

CONNECTIONS

NEWSLETTER #2

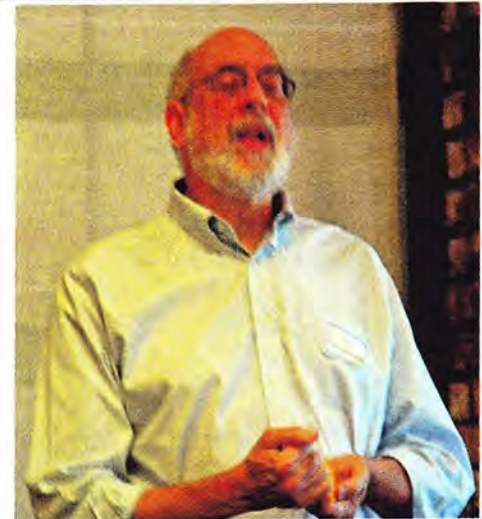
Fall 2012

Luncheon Speaker November 9th

The fall luncheon event will be held at Marie Calendar's restaurant located at Cedar & Shaw avenues (1781 E. Shaw, Fresno) from 11:00am to 1:30pm. The first half hour is an informal 'meet and greet' mingling, before sitting down at 11:30am to order our meals and socialize while eating. Lunch is free for ERFA members and for prospective joiners attending as guests. The featured speaker will make his presentation at 12:15 to 1:00p.m., after which a chapter business session is held. A major agenda item is the discussion of the revised draft Mission Statement and the proposed By-Laws of our organization in order to formally constitute ourselves as a self-governing body with elected officers.

Chris Fiorentino, Director of CSU, Fresno's nationally recognized Jan & Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning, will speak on "Student Volunteerism." His presentation will focus in part on the challenges of establishing and growing this program as well as assessing its impact on the community and on student participants. It will also include preparation of student volunteers to be effective in their assigned responsibilities.

Chris is a native of Fresno, having obtained his undergraduate and graduate education at CSU, Fresno. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Education Counseling. In 1993 he was hired to direct the campus's community service efforts. Under his leadership, the university's commitment to service in the community has grown to 16,000 students each year. During the last 3 years, Fresno State has provided in excess of one million hours of service annually. Mr. Fiorentino also serves in leadership positions on the boards of local non-profit organizations.



ERFA Luncheon Report

Our first luncheon in seventeen years was held on May 11, 2012. Twenty-two people attended. **Ted Anagnoson**, pictured above, was our guest speaker. His talk on the "Survival of CalPERS in the 21st Century," a summary of which appeared in the June edition of the *CSU-ERFA Reporter*, was very well received by all who attended. During the business portion of the luncheon, a number of issues related to the revival of our local organization were discussed, including current membership, the draft mission statement, and membership recruitment. Ideas were solicited from those in attendance, which included formation of interest groups, support for research, and volunteerism.

PROFILE: Professor Emeritus Alfred Evans, Political Scientist

[Dr. Evans is a Russian Studies specialist, whose career at CSU, Fresno started in 1979. He has continued his academic interest in retirement (2007) by examining civil society and protest movements in Russia. He speaks Russian and has made 10 trips to the Soviet Union and Russia. His latest visit to Russia in June 2012 was sponsored by a CSU-ERFA grant for scholarly research on "interest group politics" in Russia when social activists were engaged in street demonstrations against the ruling regime. He conducted extensive interviews in Moscow with people involved in the opposition movement. Professor Evans is very grateful for the generous support of the CSU-ERFA grant, which made his research possible by covering his airfare and hotel costs. It did not pay for per diem expenses and the hiring of a local research assistant.]

Prior to his most recent research in Moscow, Professor Evans operated "institution building" programs for fledgling non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were involved in civil society -- bringing 5 contingents of journalists, entrepreneurs, women's groups, local government officials, etc. to Fresno for 3-5 weeks to partner with American counterparts. These "relationship building" exercises were conducted under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, which provided \$600,000 in grant funding to the university to administer over 5 years (1999 – 2004). The purpose was to enable Russians to compare organizing principles and civic engagement methods, plus organizational structures, and return home with new ideas to cross fertilize their efforts -- planting seeds for long term development of an emerging democracy.

Asked about his observations and conclusions about recent public events in Russia based on his June 2012 visit, Dr. Evans offered the following perspective. A major segment of society is dissatisfied and disaffected; and they are demanding changes that address the increasing concentration of power by ruling elites, pervasive corruption and injustice, and structural economic inequality -- all of which contribute to a diminished quality of life for citizens. Moreover, the transition from totalitarianism of the Soviet Union toward democracy in Russia has been accompanied by a disruption in societal values and a technological divide between the old television generation and the new internet generation, with the latter subject to state controlled media and the latter open to free flow of information from abroad. There is also geographic tension between rural and urban populations, with the former more supportive of President Putin and the latter agitating for so-called "small deeds" reforms to establish more representative democracy in local government district councils (even in the capital city of Moscow). The situation is not unstable, a condition that the populace fears; but tensions and conflicts are rising as disillusionment festers. Elections at national, and regional levels are considered meaningless because of political manipulation by the ruling regime. Consequently, Russians are not optimistic about the future. For now, as one of Dr. Evans' interviewees stated: "There is a non-aggression agreement between the people and the government," which is often undermined when public officials and private elites trample the rights of citizens and violate the public trust -- leading to an increasing sense of powerlessness and hopelessness. Finally, with so many political parties (e.g. communists, nationalists, fascists, etc.) pressing their agendas, it is difficult to predict how the various socio-economic forces and the multiple interest groups will shape a new Russia over the next few decades. [NOTE: Dr. Evans plans to present his analysis of recent events in Russia at the national convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies in New Orleans (November 2012) and at the annual conference of the Western Political Science Association (March, 2013)]

[Editor's Note: This profile is the first of an occasional series planned for future issues of "Connections." Please submit names of other retirees whom you know to be leading unusual and interesting lives in retirement. Contact the newsletter editor, John Shields johnshi@csufresno.edu .]

The CSU-ERFA Foundation is now accepting grant proposals. The research grant deadline is December 17, 2012. Grants are for CSU-ERFA members pursuing scholarly research, creative projects, and publications. Grants up to \$6000 are available for the 2012-2013 grant cycle. Grant applications, guidelines, and submission information may be downloaded from the CSU-ERFA website at <http://www.csuerfa.org> or contact the CSU-ERFA office at (818) 718-7996.