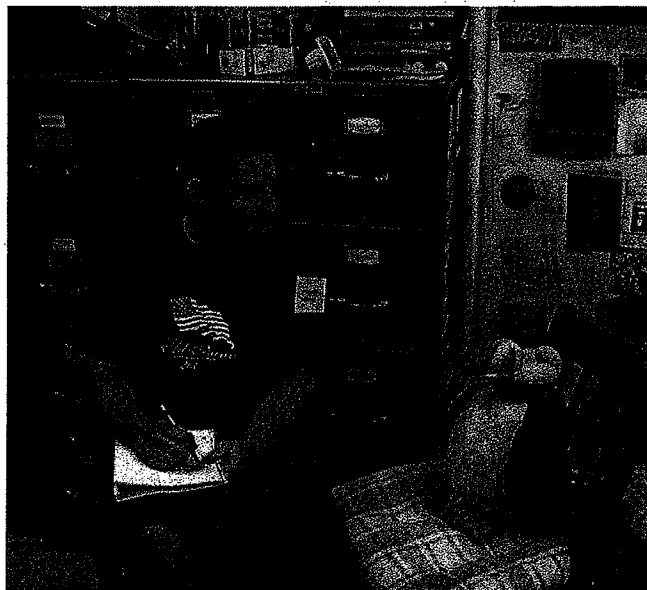


# Notes from Hilbert Space

Spring 2009

## Get to Know Ekaterina *By Jeromy Wright*

Who is Ekaterina Puffini? After hearing a few of my fellow math students talk about Professor Gilkey's teaching assistant, I wanted to find out more about her. The following Q&A session with Ekaterina answers many of the questions I had and will hopefully educate others in the math department who have not met her, or, like me, are curious about her role in the math department.



Get to Know Ekaterina....p. 1  
Math Humor.....p. 5  
Actuary.....p. 10

Archimedes.....p. 12  
Favorite Math Result.....p. 13  
Make Money with Math..p. 16

## Interview

**Jeromy:** What are your duties as a T.A.?

**Ekaterina:** I prepare all of Professor Gilkey's lecture notes and syllabi. I write and grade the homework, quizzes, exams, and the final for Professor Gilkey's courses. I even assign final grades using Duckweb.

**J:** Have you worked at any other universities?

**E:** I am director of the Krill Institute of Technology, Islas Malvinas.

\*Interviewer's note: Islas Malvinas is the Spanish name for the Falkland Islands, an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean, 300 miles off the coast of Argentina.

**J:** Impressive. Where did you do your undergraduate and graduate work?

**E:** My undergraduate and graduate degrees are both from the Krill Institute. My degree is in marine biology.

**J:** How long have you worked with Professor Gilkey and how did you meet?

**E:** I met Professor Gilkey in a Safeway in Ashland. It was about 8 or 9 years ago. We had a conversation while he was shopping and ended up leaving the store together. We have been friends ever since.

**J:** How did you become interested in Math?

**E:** My aunt runs a "nest and breakfast" in the Antarctic. I was in charge of keeping the financial records for the business. In connection with my marine biology studies, I do research applying pseudo-Riemannian geometry to the study of avian population dynamics and krill distribution in the Antarctic.

**J:** What brought you to the University of Oregon?

**E:** After becoming friends with Professor Gilkey I came up here to work with him.

**J:** Do you enjoy working here?

**E:** I enjoy working here at the University; however, the students can frustrate me at times. I am a puffin and can't always restrain my natural tendencies. I bit a student in my 282 class last year. He claimed that zero is equal to  $2\pi$ . Fortunately, he was an in-state student and no formal complaint was filed.

**J:** Your first name sounds Russian and your surname Italian. What is your ancestral background?

**E:** While I am a puffin, you will notice that my beak resembles that of a toucan. My ancestry is mixed, but I am originally from Argentina, more specifically Cordoba.

**J:** Do you speak Spanish?

**E:** Yes, I am fluent in Spanish. I am actually teaching Professor Gilkey Spanish. I also speak a little German, French, and Russian.

**J:** How did you acquire skills in these languages?

**E:** I have a sister, much smaller than me, with whom I share a brain disk. My sister travels with Professor Gilkey all over the world.

**J:** You seem very young for someone with so much experience. May I ask your age?

**E:** I, like many human women, would not like everyone to know my age. I am mature. I would say, mid career.

**J:** Besides math, what are your other hobbies?

**E:** I enjoy participating in university service; doing research in the fields I mentioned previously, krill, and writing legal memos to the university attorney.

**J:** Is there anything else you would like the students here at the U of O to know about you?

E: I publish papers on Faculty Governance here at the U of O. You can see on my blog (<http://uomarmotters.blogspot.com/>) that I am the managing editor of the La Ansotana de Ciencia y Matemática and have taken part in digitalization of the University of Oregon Assembly Records.

Considering the contributions I have made and continue to make to this university, I am frustrated by the lack of respect shown to me by the refusal of this institution to grant me an adjunct appointment. I believe it is the practice of the University of Oregon Administration to discriminate based on species. I do not consider it a coincidence that no other puffins have been appointed to positions at this institution.

J: Thank you for your time.

---

For those of you who wish to obtain more information about Ekaterina. Her blog "UOMarmotters" (<http://uomarmotters.blogspot.com/>) contains information and links to her publications. I hope that with this information, you will appreciate the contributions that puffins can make to our university community. Perhaps some of the conduct of the U of O Administration would change if they would look a little deeper into Ekaterina's contributions.