Michael Miller honored for 50 years at NDSU by colleagues and guests

By Zachary Vietz

It is not very often that someone sticks around in a single place for 50 years, but Michael Miller has achieved just such a thing.

On Fri., Oct. 27, 2017, Michael M. Miller, a native of Strasburg and Director and Bibliographer of the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, celebrated 50 years of continuous employment at North Dakota State University (NDSU) at the McGovern Alumni Center in Fargo.

The three-hour event was attended by dozens of present and past co-workers and other NDSU staff, people who have been members of Miller’s Homeland tours to Ukraine and Germany, others active in the Germans from Russia community, family members and friends.

The NDSU Alumni Foundation provided use of the alumni center, and the NDSU Library staff volunteered to help make the event a reality.

The NDSU Dinner Services prepared classic German-Russian hors d’oeuvres for everyone’s enjoyment.

Among fruit and other mainstays, catering served German wedding Kuchen, pumpkin and apple Plachinta and cheese buttons, also known as kase knoephla.

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum stopped by to express thanks and praise for Miller.

Speakers shared their experiences, thoughts and congratulations to Miller.

The first speaker was Dean of Libraries Joe Moenik, who welcomed everyone to the event.

To celebrate, as Moenik put it, “a half century of Michael’s dedication and labor of love,” he read an excerpt from a poem by Kahlil Gibran called On Time.

(Please see MILLER on Page 3)

Michael Miller and NDSU Extension Agent for Emmons County Acacia Stucke pose in front of a GRHC Homeland tour poster.

Gov. Doug Burgum, center, stopped by to express his thanks for Miller’s 50 years of service. With them is Carmen Rath-Wald of Napoleon, president of the Tri-County Tourism Alliance.
MILLER (Continued from Page 1) After reciting the poem, Mocnik introduced the next speaker. Along with NDSU President Dean L. Bresciani, NDSU President Bresciani praised Miller “not just for his work in the university and the people it serves. “That gift,” President Bresciani said, “has involved love and passion on a very human level in promoting the collection and dissemination of a story about a group of people, and their culture, that might very well have never otherwise been collected, preserved and shared in perpetuity.”

He went on to praise Miller’s 50 years of dedication to the GRHC and the lasting legacy that he has created in the process. Miller was Director of the State Historical Society of North Dakota (SHSND) Clausewitz." Berg said SHSND and Miller have worked closely together on many projects over the years. Along with Dr. Tom Is- ern of NDSU, Miller was recognized by the SHSND in 2010 with the Profile Honor Award. Berg said the award honors those who “have made a lasting or significant contribution in preserving, interpreting, researching, and promoting” history in North Dakota.

On the national level, Berg noted another award Miller has achieved. In 2011, the SHSND nominated the GRHC for the annual American Association of State & Local History’s Excellence in Leadership Award. Not only did the GRHC win this award, but they also won the WOW! Award. Berg said this is a rarely presented award for projects that have “exceptional scholarship and are exceedingly entrepreneurial.”

Berg also discussed Miller’s work that led up to the state’s acquisition of the Weik Homestead site. She says she is grateful for all the hard work and collaboration between Miller, the GRHC and the SHSND over many years.

NDSU Extension Agent for Emmons County Acacia Stuckle spoke next. Stuckle has worked with Miller since she was a work study student at NDSU 15 years ago. She shared fond memories of Millertouchthroughout her years working at the NDSU Librar-

years, all focused on German-Russian stories and visits to the homeland villages. Among other things, Damb
drew highly of Miller’s drive, talent, stamina and persistence.

Dambach drew attention to the wide array of people present at the event all to cele-
brate Miller’s achievements, and he said it is a testament to Miller’s work.

Following Dambach came NDSU Assistant Professor and Curator of the Emily P. Reynolds Costume Collection Ann Brahens. Brahens and Miller met some 25 years ago on an NDSU faculty tour Miller led through Germans from Russia country in North Dakota. As a result of the tour, Brahens and Miller decided to collaborate to create an exhibit of Germans from Russia clothing and textiles. Brahens closed her speech by praising Miller’s “laser fo-
cus” and “incredible energy” to gather histories, documents and everything imaginable to make the GRHC’s legacy.

Second to last speaker for the night was NDSU Distin-
guished Professor of History Dr. Tom Isern. Isern started his remarks by calling back to the front page of the Emmons County Record of Aug. 23, 1967. One story was about a ma-
or hailstorm causing a heap of trouble, and another that was “in the long term” more important. It was about Miller’s first being accepted to work at NDSU in circulation library and to teach library science, after being appointed by then NDSU President H.R. Abrecht. Isern went on to describe Miller as “indestructible” and said he is thankful that Miller is still the “native son of Emmons County who joined us here at NDSU in 1967.”

The final speaker of the night was the man himself, Michael Miller.

“I am thankful everyone for attending the event, and specifically those who spoke. Special thanks was given to NDSU Cattle for their German-Russian food preparation. Miller provided authentic recipes that the ca-
tering staff had never before used, and he said everything came out very well. Miller thanked major donors and others who have supported the GRHC, and he gave some background on each.

Throughout his speech, Miller thanked people and organizations that helped make his dreams, and the GRHC, a reality. Gratitude was expressed to Bob Dambach and Prairie Public TV for making nine award-winning documen-
taries concerning German-Russian heritage.

Volunteers for the GRHC and those around the U.S. and world for their help translat-
ing and other numerous jobs were not forgotten as well. Miller closed the evening thanking everyone for “join-
ing me and my family members, friends and colleagues to celebrate these 50 years at NDSU.”

At the reception are, left to right, Dr. Suzanne Kelley of NDSU, Carol Just of Minneapolis, Minn., Emmons County Record Intern Zachary Vietz, Carol and Dr. Lance Richey, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Dr. Tom Isern of NDSU. Richey is writing a biography of Lawrence Weik and has done research at the GRHC and NDSU.

With Miller, right, are Brad and Suzanne Schmidt of West Fargo. Schmidt is a Linton native.

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Michael Miller, left, and Jeremy Kopp, GRHC Special Collections Association, pose for a picture in front of a poster for one of the GRHC’s homeland tours.

Honoring Michael Miller, second from left, are N.D. Secre-
tary of State Alvin Jaeger, SHSND Director Claudia Berg and Zeeland native Robert Klein of Fargo.

Michael Miller, left, and Allan Burke of the Emmons County Record pose in front of a Homesteads of North Dakota poster. Miller and Burke worked with District 28 Sen. Robert Erbele and others on the SHSND acquisition of the Weik Homestead.

Reuben and Verda (Job) Tschritter of Fargo, Linton na-
tives, visit with Miller, left. Verda is the Record’s new cooking columnist.