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PROFESSOR MAUREEN MINIELLI AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN UKRAINE

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On 25 February, 2019, the on-line scholarly journal *Cognition, communication, discourse* lost one of most devoted members of its editorial board. Dr Maureen Minielli better known to all her colleagues as ‘Mo’ passed away in Klaipeda, Lithuania, where she was teaching for a semester. The global reaction for her untimely passing immediately filled Facebook while Routledge published an obituary of this outstanding woman (Finch et al., 2019). As her friends put it, Maureen was passionate about travel, but really, she was passionate about people (Finch et al., 2019).

In 1965, Maureen was born to Dean and Marcia Montgomery in Chicago, IL. She had two siblings, Pete and Michelle. It was her father who inspired her watching and attending baseball. Her love of sports and reminiscence of her father made Mo a true fan of Chicago Cubs for the rest of her life.

Starting at the Harrisburg Area Community College, she attained an associate’s degree in Liberal Arts. In 1987, she received a B.A. in Communication from the University of Pittsburg which brought up her interest in presidential rhetoric, and in 1991, a M.A. from Penn State. Both her theses *The Rhetoric of Ronald Reagan about El Salvador from 1981-1983* and *The Rhetorical Visions of Reagan and Bush in Selected Speeches* focused on the rhetoric of American presidents.

Her teaching career, starting in Montgomery, Alabama, from an instructor of Speech and Director of Forensics for Alabama State University, brought her all around the world. In 1992 she moved to St. Joseph’s College in Indiana where she taught speech, directed forensics, and acted as department chair. Then, Maureen worked at St. Cloud State University until 2001, and later became a lecturer at Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI). In 2006, Maureen finished her Ph.D. with Penn State and defended a dissertation *The Rhetoric of the 1972 Presidential Election: An Analysis of Four Nixon Crisis Speeches*. In 2006, Maureen and her family moved to New York City where she took a position with the City University of New York’s Kingsborough Community college. She was on sabbatical from Kingsborough teaching and researching in Lithuania when she passed.

Maureen always found time for her family: her husband and the only daughter Lauren born in 2003; her Facebook was filled with the daughter’s photos and the mother’s travels.

As a member of the International Communication Association (ICA) she widely traveled in Europe (Poland, Ukraine, the former Soviet block countries) and was most energetic to promote “communication” as a new discipline to Eurasia. As early as 2006, she began a most productive cooperation with Ukrainian universities. In the international conference “Cognitive-pragmatic research of professional discourses” held in V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, she gave us a brilliant example of research in political rhetoric, mainly the use of frame analysis for the study of political communication (Minielli, 2006). At the 2018 conference in Kyiv, I was impressed by her intelligence, her subtle understanding of Ukrainian social and educational problems, and even more – by her great sense of humor. I will always think of Mo as a workaholic. She would come

from a Croatia conference right to the Kiev Symposium (as in her last visit in 2018) and work from morning till night. She would speak at the Symposium, communicate with people outside the auditorium and give lectures to MA students in Kyiv University in spite of a heavy jetlag. None of my arguments about the necessity of rest would stop her from doing what she only thought proper and important. At the same time she was ready to joke at herself, at what she called her ‘ignorance’ and ‘poor health’ (here she was so tragically right, alas!).

Maureen was also a terrific friend. Dr Mike Hazen of Wake Forest University, a founding member of the RCA, first met her at the RCA-2006 conference in St. Petersburg:

“My first impression of her was formed when I arrived a day late for the conference due to airline problems and found her holding court in the lobby of the Soviet Era hotel that the conference participants were staying in,” Hazen said. “I think that she spent most of the conference there answering questions and generally seeing that things went well. Mo was this energetic person who displayed a charisma that permeated all of her efforts to promote relationships between Americans, Russians and other people from the former Soviet Block” (Finch, 2019, p. 187).

Since the early 2000s, being interested in intercultural communication she became an active member of the RCA, and later, ECANA (Eurasian Communication Association of North American), promoting their policies and creating content for their websites. At last, Maureen became one of the founders of the CAER (Communication Association of Eurasian Researchers), and served a term as its president, aiming to connect international scholars and practitioners for research and collaboration. Among her most recent initiatives was promoting communication studies in Baltic region, in Ukraine, and in Kyrgyzstan; and only her death prevented from realizing these projects.

In her last two years, Maureen was the editor of two edited books analyzing recent developments of communication and media studies in Eurasia and Eastern Europe. Within this specific project, she was the first to actively recruit scholars from different countries of the region. Though Maureen Minielli had a variety of academic interests including presidential rhetoric, intercultural communication, and studies of crisis, her interest in crisis studies proved to be life-long (since her PhD research and up to the last book published posthumously).

In her last year, her letters gushed with plans and ideas. She thought of recruiting Ukrainian scholars for the 2019 International Communication Association conference in Washington, DC and later to publish our findings in Western journals. In her e-correspondence with me, Mo tackled a most important topic: *Communication as an area of study in different countries*. She planned to stipulate scholars to explore and reflect upon the following questions:

1. *Is there such an area of study in your country? If yes, how is it manifested institutionally: In what kinds of communication programs (in higher education, college and university level)? In what kind of professional / academic journals? professional associations?*
2. *In your country, how have communication scholars defined / debated / proposed a coherent description of the communication discipline as a critical area of study to other scholars and educators (e.g., college and university faculty and members of national / regional associations)?*
3. *What are today’s challenges in identifying communication as an area of study in your country?*

I am sure these questions will not lose their importance and must be answered in the forthcoming research.

In America, Maureen C. Minielli was posthumously awarded full professor, and her two edited books are to be published soon only to show that her research work and her personality will be remembered by all her friends, colleagues and many researchers around the world.

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