

1992 and 2007) and authored numerous television and radio programmes on folklore and folk belief.

Mare is a member of many institutional (scientific) councils, editorial boards of international publications, as well as international professional associations and working groups. International cooperation fills a considerable part of her summers, which are dedicated to conferences and fieldwork, as well as writing or editing articles, usually several at a time. She has also supervised a number of master's as well as doctoral theses.

Mare's contribution to Estonian national culture is considerable; she has made endless efforts to advocate folkloristics, delivering lectures to teachers, astronomers, schoolchildren, pensioners, and others in schools, different courses and county libraries. As an eloquent speaker, she is in great demand and fails to refuse even if she has no time for it. Her colleagues admire her initiative, working capacity and scope of interests; yet, they also know that in recent decades administrative work has consumed a great deal of her energy, often at the expense of creative work.

On August 26, 1991, while on a fieldwork expedition in Torma parish, Mare wrote in her diary: "How little a folklorist needs to be happy – one really wonderful story and you already sprout wings!" May there be plenty of beautiful stories to come to instigate your folkloristic activities! We wish you all the happiness, tenacity and good health, so that you could initiate and realise all your spirited ideas!

Piret Voolaid

"FRIENDS, THOUGH ABSENT, ARE STILL PRESENT"

The ancient proverb "Friends, though absent, are still present", already known to that great rhetorician Cicero, is a perfect piece of folk wisdom to describe the deep and lasting friendship between Arvo Krikmann at Tartu, Estonia, and myself at distant Burlington, Vermont, in the northeastern corner of the United States. One might well ask how we two folklorists and paremiologists became acquainted, and yet, it is well known that scholars with similar interests are bound to find each other, no matter where they happen to live in the world. By way of discovering each other's published work, a keen interest to communicate with the respected and admired colleague arises that will quite naturally result in an epistolary relationship, an exchange of publications, meetings at international conferences, and over time a sincere friendship that is not hindered by the thousands of miles between the two residences and work places.

This kind of rite of passage certainly happened to Arvo Krikmann and me, even though it took many years for us to finally meet in person. Arvo, being five years older than I am, has always been a few steps ahead of me in age and accomplishments. It was thus quite natural that at the beginning of my professorial career he was of an immense

influence on me. I will never forget when I came across his seminal publication, titled *On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs* (1974), and its addendum, *Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs* (1974). A decade later I had the honor to republish both of them in *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* (1984 and 1985), and the invaluable insights on the polyfunctionality, polysituativity, and polysemanticity of proverbs presented in them have influenced me and others during the past forty years. It is with so much joy and delight that I tell my folklore and proverb students that Arvo Krikmann is not only a world-class scholar, but he also happens to be my very special friend. I also explain to them that it is such deep friendships that make scholarship so special, for scholarly research without the support and interest of friends is like working in a lifeless vacuum. Of course, I also give my students Arvo Krikmann's book *Proverb Semantics: Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor* (2009) as a present. I had edited this volume comprised of eight invaluable articles by Arvo as a present to him on his seventieth birthday. The book has a cover illustration that shows both of us at the Second Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs at Tavira, Portugal, in November 2008. The students have told me that this picture and my introduction have made it clear to them what friendship means in the scholarly world.

The political situation during the long period of the Cold War did not permit us to meet each other for many years, but I simply took the liberty to send book packages to

Tartu that included new paremiological publications and the annual *Proverbium* volumes. The Iron Curtain as well as the fact that I cannot communicate in Estonian and that Arvo was reluctant to use his excellent knowledge of the English language kept us from entering into a state of frequent communication with each other. And yet, both of us felt that there was a natural bond between us as kindred spirits. I know that my thoughts often wandered to Tartu when I was once again quoting Arvo in one of my books or articles. And he



On July 21, 2014, Arvo Krikmann celebrates his 75th birthday.

has subsequently told me that he, too, would sit at his desk wondering what Wolfgang would think of his newest publication. It is easy to imagine the joy we both felt when a package would arrive with a major scholarly achievement, to wit, the five massive and invaluable volumes of *Eesti vanasõnad* (1980–1988).

The ice was broken when Arvo sent me a letter on November 29, 1993, with the following heart-warming declaration: “Wow, when the iron curtain has ceased to exist and our shock of freedom lived through as well, it is obviously the ultimate hour for me to break the silence, to convince you that rumors about my death are strongly exaggerated, to thank you for the literature you have sent us (bibliographies, *Proverbium*, Vols. 1–10, etc.), and, also, to offer some collaboration.” And on December 10, 1993, I responded with much excitement: “Thank you so much for writing. I was always a little disappointed that you never responded to getting *Proverbium*, but I understood the political situation, of course! Now we should be able to communicate from time to time. I treasure and respect and admire your theoretical work!” With these two letters we began our correspondence, and we both treasure these epistles that have amassed to well over five hundred pages during the past twenty years. They are a lasting testimony of our close friendship and sincere interest in each other’s work.

And then, finally, another ten years later, in 2004, the time had come for us two paremiological work-horses and epistolary friends to meet in person at an international meeting commemorating the Lithuanian paremiologist Kazys Grigas at Vilnius. We were almost like two little children waiting for a big birthday or Christmas present! Almost poetically Arvo wrote to me on January 30, 2004: “Some little Lithuanian birds have chirped that you aim to fly to Vilnius and participate in the memorial conference for Kazys Grigas on March 5, 2004. Please, let me know if it is true. If it is, then I seem to have got, better late than never, a happy chance to meet you in the flesh. What a miracle, what a miracle! If we really meet, may I take with me some newer Estonian books for you, or do you prefer to get them by post?” I responded on the same day (e-mail makes it possible!), by employing Arvo’s “bird”-metaphor as well: “YES, the little bird has spoken the truth. I will indeed come to Vilnius – a big reason is wanting to meet you and some of the other dear friends from Eastern Europe. I am so much looking forward to meeting you finally. Yes, I could carry a couple of books back to America. But please remember, the suitcase holds only so much. I will see you soon, my dear friend. Who would ever have thought that this glorious day would happen? Now it is here!” Rereading these excerpts still brings tears to my eyes. My proverb students, to whom I have read a few of these letters, have told me that they helped them to understand what I meant by telling them about the importance of friendships among professors.

In July 2005, the 14th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research took place at Tartu, and this gave me the opportunity to visit Arvo and his dear wife Luule in that beautiful Estonian city. Those summer days belong to some of my fondest memories, and I so much enjoyed my time together with Luule and Arvo in their beautiful home. Here are some touching words that my friend Arvo wrote to me on August 16, 2005, after I had returned to the United States: “All the first week of August I could not get you out of my head and mind and heart and memories. Everything I told Luule was so exclusively about you that she finally asked if everything was okay with me. Though, to be honest, she herself suffered from the same disease as well. It is very

hard for me to believe that such sunny beings can exist, without any black holes in their souls, without any skeletons in their closets, absolutely unable to do bad deeds, say bad words or think bad thoughts. Please forward to your dear Mrs. Barbara our cordial thanks for her greetings and also the very best wishes from both Luule and me.” My response on the same day echoed these feelings: “Thank you, thank you for your wonderful letter! I was so deeply touched by your kind words, expressing the same feelings that I have had ever since I saw you at Tartu. We really did spend a lot of memorable time with each other, and I feel that we have all become very close friends. I keep thinking how it would be if we could have worked together on proverbial matters for the past decades! Imagine what we could have accomplished together. We obviously have the same work ethics and the same enthusiasm for our work. There is no doubt, Kriku, that you are one of my heroes! I have so much admiration for you personally and also for your incredible scholarship. It is no surprise to me any longer that you have received many prizes and that you are one of the academy members. You deserve all of this, and I am so proud to be your colleague and friend. Barbara too has observed that I talk a great deal about both of you. I think that Kriku has taken over the role of Alan Dundes [he died on March 30, 2005] in my life. You know how much he meant to me, and I feel less lonely now that I know that you are in my life. Thank you for helping me deal with my loneliness. Here is wishing you both and your family the very best. My thoughts are often with you at Kastani 59! Barbara sends her love as well, and she hopes that she will also meet you in the future.”

Wolfgang Mieder