah, absolutely. You know, you're right that the end purpose is to improve the system and the services that are provided.

But in Michael's case -- and I think I learned a lot about this from him -- is that he would start with very small things and just continue to leverage them into this larger picture.

So, for example, this business of supporting students, I watched as he brought students right into the Alliance and would take them to Ukraine; so that a number of his younger students -- Amber Schultz, for example, a student recently -- I think 2010 -- she went to the summer camp in Ukraine because of Michael's wish that a student be taken.

Now, it worked the other way as well, because once the Ukrainians saw that he brought students, that kicked off another dynamic; and Ihor Kobel, who was a teacher, then approached Michael about becoming a Master's student here at U of A.

So Michael immediately picked up and acted on that, so Ihor Kobel in fact came to the University of Alberta, completed his Master's and his Ph.D., financed to a large part by Michael's efforts through the University of Alberta and his own work
of course in doing the research and studies. And then Ihor returned now with a Canadian Ph.D. to Ukraine and is invited to become a professor at the Ukrainian Catholic University.

So he had been a teacher in the School for the Deaf; now he's been invited to work to develop programs for deaf students at the Ukrainian Catholic University, which allowed Ihor to be invited to Gallaudet University in Washington on a full-ride scholarship so that he could learn more in his work.

So you can see how Michael's insistence on having undergraduate students attend triggered other people to act in a way which eventually is the question of creating a new program --

DEBRA: Absolutely.

ROMAN: -- at a university. So I think these are very wise lessons that he demonstrated. And, you know, I take and learn from those kinds of -- attend to the small -- smaller projects because they certainly can become larger ones.

DEBRA: What I learned from Michael as well in that work is that it's about the importance of building relationships and long-term relationships and letting them decide what they need, when they need it, why they need it, and being there to offer support and resources but not necessarily leading but having them lead.
And so I think he left us with many lessons.

ROMAN: Yes, he did.

DEBRA: For those of us who are remaining, unfortunately Michael has passed now, and so we carry on his legacy in Ukraine.

What do you think is next? What would Michael want us to do as the next steps?

ROMAN: Well, I think he'd be very well, I know he's very impressed because he saw you working on this question of codifying sign language in Ukraine and fighting for deaf teachers who are in the residential boarding schools to be given the role of teaching in sign language.

They're there. The resource is there. It's just that even though some of these teachers -- deaf teachers have completed their university and so on, they have been underutilized within the residential boarding schools.

And once again, we need to continue to legitimate the role that sign language has and to invite these deaf teachers at the boarding schools back into the classroom where they should be --

DEBRA: Yes.

ROMAN: -- and to empower them to use their skills so that they become, first of all, effective teachers to these deaf kids, teaching, you know, physics, science, history, and so on; and also
role models so that deaf children in Ukraine can see
that their future occupations don't have to be
limited solely to, you know, technical occupations
of the kind that the deaf have had in the past in
various kinds of factories and so on.

But they can also work in the field of
education and in fact can be a lot better at it than
perhaps some teachers who don't have the skill level
to teach sign language.

DEBRA: Not unlike our Ukrainian
bilingual schools or our French immersion schools.

ROMAN: Yes. Native speakers are of
course the best.

So I think that Michael was very proud of the
way that you have picked up on some of the leads
that are there, recognized them, and are again
providing leadership and mentorship to the people
who can make a difference in this system in Ukraine.

And so I think if we keep chipping away perhaps
at small projects, then we'll make a difference. It
does take a few years, but you've been at it now, I
think, perhaps six or eight years yourself so that
you're beginning to understand the cycle, you know,
this 10- or 12-year cycle.

But certainly each cycle is at a higher level
than the previous one. And I think the vision of
deaf students going to universities -- the ones who
are interested and talented of course -- and graduating from graduate programs in universities, the future in Ukraine is something that one can envision today thanks to the work that both you and Michael have done.

DEBRA: There's something I should have asked you about Michael that I haven't.

ROMAN: Please do.

DEBRA: So if you had to describe sort of his three top characteristics -- I mean, you did describe him as a warrior.

ROMAN: Yeah.

DEBRA: But if you think about sort of his characteristics that have really carried his work forward, what would those three characteristics be?

ROMAN: Well, I would say that this business of persistence and commitment is probably my first choice for him. It's -- he understood that his life was dedicated to this field and that, you know, seeing the beginning and seeing the end was probably very difficult, whereas somewhere in the middle, but you can move that middle point forward. And I think he saw himself in this flow and persisted at it and would not give up. In fact, did not give up to his last moments.

DEBRA: Yes.
ROMAN: So he was very active. In fact, he came out of hospital to attend the annual general meeting of the Alliance.

DEBRA: Amazing.

ROMAN: His wife and daughter wheeled him -- or son, sorry. -- his son, they wheeled him into the annual meeting, and he stepped down and became past president. And, you know, it wasn't long after that that he passed away.

So persistence is certainly a feature of his life.

I would say this -- I'm going to mention a little more about this business of warrior, because there were times when Michael had to take a position in opposition to others. Perfectly normal when you get to those levels. There's -- there are always challenges from either a bureaucracy or a government agency or someone who doesn't understand, doesn't care to understand.

And at that time -- at those times, Michael could be quite firm, was very firm. And he had his battles, but I think those are things that he never took personally. He knew he may have been on one side and someone else on the other. And I witnessed a few of these struggles. He certainly never gave in.

But at the same time, he was -- continued to be
friends with people he worked with, even though it might have been a very heated exchange. But he didn't carry grudges or personalize. On the contrary, he was the most generous of individuals.

I saw this very much to be the case once when he walked in Lviv and he noticed a girl whose eyes were encrusted and so on. And as I understood what he told me later, he diagnosed her as having a particular kind of condition, and it wasn't dealt with because the family simply didn't have the money to send her to a doctor.

So he simply pulled out money out of his wallet and had her go for medical treatment with his diagnosis, and sure enough, it made an enormous difference to this young child.

So generosity, you know, is a strong characteristic of his.

And generous in so many communities. While his passion was the deaf and hard of hearing community, I mean, certainly in the latter stages of life, he fundraised like crazy through his church for, I think --

The Caribbean.

Yes.

He did the wheelchair project in the Caribbean. And he traveled abroad to the Philippines. You know, so he definitely felt a need
of people around the world and broadly. And he did
as much as one person could possibly do to
contribute to some solutions in these various areas.

So in terms of the third characteristic, many
things, you know, one could say. He was very proud
of his family, very committed to young people in
general. But he also -- I would say he just had a
youthful spirit to him. He loved a good joke. He
loved relating to young people. He was just a very
unique human being.

And I find this is one of the gifts I have
received and returned for getting engaged with this
whole deal with him is it's something that I have
come to understand is community of the deaf is full
of such unique people and just -- I don't know --
unique personalities and caring people who -- maybe
it's because the deaf community takes the time to
communicate, actually takes the time to talk, much
more than the mainstream society.

And so relationships are deeper, and people
know more about each other inside the deaf
community. I recognize this because it's also
true -- not as much, but it's true in, you know, the
Ukraine community and other communities. Once
you're in one of these communities of commitment,
you get to know about other people, and it's truly a
human kind of experience. And, you know --
DEBRA: I like how you have described it in terms of a community of commitment.

ROMAN: Yes, yes.

DEBRA: It really is the Ukrainian community, the deaf community.

ROMAN: Yes. And so I've come to understand this about communities as a result of these kinds of experiences. Had I not had an opportunity to get involved with the deaf community, I would be poorer for it.

And so it's been a remarkable element of my sort of experience and professional development, and I've enjoyed it.

DEBRA: We're lucky the two of you met.

ROMAN: Yes.

DEBRA: The two of you have been a power duo for sure in Ukraine.

Is there anything you wish you could have said to Michael that you didn't have a chance to before he left us?

ROMAN: Well, as it happened, I did visit him quite often in the hospital, and we talked about some of these things. I think -- you know, I had a chance to express some of these things to him.

But I guess I would like his family in particular to appreciate how much he meant to others. He spent a fair amount of time traveling
internationally and doing some of these things; and, you know, I guess I'd like his family to know that it was much appreciated by all of us.

He's made a very significant development certainly in my life but in Ukraine as a country. You know, what was happening in 2001, 2002 in these summer camps, a few thousand people were affected. But some of these things have now become institutionalized, and they're -- you know, there's well over a hundred thousand people in the deaf community in Ukraine.

They have been reading about Michael and his work in the newspapers and their publications at their conferences and so on, and I think that, as I have mentioned before, these are irreversible. Once people have a taste for the freedom to communicate in sign language or freedom in general, they don't give it up easily.

And so Michael has made this gift of freedom to the whole Ukrainian society. And wherever I have a chance to talk about it in Canada or in Ukraine, I think people are very attentive and appreciative of the significance of breaking such ground.

Because it took a special personality to put aside all of the other work he had. I'm sure there was no shortage of work on his desk, but he put it all aside and just hopped on a plane and jumped into
a country that very few of us knew much about at the
time. But he did it. And today there are a lot of
people that are benefitting from that.

DEBRA: That's a great way to end it.

Thank you very much.

ROMAN: You're very welcome. Thanks for
doing this.

DEBRA: My pleasure.

ROMAN: I appreciate it.

DEBRA: I think it's important that we
honour Michael in the way that he was a significant
person in history, and I don't know that we'll see
another one like Michael for a very long time.

ROMAN: Absolutely. Well, I'm confident
we will see such people, because I recognize them.
And as I say, there are many in the deaf community.

But it's true that he broke ground on this
bridging the isolation that the Soviet society had.
That's never to be repeated.

But in terms of original things yet to be done,
oh, there's lots of work.

DEBRA: Thank you, Roman.

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INTERVIEW CONCLUDED

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Certificate of Transcription

I, Jeffrey Weigl, CSR(A), RMR, CRR, certify that I transcribed the record, which was recorded by a sound-recording machine, to the best of my skill and ability, and the foregoing pages are a complete and accurate transcript of the contents of the record.

Dated at the City of Edmonton, Province of Alberta, this 12th day of June, A.D. 2013.

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J. Weigl, CSR(A), RMR, CRR
Official Court Reporter