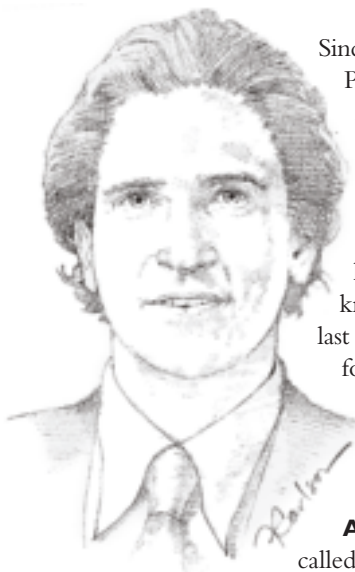


PAUL KLEBNIKOV '81 REMEMBERED

By Andrew Bernard '81 and Ashok Chandrasekhar '81, P'07



Paul Klebnikov (1963–2004)

Since the murder of our classmate and friend Paul Klebnikov '81 outside his office in Moscow on July 9, 2004, we have struggled to express our memories of Paul. The public eulogies for this crusading investigative journalist, editor of *Forbes* magazine's Russian edition, testified to his greatness, but we were privileged to know the man. In conversations over the last few months, we found the greatest comfort remembering the occasions when our lives met or even intertwined; they are windows into abiding friendships. Drawn together here are a few of those glimpses.

Andy Bernard [June 30, 2004]: Paul called me to ask if he could get an exclusive for *Forbes Russia* about how I predict the Olympic Games using economics. He reported that the magazine had been a huge success. After so many years of gloom and bad news, Russia, he was convinced, had turned the corner. Musa, his wife, and one of the boys were arriving the next day, and the ache of their absence was palpable. The months apart had been hard, but worth it, Paul said. "We are really doing something here."

Ashok Chandrasekhar [June 3, 2004]: Paul and I happened to be in the United States over the same weekend, which coincided with Paul's birthday. Musa and I coordinated that I should present myself at their house on Long Island without telling Paul. I gathered a large supply of fresh oysters and a bottle of champagne, and drove out on Saturday morning. Nothing very profound took place that last afternoon that we were lucky enough to spend together. I strode unannounced into the kitchen, where Paul was busily concocting some sort of stew. Paul gave me the usual warm bear hug—as with all his friends, Paul made me feel not only welcome, but important, as if my presence and whatever I was doing were giving Paul the greatest imaginable pleasure—and then thrust a blunt cheese knife into my hand and set me to work shucking oysters. After lunch, as afternoon faded into evening, the two of us sat on the porch and continued our conversation. Even after six months apart, it was as if we were picking up a conversation left off just the previous day. Paul described his intense pride in the first three issues of his new magazine. As the champagne began to make its presence felt, I was tempted either to challenge Paul's assumptions or to poke some good-natured fun at his excitement. Then Paul brought out copies of the first three issues of *Forbes Russia*; I opened to the first page and saw his photo and underneath, in Russian, "Paul Klebnikov, Editor-In-Chief." I realized that my friend had brought a dream to fruition. We sat together on the wooden deck chairs on the porch sipping our coffee while the children kept calling him to play. Usually he would have run to

them, but for some reason on this day we heard Musa say to the children, "Let Papa be—he's talking with his friend."

Andy [January 27, 2003]: Paul appeared at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth as a guest lecturer in my course examining companies in the international economy. Paul spoke about the Russian economy since the Soviet breakup and the prospects for the future. He used no teaching aids—no blackboard, no Powerpoint, no slides—standing with his hands behind his back, lecturing and answering questions. He described his anger at the wholesale looting of Russia in the previous decade and his guarded optimism that perhaps Russia had turned the corner. At the end of scheduled class time, none of the usually impatient M.B.A. students moved until Paul had finished. The next day a Russian student approached me and said, "I told my mother last night that Pavel Klebnikov came to my class. She responded that now she understood why I had gone so far to get my degree."

Ashok [December 31, 2002]: At a New Year's Eve weekend with our families out on Long Island, rather than our usual game of chess, Paul and I started a late-night game of Risk with our boys. Paul organized us with his usual air of martial certainty, easily communicating his energy and excitement to me and the kids: commands were issued, battle cries sounded, parlays demanded. Paul and I probably should have stuck with chess that night, as we quickly discovered that our spouses felt that children under the age of 40 should be in bed before 1 a.m.

Andy [October 10, 2000]: Paul arrived at my house with Musa and the three kids in tow for a weekend of soccer and energetic outdoor activity. Paul and I periodically gathered up his pipe and my dog for long walks through hilly streets dotted with the multicolored leaves of autumn in New England. We argued constantly about how Russia could move forward and what had kept her back. Paul was emphatic that all of the richest countries had used interventionist government policies and Russia should be no exception; I demurred in equally emphatic fashion. As always, neither of us gave any quarter, feeling free to introduce any evidence in support of our point of view and ridiculing all evidence to the contrary. The walks ended with laughter, both having absorbed the opinions of the other, neither willing to publicly admit we were already changing our views, even if only so slightly.

Andy and Ashok [Reunion weekend, fall 1996]: We gathered with Paul in a room at the Exeter Inn long after the conclusion of regular reunion events. Young Grisha was asleep in his car seat under the table. It was time for another round of furious debate about politics, policies and the future of the planet. As usual, we sat up half the night arguing about how to change the school, or the world—totally disagreeing on every conceivable issue and on every potential solution, and yet coming closer and closer together the whole time.

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And when it comes to food, little things can make a big difference—like the soft-serve ice cream and frozen yogurt machines. “One year [then-Principal] Kendra O’Donnell was looking to do something special for the students,” Rigor da Eva recalls. “We had identified these machines as something the kids really wanted, but it wasn’t in our budget. So we went to her, and she found a way to make it happen. That was a huge hit. The kids went out of their minds.”

Despite all the changes, some things are well enough left alone, and Davidson knows that. “There’s still macaroni and cheese, meatloaf and mashed potatoes,” he says. “But these kids eat here seven days a week, three meals a day, so we’re trying to keep the program new and exciting, so that when they walk into the dining hall, it’s different.”

One more thing that may never change in the dining hall is the lines—but not for lack of trying, Rigor da Eva says. “With all the food that’s out on the floor, we’re much better at getting people through the dining hall. But still the kids line up. I go out and ask the kids why they’re in line. The truth is, they *like* to stand in line. People come in and they want to scope out where people are sitting; they know just where they’re going to land. It’s also a place to socialize; you stand there and talk, and you see people who aren’t in your classes or in your dorm. There’s a community aspect to it.”

Susannah Clark ’84, a freelance writer based in Melrose, MA, prefers Elm Street to Wetherell.

For more information about dining at Exeter, go to www.exeter.edu/whatscooking.html

Finis Origine Pendet

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Ashok [Late summer 1986]: As Hurricane Gloria threatened the coast of Long Island, I was working at *The New York Times*, and Paul was visiting New York on a vacation from his Ph.D. program at the London School of Economics. Paul and I agreed to meet at his family’s house on Long Island, to protect the house and to enable me to file dispatches for the *Times*. We spent the day hammering boards over the windows and making periodic trips to the beach to inspect the massive swells. Although local radio reports called for complete evacuation, Paul, his brothers and I sat warming ourselves by the fire, making occasional calls to the authorities for updates, and filing the occasional fact to the rewrite desk at the *Times*. The next afternoon, we donned our bathing suits and headed to the beach, two young immortals intending to take a post-hurricane dip. Fortunately, the churning brown water gave pause even to Paul, and we found excuses to return dry to the house and spend the afternoon chopping up fallen trees.

Andy and Ashok [Fall 1980]: On any nice afternoon you would have likely found us sitting with Paul on the bench in front of Webster, tilting it back as far as possible. In front of us, underclassmen would have been throwing Frisbees; but we three seniors felt no need for any activity beyond talking and observing the passing scene.

Ashok [September 1980]: Just before the start of senior year at Exeter, the dean’s office organized a conference of student leaders. Paul and I were there in our capacities as Student Council president and *Exonian* chairman, along with the heads of a number of other

student organizations. All of us, both boys and girls, were housed in Langdell. This afforded us the unique opportunity to have an all-night, coeducational conversation that did not violate a single Academy rule. That night, Paul articulately sought to persuade us, not of the truth of any specific religious creed, but of a more general sense that the universe had meaning. Religion was not a topic much discussed among our circle at Exeter, but Paul managed to persuade a group that included several deeply religious people and several staunch atheists that we were all part of something much more important than any one of us.

Ashok [January 1980]: I was appointed Chairman of *The Exonian*, and Paul was appointed editorial page editor. The topic of our late-night conversations in Webster North shifted to our plans for the paper. Yet, barely two weeks later, Paul was elected president of Student Council. The conversation that night was not a happy one. I demanded his immediate resignation from *The Exonian* board. Paul was certain that he could use his combined seats as Student Council president and editorial page editor to advance his commitment to bringing the Exeter student body out of its apathy, and to spark real action—against draft registration, against oppressive enforcement of outmoded rules and in favor of discourse and public awareness. I refused to leave Paul’s room without his signed resignation letter.

Andy [March 9, 1979]: Paul wrote an editorial in *The Exonian* titled “Reviving a Tradition” about the lack of political involvement at Exeter. In it, he analyzed the recent border war between Vietnam and China and its potential to escalate into something much more serious. As a future professor of international economics, I was com-

pletely oblivious to the conflict, which, of course, was the point of the article.

Ashok [January, 1978]: Mr. Hayden, the dorm head of Webster North, informed me and the four other preps living in the dorm that Paul had asked to move out of Wentworth and into Webster North. After the meeting, I took Mr. Hayden aside and told him earnestly that he must prevent this, and that Paul would be a terrible influence in our dorm. Mr. Hayden ignored my plea, and so one evening a few weeks later, I knocked on Paul’s door and entered. I slouched in Paul’s easy chair while he sat bolt upright at his desk, trying desperately to finish a sketch that was due in art class the next day. Paul’s drawing assignment meant, to my lasting good fortune, that our conversation could get started.

Andy [Early September 1969]: It was the first day of first grade at St. Bernard’s School in New York. The legendary Rosemary Lea was in command of the room. A hand went up just in front of me accompanied by words I did not understand. The response from Miss Lea was sharp: “Klebnikov, if you want to use the bathroom, you will have to ask in English just like the rest of us—no Russian, please.”

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A memorial endowment fund in honor of Paul Klebnikov ’81 has been established at Exeter by his friends and classmates. For more information about the fund, including how to contribute, please see page 75.