

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
Roman Zlotin
1940-2023

Senior Lecturer Emeritus Roman Zlotin, our beloved faculty colleague, died at his residence on February 26, 2023. Roman was an outstanding and internationally renowned scholar in the field of biogeography, esteemed both by colleagues in his native Russia and at Indiana University Bloomington, where he was additionally known as a versatile and popular instructor over the course of three decades. He remained active in fieldwork throughout his career.

Roman was born in Moscow, USSR on November 22, 1940. As a schoolboy, he developed a keen and lifelong fascination with the natural world, actively participating in expeditions to nature preserves and wildlife parks under the auspices of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature. He entered Moscow State University in 1958 as a student in geography, where he specialized in biogeography until his graduation in 1963. Diploma in hand, he quickly accepted the position of research scientist in the Department of Biogeography at the Institute of Geography of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He soon established himself as a leading specialist on general and regional issues in biogeography and ecology. In 1970 he defended his dissertation on the “Structure and productivity of high-altitude ecosystems in inner Tien-Shan,” a work that served as the basis for his monograph *Life in High Altitudes*. He went on to publish almost a dozen monographs and more than 100 articles during his career, chairing the biogeography department of the Institute of Geography from 1983 to 1994.

Travelling extensively throughout the USSR as participant and leader of research expeditions to the frozen tundra of Siberia, the mountain vastness of the Caucasus and Tien-Shan, and the arid deserts of Central Asia, Roman also undertook research abroad to such destinations as Norway, Vietnam, and various islands in the Pacific Ocean. Roman first visited the United States in 1987 when he was invited to deliver a keynote address at the 4th International Wilderness Congress in Denver. In an interview for the REEI newsletter, Roman likened his initial impressions of the United States to “love at first sight.” His newly conceived affection for the land, cultures, and people of the United States and North America as a whole lasted throughout the remainder of his life.

In 1990, Roman set foot on the IU Bloomington campus for the first time in order to attend a conference devoted to environmental problems in the Aral Sea. That visit opened the door to an association with IU that ultimately led to multiple appointments over three decades, first for the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA, now O’Neill) where he taught “Environmental Degradation in the Former USSR.” The course opened a new chapter in Roman’s professional life, as he took on the role of instructor for the first time in his academic career, which up till then had been exclusively devoted to research. Roman’s classroom debut was a success that led to a series of visiting appointments as both instructor and researcher with SPEA, the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, the Department of Geography, and the Center for the Study of Global Change. Alongside his activity at IU, Roman also formed an association with the University of New Mexico, first as a researcher and subsequently as an adjunct professor in its Department of Biology.

In 2002, Roman was appointed senior lecturer in the IU Department of Geography, a position he held until his formal retirement in 2019. Roman regularly taught such geography courses as “Geography of Russia,” “World Regional Geography,” and “Russia and Its Neighbors.” With the encouragement of REEI, Roman developed a Russian-only version of the latter course for students with advanced proficiency in the language as well as “Environmental Issues in Russia,” another course taught exclusively in Russian. Housed in REEI, these courses proved highly popular among REEI master’s students and undergraduate minors, as well as students pursuing other programs of study. Even as a retired faculty member, Roman continued to offer a Russian-only course to IU students under the title “Contemporary Issues in Russia” through Spring 2021.

Those who knew Roman were invited to submit reminiscences and testimonials using an online document. Many former students remembered Roman’s enthusiastic and outstanding instruction, which gave them the opportunity to explore topics in politics, environment, culture, society, and international affairs while refining their Russian language skills. A common theme was what a joy he was to be around, with one former student commenting that going to Russian discussion every Friday afternoon was the highlight of their undergraduate experience. Roman also was very generous and every summer that he returned to Russia for research, he brought back a memento—often a lovely painting, such as a city or rural landscape—for REEI. These gifts now live forever at REEI in Roman’s memory and as a testament to Roman’s spirit of generosity.

We request that this memorial resolution be presented to the members of the Bloomington Faculty Council, that it be preserved in its minutes and archive, and that after its presentation copies be sent to Roman’s wife Sonya Zlotin and son Alexey Zlotin.

Mark Trotter

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With contributions by:

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