

***My Life  
and  
Sometime Turbulent  
but  
Always Happy  
Times  
by  
Leo Plato  
Kalageorgi***

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>My Roots and Early Childhood in Harbin (1935 to 1940)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>My Early Years in Shanghai (1940 to 1949)</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>Communist “Liberation” of Shanghai (1950 to 1953)</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>Departure from Shanghai to Hong Kong and to Brazil (1953 to 1954)</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>Initial days in Rio de Janeiro (1954 to 1960)</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>VI</b>	<b>General Motors Institute (1961 to 1963)</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>VII</b>	<b>Return to Sao Paulo (1963 to 1964)</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>San Francisco, CA (1965 to 1971)</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>IX</b>	<b>My First GM Overseas Assignment - Europe (1971 to 1974)</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>My Second GM Overseas Assignment - Iran (1974 to 1978)</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>XI</b>	<b>Return to GMAD Fremont (1978 to 1982)</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>XII</b>	<b>Transfer to Detroit (1982 to 1985)</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>XIII</b>	<b>Major Life Change (1985 to 1986)</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>XIV</b>	<b>The Wonderful Years (1987 to 1989)</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>XV</b>	<b>Preparation for our Russian Adventure (1990 to 1991)</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>XVI</b>	<b>My Third GM Overseas Assignment – Russia (1991 to 1993)</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>XVII</b>	<b>Extension of my Togliatti Assignment (1994 to 1996)</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>XVIII</b>	<b>My Fourth GM Overseas Assignment – Tatarstan (1997 to 1999)</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>XIX</b>	<b>Manufacturing Engineer at Pontiac Engineering Center (1999 – 2002)</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>XX</b>	<b>Manufacturing Engineer at Warren Engineering Center (2002 – 2004)</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>XXI</b>	<b>Retirement and the Golden Years (2004 to 2007)</b>	<b>354</b>

## *Table of Appendices*

<b>A</b>	<b>Kalageorgi Family Tree and Brief Chronology</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>Travel Diary of European Honeymoon Trip – March 25/April 9, 1986</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>Travel Diary of New England Trip – July 20/30, 1986</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>Travel Diary of San Francisco Visit – August 27/September 2, 1986</b>	
<b>E</b>	<b>Travel Diary of Orient Trip – April 4/26, 1987</b>	
<b>F</b>	<b>Travel Diary of South Western States Trip – October 10/24, 1987</b>	
<b>G</b>	<b>Travel Diary of 2<sup>nd</sup> European Trip – March 22/April 13, 1988</b>	
<b>H</b>	<b>Travel Diary of Blue Ridge Parkway Trip – October 15/22, 1988</b>	
<b>I</b>	<b>Travel Diary of Canadian Rockies Trip – August 19/September 8, 1989</b>	
<b>J</b>	<b>Beverly’s Summary of our 1<sup>st</sup> Year in Russia</b>	
<b>K</b>	<b>Beverly’s Summary of our 2<sup>nd</sup> Year in Russia</b>	
<b>L</b>	<b>Beverly’s Summary of our 3<sup>rd</sup> Year in Russia</b>	
<b>M</b>	<b>Newspaper Articles in the Russian Press</b>	



## Chapter I – My Roots and Early Childhood in Harbin (1935 to 1940)

*"I yam what I yam" - Popeye*

I never forgot or hid my roots and heritage – some friends of mine in later years tried to hide theirs by “anglicizing” their names, this saddened me but I was sympathetic, understanding this move since some of the communities to which they immigrated to, had some deep-seated prejudices on race and ethnics of origin. I could blend in any place since I had an accent, whose origin was impossible to determine, in every language that I spoke.

I was born on a balmy autumn day, September 9, 1935 in the town of Harbin, which is in the Heilong-Jiang province of North Eastern China in the former state of Manchuria at the slopes of the high mountain range which forms a natural barrier to the Russian border of Southern Siberia. Manchuria is the birthplace of the Qing Dynasty. Historically separate from China, it became the seat of power when the Manchus invaded and took control of China, eventually becoming the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

It is a mountainous region with mixed coniferous and broad leaved forests with beautiful glades and valleys plush with wild flowers, berries and shrubs. The scenery, climate and wildlife there was very similar to the Northern Rockies of Oregon or Washington states - mountainous with beautiful thick fir forests and heavy brush full of game. The wildlife was plentiful with the Imperial Siberian tigers, snow leopards and smaller wild cats. There were also a lot of wild boars, black and brown bears, deer, foxes and sable. The area abounded with wild pheasants, quail, duck and geese. It was a hunter's paradise.

Russians played a big part in Harbin's history. Until 1896, Harbin was a fishing village on the banks of the Sungari River. However, the Qing Dynasty conceded a rail concession to the Russians who built a railroad from Vladivostok to Harbin and on to Dalian. Despite the Russians losing control of the railway to the Japanese after the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905, Russian influence could be seen until the end of the World War II.

The non-native population of Harbin was mainly comprised of descendents of Russian émigrés who retreated into Manchuria at the collapse of the White Russian Army's struggle with the Red Bolsheviks at the close of the Russian Revolution in the early 1920s. The city had Russian Orthodox churches, an active arts community, a library, and a Russian-language newspaper - even beauty pageants and horse racing.

Harbin's 15,000 Russians represented every strata of Russian society. Harbin's population swelled with “White Russian” refugees fleeing the revolution in 1917 and streaming to this relic of prerevolutionary Russia to continue their previous lives. Many were members of the Russian nobility. They spent summers sunning and boating on the Sungari River, and winters skating and sledding; it was like the revolution never happened. Their flocking to Harbin helped to create the largest Russian population outside of Russia.

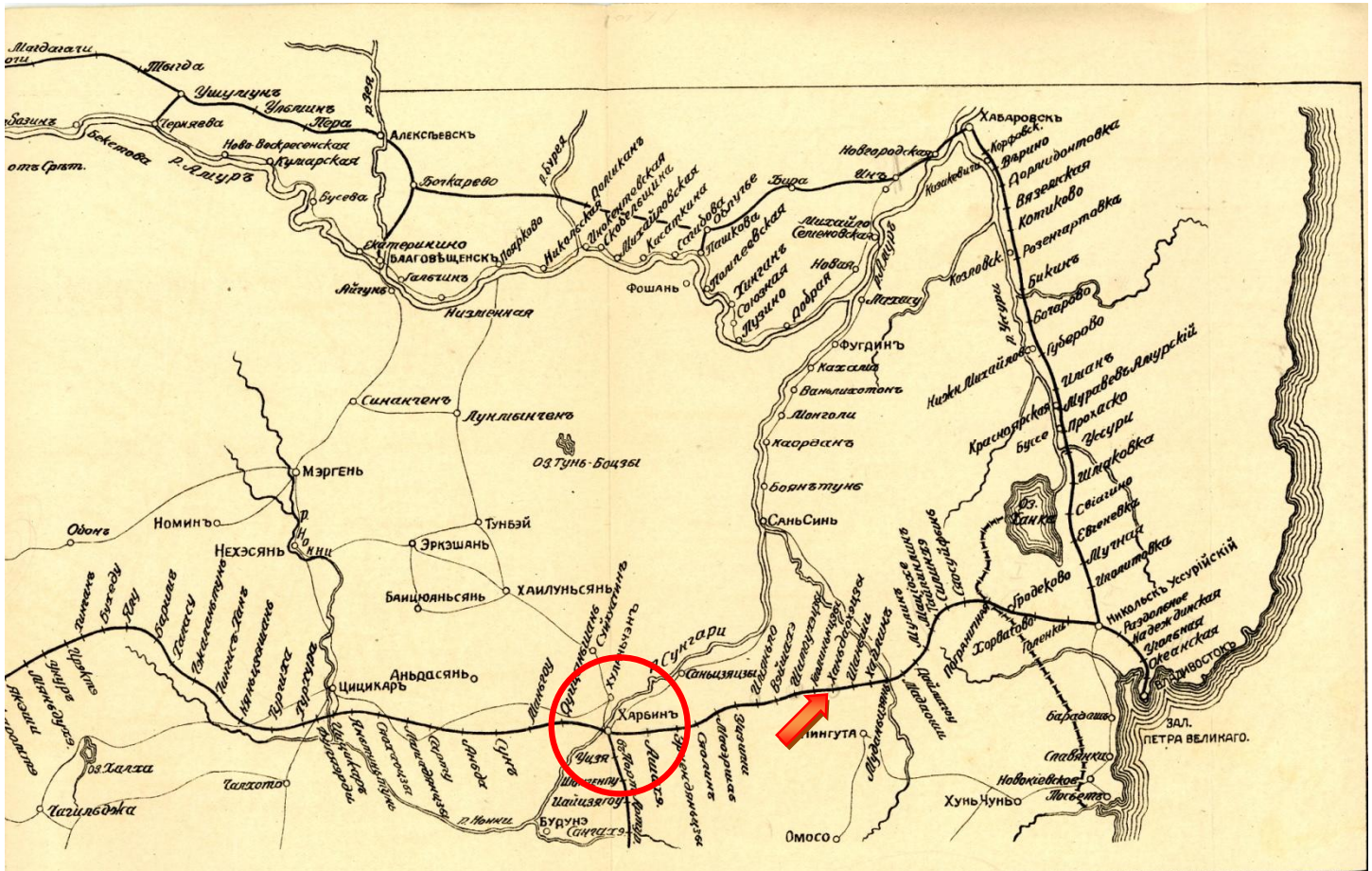
“White Russians” was a term used to identify the émigrés from Bolshevik “Red Russians” who controlled the government after the overthrow of the Tsar and formed the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics or the USSR. Although they were ethnically mostly Russians, this group also included many Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Jews, Tatars and other citizens of the former Imperial Russia. As the economy soured; Russian businesses failed and were taken over by Chinese entrepreneurs, and

many previously rich Russians entered poverty - leading Harbin to be called “the graveyard of the white man’s prestige.”

In 1931 the Japanese army invaded Manchuria. The Japanese set up a new country in Manchuria called Manchukuo. They made Pu Yi the Emperor. His biography is a record of attempt after attempt to regain the Chinese throne, and of efforts by various Chinese factions and foreign powers to utilize him to seize control of China and Manchuria. (See the 1987 Columbia Pictures movie called “The Last Emperor”).

The Japanese occupied Harbin during World War II and under their domination of Manchuria it was called Manchukuo until 1945 when the Soviet Red Army took it. In 1946, Chiang Kai Shek and Stalin agreed to turn it over to the Chinese. During the war, Japanese developed Manchukuo as a military industrial base. At the end of the war, Soviet forces invaded Manchuria. Pu Yi and some of his attendants fled his palace and were not taken to Japan. They were flown to the USSR and kept under house arrest till his return to China in 1950.

My initial years were spent in a little railway town called Handahedzi where my parents had a log cabin home.



**Handahedzi was a small railway station town about 100 miles east of Harbin on the Chinese Eastern Railroad (KVZhD) also known as the Trans Siberian Railroad.**

My father was very tall, well over 6 feet, with a slim muscular build and very powerful arms and shoulders. Mother told me that he could straighten a horseshoe with his bare hands. He was darkly

handsome and very popular with all, especially the ladies. In later years, in San Francisco, one of his friends from those days, shared with me on what a great person father was and that he “would give the shirt of his back” to a friend in need. He was a little boisterous and on the “wild side”, till as his friend said with chagrin, my mother and her “aristocratic family” tamed him somewhat.

I do not recall my father but Nina Andreevna Sapelkina (my future mother-in-law) knew him well and told me the following - *“I met the two siblings, Ksenia and Platon Tsin-Bursakov in 1932 when they arrived in Harbin from I rkutsk. Ksenia, or as we named her Asya, was 18 years old and Platon, or as he was known, Tosik was 16 years. My sister Elena helped Asya to get a job at the City Hospital.*

*Besides a good salary, the employees also received free meals. Tosik and I mingled with the crowd of employees and got fed with them also. My sister and I were renting a single room and lived very modestly, soon Asya moved in with us, and Tosik would visit us daily, going in the evening to spend the night at their Chinese relative’s home.*

*During this period, Asya shared with us the history of her father, Lev Platonovich Tsin-Burlakov.*

*He was a native Manchurian and as many Manchurian Chinese he was very tall – nearly 2 meters (6’- 6”) and weighed 7 poods (over 250 lbs – not fat but solid) with regular facial features, large open eyes and a straight nose. By family tradition, he was sent, while still a boy, to study for 12 years in a Tibetan monastery. At the conclusion of his studies, he was released to the world for a few years and had to decide, by himself, if he wanted to become a monk or join the secular world.*

*He decided to try out his abilities and went to Siberia, not knowing at that time how his life would turn out.*

*After many hardships and trials, he found himself in the outskirts of I rkutsk, poorly nourished and in rags, near the home of an Orthodox priest. Not knowing how to speak Russian, somehow he requested help. The priest felt sorry for him and offered him work to take care of the domestic animals (cows, horses, etc). The worker turned out to be very capable, learned very quickly to speak and write in Russian and asked the priest to baptize him in the Orthodox faith.*

*He took the priest’s family name (Burlakov) as his own. Soon the priest’s daughter married him.*

*Poor and needy people would often come to the priest, requesting help and blessing of the sick. The priest would help as much as he could and Lev Platonovich would visit the sick, gathering herbs, and treated them with natural medicines based on his Tibetan knowledge and experience.*

*Very quickly, the word spread throughout the town of the miraculous Chinese healer, and people started to gather around the priest’s home. One day, an I rkutsk millionaire arrived at the priest’s home, he heard about the Chinese healer. His only daughter got ill and was paralyzed. Local doctors were treating her, she was sent to be treated by specialists in Germany but no one could help her. All this was published in the medical journals of that time.*

*In desperation, the father, requested help from Lev Platonovich. He examined the girl and said he would treat her but she must be situated close by his home. Shortly, the girl arrived in the area, accompanied by a governess and a nanny and a house was built for her. She lived in that house for quite some time.*

*One day as the father came to visit her, he saw her walking out of the house to meet him. He fainted from the shock of seeing her so healthy!*



*After this, the fame of the Chinese healer flew throughout the medical circles and people started to arrive from everywhere. Lev Platonovich became a millionaire.*

*When the revolution came, it touched everyone. Lev Platonovich decided to send his children to China to live with his relatives. He sent them with a chest filled with valuables. The chest got “stuck” somewhere among the relatives, who sheltered the children for a few months, then refused them lodging and told them to go out and get jobs.*

*This is how my sister and I became friends with Asya and Tosik, they were both very likable, generous young people. Outwardly Asya had a “little something” Chinese, however Tosik did not look or act Chinese at all. He was very tall, handsome, very well built with beautiful wavy dark hair.*

*Asya continued to work at the hospital, but Tosik got a minor supervisory job in the administration department of the Chinese Eastern Rail Road (KVZhD). At one of the company’s balls, he met Katia Kalageorgi. Shortly after, on December 27, 1934, they got married and left Harbin for Handahedzi.*

*In 1937 Asya’s and Tosik’s mother, Rita Feodorovna arrived in Harbin but Lev Platonovich was arrested by the Bolshevik Cheka (KGB) in the Soviet Union, their property was confiscated and we heard that he died in prison.”*

My mother Ekaterina Nicolaevna Kalageorgi (known as Katia) came from a noble family and was a direct descendent from the Empress Catherine II (the Great). See the attached Kalageorgi Family tree in Appendix A.



**Mother and Father Wedding photograph – December 27, 1934**  
**My father was 6’5” tall so Mother at 5’1” is standing on 3 thick books for this photo**

Father was quite a “macho” figure, well liked by those that knew him, boisterous and rowdy at times but great fun to be around. He loved hunting and there were a lot of wild animals in the area around where we lived. The mountains and the pine forest was rich with wildlife such as large brown bears, wild boars, deer, wolves, badgers, foxes and an occasional Imperial Siberian tiger. These tigers were beautiful animals, largest of the species and had the Chinese Imperial character on their large foreheads. There were also a lot of pheasants, wild ducks, geese and other smaller beasts and fowl.

The area abounded with many professional hunters and trappers as well as farmers. He was great friends with a nearby village of “Old Believers”, who were generally aloof and suspicious of strangers. These were the 17<sup>th</sup> century émigrés from Russia who escaped the religious schism of that time. In 1652, Nikon (Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church) introduced a number of ritual and textual revisions with the aim of achieving uniformity between Russian and Greek Orthodox practices. Nikon, having noticed discrepancies between Russian and Greek rites and texts, ordered an adjustment of the Russian rites to align with the Greek ones of his time. According to the Old Believers, Nikon acted without adequate consultation with the clergy and without gathering a council. After the implementation of these revisions, the Church anathematized and suppressed with the support of Muscovite state power the prior liturgical rite itself as well as those who were reluctant to pass to the revised rite. Those who maintained fidelity to the existing rite endured severe persecutions from the end of the 17th century until the beginning of the 20th century as *schismatics* (раскольники). They became known as "Old Ritualists" (*staroobryadtsy*), a name introduced during the reign of Empress Catherine the Great. At the same time they continued to call themselves simply Orthodox Christians.



*Detail of the painting Boyarynya Morozova by Vasily Surikov depicting the defiant Noblewoman arrested by Tsarist authorities in 1671. She holds two fingers raised: a hint of the old (i.e. "proper") way of cross-signing oneself: with two fingers, rather than with three.*

Many of them, in later years, emigrated to Oregon, Alaska and Canada as the area climate and geography closely resembled their life style and isolation from civilized populated centers. The men

do not shave and a full beard is a symbol of maturity, they wear belted Russian collared tunics and loose trousers stuffed into tall soft leather boots. The women wear bright flowered dresses and scarves to hide their hair which is considered erotic. They never use make-up or perfumes. In general they are some-what similar to the Amish societies, avoiding all machinery and automation.

They often came to our home, always bringing their own wooden bowls and utensils as well as a freshly killed venison or boar-meat for a dinner and drinking session. The dinners were very jolly and boisterous with much drinking and eating. They would also bring their own beverage which was a misty looking partially clear wine made from wild grapes. It looked and tasted very innocent, however after a couple of tumblers, one would lose control of their legs and get happy and drowsy, eventually slipping to the floor to sleep. Dinner parties usually ended with all of the bearded hefty guests peacefully snoring on the floor while the women cleared the tables, washed the dishes and fed the children. After that, the women sat around seeped scalding hot honey-sweetened wild herb tea and gossiped about their life in the village.

The “dark side” of my life in Handahedzi was the raids on the railroad and the Russian population by local bandit gangs called the *hunhuzi*. They would kidnap wealthy Russian for ransom sending a cut-off finger or ear to stimulate rapid payment. My father was very active in hunting them down and never went anywhere without a loaded weapon. Our house was well-protected by thick logs and patrolling trusted guards.

Banditry in 1930 reached astounding proportions. Some estimated that there were more than 500,000 people in these gangs. Peasants and farmers alike joined these outlaw gangs in record numbers. The bandit gangs were not typical gangs. They were not just a few outlaws holding up merchants and villagers for money. Instead, the gangs were often very large and usually consisted of many former law-abiding citizens who were forced to make a choice between starvation and banditry. Controlling territories as expansive as a large United States county, they ranged in size from 100 to 10,000 people.

The number of bandits in China in the year of 1930 was so high due to the political and economic situation of the time. Faced with hunger and the ever-increasing price of food, many peasants faced eminent starvation. They turned to the government for help but got none. The underdeveloped economy could not help the millions starving in the country. Added onto this horrible economic situation was a civil war waging in the northern part of the country. The south, empty of military protection soon became the target of bandit gangs. These bandit gangs stole food and money from the peasants with little to no resistance from the government. Many peasants, unable to cope with the problems facing them, saw banditry as the only solution to their dilemma. If they could not get food legally, then they would do it illegally. And so due to economic and political problems facing the masses, the bandit gangs grew at alarming rates in 1930.

These economic hardships also made the ranks of the growing Communist believers swell greatly. The gross inequality between the small wealthy merchant class and the vast numbers of hungry and abused peasants made the task of Mao’s agitators and recruiters that much easier. The Red Army never took any food or property from the peasants without paying for it and went to great lengths to identify their kinship with the peasants and lowly workers. By contrast Chiang’s National army consistently robbed the peasantry of their meager supplies at gun or bayonet point.



Father on one of his "Bandit Hunting Trips" – tracking down the "Hunhuzi"

Father also belonged to a group of young "bon-vivantes" called The Black Musketeers. They wore black bell-bottom tight trousers and black silk shirts with flared sleeves showing off their manly builds. They were very anti-Bolshevik and often got into fights with the "Commies" and "Reds". Life in Handahedzi was pleasant, lively and adventurous. Our neighbors were mainly families of Japanese expatriates and at an early age I was pretty fluent in Japanese, unfortunately due to lack of practice I lost it all. Nevertheless, I still recall with great fondness the smooth, lulling, mystical sounds of the Japanese koto string instruments as I used to fall asleep in my crib.

I do not remember much of my early childhood, however through my mother's recollections in later years it was a happy period albeit somewhat rugged. I vaguely remember my first toy. My father would come home in the evening, remove his .38 Browning automatic pistol, pull out all the bullets and drop the unloaded firearm into my crib for me to "teeth on".

We had some yard animals around the house, a few pigs, and a couple of goats, chickens and ducks as well as a cow for milk. As most foreigners we had a live-in Chinese family to take care of the animals, do house cleaning and cook our meals. That early exposure to Northern Chinese cooking developed my taste and love for the spicy local dishes of the "Hei-lung-chiang" province (long black dragon", especially the wonderful steamed/fried meat dumplings called "tio-tse" or "pot-stickers".

Father was an exceptionally handsome man, tall and very powerful, very popular with the local people. He loved parties and so did my paternal grandmother who was very slim and fit and loved to gallop bare-back on her horse in the clearing by the mountains. Our cabin was the focal point of many parties and social gatherings. It was always full of guests on weekends, many playing 7-string Russian guitars and accordions. Due to the characteristics of the people there and the prevalent frontier spirit, most of the parties were rather boisterous with lots of loud music, singing, and of course much drinking.

The bulk of the Russians there were either ex-White Army officers or the sons and daughters of the same. At the parties there was often a competitive spirit of who could out-drink, out-shoot or out-fence whom and the sturdy logs of our large cabin had many bullet holes depicting various marksmanship at hitting flies, matchboxes or other targets of competition. Mother was initially very shocked, she was only barely 17 years old when she got married and led a pretty sheltered life. However with the help and guidance of her mother-in-law, she learned how to handle the situation quite well.

My paternal grandfather – Lev Platonovich, was a very large and powerful man, nearly 2 meters tall (6' 6"), 8 poods or 290 lbs in weight – all solid with little fat. He was a full blooded northern Chinese and a very well known doctor in Siberia who treated his patients strictly using herbs and natural wild plants. This was a knowledge that he acquired as a young monk in Tibet and later cured a lot of people in Russia and northern China making him a very wealthy man. He loved to throw dinner parties where all of the guests would eat around a large round table – Chinese style and no guest was allowed to leave until he could sail a chopstick across the table by compressing it in his stomach. Ladies were exempted. He never smoked or drank but would have one toast for all of the guests by stirring a chilled bottle of cognac with a chopstick and gurgling it down with one swallow.

My paternal grandmother – Rita Fedorovna, was quite a character, she was a tall slim very energetic woman descended from Cossacks. She loved to ride bareback astraddle Cossack style on a spirited horse, jumping fences and galloping in the fields near our cabin with her long dark reddish hair streaming behind her. She enjoyed chewing chalk, and would often chew a mouthful, spitting it out discreetly in a spittoon. She smoked and could drink any man under the table. She belonged to the "Old Believer" sect.

Once an elderly relative came over unannounced for a friendly visit. Father, however, had a few drinks and decided to amuse himself by doing some target practice in the backyard, shooting at tin cans with his .38 Browning pistol. As he saw the visitor, he yelled out with a friendly greeting and ran towards him forgetting that he had a pistol in his hand. The poor gentleman nearly had a heart-attack and started running down the road in sheer terror with my father running after him waving his pistol to get his attention. Fortunately, my paternal grandmother heard the commotion and ran out to calm things down.

Manchuria was under Japanese occupation since the early 1930's and the populace there, being very heavy with dedicated ex-White officers still brooding over their defeat by the Reds during the Revolution, was very susceptible to the anti-Soviet courtship of the Japanese Imperial forces.

My father always had dreams of returning to Russia on a white horse, routing the Reds and returning the Tsar to his rightful throne in the rebirth of the old Imperial Russia. The Japanese played this up in a big way and assisted the Russian émigrés to form a military unit complete with the old regimental banners and pomp anticipating to use them as a buffer when the expected conflict would break out between Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union on the sensitive Manchurian border and the key railway system.

Mother and I stayed with her parents, my grandparents, in Harbin for nearly a year where she got a job working as a waitress in the Mars Café which was a very popular meeting place for local business men and merchants.





*Mother and the "Golden Child" – 1938 in Harbin*

My original birth certificate (#45) issued by the Harbin Kazan Madonna Male Monastery on March 26, 1937 states that I was born on September 9, 1935 and baptized on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month. My father is listed as Lev Platonovich Tzin and my mother as Ekaterina Nicolaevna. However after mother's divorce in 1943 she reverted back to her maiden name and hereafter I was officially known as Leo Kalageorgi.

My memories of Harbin are rather dim, I remember the fun rides on the Sungari River when it froze in winter. The choice method of transportation on and across the river were the "Talkai-Talkai" (Push-Push) transportation, sleds on oiled leather that were pushed by a Chinaman with a sharp pointed bamboo pole. These sleds had heavy fur coverings and blankets for the passengers and we were bundled up securely for a glorious ride. With some effort the driver would build up enough momentum for the sled to glide smoothly at a fair speed. I distinctly remember the joy of those rides, bundled up in my warm winter coat, hat with fluffy ear flaps and hot sweet tea with milk to keep me cosy. There were very few lights and as a result the night sky overhead was heavily sprinkled with stars in a deep indigo cloudless sky.

Summer had pleasant weekend outings to the riverside swimming beaches followed by "salted bread sticks" at the Mars Café where my mother worked as a waitress.

My mother's older sister, Valentina (Tetia Valia), born on August 15, 1912, married Prince Vassily Golitzin and was somewhat of a "society" lady. I remember one day mother left me with her to go shopping only to come back later and being met at the door by my agitated aunt who was sprinkling perfume around the house because I soiled my diapers and she was at a loss of what to do.

In later years Mother shared with me this anecdote – Aunt Valia was invited to her 1<sup>st</sup> formal social occasion at the Italian embassy with her husband the Prince. She was very nervous and worried to

be sure in following the correct etiquette in using the right cutlery and proper procedure sequence. My uncle laughed and told her to just observe and imitate the other guests. Everything went well until they served the main dish of steaming spaghetti with rich marinara sauce. Following her neighbor's actions, Aunt Valia attempted to twirl the spaghetti onto her fork embedded in a spoon. Unfortunately she did it too quickly and splattered the sauce onto her neighbor's stiffly starched, snow-white tuxedo shirt. At this point she burst into tears and had to be consoled by the kindly Italian gentlemen who were trying very hard not to laugh. She was only 18 years old at that time!

After that, things went very well with her. She was accepted in all of the "posh" clubs and became quite a tennis player and yacht person. Her only regret was that she could not have any children due to some medical condition which I never found out. As a result I got a lot of affection and advice from her both directly and through regular letters in later years.

Being the only grandchild, I was the "golden child" to my grandfather. In his eyes I was a "cherub" with golden curly locks that could do no wrong. I would love to sit in his lap and have him gently scratch my head while he told me magical stories or reminisced about his days in the Imperial Court of Tsar Nicolas II where he served as a page, courier and army officer from the elite Suvorov Cadet Academy. He shared with me many interesting stories of his encounters with the members of the Imperial family which unfortunately I was too young to appreciate or remember.

The first time that I was paddled on my butt for some misdemeanor, my grandfather was aghast and had to take valerian drops to calm himself down – "How could you beat this Golden Child" he said in a shaken voice.

In early 1940, Mother met an Englishman from South Africa, Evan Bissett. Although he had a wife and two daughters back in Durban, South Africa, he promised to divorce his wife and marry mother. As war clouds grew closer, he left for Shanghai and got us tickets on a boat from Dairen to Shanghai. Mother and I left Harbin in the summer of 1940 by train to Dairen, just a little more than a year before WWII started in the Pacific.

During that period the only other kids in the neighborhood where we lived were Japanese and I learned many words and sentences. Unfortunately I forgot them in the following years; however I still recall the calming sounds of Japanese string music and soothing songs of the women lulling their children to sleep.

I loved the overnight train ride, with the "clicking" sound of the rails, the "chugging" of the steam locomotive and the gentle rocking of the compartment. The green scenery of the countryside was fascinating as it flashed by and till today rail travel is still my favorite method of transportation for excursions and pleasure trips. Our stay in Dairen was minimal as we boarded the steamship for Shanghai nearly immediately.

I do not remember much of my first sea voyage, it lasted only a day. Mother purchased for me a water thermos on a shoulder strap and I accidentally bumped it and shattered the glass. That was a major disaster and by the time I got over the "bawling and the pouting" the trip was over and we were in Shanghai.

Later I found out that my father met my maternal grandfather, Nicolai Grigorievich in Harbin in June of 1942. He asked him on our whereabouts and welfare and later wrote to him asking for our address in

Shanghai. Two years later mother wrote to my father to Mudantsian, a small railroad outpost town in Manchuria, and got a reply from him on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1944, shortly before the war ended and he was forcefully repatriated to the Soviet Labor camps along with most of the male adult Russian population of Harbin and surrounding areas.

In the letter he states his regrets on their 6-year separation and resulting divorce. He acknowledged my photograph that she sent him, saying - *"Lekochka changed little, just got a little more mature. In his features I see something of me, however more of you, since he is your son and your hope. I fully agree, as you write, that you have more rights to him than I. However the government law states that the son belongs to the father. I do not agree with this and feel that the child, particularly in his early years, should be with his mother. So please do not think that I have any thoughts to "steal" him away from you."*

He describes his new family – *"Zhenia, my wife, is a brunette, a little shorter than you, her deceased mother was German and her living father is a Serb. In looks and character she is like her mother that is typically German with stern features, confident movements, business-like, far from sentimentality, closed, cold, unemotional and impatient with people to whom she is very critical. Only see the children in the family and does everything for them, husband and a tasty meal are on the last plan. She graduated from the North Manchurian University in Harbin and is 28 years old. Oldest son – Giorgi, everyone says looks like me, dark, very active and pampered by his mother and by others, he is 2 ½ years old, talks a lot but has an accent. The newly born boy was named Igor, all that I can say is he looks like the older one did when he was born"*

He continues – *"I heard from my sister, Asya, that Leka is getting an English education. Of course that is your right, but I tell you, with conviction, since I am his father, Katusha, do not diminish but on the contrary instill in him that he is – Russian! He will have his own Wonderful Motherland – Russia, that his existence now is in a foreign land, it is temporary so because of the human evil - Communists. Understand yourself and convince, him since he is already a thinking boy, that the culture and civilization of the Anglo-Saxon countries and Communist education is egoistical, perfidiously attractive, having the goal of deceiving and exploiting the people of other nations. How badly I want to see my sons as officers in the New Russian Army, Russia cleansed of Communism and its resulting atmosphere. Russia with good neighboring Eastern lands, only then I can peacefully die, Lord help for this to happen."*

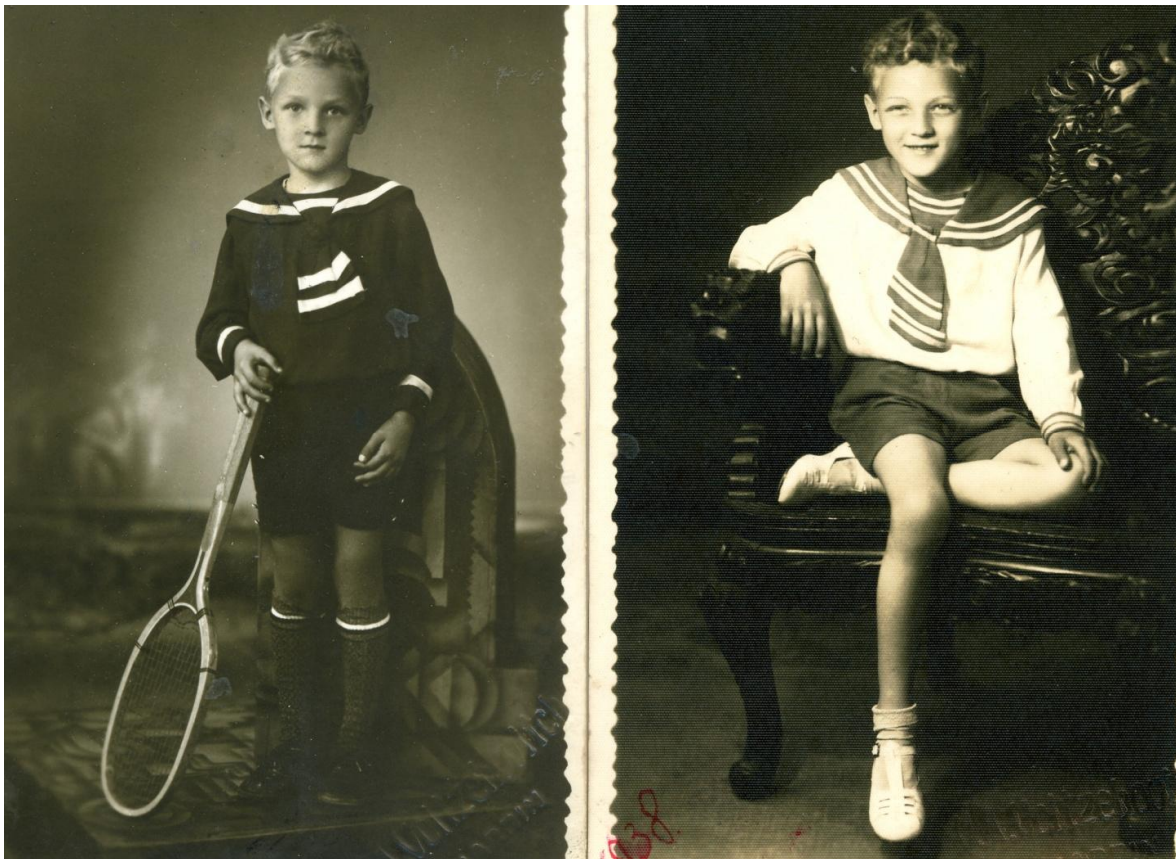
In this letter he expresses his regrets that life turned out this way. He says he still loves Mother and me very dearly and feels guilty with his new family that he cannot change this. He states that he has quit drinking except on mandatory social occasions, stopped carousing and drowns himself in his job with long hours and dedication. To my knowledge there were no other letter exchanges or correspondence between them until in 1968, Mother received a letter from Aunt Asya confirming father's death in 1952, just a year before total amnesty was declared for all of the Harbin detainees after the death of Stalin in 1953.

First knowledge of Father's passing came in a letter from my uncle Vassia Golitzin, my aunt Valia's husband who also spent long years in Soviet labor camps between 1945 to 1953. He wrote to my grandfather on April 8, 1960 – *"from letters that I received from Asya, I discovered, finally, about Tosik's death which occurred in 1952. Please pass on my condolences to Leka"*

On March 11, 1978 my uncle George, mother's older brother, wrote to her – *"when your son, Leka was in Moscow, I intentionally did not go to meet with him as he would have asked me about his father and since I never learned to lie, I did not wish to tell him the truth."*

On October 13, 1978 he wrote – *"Tell your son not to grieve. His father told me in 1949 <all my life, I only loved Katusha>, I always remained silent during his remarks – this was best for both of us. I worked with Tosik in the Urals for 2 years, 1946 to 1947, loading freshly cut trees into railroad boxcars. We shared a room, but he got bored very quickly with this kind of work and found a job as the group cook's assistant and moved out. I left for Siberia and do not know where he went. His sister later wrote to me that he died in 1952" – **Father was only 39 years old when he passed!***

I still had bitter feelings towards my father since I pre-judged him sharply for abandoning my mother and me at an early age. Therefore no one told me of his passing till many years later. Mother always had good thought and memories of him and tried her best to reduce my bitterness telling me I would understand better as I got older. I regret deeply till today that I did not get more details from her. As time went by and I met others that knew him personally, I consistently got good reports on his kindness, concerns for friends and kinfolk tempered with his wild and adventurous nature. I think he and I would have had a "grand" time together and as my mother often said it would have been great but she would get very prematurely gray from our antics!



Sailor suit photos were a la mode – so Voila! - The "Golden Child" – 1938/1939

To this day, I regret that I did not get the chance to meet with Uncle George as there is much that I do not know about our family early years. I also did not get much of an opportunity to discuss them with my Aunt Valia who was a firm believer in "looking forward and not behind". All that I have are some

letters and photographs which I am still attempting to put together, discovering little bits of new information as I do my “detective work” in piecing my chronology.

Uncle George was mother’s oldest brother; born on July 5, 1911. He was a tall, slim, elegant man with a patrician air and good aristocratic manners. He and “the love of his life”, a beautiful debutante, would draw everyone’s attention at the frequent balls that were held in the “noble society” of Harbin. These balls reflected the traditional outings of Imperial Russia – “The Tatiana Ball” for debutante’s and young High School Graduates, the “Cadet Ball” for young officers of the Imperial Army and many others.

Uncle George, in his well-cut tuxedo and she in a gorgeous white evening gown, were the stars of these outings as they waltzed across the floor. Fox-trots were frowned upon in those days as “too plebiscite” and tangos were too “sexy” only to be done by the very daring, my uncle being one of the few that did them nicely.

Unfortunately, his loved one moved with her family to Dairen and they never saw each other again. After a year of heartache and moping, Uncle George met another young lady and they got married, however, sorrow seemed to follow him as she died due to a difficult childbirth, taken her baby daughter with her. Uncle George never recovered from this and took to heavy drinking which plagued him for the rest of his life.

He was a very accomplished artist and was very good at oil painting – mostly scenery, still life, fables and some portraits. His paintings were often somber and dark reflecting his mood. In later years I tried to have some of his paintings mailed to me, but it was forbidden by the Soviet government as they were considered as “National Art Treasures”.

When the Cold War thawed, in the early ‘60s, he re-located his initial love who was living in Canada at that time and they resumed a very busy correspondence with lengthy letters (10+ pages from her and 2-3 pages from him), very frequently (3 or 4 letters a month), until he passed away in 1984. Each time that there was a short delay of his reply; Mother would be besieged by letters from her, asking if he was alright and was he angry with something she said.

My mother’s younger brother Paul, or Pavlik as we called him, was born on July 30, 1924. He was only 10 years older than me so I never called him “uncle” as I considered him more as a peer. He was also fairly tall and had my grandmother’s dark handsome face with dark eyes and wavy brown hair. He was an excellent opera baritone soloist and often performed in the role of “Prince Igor”, his favorite aria was “Oh! Give me freedom so that I can raise a host of troops against you”. He was very pampered from early childhood and as a young adult with his beautiful singing voice he was the main attraction with the opera’s troupe of dancers and singers.

This led to a lot of partying and drinking which in later years ruined his health and killed him by the time he reached 45.

Grandfather was a very distinguished and kindly man, however due to his aristocratic heritage and upbringing, he was somewhat naïve and trusting. Contrary to many other former nobility that escaped from the Bolsheviks with diamond and gold sewed into their clothing, he took wads of imperial currency which became practically valueless after the revolution. Additionally he had a major break-in to his home while he and his family were on vacation at the riverside.



## MAJOR ROBBERY at the KALAGEORGI RESIDENCE –

The night of 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1936, thieves broke in the house of N.G.Kalageorgi, Director of the Ticket Section of the Russian-Chinese Railroad Office. The criminals forced their way into his home at 52 Church Street in the Moddegau district.

The value of the loss is currently being investigated but is estimated at a large amount.



*Grandfather and his family at home on #52 Tserkovaya (Church) Street – 1926*

My mother reminisced many pleasant moments at their home in Harbin. The area was heavily populated by Russians who escaped from the Red Army forces and formed a tight community with their own churches, schools, university, social clubs, restaurants, theaters and general socializing. Everyone knew everyone and summer outings, boating and swim parties were very common on the banks of the Sungari river in summer as well as skating, sledding and toboggan racing in winter when the river was frozen with 6" or more of ice.

My grandfather, as a senior administrator at the Russian-Chinese Railroad Head office, was well known and respected and the family lived fairly well on his income, however to my knowledge none of the younger member had a desire to get a university degree, although in those days a high school degree was equivalent in education to the sophomore year in most Western universities. Particularly in arts, science, mathematics and literature.





*Grandfather and his staff - 1929*



*The Main Street (Kitaiskaya) in Harbin - 1936*

The Kitaiskaya Street was the main street in Harbin and heavily frequented by Russians and other foreigners. All the fashionable stores and restaurants were located on that street and one would constantly bump into friends and make new ones as they went about their business or were just taking a stroll, as the Russians say ***“To show Oneself and to see Others”***



Harbin today is world famous for its Ice Festival. This annual event has been around for over 20 years and it draws visitors from all over China who come to see the amazing creations that are lit up at night by multicolored lights. Harbin happens to refer to itself as the “ice city,” very fitting given its northern latitude and gorgeous display of the winter elements. With fairy tale palaces and beautiful traditional pagodas the carved ice sculptures make a magical landscape, turning a cold and harsh environment into a beautiful one. Different international themes are selected each year to maintain freshness to these festivals as well as to attract foreign visitors from abroad.

Swing saws are used to carve ice into blocks, taken from the frozen surface of the Songhua River. Chisels, ice picks and various types of saws are then used by ice sculptors to carve out large scaled ice sculptures, many of them intricately designed and worked on all day and night prior to the commencement of the festival. Deionised water can also be used, producing ice blocks as transparent as glass to make clear sculptures rather than translucent ones. Multi-colored lights are also used to give color to the ice, creating variations on sculptured spectacles when lit up especially at night.

Some ice sculptures made in previous years include: buildings and monuments of different architectural types and styles, figures including animals, people and mythical creatures, slippery dips or ice slides and lanterns. Apart from winter recreational activities available in Harbin, these exquisitely-detailed, mass-produced ice sculptures are the main draw card in attracting tourists around the world to the festival.

Officially, the festival starts January 5<sup>th</sup>, and lasts one month. However the exhibits often open earlier and stay longer, weather permitting. Ice sculpture decoration technology ranges from the modern (using lasers) to traditional (with ice lanterns). There are ice lantern park touring activities held in many parks in the city. Winter activities in the festival include Yabuli alpine skiing, winter-swimming in the Songhua River, and the ice-lantern exhibition in Zhaolin Garden.



*Harbin today – The Annual “Ice Festival”*



### ***Inserts to Chapter I – Harbin***

- Check for more photos

## Chapter II – My early years in Shanghai (1940 to 1949)

**“Each 10,000 mile journey starts with the 1<sup>st</sup> step”**

Over my lifetime, I would travel to 5 continents, visit 40 countries residing in several of them, cross the Equator half a dozen times and circle the globe. This was my “First step”.

The voyage down the coast of China was uneventful and after a short cruise up the Whangpoo River we arrived in Shanghai at the Bund. I remember how huge it looked to me after Harbin and Dairen. This was the most populated city in China with over 6 million inhabitants at that time.



View of the Bund and Whangpoo River

Shanghai's strategic position at the mouth of the Yangtze River made it an ideal location for trade with the West. During the [First](#) Opium War in the early 19th century, British forces temporarily held Shanghai. The war ended with the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, which made Shanghai one of the “treaty ports” opened for international trade and saw foreign nations achieve extraterritoriality on Chinese soil, the start of the foreign concessions.

1854 saw the first meeting of the Shanghai Municipal Council, created in order to manage the foreign settlements. In 1863, the British settlement, located to the south of Suzhou creek (Huangpu district), and the American settlement, to the north of Suzhou creek (Hongkou district), joined in order to form the International Settlement. The French opted out of the Shanghai Municipal Council, and maintained its own French Concession, located to the south of the International Settlement, which still exists today as a popular attraction. Citizens of many countries and all continents came to Shanghai to live and work during the ensuing decades; those who stayed for long periods — some for generations — called themselves “Shanghai-Landers”. In the 1920s and 1930s, almost 20,000 White

Russians and Russian Jews fled the newly-established Soviet Union and took up residence in Shanghai. These Shanghai Russians constituted the second-largest foreign community.

We settled in a small apartment on Route Frelupt in the French Concession. My initial days in Shanghai were not my greatest. I sorely missed my grandfather who pampered me and called me “the Golden Child”. I was enrolled in L'Ecole Remy, a French-Russian grade school, my first experience with strict teachers who had no patience for “undisciplined, talkative children”. My first few days in the classroom were spent standing in a corner with a handkerchief stuffed in my mouth.

The school was within a short walk from our apartment and although I was barely 5 years old, Mother let me walk home alone from school after guiding me on the path a few weeks. I had to take a right turn from the school gates and walk 3 blocks straight to our door. One day I noticed that most of my classmates took a left turn from the school gates. I decided that I could do the same and just walk around the block to head home.

A neighboring fish market attracted me and nearby a Chinamen selling puppies, birds and small creatures. Before I knew it I got hopelessly lost and wandered in circles till dusk. At that time a kindly Russian-speaking policeman noticed me and taking my hand kindly brought me to my nearly-hysterically worried Mother.

DISAPPEARANCE of a RUSSIAN BOY in CONCESSION	
Detectives of the French police are performing a search in the disappearance yesterday of the Russian boy, Lev Kalageorgi. Notification on the disappearance of the boy was made yesterday evening at 6 pm to the Central Police Precinct, by the boy's mother	She said that the boy lived with her in an apartment on Rue Frelupt, but yesterday, for the entire day after leaving home in the morning, did not return. The mother described the boy and the clothes that he was wearing when he left the home. Search for the boy is continuing this morning

*Extract from the local newspaper*

Due to my adventure I caught a cold and was put to bed with a glass thermometer in my mouth. I unintentionally bit down on it and swallowed the mercury tip. Mother immediately called a doctor who gave me some laxative and as a result, the tip came out of my other end – to everyone's surprise and relief the mercury did not come out of the tip! In later years Mother claimed that was the reason that I grew so tall in such a short while.

The day after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the next day Japanese marines occupied the International Settlement. By January 1943 it was abolished and the Shanghai Municipal Council was disbanded. All foreign nationals with passports from the “Allied countries” were required to wear armbands with the letters “A” for American, “B” for British and “N” for Dutch. Shortly after they were all rounded up and placed in internment camps in the outskirts of the city. Evan Bissett managed to leave Shanghai before the occupation and returned to South Africa. My mother and I moved to an apartment on Route Grouchy in a section fondly called “Skunk Hollow”.

Life in “Skunk Hollow” was great. I made new friends with the neighboring kids and their parents. It was a very ethnically mixed environment made up of Russians, Filipinos, Portuguese and Chinese. In

summer some of us would climb on a backyard stone wall and watch the activities at night in the adjoining outdoor dance club. We were invisible in the dark since the dance floor was brightly lit and would shoot marbles from slingshots at the drums. One night we had a close one since the club bouncer waited for us one night against the wall and grabbed my dangling leg to pull me down. Fortunately my buddies were quick enough to grab me and pull me back on our side with me losing one shoe. The loss of this shoe resulted in a month's "grounding" by my mother. Shoes were very expensive!



38 Route Grouchy – our windows on 1<sup>st</sup> floor (Skunk Hollow) ~ 1952



38 Route Grouchy – our windows in 2011. Minimal change in 60 years

In 1941 I was enrolled in a Catholic school run by the Marist Brothers called Sainte Jeanne d' Arc College. It was just a block away from our new home and holds my fondest memories of my life in Shanghai. When I started there I did not know any English as I spoke only Russian at home.



Sainte Jeanne D'Arc College – 1940 on Route Doumer and Avenue Joffre

My school days were busy and pleasant. Although the Marist Brothers were pretty strict, they were very dedicated to provide us with an excellent education and spent a lot of time with the students, joining us in all sports activities and always being available for tutoring or counseling. The classes were small, about 30 students of a very international mixture of Russians, French, English, Chinese, Portuguese, Indian, Koreans, Germans, Italians and many other ethnics. This really broadened my understanding from an early age of the different cultures and ethnic customs and assisted me greatly in my future life.

My closest friends are still from that group and although currently they are scattered throughout the world, I still maintain contact with many of them through written correspondence, telephone conversations or exchanges of brief visits. I was a relatively good student and learned to speak English rather quickly.

The school had two sections – All courses taught in English with French as a subject and the 2<sup>nd</sup> section had all courses taught in French with English as a subject. To my later regret I was enrolled in the English sector and did not master French. All the boys in the French sector, however, learned English since it was the major foreign language being used in Shanghai during those “semi- colonial” days.

Many years later I had the pleasure to visit with one of my Marist Brothers teacher, the Reverend Brother Gilbert in Paris France. He was in his 90's partially blind but recognized me and we had a very pleasant visit down memory lane.

I still maintain contact with several of the boys pictured in the 1943 class photograph below, but alas, many of them have passed on over the years. I am seated in the center of the 1<sup>st</sup> row.





My class in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year at Sainte Jeanne D 'Arc College in summer of 1943

In August of 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and immediately invaded Manchuria and Korea. Resistance in Manchuria was very weak since the Japanese just had an atomic bomb dropped on them in Hiroshima and were close to defeat. The émigré military unit composed of White Russians suffered very heavy casualties. Right after the occupation of Harbin, the Soviets rounded up all the White Russian émigré males between the ages of 17 to 60 and shipped them north to the virgin lands under development between the Ural Mountains and Lake Baikal in Central Siberia. My father and two of my uncles were among the detainees. My grandfather and younger uncle were spared by sheer luck.

Many years later, in the early 60's, Mom regained contact with my uncles to learn that Father died in one of the "Gulag" camps in 1952, just a year before most of the inmates were released.

From a few escapees, those of us fortunate enough to be in Shanghai, heard many tales of the bitter weather, forbidding terrain and extreme hardships that these people had to endure building new housing, factories and other construction in a nation ravaged by war. They had to clear the thick virgin forest, till the frozen land and remove huge granite rocks. The vast majority of these expatriates was ex-nobility, lawyers and merchants and has never done any physical labor in their lives. However as I later found out the younger generations, kids my age, benefited from the scholastic system and many of them attained PhD's in Science, Engineering and Arts.

The WWII years (1940 – 1945) did not cause any major hardships on my youthful mind. To sustain us during these difficult times, Mother worked as a salesperson and waitress at a popular café called D.D.'s located on the main street in the French Concession Avenue Joffre. In the evenings she took ballet lessons and got a second job with "Show trust & Co" which cast performances of Operettas,

Operas and Plays at the Lyceum Theatre just opposite the prestigious French Club on Avenue de Cardinal Mercier.

I remember being chastised for climbing on the roof of our dwelling to watch the US B-29's bomb the surrounding outskirts of Shanghai not realizing the risk we were putting ourselves due to the flying shrapnel from the anti-aircraft guns, one narrowly missed my buddy's head by just a few inches.

The Kalageorgis were always artistically inclined. As mentioned earlier, my older uncle George was an accomplished portrait and landscape artist and my younger uncle Paul sang as a lead baritone in the opera in Harbin. In my childhood I was also very good at drawing but dropped it at an early age much to my later regret. My mother's older sister, Aunt Valia married Prince Vassily Golitzin thus becoming a patroness of art rather than a contributor. However she was very literate, very knowledgeable and well versed in literature.

I frequently went to watch my mother's opera rehearsals at the Lyceum Theatre, mainly because I had a "crush" on one of the younger ballerinas. One evening the Head Ballet Mistress, a stern, no-nonsense older woman yelled at me – "You! You have been here ogling the girls long enough. Come on the stage and become useful". This started my very brief ballet experience and I performed as a paid member of the troupe for several performances of "Swan Lake" during its full season.

During that time I another "life-threatening" experience. When I was about 8 years old, I was sitting in an armchair not far from the fireplace when my mother who was knitting asked me to get her a ball of wool from the cupboard. I immediately got up and went to the cupboard. At that moment the large glass chandelier that was over my armchair broke loose and crashed to where I was sitting breaking into sharp splinters. If I had hesitated even for a moment I probably would not be writing this now.

Growing up in China, we did not indulge in candy, chocolates or pop. During recess in school there was a "Tuck Shop" on the playground run by a friendly Chinaman fondly known as "Johnny the Tuck Man". He sold to us various treats such as dried salted lemon peels, preserved fruits and vegetables, honey-soaked nuts and hardened roasted dough as well as various mysterious items that I cannot describe but tasted very good. A side benefit was that I did not have a cavity till I was nearly 32.

During the summer recess, Ste Jeanne D'Arc would remove the partitions between the classrooms on the 1<sup>st</sup> level and create a large hall. This would be filled with a couple of pool tables, ping-pong tables, shuffle board and a multitude of desk games such as chess, checkers, and many other competitive 2 player games. For a small fee, we could spend the days there playing games, meeting our class chums and generally enjoying the school break.

The grass would grow nearly knee high in the playground and I would love to lie there, hidden from the world, observing the white clouds in the gorgeous blue skies and listen to the cicadas and grasshoppers do their singing, watch the dragonflies flitting by and observe the various large beetles, ants and other insects crawl though the grass, pretending to be as tiny as them in the green jungle of grass stalks turned to towering trees. I also would spend a lot of time climbing high onto a stately oak that grew in the corner of our grounds and hide myself in the leaves observing all the activities below.

The arrangement in our living quarters at Route Doumer were also conducive to my education in the beauty of the female figure. Our kitchen and bathroom were located in an earlier designed verandah in the back of our two rooms and were separated by a wooden partition that reached to about 2 feet below

the ceiling. Some nights when my beautiful young (early 20s) baby-sitter would stay over to watch me and after I pretended to fall asleep she would go take a bath. I would quietly scamper up on the kitchen table and peek from the top studying her comely nude figure.

I studied at Ste Jeanne D 'Arc continuously with a brief 2 month interruption due to financial hardship during which time I was at Saint Michael's College, a Jesuit school for orphans and needy children. 1944 was a particular hard year in Shanghai, the Japanese were losing the war, food became very scarce and expensive, there were air raids nearly every night with US heavy bombers, the B-29s bombing the Japanese military installations and airfields on the outskirts of the main city. We were relatively fortunate; however there was much shrapnel from exploded anti-aircraft fire that would drop down on us. Mother could not afford to continue paying for my tuition at Ste Jeanne D'Arc so she transferred me to that Jesuit boarding school.

The education was somewhat similar to SJA, however the life style was rather different to what I was accustomed to. My first breakfast was oatmeal, called "porridge" that had a fair amount of additional protein, namely little white worms with beady black eyes and a lot of legs. The other kids ate normally, some sorting the worms from the grain to the edge of the plate, some just ignoring them and gobbling up the entire mixture. I could not handle that and as a result usually missed breakfast.

Class room time was good as the Jesuit priests who were the teachers had zero tolerance to lack of attention or any class disruptions. Those always followed a trip to the director's office and a caning. Playground was fun but somewhat on the rowdy side with much running around, wrestling and general "horsing around". Lunch and dinners were not bad but rather austere and skimpy. Lights out were at 9 pm and that was when some of the older boys would sneak out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window to an adjoining friendly tree and make their way to the local billiard hall for some competitive pool where they made some extra money hustling the "wealthy spiffs"



*In my St.Michael's College Cap with Mother – 1944*



After about two months at St. Michael's College my mother noticing my loss of weight and bags under my eyes for lack of sleep, yanked me out of there and re-instated me back at Ste Jeanne D'Arc where I remained till my graduation in 1949.

On August 16, 1945, World War II came to an end with the broadcast of Emperor Hirohito's voice on the loudspeakers at the Shanghai Race Course for the Japanese Imperial forces to lay down their arms except in the use of civil order. It was impressive to observe the strict discipline of the Japanese soldiers as they stood in rigid attention, with fixed bayonets at the main utilities stations, department stores, banks and major business building, stoically enduring with stony faces the jeers and taunts from the "liberated" natives.

Shortly after, waves of American GI's appeared, they came from the Pacific forces that were close by in preparation of the invasion of Japan before the dropping of the two atomic bombs occurred. Through the balance of 1945 and most of 1946, Shanghai was the central processing point for the American military personnel returning to the US from the Pacific theater of operations.

However in the midst of this euphoria, major fighting was going on in North and Central China between Chiang Kai Chek's Nationalist forces and Mao Tse Tung's Red Army.

As the Communist army approached closer to Shanghai, waves of trepidation and fear rippled through the wealthier levels of Shanghai's expatriate society. The millionaires and upper society started packing, liquidating their assets and moving on to greener pastures and "home" bases.

We, as the "poorer" White Russian exiles, had no resources or places to go to. Some were fortunate to find relatives in the US, Europe and Australia, however a fair portion of us had no where to go. Some of the more patriotic and idealistic members chose to accept Soviet citizenship and went to the USSR. The upper middle class, composed of merchants, lawyers, engineers and business people appealed to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

After 1945, American magazines and "comic books" made their appearance – this was our 1<sup>st</sup> exposure to the famous "super" heroes such as Superman, Captain Marvel, Batman, etc. We were fascinated and after some initial restrictions, the good "Brothers" permitted us to set up trading sessions for 15 minutes at the classrooms in school just before the classes start. I think it was their ploy to get us in class on time. Trading was fast and exciting as each boy had his favorites – mine was Captain Marvel.

One of our students was fortunate to get a semester scholarship to the USA and we learned some "American" techniques from him on his return. I remember the shocked looks on some of the faces when during a competitive softball game with a team from another school, he started to "razz" the opposing team's pitcher and batters! Being a handsome kid, he was popular with the girls and got us all jealous by teaching them all the latest "boogie-woogie" steps and twirls.

In summer we used to go to the seaside at Chapoo, about 6 hours drive in an old US Army truck. On the way we often had to pick up Chinese Nationalist soldiers who were hitchhiking completely armed with rifles and bandoleers of cartridges. Some of them would have live grenades dangling from their bandoleers by the firing pin. On one of those visits when I was about 11 years old, I was scampering with some of my pals along the side of a large cliff. Carelessly I ran too close to the edge, and slipping on the wet grass, rolled over the edge. Just a foot below was a tree stump that hit me in the

waist and left me dangling 50 feet above the sharp rocky surf until some adults climbed down with a rope and rescued me.

That was when I started believing in “Guardian Angels”

My early school years bring back memories of warm, lazy summers, class outings to the pagodas on the gentle foothills surrounding Shanghai, happily busy classroom hours, soccer and softball games, swimming and “sampan” rides on the Whampoo river, bicycle outings, picnics and birthday parties.

Almost all of us had bicycles and would chase around the open areas in “Skunk Hollow” showing off to the girls. One of those forays nearly ended badly for me – as I was peddling at full speed down the lane, I did not see an empty clothes line that someone string from a tree to their window. It hit me on the chin as had my head down and knocked me off the bicycle. I shudder to think what may have happened if it hit me on my throat.

In the waning years of the Kuo-Ming-Tan government, inflation was rampant and some of my older friends who had jobs would get paid in millions of nearly worthless paper currency. At that time there were many black market money exchangers who would trade old Chinese silver coins for paper currency. They would stand at street corners and clink the coins in their hand to advertise for business. Repercussions were extremely harsh, if they were caught by the Nationalist Military police, they were executed on the spot with a bullet to the back of their head and left on the street as a warning to others.

After graduation from SJA on August 18, 1950 I was transferred to the Saint Francis Xavier College, which was equivalent to the Junior and Senior years at a US High School. SFX was located across the Soochow Creek in Hongkew, about 45 minute ride by bus and electric tramway from my home. However at 14 life is a lark and we had a lot of laughs and fun during those rides much to the irritation of the adult travelers.

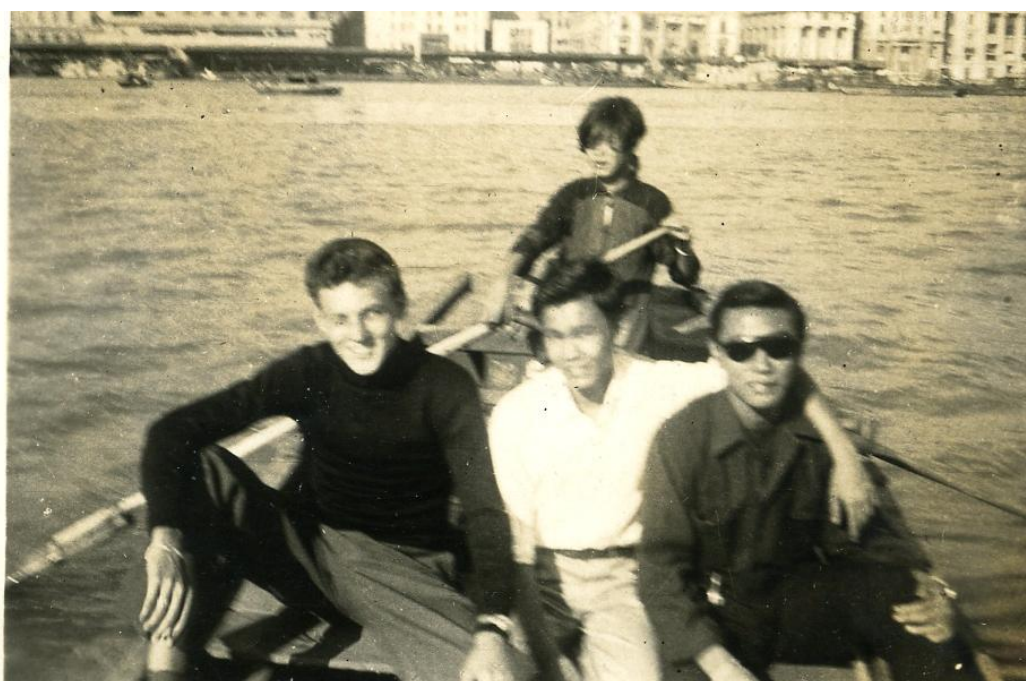
One of our favorite tricks was to watch for an empty seating spot to appear in the long benches that ran along the sides of the car and shift over in a group to provide a seat for one of our buddies on the other end or middle. This often resulted in some startled local person, who hate physical contact with strangers, ending up sitting on our laps.

I had three very close buddies in our SFX class and we frequently forged our parents’ signature on notes telling the teacher we were ill and played “hooky” from school. On one such escapade, after getting into a “financial” argument with a boat owner, we were unceremoniously dumped at the river bank in the Lughwa airport area which was a closed military zone. As we wandered on we were surprised to see a bunch of Europeans playing volleyball near the hangers that were housing MIG fighter planes. We then realized that these were Russian Soviet pilots that were training their Chinese counterparts. This was a strictly classified zone and we were in “deep do-do” if we were caught. As we approached the gate we saw two young Chinese guards with fixed bayonets on their rifles. We marched resolutely up to them and as they turned to us, one of my buddies barked at them ferociously in Russian and waved his arm in a gesture telling them to step aside. The startled guards, who were not much older than us and who were guarding the airfield from “outsiders” and not “insiders” moved away and let us through. We strolled slowly without looking back with some tension half expecting a rifle shot, and as soon as we turned the corner – ran like “bats out of hell”.



*My final year at Saint Francis Xavier – 1951. Down to a graduating class of 8 students.*

In my early teens, my school grades declined significantly. I was talkative and inattentive in class, often day-dreaming or performing “pranks” at the teacher’s expense and generally having an “unsatisfactory” behavior. Only much later, in 1981, when I impulsively took a 3-hour Mensa test, I discovered that I was eligible with an I.Q. score of 149.



*Sampan Ride on the Whangpoo – “Hookie” from school*

On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945 the WWII Japanese occupation of Shanghai officially ended. We became aware of this event by a strange roaring noise in our terrace on that morning – it was the 1<sup>st</sup> Jeep that I ever saw, arriving with some US Army officers to pick up an agent for the Allies that lived in our terrace and was clandestinely broadcasting daily, throughout the Japanese occupation, on a hidden short-wave radio, updates on the Japanese military movements, strengths and locations. Next came the releases from the internment camps of the Allied citizens, some related to my neighbors and school colleagues. There was a general euphoria and the start of my “teen/adult” education among the renewed hustle and bustle of the return to the “pre-war” Shanghai life.

I was saddened to hear many years later that Saint Joan of Arc College was demolished in 1990 and a high-rise apartment building is there now on the corner of the former Route Doumer and Avenue Joffre. Saint Francis Xavier College is still functioning but without the Marist Brothers, it is now an English language school, called Beihong Senior High School, for Chinese students wishing to be proficient in that language.

When I reached 13 years of age, in 1948, I joined the SJA Boy Scout Troupe. Initially it was a lot of fun with weekly meetings, merit-badge training, week-end camping and general “camaradie”. I fondly remember our first overnight camping trip to the Chinese country side. We went to a secluded area near a bubbling creek with a lot of bushes and trees. The day was sunny and bright and we had a lot of fun with inter-troop competitions in building trestle bridges with our scout staves over the creek as well as training in first aid applications, bandaging, torques and splint applications for “broken” arms and legs.

When night came some of us, myself included, had US Army surplus one-man “pup tents”, however 2 of my buddies were sharing a small white canvas tent. The site was close to a Chinese cemetery and as night came, the two in the white tent got frightened by the shadows from the trees overhead in their semi-translucent tent and the intermittent whispers of the night breeze. They both ended up climbing into my small “pup tent” and we spent the night poking each other with elbows and knees!



*Swearing in a new member in our Boy Scout Troop*



By 14, I was promoted to Troupe Leader 1<sup>st</sup> Class, however I was getting a little bored with the activities and did not like our new Scoutmaster who was very humorless and a disciplinarian. With my close buddies we invented lots of ways to irritate him culminating in pretending not to hear his commands during a marching exercise and “goose-stepping” in a robotic fashion through toilets, brushes and ending up by slamming into a wooden fence. He was livid with anger and slapped me across the face. That did it my whole troupe of 12 quit right there and never returned to scouting.

As I got older we would often go on bike picnics in the country side. Not everyone had a bike so we would often double up and carry the girls sitting across the main frame of the bicycle. This was very cozy and romantic since it gave us a chance to admire the backs of the head, hair and necks of our enamored ones. The girls usually brought the food – sandwiches, pastries and fruit, while the boys provided the muscles of their “pedaling power”.

On one of our excursions, one of my buddies brought along a newly acquired young golden retriever. A beautiful friendly active dog, just out of “Puppyhood”. He pranced along with us with joy being expressed in every movement of his body. All went well till we arrived near a Chinese village. The Chinese peasants in those days used human manure for fertilizer and there were huge (10 feet in diameter) clay cisterns in the field. As you may guess our beautiful dog in its joyful run fell into one of these cisterns. They were not deep so he managed to crawl out and ran towards us shaking his coat at every other step. We all scattered and he assumed we were playing and gave chase. From that day on my buddy was known for a long time as – “Charlie with the S---t Dog”.

During my early school days at Ste Jeanne D’Arc College, which was situated on Avenue Doumer in the French Concession, I walked daily past the residence of Du (Big Eared) Yuesheng, the Godfather of Shanghai and the head of the Green Gang Triad.

The Green Gang was a criminal organization that operated in Shanghai in the early 20th century. It was a secret society established originally by Fong Toh Tak of the Shaolin temple to protect the Han people who were oppressed by the Qing dynasty, and to restore the Mings to power. By the 20th century it had acquired such wealth and power that it had become corrupt, and included many successful businessmen. Under Du Yuesheng, it controlled the criminal activities in the entire city of Shanghai. The Green Gang focused on opium (which was supported by local warlords), gambling, and prostitution. Shanghai was the vice capital of the world at that time.

It was often hired to break up union meetings and labor strikes, and was also involved in the Chinese Civil War. Carrying the name of the Society for Common Progress, it was responsible for the White Terror massacre of approximately 5,000 pro-Communist strikers in the City of Shanghai in April 1927, which was ordered by the Nationalist leader General Chiang Kai-Shek, who granted Du Yuesheng the rank of General in the Nationalist army as a reward for conducting the massacre.

The Green Gang was also a major financial supporter of Chiang Kai-Shek, who became acquainted with the gang when he lived in Shanghai from 1915 to 1923. They shared their profits from the drug trade with the Kuomintang after the creation of the Opium Suppression Bureau and had a major role and influence in that corruption filled government.



*Residence of Du (Big Eared) Yuesheng, the Godfather of Shanghai and the head of the Green Gang Triad.*

Du was a passionate gambler and loved the grand, showy gesture, be it a couple of sing-song girls on his arms or a coffin delivered to the home of someone who had slighted him. He was tall and thin, with a face that seemed hewn out of stone, a Chinese version of the Sphinx and always wore a Chinese silk gown with western style boots. In the crazy free-for-all world of Shanghai, he was a Pillar of Society as well as Underworld Boss. He escaped to Hong Kong just ahead of the Communists in 1949 and died there in 1951.

When I was about 15 years old, one of my close buddies, decided that it was time for me to learn to dance properly. After some basic instructions on the fox-trot, waltz, tango and rumba, he felt that it was time to get professional practice. This was my first introduction to the “taxi-dance” girls. We went to a local dance night club where one bought an entry ticket which entitled him to drink hot green tea all night and a roll of tickets – one per dance. After the initial clumsiness, I started to enjoy myself. The girls were all Chinese, young and quite pretty in a “petite” way. They were good dancers and I learned fast. We told them that we were a couple of “business men” relaxing after a hard day of business activities. A couple of weeks later as we were going to school carrying our books we heard some giggling – there were a couple of the girls across the street, pointed at us with our books and laughing in amusement at our embarrassment.

In 1949, I joined the Young Men’s Christian Association and The YMCA building was located on the Bund adjacent to the prestigious Park Hotel and within walking distance from the British Embassy and the Garden Bridge over Soochow Creek, not far from the famous Garden Bridge Park with the infamous sign – “No Dogs or Chinese Allowed”. The YMCA, or as we fondly called it “the Y”, was a great club for young people. The best days of my life were spent there.

On the street level, near the main entrance, was an American style soda fountain, where ice cold stewed fruit was served, you could order one of about 20 different ice cream sundaes such as strawberry hill, pony express, banana split and others. I remember my first experience of eating a

“Strawberry Ice Cream Soda”. The YMCA was very well equipped. There were also about six bowling lanes on that level, adjoining a “steam room”. I remember wandering into the steam room after a bowling session and stopping in horror when I saw those large square metal boxes with only the heads sticking out wrapped in towels. I ran out of there in terror to the amusement of the participants who were mainly older business men getting a steam treatment for weight loss.

On the first floor there was a big lounge with white couches, and a big table with English newspapers, a room with table-tennis tables, and the swimming pool balcony. Just before the door to the balcony there was a column where a small plywood plank was hanging on a hook. It said “MIXED SWIMMING” on one side and “MEN'S SWIMMING” on the other side if overturned; so some jokers used to overturn that sign and make it MIXED SWIMMING while it was MEN'S SWIMMING, with naked men and boys doing their swimming training laps and exercises.

In those days, for some vague hygienic reason all of our swimming classes and training was all male and sans suits. This occasionally created some panic when some of the girls would absent-mindedly and inadvertently wander onto the balcony overlooking the swimming pool. Some of our older “better endowed” trainers would love to bounce on the diving board in anticipation of those “accidental” visits.

I remember two episodes: The door with the sign on it "Businessmen" opens and a naked old man walks in the pool, he puts his thick specs on the bench and walks alongside the waterfront, people seeing a naked person began to shout: “mixed swimming! mixed swimming!” but it looks like he was quite deaf and keeps on walking; at last he stops, puts his palm to the ear and says: "what ?" with that nice Jewish accent facing the swimmers with no swimsuit on, at last he finally understands, what's going on, turns around and slowly walks back with all the people in the pool giggling.

During a Junior swimming team training with no swimsuits The Coach was standing in the shallow part of the pool giving instructions, while totally naked. The women's door opened and an old woman dressed in a black swimsuit walks in to the pool. We were all yelling, that it's men's swimming only but she pays no attention and walks directly to the Coach and starts arguing, trying to convince him that it's time for mixed swimming. The Coach got so excited arguing with her, that this really huge 6ft 4in tall person, forgot all about covering up; this was something watching them. Suddenly he realized his naked state and grabs his towel from the window sill and wraps it around his waist . After this the woman goes away!

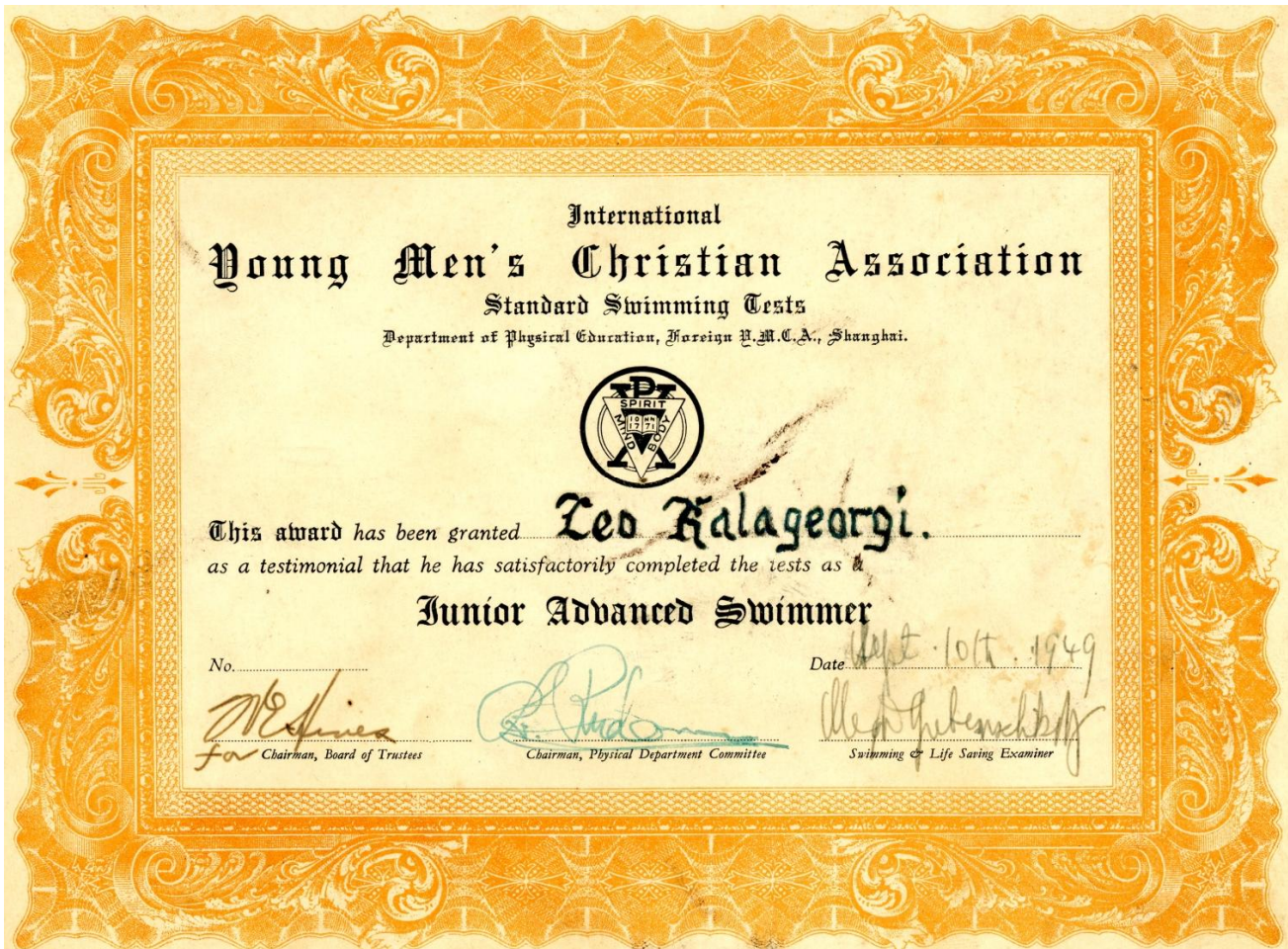
In reciprocation to this “violation of our privacy”, one of the boys drilled a peephole on the back stair well into the ladies shower room and we would gather there occasionally pushing and shoving to get our turn. Unfortunately the older girls caught on pretty quick and took their shower away from its limited view.

The second floor had – The “Junior” room, a fully-equipped gymnasium with setting for basketball and indoor tennis competitions as well as gymnastic equipment like high and parallel bars, hobby horses and rings. A room with fitness and rowing apparatus, weightlifting bars, parallel bars, boxing bag and other manly stuff. The gym was above the pool.

The third floor had four rooms for playing squash and handball both played with a small black rubber ball against the wall. In handball the player uses a leather glove. These rooms were above the gym and were used frequently after hours for romantic encounters.



The fourth to ninth floor was a hotel for men only. There was a nice roof garden too.



*My Junior Advanced Swimmer Certificate*

It took a lot of hard swimming and competition to obtain the above "Junior Advanced Swimmer" certificate and I was well on my way to get the "Senior" version by competing with the other clubs. My specialty was the 50 yard crawl freestyle race as with my height I would always gain an initial lead of a few feet.

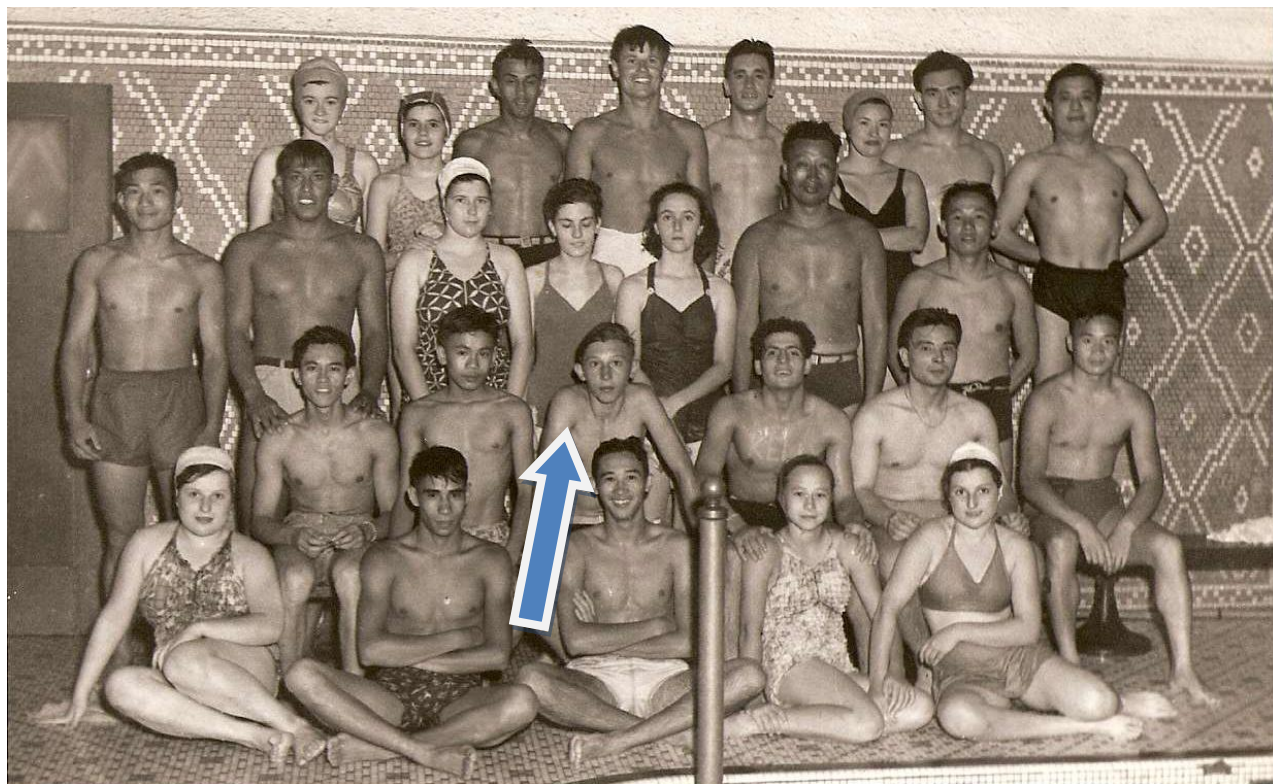
During my early teens I spent a lot of time in the Foreign YMCA where I learned to swim with excellent coaches and mentors. I developed into a "better than average" swimmer and received an "Advanced Swimmer" certificate. As I grew taller, reaching close to 6' by the time I reached 14 years, my height gave me advantage in short races (25 to 50 yards). I practiced diligently on my initial "flat bellied" gliding dive which put me nearly a yard ahead of my competitors. At 14 I was competing in many of the major Free-Style Junior Inter-Club races. Another of my specialties was also the back-stroke.

The "Y" had many female members as in Shanghai there was no YWCA. This was great for us boys and we had many opportunities to meet and date girls. For some of us, like me, who attended "all boy" schools, this was a new and exciting experience, however my shyness and lack of self confidence lost me many good opportunities as I would get tongue-tired whenever a girl would talk to me.

The Senior Advanced Swimmer Group was the "pride" of the YMCA. It included all of the best swimmers and instructors of the club. Some of them were Olympic level but being "expatriates" they



could not be sponsored by any “real” country. They participated in all of the inter-club competitions and gained many trophies.



*The Senior Advanced Swimmer Group with Igor Guileff*

Years later when I had my GM Overseas assignment in Russia, I received a telephone call from Igor Guileff, then known by the surname of Bastrikin. He is the chap in the center of the second row with his hands on his knees. I was overjoyed to hear from him and a couple of years later we exchanged visits, with him and his wife, Alla, coming to the US and Beverly and I visiting them in Ekaterinburg, Russia. He is still an ace swimmer and competes in his age group in Russia, holding 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the National events. Our 3-week tour across the US with the Guileffs, is covered later in this “bio”.



*Foreign YMCA Swimming Pool*

The YMCA was closed in late 1952 along with most of the other foreign establishments including all of the Catholic and Protestant schools and churches. All of the foreign priests, brothers, nuns and clergy were also deported at that time.

My teen years were happy but tumultuous. It was not easy for my mother being a “single” parent. I was very rebellious to discipline, lax on my homework assignments, sullen and moody and started drinking and smoking at a very young age. However in those days we were nowhere close to the “juvenile delinquency” that was portrayed in the movies of later years. We would never dream of using any physical aggression on our elders or smaller children. The worst that we would do is maybe smash some windows to illustrate our anger or dissatisfaction with someone in authority.

I graduated from Saint Francis Xavier’s College on December 22, 1951 on an accelerated program because the college and the foreign Catholic clergy were under great pressure to leave the country. Our graduation class was slimmed down to just 8 students. At the same time I took the University of Cambridge entrance exam and successfully obtained an Overseas Certificate “A” also in December of that year.



*My Intermediate (Junior) Year at St.Francis Xavier's College - 1950*

I still correspond and see some of my colleagues from the above class photo taken 60 years ago. Guy Chaillon, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left in the 2<sup>nd</sup> row lives in France and we visited with him a few times over the years. Alfredo da Costa and Edward (Sonny) Machado on my left reside in South San Francisco, CA as does Sidney Shaw seated in the extreme right of the front row. I see them periodically when we visit relatives in San Francisco.



Life in “Skunk Hollow” was good. Our apartment house (condominium style) was the 4<sup>th</sup> one in a row of apartment buildings on one side of a broad enclosed “U shaped” lane, there were five more apartments on our side. The bottom was a caretaker’s house and there were nine apartments on the opposite side with parallel stone steps running from each one to the central court. Our side had opposing “L shaped” cemented brick stairs running in opposite directions from each pair of houses. See photo on page 12. All the entrance stairways were to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor level as the ground floors were intended for garages to house non-existent cars and were converted to low cost apartments with the advantage that they had access to a small back yard where many of the inhabitants during the war years raised chickens and ducklings for food. The entrance to the lane had a large double gate steel framed with black painted sheet metal which would be closed and locked every night after 11:30 pm. A small pedestrian door with an all night security watchman was left unlocked for late night resident traffic.

The inhabitants were very international, besides the “White Russian” immigrants like ourselves, there were Russian and British Jews, Portuguese and Filipinos, Lithuanians, Indians, Vietnamese, Chinese and a mixture of all of these. Everyone got along very well and we were fiercely territorial – no one from the houses in the outside area dared to enter the “scary” Skunk Hollow except those from the adjoining Route Grouchy and Route Doumer that were sanctioned by one of the residents. Everyone spoke English or Russian or French. Chinese was rarely used much to my later disappointment for I never got the chance to learn beyond being able to swear!

The neighborhood was well equipped with many grocery and fresh produce stores run by Northern Russian-speaking Chinese, I remember with mouth watering nostalgia, the mountains of Chinese potstickers that were shared with me by those shopkeepers on the Chinese New Year holidays when they would invite selected customers to partake in their family celebrations.

There were also, a bicycle repair shop right across the entrance to our lane , a couple of laundries and steam cleaners and a hot steam center which provided boiling water in large wooden barrel/tubs that were delivered to the home for a weekly or monthly bath as there was no hot water piped to the various homes. Being the only and “favored” child I always got the first use of the hot water, all other family members bathed after me.

During the war years meat was hard to get so mother bought a dozen chicks and ducklings to raise and supplement our diet. Every morning she would lower a basket from our 2<sup>nd</sup> level back window with those critters to our back yard and let them scamper around, throwing feed grain from her window. In the evening it was the reverse process and I was assigned to go into the yard and catch them for loading back into the basket. The night they spent in our bath tub and it was my job to clean up after them the next day. The sad part was that as they grew up large enough to be eaten, no one in the family had the nerve to slaughter them and they were eventually given away to friends and neighbors.

The neighbors living at our side in apartment number 36 were a Russian Jewish family with two daughters about my age. I remember improving my physiological knowledge of differences in anatomy by playing doctor until I got caught and had my “ears boxed” by an irate parent. The father of this family had a moving/transportation company and always had big sturdy wooden 2-wheel carts parked outside near the stone stairway to the entrance. We found many uses for them, the most

exciting one being riding up one of them at slow speed on our bikes and balancing on them till they tipped down. Sometimes we were not successful and ending up taking a fall of about 3 feet to the asphalt ground. Not very advisable for the bicycle and/or rider!

In later years when the war ended, he bought some used US Army trucks (6 by 6's) and would offer family summer trips to the seaside at the village of Chapoo, approximately 300 miles away. We would wait in eager anticipation and get on one of these trucks with about 25 other people loaded down with big containers of kitchenware, bed clothing, collapsible sleeping cots, tents, miscellaneous canned food and many other necessities and go bouncing along primitive unpaved roads for over 6 hours non-stop except for rare "potty breaks". To add to the excitement we had to stop once in a while to pick up hitch-hiking Chinese Nationalist soldiers armed to the teeth with live grenades hanging by their pins of their ammunition belts.

Route Doumer, which I mention earlier on page 18, also had a movie house which we frequented nearly every weekend especially after the war when all of the latest American movies were shown. My favorites were the MGM musicals and horror movies like "Frankenstein", "Dracula", "Wolfman" and others as well as all of the giant creatures from Science Fiction like "Attack of the Giant Spiders, Ants, Rats, Wasps, etc, etc and etc."

The courtyard of the Doumer Theater also had a grassy tree-shaded knoll in the front of the movie house. This was the usually selected spot for "1 on 1" resolutions of differences incurred on the school playground. Fist fights and rough play were banned on the school grounds and violations can invoke severe punishments (caning) or even expulsion. Due to this there were occasional duels enacted here in the center of a circle of cheering supporters and referees that insured "fair play" – no kicking, biting or hitting when either opponent is down. Once in a while our group would encounter an "enemy crowd", usually Russian street urchins or members from another gang. Then a real rumble could occur, however certain rules always prevailed – no weapons, no hitting or kicking a fallen enemy and no picking on smaller kids. The last potential rumble that I was on was terminated before it started when a little elderly Russian lady jumped in between the two groups, which numbered over two dozen on each side, and started hitting the leaders with her umbrella shouting "Hooligans! Shameless ones! Bare-footed Tramps!" we all scattered as no one dreamt of laying a finger on an elderly person, especially a woman! What would happen to her today in such a situation I shudder to think.

Regardless of the times, Mother always had a small Christmas party for me where I could invite a few of my closer friends. She always encouraged me to have friends come over and being a wonderful cook always had some pastries, torts or other delicacies for us which made those visits popular.

I remember those days with great fondness and still maintain contact with two of the boys in the above photo – Sam Moshinsky, seated at the left end and currently residing in Australia and Alfredo da Costa, seated 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left presently living in South San Francisco, CA.

Sam just recently published a book based on his memories of China and kindly sent me an autographed copy. He encouraged me to do the same with a good editor and publisher. He like I, are not seeking financial gain but feel obligated to share our memories with our children and grandchildren of a historical period that will never return and is hard to comprehend by people who have not experienced our Odyssey.





*Christmas party at my home – December 1948*

Mother in those days performed as part of a Russian Opera and Ballet group at the Lyceum Theater near the prestigious French Club. It was located in the French Concession neighborhood of Shanghai, the Lyceum Theatre was once home to the British Amateur Drama Club. The art deco theater was founded in 1930 and now hosts Chinese opera performances, classical ballet and music, children's theater, and a variety of other musical and theatrical events. Designers from Singapore gave the Theatre a new look in 2003, complete with a redesigned stage. Situated on Maoming Road, the Lyceum, with its classic European style, appeals to a wide audience of theater-goers and is a historic landmark as one of Shanghai's oldest theaters.

I often went to the Lyceum as mother always obtained for me complimentary tickets and greatly enjoyed watching the Russian version of Austrian operettas such as "Sylvia", "The Merry Widow" and other classics. I often went to the dress rehearsals and it was fun to see the "spoofs" that happened quite often. An additional attraction was my infatuation with one of the young ballerinas and I would faithfully attend all of the rehearsals where she performed.

On one of those days, the Ballet Mistress, a stern very forbidding older lady, who once was a shining star in the "Ballet Russe" during Russia's Imperial days, barked at me in her husky voice – "You there, get your butt on the stage, you probably know this scene by heart now. I am tired of seeing your face – make yourself useful!".

Thus I resulted in getting drafted to actually perform on stage in "Swan Lake" in a "walk-in" part where I was one of the heralds for the number where the Prince was reviewing his potential brides. I had to wear tights and a blond page boy hair piece – this provoked a lot of giggling and finger pointing by

some young Chinese girls who were performing ahead of our show. They shared with me later that they had a serious debate if I was a tall girl or a boy until I lifted my tunic to reach for my cigarettes tucked in the top of my “very tight” leotards. At that point they started guffawing and pointing at my crotch gleefully yelling “Boy! Boy!”



*The Lyceum Theater today – called Shanghai Arts Theater*

I had one more performance as a Polyvetian warrior in “Prince Igor” and when it became obvious I would not become a dancer soon enough with my two left feet – I retired at the peak of my career. Since those early years I developed a love for classical music, operas, musical stage shows, and ballet. I was never a great fan of watching symphony orchestra performances but love to listen to recording and often studied in later years with music in the background.

Most of the opera stars and the orchestra musicians later migrated to the USSR, where they were welcomed for their talents and continued to be applauded and loved by their audiences. The ballet group did not do as well since even after the war, Russian dancers were better trained and stronger performers.

Mother performed in many of the classic operettas such as “Sylva”, “The Merry Widow”, “Gypsy Baron” and others as a dancer in the troupe as well as in some solo scenes.

Mother was very talented and performed some solo dances for which she created her own choreography and costumes design. She also sewed all of her costumes and often assisted the other

dancers in developing theirs. I remember her very carefully stitching in the intricate spangles, colored ribbons and costume gems for beauty, color, sparkle and uniqueness of her costumes

After the closure of the Lyceum Theater, mother was restricted to make her living by sewing, knitting and dress-making at home, barely making ends meet and raising a growing, always hungry, unruly teenager. This strengthened her resolve to make sure that I got a good education and continued on to get a university degree.

She was always a great inspiration to me. She never had a harsh about anyone and I never heard her gossiping or demeaning anyone. All sorts of people would seek her out and share their tales of woe. She would listen patiently and attentively, never giving advice unless asked directly for her opinion, and even then she was never specific or judgmental.



*Mother in her Russian Costume – 1949*

With me she was always kind and patient but somewhat strict in my younger, pre-teen years. But she would always listen to “my side” of the story before applying any punishment even when it was very obvious of what transgression that I have done. I miss her sorely and have much regrets on how I treated her sometimes.

Although she worked hard, she always had time for me and for a whole string of more unfortunate souls that came to her for counseling. She would patiently and attentively listen to their sorrows and concerns, nodding sympathetically and letting them unburden themselves to her, She never gave advice unless she was asked directly and on those occasions would lead the person to determine on their own what the best solution was.

Those early years in Shanghai were not easy on all of the residents of Shanghai. The Japanese occupation was very harsh on the Chinese, whom the occupiers treated very badly. All of the “allied” foreigners – British, Americans and Dutch were interned in camps. The French and the Russian were left free. The French because of the Vichy (pro-Nazi) government in France and the Russians and the “Non-Iraqi” Jews from Russia, because they were “**Displaced People with no country**”. This is a term very hard to understand by people who have never experienced that status.

## Fortune magazine, January 1935

*The profile of Shanghai published by Fortune magazine in 1935 caught the old city at its best and most vibrant.*

### **The Russians**

*On FEBRUARY 7, 1920, Admiral Kol-chak, head of the Russian White armies in Siberia, was shot at Irkutsk by the Reds. Thereupon the White cause collapsed, and petty Russian aristocracy and bourgeois who had fled the Terror to Siberia began a long hopeless retreat which did not end until they reached Vladivostok in 1922. Thousands of these refugees fled to Harbin, Manchuria. No group was ever worse equipped to make a living or ever chose a worse place to make it in. Having natural talents for singing and dancing, they founded innumerable night clubs at Harbin, such that that city became known as the world's premier school of entertainment. But there were only poor Russians there and, seeking a better livelihood, men and girls set forth alone or in little groups along the China coast. Presently the girls awoke to find themselves famous. They were not only beautiful: they were reduced to the necessity of earning a livelihood with their beauty, and there were no other white women of this sort in the East. Their popularity became international, as dancers and singers, as mistresses and whores. And thus, like the Shanghailanders in quest of riches, they came at length to Shanghai.*

*Meanwhile other White Russians had reached Shanghai, some overland, some by water, one group of 8,000 (including two refugee Admirals) having sailed down the China Sea from Vladivostok in twenty-seven vessels. The men got work as guards to wealthy Chinese, or as soldiers; the women filled the cabarets. In 1931 the Japanese influence in Manchuria caused a new wave from Harbin to fall on Shanghai, bringing the total up to 25,000 in 1934 - the second largest foreign group in the city. The sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway that year started still another wave, doubling the Russian population, and doubled the tragedy of the crowded colony that sprawled through the alleys and byways of the French Concession.*



*Nor is it possible for the well-groomed Westerner to grasp the full extent of this tragedy unless he reminds himself that these people are cultured and were once well-to-do. Even today a few of the refugees are rich, for before the World War the Russian investment in China, notably in Manchuria, was second only to that of Great Britain. A few, too, have found employment in Shanghai as engineers and professional men. But these are the exceptions. The great majority, though used to money, have none. Moreover Shanghai scorns them and thrusts them into a social group apart, like the Portuguese. The Communists hunt them down. The Chinese, who have never before seen the degradation of a white man, despise and bully them. And because with their arrival white prestige took a beating from which it has never recovered, the whites resent them.*

*Yet there they are. They have invaded whole sections of Avenue Joffre and other once-fashionable residential districts, where Russian dress shops and beauty parlors have multiplied in absurd profusion among Russian bread shops, restaurants, delicatessens, and tenements packed in between pretentious stone apartment houses. They are a loyal, home-loving people, frequenting their own clubs, fostering their own customs. All they ask is an opportunity to make an honest living, but there is no such thing for them in Shanghai. They start pathetic little shops (as if there were not enough shops in Shanghai!); become manicurists, barbers, waiters, sometimes even capable secretaries to the oligarchy of the Bund. The foreigners help them to support a Russian school and grudgingly buy little white flowers to endow a Russian hospital. Still half of them are unemployed. They gather at night around their samovars to talk over old times. They marry out of their race when they can. They beg, they steal, they sometimes murder.*

*Beautiful and educated, thousands of their women have gone forth into life of Shanghai to meet fortunes as varied as the city itself. They are popular with American sailors and marines, many of whom have married them. Some become the mistresses of taipans, or near-taipans, and live for a time in ease. The hostesses at the better night clubs dance and drink with any man that comes along, but do not necessarily go home with him. They get a cut on the champagne he buys, the girl being served from a bottle that really contains cider, and they dance with him at the rate of about three dances for a dollar.*

*If perchance someone happens in who has just come from Russia, they will gather around him excitedly, ask how it is there and whether there is any chance for them to return. They will go home that night and tell the older ones (who remember Russia) what they have heard. But their trail is all downhill. As it goes down you find other and more exotic nationalities mixing in with the Russians, and the locale shifts to the French Concession, where vice is rampant. Here are the soldiers' dives. Besides, there is an unusually wide selection of good, old-fashioned whore-houses, with Russians again leading. At these you sign "chits" (notes) which are collected at the end of the month by the house pimp. A few Russian girls filtered even lower, to the Chinese whorehouses along the river front, where men paid twenty cents and some of the girls have no noses. Most commit suicide before that depth is reached.*

The 25,000 Russian exiles, as a group, were not classified as white men in Shanghai by the local ruling British hegemony. Many years later, as I was writing this biography, I reminisced on the "see-saws" of history. How the Shanghai "White Russians" portrayed this very poignantly and clearly. Here were the former upper classes of Imperial Russia, the nobility and aristocracy, formerly the elite all-powerful group at the top of the society, now poor, selling the little jewelry that they managed to hide on

their meager belonging during their flight from Russia. They were totally unequipped to earn their living since their skills were limited to “gracious manners”, “classical education in literature and arts”, “military skills as officers in the Imperial Army” and “gourmet connoisseurs of fine food and wines”. Most ended up as minor officers for the multitude of Chinese warlords and bandits, bodyguards for the various Chinese gangsters and tong leaders, car mechanics and chefs, waiters or doormen at fancy restaurants. On the other hand, in a complete reversal of class roles, the former minor merchants, traders and small factory owners blossomed in the new “free-wheeling” environment and cheap labor, getting rich, while the former nobility was stagnating.

This period was captured in the 2005 movie entitled “The White Countess” with Ralph Fiennes, Natasha Richardson, and Vanessa and Lynn Redgrave.



"The White Countess" takes place in Shanghai, China, a city of extraordinary variety, refuge and playground for the world's exiles and expatriates, on the brink of Japanese invasion in 1936. White Russian Countess Sophia Belinskya (Natasha Richardson) works as a taxi dancer -- and sometimes illicit -- jobs to support her young 10-year old daughter and deceased husband's aristocratic family, who live in poverty in Shanghai, dreaming of the elegant lives they lost to the Revolution. Todd Jackson (Ralph Fiennes) was a distinguished American diplomat before he lost his eyesight and family to violent accidents. Having acquired a certain recklessness, he wants to open a night club, where he will engineer the staff, entertainment and patrons to create a melodious and exciting blend of elements superior to any other club in Shanghai.

This old map shows the location of my former home on the corner of Route Grouchy and Rue Doumer. Sainte Jeanne d'Arc college was just a block away on the corner of Rou Doumer and Avenue Joffre.



*Part of the former French Concession with the old street names in my neighborhood*

It was only many years later, when I migrated to the US and was exposed to the Middle and High Schools there, did I understand the high value of my early education with the Marist Brothers. At Saint Joan of Arc College, standard mandatory education ended at Standard V or equivalent to Grade 9. However the average age of our class at that point was 10 years old. After that, in Forms 1 through 5 the education was geared to preparation for college with much stress on mathematics (differential equations, integral calculus, algebra and trigonometry), physics and chemistry. We also covered world geography and world history (primarily European) as well as a good knowledge of English and American literature. This made up for a total school period of 10 years. Students stayed in one classroom for the entire year with the teachers moving from room to room. Class size was an average of 40 students. Bullying was unheard of and considered cowardly. All students took the same subjects for the same number of hours. There were no custodians as the students cleaned up their classrooms on a rotation basis or sometimes for punishment for bad behavior.

In March of 1951, during my last high school year at Saint Francis Xavier's College, I successfully passed the Overseas School Certificate examination for entry to the University of Cambridge in London. Although my financial status made this route highly improbable, nevertheless it gave me a sense of worth and capability that I passed this examination with very little preparation or effort on my part.

Also in later years I found out that my High School education by the Marist Brothers in Saint Francis Xavier's College, was equivalent to the requirements of the sophomore year in a standard US University. It made my college years so much easier and I am eternally grateful for the strict but kind guidance and teaching that I received in the 10 years that I was with them.



### Chapter III – Communist “Liberation” of Shanghai (1950 to 1953)

“Everything is in flux, Nothing is at Rest” - Heracles

The “Liberation” of Shanghai on 27 May, 1949 was very rapid and practically a “non-event”. The night before my buddies and me after seeing the many weeks of preparations by the Kuomintang army of digging trenches laying sandbags at intersection of major roads, taping glass windows, we were excited in anticipation of a major “Stalingrad” type battle between the opposing Chinese forces.

We agreed to get up early and cycle down town to see the action first hand. The next morning I was all keyed up and ready when my buddy shows up and tells me “It’s all over – we have been liberated!” My jaw dropped but as we cautiously proceeded to the main streets we could see that most of the soldiers had red stars on their caps or red armbands on their sleeves. The KMT Nationalist forces fled during the night with barely a shot fired.

I remember the summer of 1950 on coming to school, a couple of my classmates told me how surprised and impressed they were that I was such an accomplished and dedicated track and field athlete. I was puzzled till I discovered that one of my “smarty” buddies signed me up for EVERY competitive event in our annual school track & field competition! At 15, one’s honor is very precious so I only cancelled the concurrent running ones and let my entry stay in the rest.

One of the events was a 1 mile marathon. Since I normally did not participate in soccer or softball, and did very little running, I had to practice for this one and started running after school hours in the recreation yard. When the event occurred much to my surprise I came in 1<sup>st</sup>! Must be my long legs. However as I reached the finish line I blacked out and collapsed scaring everyone especially me.

As I got into my teens I grew tall for my age and could easily pass for 2 or 3 years older than I really was. This was exciting for me since I could mix with an older and worldlier crowd. However, still being quite immature, this put a lot of pressure on me since by nature I was rather shy and tongue-tied when dealing with girls. I started smoking cigarettes very early, around 14, to portray a more mature image and started drinking vodka at parties to develop “Dutch” courage in my relationship with the fairer sex.

I had my first drink in 1950; I was barely 15 years old. A girlfriend of one of my classmates threw a birthday party with approximately 25 kids. Her family was pretty well off financially and her parents were rather liberal minded for those times. They let us have the run of the house with no adult supervision and liquor was easily available on an open bar.

I did not, at that time know how to dance and was somewhat self-conscious and shy in those surroundings. The hostess knew that I was sweet on one of her girlfriends and egged me on to ask her to dance. Seeing my reluctance, she gave me a glass of sweet cherry brandy to get me into a proper party spirit. A second glass followed the first and the next thing that I remember was my classmates walking me home, very sick and nauseous.

My mother was very upset on my condition and behavior, however what saved me from a major scene was the arrival of my grandparents, younger uncle and aunt from Harbin. I did not touch any more liquor for a couple of months and then started drinking casually at parties and dances. In those days we would always have a couple of shots of vodka at some obscure Chinese restaurant prior to

going to a dance or party and smuggle in an inner pocket of our jackets a ½ pint of vodka for drinking there.

Drinking was a “macho” theme in those days and any boy of our age group who did not drink was considered a “sissy” or “mama’s boy”. We used to brag to each other on how wasted we would get and how much liquor we could consume in any one sitting. Drinking the others under the table was the height of manly achievement.

We had many dance parties at various friends’ homes for numerous occasions – birthdays, names days, farewells, and holidays or just when the mood hit us and a place was available. Records were hard to get in those days and we had to rely on relatives who would travel on business to Hong Kong or Japan to get us the latest “hits” never-the-less we were quite proficient in all of the latest dances – the fox trot, the graceful waltz, tango with classic “dips”, the rumba, samba, conga-line and the athletic jitter-bug! Some of the poor girls would have head-aches from some over enthusiastic tango dips when their head hit the floor and bruised wrists from some poorly coordinated “boogie woogie” turns. The “gang” was very international, however not too many local Chinese participated in those days because they were afraid of being considered “corrupted by the decadent West” by the Red Communist government.



*A typical teenage dance party at a friend's house – note the dresses and the suits*

What “saved” me and delayed some serious alcohol problems at that early age was, first my excellent physical condition – I was a great dedicated competitive swimmer and did some weight training in the winter months to maintain my strength. I also always drank in the “Russian way” – avoided mixed cocktails and drank straight cold vodka shots with always a chaser of something “fatty and salty” like pickled herring, Chinese dumplings (pot stickers) and other greasy meat cuts like chunks of ham or salami to line the stomach and reduce the inevitable next day’s hangover.

About that time I was also introduced to the famous “red light” area of Shanghai, the local whore-houses and taxi-girl dance halls. Drinking liquor went hand-in-hand with those excursions, since the “wiser” more mature guys would tell us that we could prolong sex when we were drunk as well as stifle our inhibitions and increase our self-confidence.

I felt pretty comfortable with the more mature prostitutes and dancing girls who sort of “adopted” me but was very shy and intimidated by regular “family” girls of my age.

I remember, how on my way to school, we would pass through the local skid row and how my classmates and I would shake our heads at the drunken derelicts, mostly Russians, sprawled in the doorways and on the sidewalk. I would pity them for their lack of willpower and bad fortune, but refuse to give them any pennies as a handout, telling my friends that they would just spend them on liquor.

In 1946, I also joined the Foreign Y.M.C.A. where I learned to swim competitively and received my life guard training. I also joined a Japanese Jiu-Jitsu club and was working on my green belt until I broke a toe and had to quit temporarily. Sadly I never returned.

Although World War II ended in August of 1945, the conflict between Cheng-Kai-Shek's Kuomintang and Mao-Tse-Tung's Communist armies heated up and foreigners started evacuating Shanghai. Western passport carriers like the Americans, British, French, Italians and Germans had no difficulties for they had their consulates and government agencies to help them. But the Russians had a difficult choice. Most did not want to go to the Soviet Union based on the stories mentioned earlier but no other country wanted to take them. My mother and I were considered “stateless White Russians” and as such were only eligible to enter the USA and Australia on the Chinese quota which was very limited.

There were constant farewell dinners at fancy Chinese restaurants where the keynote was getting the honored guest as drunk as possible for a good departure. Naturally in the process most of us got pretty smashed as well.



*Shanghai Rowing Club Swimming Pool ~ 1952*



In 1952, I was employed by The Shanghai Rowing Club located at the Garden Bridge on Soochow Creek as a lifeguard to watch the members' kids during their swimming in the indoor pool. The indoor swimming pool was not large, just 25 feet long with a deep end of 7 feet. The water was not heated so the pool was only used in summer for swimming. In the winter there was a 4-seat training rowing boat placed in it for training new rowers, mostly children. There was also a row of rings approximately 8 feet above the water spaced about 6 feet apart down the middle for the full length of the pool. We would often swing on then arm by arm practicing our Tarzan yodels. Another one of our pastimes was to splash the curtains of the ladies' changing rooms and then peek at the reflexions in the water of the girls toweling themselves after their shower. They never caught on!

Another time I took out a one-man racing shell on the river without permission as I knew I would not be allowed to do it alone without supervision and guidance. It was a pretty harrowing experience as it required great balance – the shell was just 18" wide by 20 feet long with 2 slender 9 foot oars. With great difficulty I got out into the Soochow creek and after some bad moments proudly rowed out into the Whangpoo. In fear of being fired, I told no one about my escapade, which I repeated a few times when the club was empty of members and the Chinese staff was busy playing mah-jongg



*Pulling out on the mighty "Eight" from the Shanghai Rowing Club on Soochow Creek*

There were also pleasant memories of competing in rowing competitions on the Whangpoo River and getting a completely new circle of friends. Two of them, I later discovered, were members of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), which was responsible for supplying the British Government

with foreign intelligence. They were fluent in Chinese, oral and written, very social, good drinkers and fun to be around as they seemed to have a lot of leisure time.

There was much intrigue going on in Shanghai during these days but I was too young to understand it or appreciate it. I remember how shocked we were when the deputy chairman of the virulently anti-communist White Officers Club, showed up at the Easter midnight mass in the Orthodox Cathedral dressed in the full uniform of a KGB colonel.

My brief job at the Shanghai Rowing Club was rather uneventful as my sole duty was to sit around the pool during the early afternoon while the young Western mothers and some Chinese nannies would bring the young children to splash around in the pool. There was just one “happening”. The daughter of a wealthy banker, after a multi-martini lunch decided to sun herself at the pool. She arrived in her skimpy bathing suit and after a quick dip, took off her swimming cap (mandatory equipment for all female members when using the pool) positioned herself on the diving board spreading her long red hair around her shoulders. A couple of the mothers glanced at her disapprovingly and muttered under their breath – “look at the mermaid”. After a short sun warming, she got up and cap less dived into the pool. This was in blatant violation of the rules as in those days hair would clog the pool’s filters and mess up the pumps. The mothers all looked at me for action, so I leisurely strolled over to her and politely said – “Madam, could you kindly put on your swimming cap”. She looked at me with venom and malice, and spewed out – “Go to hell, you Russian bastard. I will have you fired, you blankity blank etc, etc!”

At a loss of what to do I went and got the Chinese manager, a young Oxford graduate very correct gentleman. He approached her carefully but before he could open his mouth, she yelled at him – “Get away from me you filthy Chink. I can get you fired too”. Fortunately her father was still having lunch upstairs and after the manager alerted him, he came down and got her out of the pool and club. I never saw her again.

After the closure of the YMCA by the new Communist government, I briefly joined the Russian Soviet Club but after a short period was expelled as a “subversive element of the decadent Western influence” because I constantly skipped the mandatory political indoctrination lectures and enticed many of my young peers to sneak off to a nearby park for “kissing” games and charades.

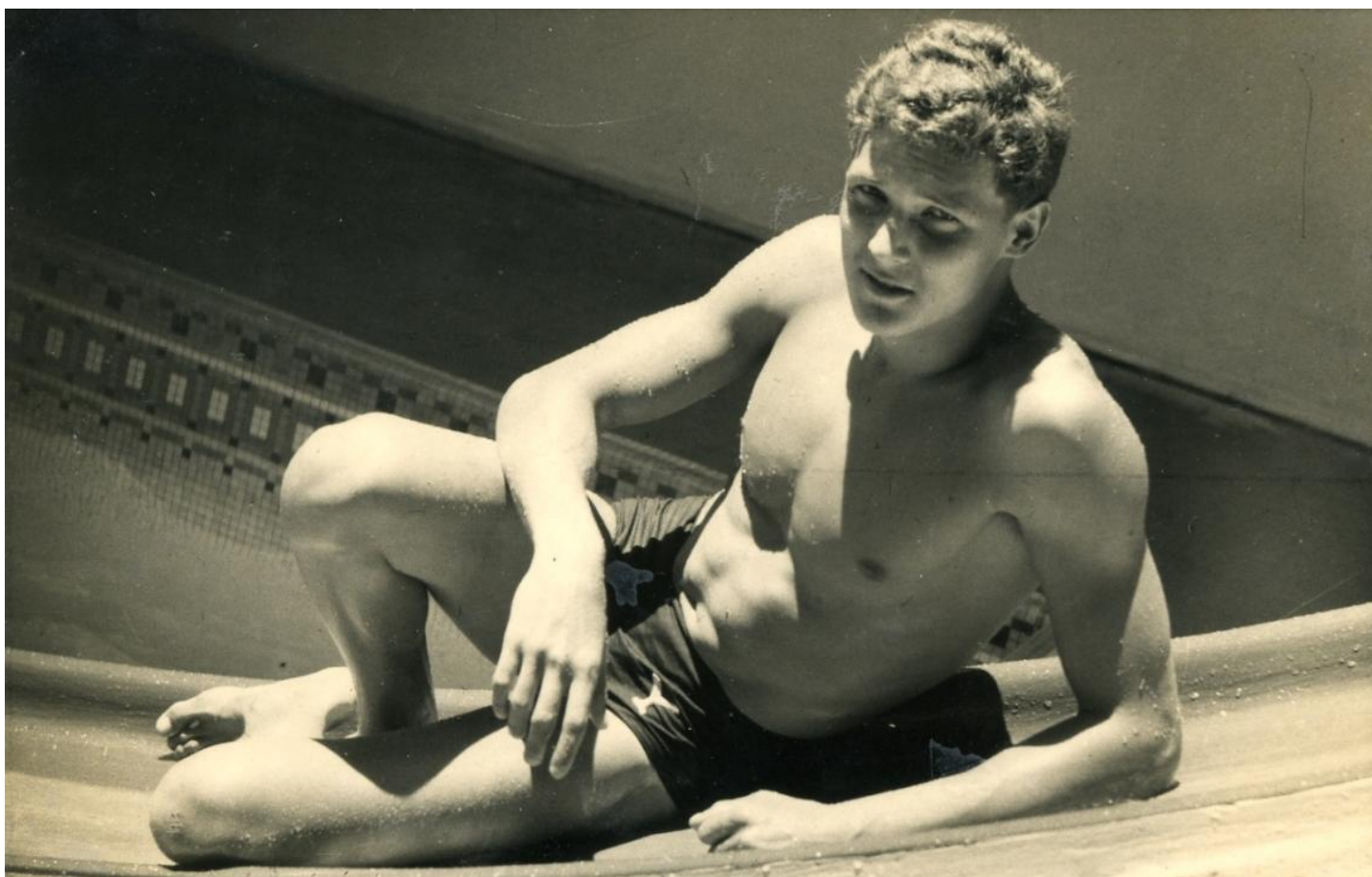
My life at the Soviet Club was full of activities somewhat different from my YMCA and Rowing Club days. There were more track & field sports such as hurdles, running and jumping. Also political lectures on Communism and Socialism, organized marches in the sports arena and preparations for the “Komsomol” which was similar to “Scouting” but with politically social intent. I also met many new arrivals from Harbin & Tientsin. Young teenagers who were moving south with the intent of avoiding the return to “Mother Russia” and migrating to either Australia, South America, or Canada. US entry was closed to most of us because being born in China put us under the American Chinese Quota which was very tight.

By 1953, the Chinese Communist government closed the British and American Embassies and the Shanghai Rowing Club became defunct. Jobs were hard to find but I managed to get a Lifeguard position at the prestigious French Club (Cercle Sportif de Shanghai) that I mentioned earlier. The membership of this fanciest of Shanghai Clubs was mainly rich and prosperous owners and executives of the various large shipping and trading firms as well as a sprinkling of Shanghai’s wealthiest Iraqi-Jewish families.

My employment at the French Club has many fond memories and I still maintain close contact with some of my young swimming pupils and friends from that period.

To augment my income during that period, I gave swimming lessons at the club, both to children as well as adults. My proudest accomplishment was the sight of one of my adult students swimming breast-stroke for the full length of the pool. When he started he was terrified of water since he had a near drowning experience in a lake in Switzerland.

I also taught English to a repatriating Japanese physician, who was also my only customer for “boot-leg” whiskey that I was trying to peddle. I would sell him a bottle then consume the entire contents during our lessons and sell him another one. He was a teetotaler!



*Life Guard and Swimming Instructor at “Le Cercle Sportif de Shanghai”*

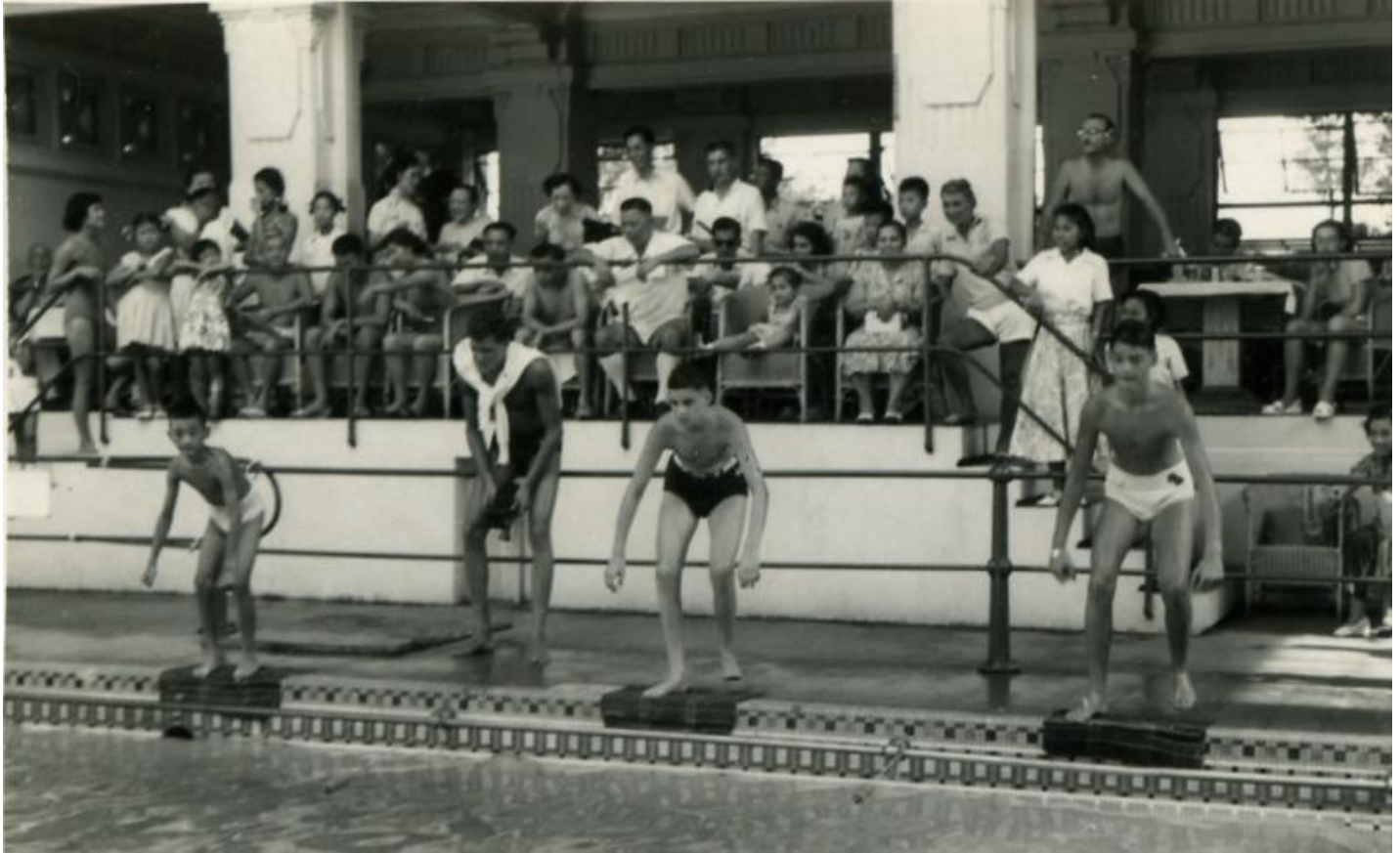
The French Club had the only Olympic size pool in town during those times and was very often used for the Inter-Port Swim meets between Shanghai, Tientsin and Hong Kong. These meets were very popular and in 1931 were visited by Johnny Weissmuller – the Tarzan star. He exhibited his Olympic swim style complete with his “somersault” rapid turn but declined to do his “Tarzan” yodel saying that he was forbidden to do that based on his Hollywood contract.

As the Swimming Instructor at the prestigious French Club, I had quite a few students. Some of them had “other” interests than learning to swim. The membership of the club comprised of some of the wealthiest people in Shanghai, many of the men were elderly tycoons with younger wives. Fortunately or



unfortunately, I was too young and naïve to take advantage of this and missed many “opportunities”. I was also “in love” with one of the daughters of a wealthy Iraqi-Jewish family and had my hand full in evading the parents’ supervision for clandestine meetings with the girl.

Also at that time, being somewhat physically attractive, I came under the attention of a large (over 6 foot – 250 lbs) British tycoon who was a homosexual and followed me around relentlessly until I finally convinced him that I was not interested in him or his money.



*A swim meet at the French Club indoor Olympic pool*

The Club also had a large ballroom with a grand piano and occasionally, when there was no one there, one of my very talented and musical friend would entertain us there when the club was closed.

As the foreign residents of Shanghai thinned down due to emigrations to their native lands as well as to Australia, Canada, USA and Brazil, the remaining community of young people got closer even though we were separated by distance in our residency. One of my popular haunts was the Embankment Building which was located approximately 4 miles from my home. There were many pretty girls there as well as some very talented guitar, ukulele and drum players there. Every night there were jam sessions, singing and dance parties. However being very short on cash, one of my neighboring buddies and I would walk the 4 miles home nearly every night in the small hours of the morning. About that time, motivated by my musical friends, I developed an interest in playing a 6-string acoustic guitar and acquiring one, I have been “plinking” a guitar ever since.

“Liberated” Shanghai under the Chinese Communist rule was initially somewhat grim and dark. All of the nightclubs, cabarets, dance halls and whorehouses were closed. Curfew started at 11 pm till dawn and there were armed soldiers on patrol at night to enforce the curfew. All adult Chinese were

required to wear “Mao jackets” – padded cotton pants and tunics with long sleeves and buttoned to the chin. Blue for normal citizens and khaki for military and government officials. But at our youthful age this did not bother us, we partying continuously and were very ingenious in evading the curfew patrols.



*Members of the Anglican Choir at Shanghai's Trinity Cathedral*

On the encouragement of my close friends, I joined the Choir at Shanghai's Anglican Cathedral. However with no musical training and being somewhat “tone-deaf” I was placed next to the most powerful basses to drown out my false notes and pitch errors. The choirmaster was too polite to expel me.

The Anglican Trinity Cathedral, spiritual home of Britain's colonial classes in the Far East for almost a century, was closed in 1959 but has been handed back to the Church in 2004 after years of neglect in response to a surge in support for Christianity in China. It is currently being rebuilt and the demolished spire with the bell tower is being re-instated based on the former architecture.

With the YMCA, Race Course and the Rowing Club closing down, I spent more time at the Soviet Athletic Club. I was not old enough to be permitted to their evening dance parties on Saturdays so my buddies and I hung around on the outskirts watching the activities and listening to the live band music. We observed where the stewards stored the wine barrels behind the kitchen in a fenced area and noticed a small hole in the fence. The hole was too small for any of us teenagers but a younger brother of one of my friends, age 11 was just small enough to wiggle through.

We gave him some empty bottles and a rubber tube and taught him how to siphon the wine out of the barrel into the bottles. All went well with our plan for a while, then the deliveries got slower and sloppier and after a while stopped. We could not see very clearly into the hole and were trying to keep quiet so as not to alert the stewards. Suddenly we heard a small voice singing some popular songs from behind the fence occasionally interrupted by loud hiccups and belches! After much coaxing, pleading, threatening and whispering, we finally got him out. We dunked his head in water and he threw-up a few times. Fortunately his parents were at the dance and came home very late at night. This gave us time to tuck him into bed and threatened him that we would not let him hang around us if he tattled. He honored his promise and we were never caught but needless to say we did not repeat this stunt.

There was a fair sized Russian Gypsy community in Shanghai and the young gypsy kids, ages 10 to 15 would often approach a well-dressed gentleman on the street holding a brick and say "Uncle, dearest, would you like to buy a brick, please". This would usually result in some donation of small change for no one wanted to be hit by a thrown brick as they walk away. In my night meanderings I got to know some of those kids and one of their older sisters, "Lilka the pock-marked", for some reason took a liking to me and has one of her younger brothers follow me around the bars and coffee shops to protect me from harm. Also, as a result of this attraction, I was invited a couple of time to the gypsy camp on the outskirts of the main city where I had the opportunity of hearing some fantastic guitar fingering and songs in their language, as well as some authentic gypsy dances around a campfire.

Another favorite summer pastime was sitting on the top of the stone wall behind our apartment complex which was bordering a local night club and watch the outdoor band play popular dance tunes to the clientele. We would sit there dangling our legs and periodically shoot marbles from our slingshots at the bass drums enjoying the startled responses of the drummer and dancers. One night as we were settling ourselves on the wall, a hand reached out from the dark and grabbed one of my buddy's foot. Fortunately we reacted very quickly and pulled him over to our side but lost one of his shoes in the effort. That was the end of that adventure.

As mentioned earlier, the foreign population of Shanghai was diminishing very rapidly. In 1949, a large contingent of "White Russians" was transported by the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to a small, sparsely inhabited tropical island in the Philippines called Tubabao, located next to the Southern tip of Samar Island, and is linked to it by a bridge. About 5,500 people - men, women and children, predominantly Russians, were transferred either by sea or air from Shanghai to Tubabao. The refugee stayed in the island for an estimated 27 months until a special act of Congress permitted some of them to be moved to the USA while others less patient moved to Australia and Canada.

The Russian Immigrants lived in tents using Army surplus equipment from WWII, field kitchens, toilets, tents, etc. Various consulates came to the island and within two years, from 1949 to 1951, all of the Russian immigrants finally migrated to various corners of the world, primarily to the USA and Australia and the camp was disbanded. Facilities were practically non-existent and considering that the bulk of this group was comprised of store owners, merchants, businessmen, office workers and professionals like lawyers, doctors and engineers who never had to do any menial work in China, it was amazing how quickly they adapted and even thrived in those primitive conditions. They quickly



set up a primitive rudimentary local government that was considerably peaceful with quick resolutions of differences and problems. They rotated critical tasks such as public maintenance, security, trash collection and disposal as well as a fire control brigade. A small grade school was set up for the children and more advanced classes for the teenagers. There was a local scout troop, a dance school and an amateur theater group which periodically gave performances to the enjoyment of all. There was also a church with regular Sunday services. Sports were also encouraged, despite the heat, and volleyball and tennis were played quite regularly.



*The tent city of the "White Russian" refugees in Tubabao*

This tropical period was rather harsh on the adults since they had to endure the heat, humidity, fevers and living in a hot army tent with poor ventilation. They were used to a softer life with servants and staff doing their chores and meeting their needs and had to learn quickly how "real" people lived.

The youngsters had a wonderful time swimming in the warm waters and going to Russian Scouts meetings every morning for a flag parade. On Sundays there was a huge scout campfire and great time were had since there was a wonderful beach and lots of areas to play and explore.

Back in Shanghai, the rest of us coped in the best way we could. We had frequent "farewell" parties as our ranks got thinner.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1951 I turned 16 and was at a major crossroad in my life path. At that age I was fully qualified to accept Soviet citizenship and request repatriation to the "Russian Motherland". It was that or attempt emigration to Australia, Brazil or Canada. The road to the USA was closed because I was born in China and was considered as a "white" Chinese with an extremely limited quota for entry. Australia also was not easy due to their "White Australia Policy". This was a big decision for a 16-year old.

Tired of being a "stateless person" or as the term was in those days a "DP" or "displaced person", I accepted a Soviet passport and proudly showed it to my classmates and friends. However, I did not apply for immediate repatriation although the Soviet Embassy did their best to encourage me to do so. I often wonder where I would be today if I took that path.

In mid-1953 after much “soul-searching”, I made a life-changing choice, and with beating heart went to the Soviet Embassy and turned in my passport, thus declining Soviet citizenship. They first tried to change my mind politely and in a friendly fashion, but then realizing the firmness of my decision, berated me as “an enemy of the Motherland” and told me to vacate the premises. That was when I applied for a visa to Brazil and chose “the West”.



*My Judo Class - 1952*

About that time, I also decided to enhance my fitness for future uncharted travels and tribulations, and joined a Japanese Judo Club run by one of my friends who was a 6<sup>th</sup> degree Black Belt.

I was the only “European” in the club and most of the other members did not speak English and were eager to pick up some language skills as they were on their way back to their native Nippon.

The class was a lot of hard work and fun. I was at least a foot taller than most of the students and to their frustration, they could not throw me as I would bend over them in the middle of their attempt. Finally one of them got very exasperated and threw me over his head with his feet during a “back fall”. He was scolded severely for that by the instructor as it was a very dangerous fall for a novice. I succeeded in obtaining my yellow belt and then had a misfortune of stubbing and breaking a toe on a badly placed tatami mat. This involved a month’s break and I never came back.

Many years later in California I joined a Tai-kwan-do class and was happy to discover that I still remembered some of my skills – mainly how to fall correctly.

In the early phase of the Communist “Liberation” of Shanghai, a curfew was imposed at night to guard against crime and “provocations”. This curfew was from midnight to dawn but generally did not apply to us foreigners, meaning Europeans. However the streets were patrolled by rifle toting soldiers with fixed

bayonets. One Saturday evening as I was at a party and feeling in “good spirits”, someone mentioned that we had a shortage of girls to dance with. I volunteered to remedy the situation as I knew a couple of sisters that lived in the neighborhood and loved to party. I offered to go and get them. Arriving at their housing project, I was confronted by a locked metal gate as it was close to curfew time. Without hesitation I climbed over the gate and tapped on their window only to be told by their irate aunt that they were not home but partying somewhere. Disappointed, I climbed back into the street – right into the middle of a group of armed soldiers. With pointed bayonets, I was escorted to the local precinct station where I was interrogated and finally released after I signed a statement that “I would NEVER climb over a locked gate again during my residency in the People’s Republic of China”

One of our summer events, during this period, was swimming in the muddy brown waters of the Whangpoo river. We found an old abandoned freighter on the river in a secluded area and would congregate there for an occasional picnic, diving into the murky waters and generally “horsing around” as young teenage boys do. We never gave it a thought that the murky water could contain hazardous items like bamboo spikes, corpses or dung. We also ignored the dangers of getting cut on the rusty metal of the wrecked freighter and other items that scare adults. Needless to say no parent and/or adult ever knew of this and other escapades....well, such is the life of the young and restless.

“Liberated” Shanghai, brought on some major changes to the life style on this bustling city. All the nightclubs and bars were shut down. Rickshaws drawn by scrawny underfed coolie were replaced by Pedicabs which were similar 2-seat open carriages but driven by a bicycle. Standard cotton padded suits replace form-fitting elegant dresses with high slits on the sides. Khaki for military and government offices, dark blue for the rest. On our way to school we would often see truckloads of kneeling men with their arms bound behind them, heading for “people’s trials”, “re-education” and sometimes execution.

In those days as our ranks of foreigners slimmed down by departures, I spent a lot of evenings at the Embankment Building, across the Soochow creek at the apartment of Louis Pineau. This was a young man who was crippled from birth and confined to a wheelchair. His aunt encouraged those gathering to provide social activities for him and we would gather around his bed on which he would squat on his shriveled legs and associate with us. These were very pleasant gatherings as there were always a lot of pretty girls and many of Louie’s kinfolk were accomplished musicians and entertained us with guitar and ukulele sing-alongs and solo performances. There was one occasional set-back, Louie was rather overweight and once in a while had to “pass gas” while seated on his bed, especially if he was laughing – this would result in instant evacuation of the room till the air cleared with giggling groups hanging out in the hallway.

At that time, I was pretty destitute but would not impose on our hosts for dinner, so at that period, one of my buddies and I would excuse ourselves, telling our hosts that we are going out to eat at a local eatery, and head to the Shanghai Rowing Club that was close by. At that hour the club was deserted with the Chinese staff playing Mah-jong in the back room. My buddy and I would sneak into the bar and steal a few shots of whiskey, gin or brandy to fortify ourselves, grab some peanuts and/or crackers and head back to the gathering.

In 2003, after nearly 50 years from my departure from Shanghai, I received the following letter from an old friend who was “repatriated” to the Soviet Union with his parents in 1947. He was then a minor and had no say in the matter.



*"My recurring nightmare".*

*"I never really like to ruminate the past. In spite of my age I hardly ever live in my past. I prefer to live in the present and the little that is left of the future. Recently, for some reason, I happened to think of the past years. Some episodes came back to my mind, some amusing, but unfortunately many very, very sad ones.*

*Everyone always takes his freedom for granted. No one ever really values his freedom unless he loses it. Then it is too late. I value my freedom, now that I have it back. I have had the misfortune of losing it way back in 1947, voluntarily.*

*In 1947 together with my parents I went to the Soviet Union. I didn't want to go, but my parents wanted to. They thought that after the war the country would be free. I made inquiries, I talked with a lot of people who came from, passed through and escaped risking their lives from the Soviet Union. All what I heard was against going to the Soviet Union. I could not convince my parents not to go. They were set on going. I am the youngest in the family, and I did not want to leave them. I knew that life in the country devastated by the war would be difficult, full of material deprivations. But I never occurred to me that it could be so monstrous. I should have insisted, but at that time I was too young to be firm enough. Many times I tried to dissuade my parents, but to no avail. They wanted to return to their Motherland. It turned out to be a wicked, vicious Step-motherland, all set to eliminate her stepchildren physically and morally. But actually I could not be disillusioned when I landed in the Soviet Union; I simply had no illusions.*

*In those days the Soviet Union was a different world populated by people with distorted mentality, where black was white, and white was black. Crude propaganda was hammered into your head. It was difficult to understand people. It was dangerous to talk. I had to choose my words carefully. Anybody's best friend or even a relative could file a report on anyone, firmly believing he is doing the right thing. The result was labor camps with a sentence of at least 10 years. Cruelty prevailed everywhere. I was never a fighter, but I had to learn to fight for self-defense, for survival. We could not get dissolved in the crowd, because we were so obviously different. I never even attempted assimilation, it would have never worked, and I never wanted it. In a way it was a challenge. Perhaps that actually saved me from the labor camps. Many who tried to look and act like the locals ended their lives jailed. I was lucky enough to have a few of the local friends, who though only half-believed me, never reported on me. They are or were really nice and honest friends.*

*Now, I want to tell you about my nightmares of the past. This is not just an episode, because it lasted too long. This is a tale of existence on the verge of insanity, when life has no value, when there is no real reason to continue living, when there seemed to be no future. Often when I was quite awake I would look at my life as from the side. I could not really accept my existence as real life. Yet I worked, studied, met people, but all that was looked upon by me as from aside, as someone else's life, in a sort of a haze.*

*For a period of about thirty-five years I had recurring dreams. They were nightmares, always the same to the minute details. In my dreams I was preparing to go to the Soviet Union. I did not know where I was, I did not know why, but I had to go, and I definitely did not want to go. To say that it was an unpleasant feeling would be putting it very mildly.*

*Then I would wake up with the relief that it was only a dream. I would look around trying to figure out where I was. To my horror I would realize - I am in the Soviet Union. It was like finding yourself in the dead end of nowhere. After that there was no sleep, dozing sometimes, getting up in the morning with a headache and the*

*feeling of total frustration.*

*I have heard that prisoners in jail do have similar dreams. In their dreams they are free, but have to return to jail. But they are in for crimes, and such dreams are a part of the penitence. In my case it was too high a payment for an ill-considered act.*

*I started having such dreams from the very start of my life in the Soviet Union. I was always afraid of my dreams, so I tried to go to bed as late as possible, to sleep without any dreams. In my younger days it had been quite normal for me to have a nightly sleep of 3 or 5 hours only. Sometimes I thought I was going off my rocker.*

*I could not tell my relatives about my dreams, because it would be too cruel. I did go to the Soviet Union only because I did not want to leave my parents, and I could not let them down in any situation. As it was, during the Stalin and even post-Stalin era my father many times suggested to me to make an attempt of an escape from the Soviet Union, to get free. It was self-sacrifice on my father's part. I always declined his suggestions. First, it was impossible to escape from the central part of the country where we lived. Second, many of those who attempted to go near the border either disappeared or ended up in labor camps, many died there. Third and the main reason, my parents, even in the event of an unsuccessful attempt, would be jailed, tortured and would end their lives in labor camps.*

*My parents and my sister needed me. Later I had to take over all the main family problems and make all the main decisions for both of our families.*

*Now at last I am free again, but at the end of my trail. The Communist regime fell unexpectedly without a war, without a revolution. Just fell apart. Unfortunately many are still longing for the past. They are missing their sty and the lump of stale bread they could get without working too hard. They knew they were secure from complete hunger. They might understand the advantages of freedom, only if they lose it. I am afraid the loss of freedom is not unlikely."*

Sadly a lot of my friends were in that category – “forced” to go to the Soviet Union at its worst time right after WWII with their parents who were ignited by longing for their land of birth and ancestry, not realizing the hardships that they would encounter in those years of reconstruction, Stalin’s paranoia and the rigors of a regime surrounded by enemies. The ones that stayed behind, did not fare so well either as jobs dried up and international activities disappeared. Many of the “stateless White Russians” had no place to go. It was sad to observe the ranks of destitute, young men in hand-me-down clothes, sleeping in alleys and stalls. Alcoholism fueled by cheap Chinese rice liquor abounded. With sorrow, I would occasionally recognize some of the former athletic champions and well known society party goers, hunched among them or standing at corners hoping to get a small hand-out to buy cheap spirits or a few drags on an opium pipe.

Leaving Shanghai was not easy, although after much difficulty, mother and I obtained entry visas for Hong Kong, we did not have the necessary funds for the travel. There was a strict rule in those days applied by the Communist government to restrict the further “leaking of wealth from China by foreign exploiters”. All foreigners leaving Shanghai could only take two suitcases of clothing and one crate of household items, as well as only US \$150 per person.

Our clothing barely fit into three suitcases for both of us and the crate of household items contained some family “knick-knacks” and my books and comics (which were all confiscated). Cash we had none,

but this proved to be our salvation, as a friend of mine offered to loan us 300 US dollars to be returned to one of his relatives in Hong Kong. We accepted and this covered our fare as well as assisted us to purchase some needed items, such as food.

My last dinner in Shanghai, on December 26<sup>th</sup>, the night prior to our departure, was roasted goose with chestnuts, ginseng and bamboo shoots stuffing along with a suckling piglet impregnated with spices and a greasy crackling skin. A dinner that still brings on an attack of salivation in my mouth even after all those years! Although this was accompanied with a liberal dosage of the best ice-chilled vodka, my mood was far from optimistic with some fore-boding on this major life altering step in leaving China forever to the larger world beyond my life experiences.

The next step was a taxi ride through dark, rainy, empty curfew-imposed streets to the dock where our ship was berthed. The ship was an old British tramp steamer hauling cargo to and from Hong Kong. The captain was a pleasant red-faced Englishman with a couple of Australian officers and mixed Malaysian/Chinese crew. It was close to midnight when our meager belonging were finally loaded aboard, for some strange reason all of my books and comics were confiscated but the clothing and personal belonging were left intact. The Chinese authorities finally cleared our papers by dawn with one mishap – a Chinese crew member was detained since he could not account for his foreign wristwatch which he probably sold illegally while ashore.

I remember with fondness that night as the captain with great ceremony and flourish opened the ship's bar and offered us all a "Scotch and Soda" as a celebration on leaving China's territorial waters. That night I slept very soundly with the gentle rolling of the ship on the placid Yellow Sea, dreaming of the adventures and challenges ahead of my young life.

### **Inserts**

#### **To Chapter III – Shanghai – "Liberated"**

- Find and insert photos of Soviet Sports Club (SSK).
- Race Course – rifle chamber click



## Chapter IV – Departure from Shanghai to Hong Kong and to Brazil (1953/54)

*“Let us not look back in Anger or forward in Fear, but around for Awareness” – James Thurber*

Two days after the Christmas of 1953, my mother and I finally left Shanghai on my second sea voyage by cargo steamer to Hong Kong, arriving at that then British Colony in early 1954, leaving Mao's Red China for good.

The trip was relatively uneventful except for my experience with the incompatibility of shampoo and salt water showers. I attempted to wash my hair in our cabin's shower stall and after soaping my head with a liberal amount of shampoo, stuck it under the shower not realizing that the water was provided from the salty Yellow Sea. Next I was hollering for Mom with a head covered with a gooey mess!

In Hong Kong I met many of my former schoolmates who have emigrated earlier and here was “party time” again every weekend. Most of my former classmates worked either for the newspaper or the local police force. They were all hard drinkers and party goers! Needless to say we all had a grand time since Hong Kong was just as free-wheeling and corrupt as Shanghai was in those “colonial days” when the “white man” was king in those parts of the world.



*Party time in Hong Kong with my former classmates from Shanghai and their Hong Kong friends*

One of our favorite pastimes was to visit the popular dance hall bars, pick a sturdy table along a back wall and settle back to watch the nightly fist fights between the US Navy “Joes” and the British Army “Tommies”. The table helped to barricade against flying bottles, ashtrays and an occasional body! Another favorite was to visit a Chinese restaurant that had good food but no liquor license with one of my plainclothes policeman buddies. We would order a lot of the best dishes with liberal amount of unlicensed whiskey and invite all of the call-girls that were hovering around to join us. When the bill came, my buddy would fumble for his wallet and “accidentally” drop his police I.D. face up on the table. Immediately, the Chinese owner would rush up and insist that there is no bill and everything was “on

the house". Of course we never went to the same place twice – but there were many such places with delicious food and specialties.

It was in Hong Kong where I first got a glimpse of the ugly face of discrimination. On asking one of my former SJA classmates if he saw any of the other boys from our school since his arrival in Hong Kong, he replied – "We do not associate with half-breeds", I was shocked and asked him if he was aware that my grandfather was Chinese. He turned beet red and stammered an apology, however this opened my eyes to the world "outside of Shanghai" where we were cocooned from a lot of the western world's ills and beliefs.

Later, I learned a few more "hard truths" about the "real world". Some of my classmates had major difficulties after repatriating from Shanghai to their "home lands". The local inhabitants looked at them with suspicion due to their accents and behavior patterns. Shanghai was very international, at least for us kids, and no thought was ever given to the differences in nationalities, race, and religious beliefs. Some of my friends that went to Europe felt alienated and discriminated in their jobs.

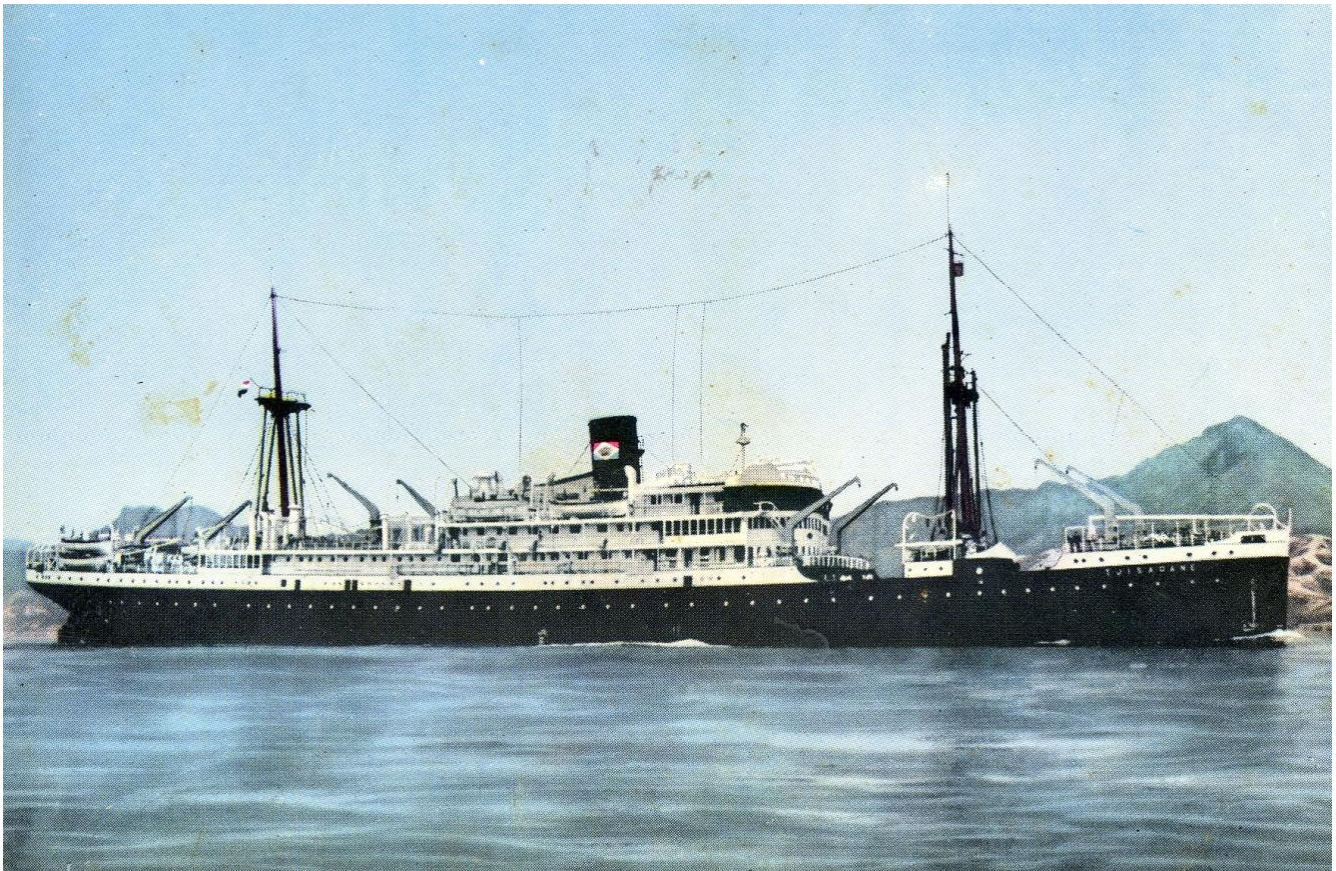
The "White Australia Policy", of excluding all non-European people from immigrating into Australia, was the official policy of the government in Australia till the 1950s, and elements of the policy survived until the 1970s. Although the expression 'White Australia Policy' was never in official use, it was common in political and public debate throughout the period. Even so, many of my Russian friends "anglicized" their surnames in an attempt to blend in. The same in the USA, where some of the darker skinned ones pretended to be Hawaiian.

Although I was only 18 years old, due to my fluency in the English and Russian languages, I landed a very lucrative job as a translator for the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA). The work was very simple, since the person that hired me, told me that he was only interested in "pertinent facts" and had no time to read about the writers woes or family problems. This often reduced a 3-page letter to a couple of paragraphs and I would turn in 20 to 30 letters each week at \$3 per letter, thus I would make up to 3 or 4 times the weekly wages of some of my older schoolmates who were working in the local banks, insurance and shipping companies and gaining minimum wages.. I also did a lot of my work in my hotel and had very flexible hours of about 10 hours per week. This made me very popular and I toured the local bars, restaurants, dance halls and sex shows nearly every night.

But all good (and bad) things come to an end and on June 22<sup>nd</sup> of 1954, mother and I were on our way to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on a Dutch cargo steamer of the Royal Inter-Ocean Lines, the SS Tjisadane. Sailing for Singapore, where we had a 5-day stop (June 27 to July 1), I enjoyed my time touring the island and feeding the lively monkeys that were everywhere, while the older passengers were being de-briefed by the MI-5 and CIA people for scraps of intelligence regarding the Chinese Communists and the Red Army.

Next was a stop in Mauritius (July 12), where I got myself into serious trouble by delaying our departure by an hour. I took a stroll in the thick jungle and lost my way – not a pleasant experience with animal snarls, chattering monkeys and parrots squawking in the thick foliage. We stopped at Durban for 3 days (July 18 to July 21), and East London (July 22), Port Elizabeth (July 23), and Cape Town (July 26) for a day's stop in each. Then came the long 11-day haul to Rio de Janeiro with beautiful silvery flying fish and accompanying schools of playful dolphins, We arrived on August 6<sup>th</sup> , the total sea journey was 45 days!





*S.S.Tjisadane on route - Hong Kong to Rio de Janeiro via Singapore, Mauritius, East London, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape town and Rio de Janeiro – June 22 to August 6, 1954.*

There were approximately 300 passengers on board, about 80 Russians from China and 220 Japanese being expatriated from Okinawa and 1 Brazilian young man isolated from us in 1<sup>st</sup> Class.

The Russians were travelling 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, sharing cabins with 4 or 8 to a cabin with the men separated from the women, including wives and children. A schedule was worked out so that married couples could have some privacy at certain hours each day. Our cabin had 7 individuals, consisting of an old man – a Cossack travelling with his wife and a huge metal-bound case which everyone said contained bars of gold since the old man would not let it out of his sight. There was a father and son, chubby, jolly and full of good humor. A small dark fellow, Armenian/Georgian full of jokes and anecdotes and 2 boys around my age, one a shy teenager travelling with his parents and younger sister and a large blond solidly built fellow who would start each day with 50 pushups and a run around the deck.

The Japanese were travelling “steerage” or in one big common area in the cargo hold. Do not know what schedule they set up since we rarely went below our deck. Being in such close proximity, it was not long before everyone knew everyone. Beside myself there were four other young adults, one of them was from a wealthy family and had 3 cases of vodka in his luggage – “party time again”. We would meet at the bow away from the other “older” adults and share a bottle with fresh oranges, throwing scraps of bread to the sea gulls and watching the flying fish and dolphins that were leading the ship. The sharks followed behind since the cooks would daily dump their kitchen garbage from the stern.



The first morning after departure from Hong Kong, Mom sent me to the shower area to bath myself. After thoroughly soaping myself from head to toe I stepped into the shower. To my horror my hair got tangled into a “gooey” mess. I panicked, wrapped a towel around me for decency and went hollering for Mom. She was highly amused and told me that the shower used salt sea water and that I had to rinse my head first in fresh water which was available in a basin provided for this purpose.

Outside of a weekly “life boat” exercise we were not bothered by the crew and set up our own programs activities. We had some school and dance teachers aboard so the “youngsters” had daily classes in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as folk dancing and singing once a week. The adults also organized an athletic competition between the Russians and the Japanese – tug o’war, wrestling and gymnastics



*The Chief Mate refereeing a friendly Tug O'War exercise*

Our first “port of call” was Singapore where we spent four days. The extended stay was utilized by the British Intelligence (MI-5) to debrief all of the adults (me included) on details of life in Communist China. They were particularly interested in military transports, license plates, uniform insignia and locations of military camps and zones. My memory was “zilch” so I was of no help.

In the mid ‘50’s Singapore did not impress us after Shanghai and Hong Kong. It seemed seedy, dirty and decrepit. That was why years later in the late ‘80’s when Beverly and I visited it again, I was greatly impressed on its modernization, cleanliness, architecture and prosperity as a result of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew’s strong and strict leadership. He was the one that greatly reduced drug trafficking by hanging 3 British young men who were caught with drugs in their backpacks regardless of the pleas from the Queen of England for clemency. His famous reply to Queen Elizabeth II was – “Madame, it is our youth and not yours that was being led to addiction”.



When we left Singapore we sailed through the Strait of Malacca between Malaysia and Sumatra. We hugged the beautiful green jungle coastline of Sumatra, watching the beautiful flying fish and the colorful birds along the way. As we turned west and entered the Indian Ocean, the water turned from brown to a gorgeous blue/green with mild white sea caps. We proceeded calmly over the great oceanic expanse with balmy South East Trade winds to Port Louis on the African island of Mauritius in the Mascarene Islands group. Halfway on our journey, the Captain invited us “young studs” to take part in the Equator Crossing Ceremony.



*Certificate depicting that the recipient has crossed the Equator*

Early in the morning, pre-dawn, we reported to his cabin and were outfitted as pirates, complete with beards, eye patches and wooden swords. Then we boarded one of the lifeboats and were lowered into the sea. The other passengers were awakened by loud blasts from the ship's horn as the ship stopped. The Captain announced on the intercom that we have entered King Neptune's domain and he will be boarding the ship to request tribute. At that point our lifeboat was raised and King Neptune (the 1<sup>st</sup> Mate in full royal regalia) and we the pirates boarded the boat. A pre-

arranged list of grievances was read off a roll of toilet paper and some of the passengers were duly punished with egg shampoos and dumping into the ship's pool. The pirates had a ball; since our task was to grab any young woman we could fine and throw her fully dressed into the pool.

On arrival at Port Louis, Mauritius, we were permitted to go ashore with strict instructions to stay in a group and be back an hour before the ship's departure. After nearly two weeks at sea with only water on all sides we were ecstatic to explore the lush green jungle that surrounded the port. My buddies and I with a couple of the more adventurous adults took off eagerly into the jungle. There was lush growth on all sides with colorful jungle flowers and the screeching of monkeys and birds on all sides. Fascinated with the "movie-like" atmosphere of the Tarzan series that I adored and imagining myself to be Johnny Weissmuller, I forged ahead and soon lost the group. First it was fun but then I started to hear sinister rustling in the brush and the screeches of monkeys and birds went silent. Controlling my rising fears I determined that since we entered the jungle going uphill, the return to the port must be down the slope.

I started going down at a fast pace which eventually broke into a run. I could hear the ship's horn blowing for preparation to depart and started running faster. Suddenly something made me halt and after taking a small step I stood poised at a 20 foot drop to the sea! My Guardian Angel again.

Gingerly I hugged this cliff and made my way to the beach, making it finally to the ship, my half-hysterical mother and a very irritated captain who had to delay departure by an hour because of my foolishness.



690-N Rickshaw Boys, Durban.

*Native "Rickshaw" boys showing off for the tourist cameras – Durban, South Africa*

Next stop was Durban in the Republic of South Africa where we stayed for 3 days. In Durban I managed to stay out of trouble and enjoyed myself in wandering around the port, never going too far from the ship and checking out the local activities. We had a curfew of being back aboard by supper (7 pm) every night.



After Durban there were two short stops, East London and Port Elizabeth of a day each. Most of us did not even bother to leave the ship. Incidentally our young group did not like the bland meals that were served to the passengers and requested the Ship's Purser if we could eat what was served the crew who was made up of Chinese and Malaysians. Their food was very spicy and interesting and we enjoyed it greatly.

On one occasion, as we were eating, we were harassed by two bratty Russian kids. They would observe us from a distance and then dash up and gobble a mouthful from the main plates. We decided to teach them a lesson. Among the food were little dishes of extremely spicy hot crushed Thai peppers used as a supplement. We would take a small piece with our chopsticks hold it to our mouths and sigh with great content and savor. The two brats after watching this a while dash up and each snatch an entire dish and drained it instantly. We were shocked and sat agog while two youngsters nearly choked themselves, falling on the floor and gasping for air. The ship's doctor arrived and the kids' stomachs were pumped out. We all received a severe scolding although we never expected that they would try to drink the whole dish.

As we approached Cape Town we passed the Cape of Good Hope where the Indian Ocean meets the Atlantic. This area is famous for its storms and we hit a "beauty". The waves came crashing on the deck and the ship rose and fell with great force. Everyone got terribly sea-sick except me. I loved it, I do not know where I got my "sea legs" but I was having a ball! With youthful exuberance I went on the deck and for a better "ride" I laboriously climbed up the rear mast trying to reach the "crow's nest". However the wind was so strong it flattened me to the mast and I only got  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way to the top holding on to the steel rungs. When I came down I was face-to-face with a very angry, livid Officer of the Deck. He said "YOU AGAIN!!!" and took me to the Captain's office where the Captain chewed me out and threatened to throw me in the brig for the duration of the journey. He told me if the wind had changed just a little I would have been torn off the mast and flung into the raging ocean. My Guardian Angel took care of me again.

Fortunately, I was not thrown into the brig but I could feel the watchful eyes of the ship's officers for quite a few days.

The next was the longest stretch of the sea journey 12 days across the Atlantic Ocean with no land in sight. I certainly related to Christopher Columbus and his state of mind! To keep us occupied and entertained the resourceful lady teachers put together a stage show with singing, folk dances and musical instruments (guitar, balalaika, harmonica and accordion). The young kids that rehearsed for this for 3 weeks did a great job and we invited our Japanese neighbors to join the audience. In reciprocation and to "save face", the Japanese also put on a show with geisha dances, tea ceremony, biwa (Japanese lute) playing and a jiu-jitsu exhibition.

We finally got to meet the young Brazilian travelling 1<sup>st</sup> class. He spoke no Russian only Portuguese and some English, so I was the only one in our young group who could communicate with him. This became a little of a burden because he was attracted to the only teenage girl in our group, a sister of one of our "band of brothers" and since the attraction was mutual, found myself in the role of a translator of tender messages.

Finally after a seemingly endless journey one early morning we saw the Brazilian coast and by that afternoon we were in Rio de Janeiro where all the people were light brown, all the women

were beautiful, samba was king and all the men wore white pants and shirts. Mother and I were part of a small group, about a dozen, who disembarked here, the rest sailed on to the port of Santos and from there, inland to Sao Paulo.

My grandparents, Pavlik and Aunt Valia were there to meet us and we had a joyful family reunion after being apart for over a year. That night I could not go to sleep so around midnight I went for a stroll in the neighborhood. I did not speak or understand a word of Portuguese/Brazilian but figured if I watch my directions carefully and make a complete circle around our block, I would not get lost.

It was a beautiful warm moonlit night and I decided to be more daring and headed for the beach which was only a block away. I was enthralled by the white breaking surf and the pure beach with snowy white fine sand. I have never seen a beach like that – it was the Ipanema beach, made famous a few years later by the popular song – “The Girl from Ipanema”.



*Mr. Cool on the way to South America and the Senoritas*

I stayed out till dawn break and again was totally fascinated by the gorgeous sun rising from the greenish blue ocean. Till today I remember the beauty of the beaches of Rio with the towering Crocovado Mountain behind with its gigantic white statue of Christ the Redeemer with his arms open to the sun rising from the ocean to welcome travellers and the new day.

These were probably my happiest days. Here I was young, healthy full of “p—s and vinegar” in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The weather was always great, not too hot in summer and balmy in the winter. The beaches were fine white sand; the ocean was gorgeous blue/green clear water. Food was cheap, the “senoritas” beautiful and the natives very friendly and full of good humor, constantly joking, horsing around and very relaxed.

The core culture of Brazil is derived from the Portuguese culture, because of its strong colonial ties with the Portuguese empire. Among other influences, the Portuguese introduced the Portuguese language, Roman Catholicism and colonial architectural styles. The culture was, however, also strongly influenced by African, indigenous and non-Portuguese European cultures and traditions. Some aspects of Brazilian culture were influenced by the contributions of Italian, German and other European immigrants who arrived in large numbers in the South and Southeast of Brazil.

In the early 50's there also came large groups of Japanese from Okinawa, they were very industrious and hard-working farmers who cleared large swatches of jungle and completely monopolized the fresh produce market in the Sao Paulo area.

The indigenous Amerindians influenced Brazil's language and cuisine; and the Africans influenced language, cuisine, music, dance and religion.

Coffee has been one of the main beverages among Brazilians since the beginning of the 19th century.

Brazilian cuisine varies greatly by region, reflecting the country's mix of native and immigrant populations. This has created a national cuisine marked by the preservation of regional differences. Examples are Feijoada, considered the country's national dish; and regional foods such as vatapá, moqueca, polenta and acarajé.

Brazil has a variety of candies such as brigadeiros ("brigadiers") and beijinhos ("kisses"). The national beverage is coffee and cachaça is Brazil's native liquor. Cachaça is distilled from sugar cane and is the main ingredient in the national cocktail, Caipirinha.

Brazilian art has developed since the 16th century into different styles that range from Baroque (the dominant style in Brazil until the early 19th century) to Romanticism, Modernism, Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism and Abstractionism.

Brazilian music encompasses various regional styles influenced by African, European and Amerindian forms. It developed distinctive styles, among them samba, bossa nova, and Brazilian rock.

The most popular sport in Brazil is football (soccer). The Brazilian national football team is ranked among the best in the world according to the FIFA World Rankings, and has won the World Cup tournament five times.<sup>1</sup> Basketball, volleyball, auto racing, and martial arts also attract large



audiences. Though not as regularly followed or practiced, tennis, team handball, swimming, and gymnastics have found a growing number of enthusiasts over the last decades. Some sport variations have their origins in Brazil: beach football, futsal (indoor football) and footvolley emerged in Brazil as variations of football. In martial arts, Brazilians developed Capoeira, Vale tudo, and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. In auto racing, Brazilian drivers have won the Formula One world championship nine times.

Brazilians as a rule are a very gregarious, fun-loving people inclined to music, dance and general socializing. They are very ethnically mixed and racial discrimination is practically nonexistent and limited to friendly jokes and anecdotes between the different provinces. For example people from Rio are called “Cariocas” who are never serious and always lazing around on the beaches, the ones from Sao Paulo or the “Paulistas”, totally industrious and have no understanding of fun and the ones from the Northern provinces as “Flat Heads” because they arrive standing on a in a covered truck for the 12 hour bumpy ride.

Of course as with all immigrants to a new country with foreign ways and a new culture, life was not necessarily a “bed of roses” on arrival. Us “gringos” generally did not know the language and had to rely somewhat on our countrymen that arrived earlier. One of my friends, Mike K. met a compatriot at the dock when he arrived from Europe. This new “pal” was very helpful in getting penniless Mike a job salvaging bricks from demolished buildings. The job was a rough one for anyone who never did manual labor. First he had to pick and collect a load of relatively useable bricks from a demolished building. Hand carry them to a salvage site and then using a chisel and hammer, carefully remove the solid mortar without damaging the brick. He worked 10 hours a day for an entire week and at the end when he went to collect his wage, he was told by the supervisor that his “pal” had collected it already. He never saw his “pal” again.

In the mid 50’s, the new immigrants were a very mixed lot – there were “White Russians” and Portuguese/Chinese from China, a small group of “Red Russians” who defected from the Soviet Union, dissidents from Hungary, Japanese from Okinawa, and an assortment of other nationals who were displaced from their country of origin due to politics or sometimes criminal prosecution.

The bulk of the Russians settled in two main areas, a small, more affluent group in the Ipanema and Copacabana beach areas in Rio de Janeiro and the majority in Villa Zelina in Sao Paulo. There was a lot of interfacing and social contacts between the two groups.

## Chapter V – Initial days in Rio de Janeiro (1954 to 1960)

“The Ultimate Path is without difficulty, just avoid Picking and Choosing” – Seng Ts’an



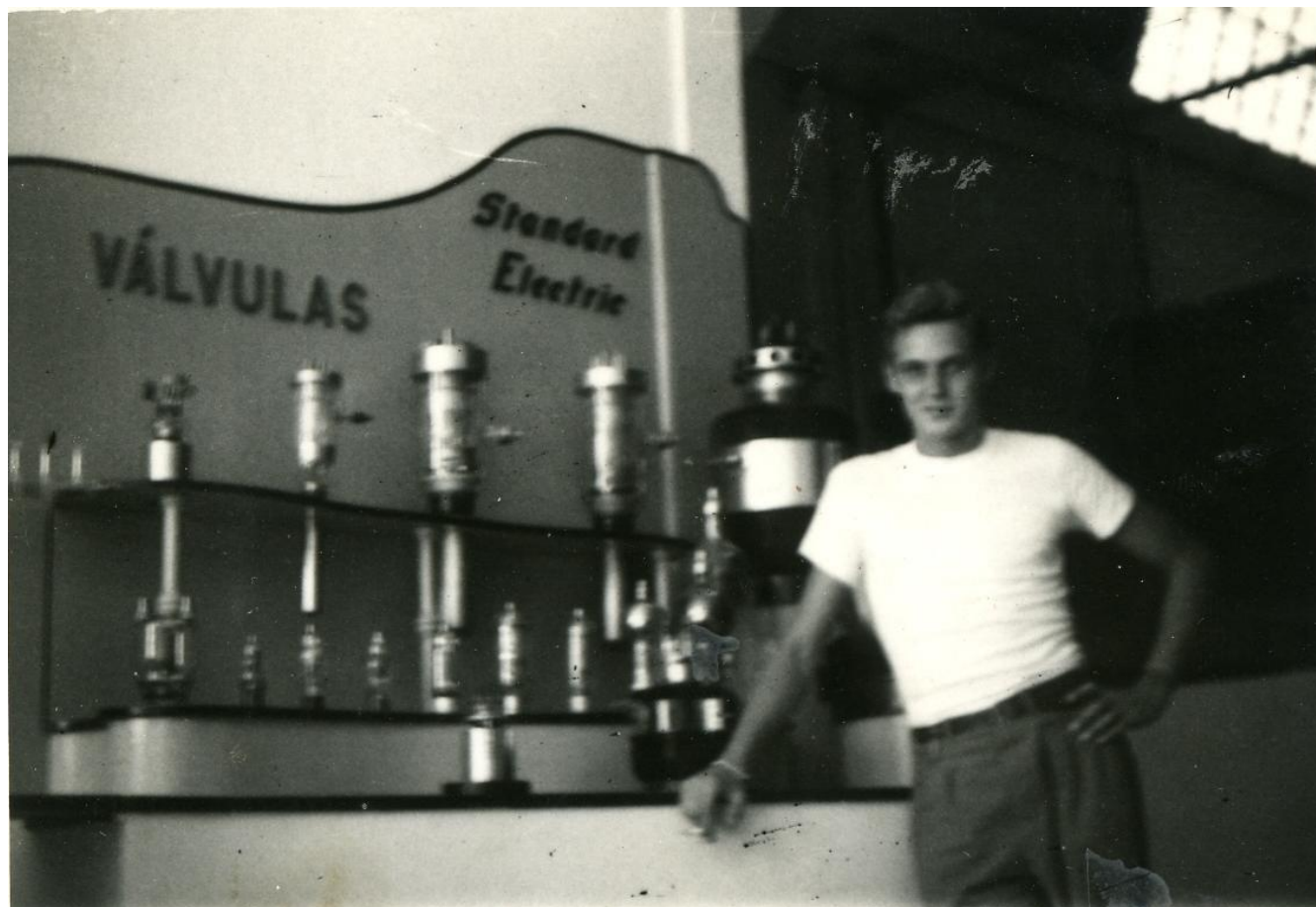
*Sugar Loaf (Pao de Asucar) and Botofogo Bay at dusk*

We stayed with my grandparents, who immigrated one year before us. After a couple of days of “acclimatization” I went job hunting. Not an easy task since I had no skills, no experience and absolutely no knowledge of the native language or culture. However in one of my meanderings downtown I bumped into an acquaintance from the Shanghai YMCA. After a warm greeting and a couple of “cafezinhos” (very strong Brazilian coffee in a mini-cup with lots of sugar), he suggested I come down and see him at the factory where he was employed. This factory was quite a ways out of town but he gave me detailed instructions on what buses I had to take to get there.

The next morning early, without telling anyone at home, putting on a spotless white suit, I went on my Odyssey. It took over 90 minutes with 3 bus changes but I got there. The factory was called “Standard Electrica” and it was a subsidiary of International Telegraph and Telephone (MIT). I asked for my friend at the gate and was escorted to his area by a guard. The job vacancy was for a store-keeper in the Vacuum Tube Manufacturing Plant.

I was interviewed by the plant manager who was a “good ole boy” from South Dakota who worked up the ranks from the assembly line and knew first hand all the aspects of the manufacturing and assembly of electronic vacuum tubes. He was a hard worker, very dedicated and a hard drinker.

We hit it off right from the start since I reminded him a lot of his younger son who he hasn't seen in years due to a bitter divorce and custody battles.



*My 1<sup>st</sup> job in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – Standard Electric S/A Manufacturing of Vacuum Tubes.*

He hired me on the spot and sent me to Personnel with a note stating that I can start immediately. The Personnel manager was shocked when he discovered that I did not speak a word of Portuguese, however he could not deny the plant manager's request and, greatly irritated, gave me an ID card stating that I was a full-time employee. On my return I asked my new boss what is my 1<sup>st</sup> task. He pointed at an overhead structure overflowing with dirty, dusty carton crates of old TV vacuum tubes and told me to start sorting and inventorying the lot.

These years on my 1<sup>st</sup> "real" wage-earning job were very educational and very valuable for my future relationships and abilities in my jobs. I was fortunate to get hired just a couple of months before I turned 19 by an American from South Dakota. He was in his mid 50's and grew up in the "rough and tough" years of the roaring 20s. His dad was the sheriff in a small frontier town and he learned early to stand his ground, speak softly and have a pair of hard fists.

On my first day at work I showed up in a white suit and snowy white shirt, the image of a "southern" playboy. He looked me up and down and said – "you ready for real work?" I replied "sure!" he said "see those boxes with TV tubes on the mezzanine? I glanced up and saw a tangle of dusty, jumbled pile of assorted boxes and said "ye....s", he looked me in the eye and said "well, I need them sorted by size and stored in rows, 4 boxes high". I said "OK" and stood there waiting for my workers. After a little while, he asked me – "what are you waiting for?" it became apparent to me that no help was



coming. Without a word of complaint, I carefully removed my white suit jacket and tie, rolled up my sleeves and went at it

I was pretty strong in those days and although the boxes were heavy and bulky, I learned very quickly how to pick up 3 or 4 at a time and before the end of the shift at 5 pm, I had them all sorted in neat stacks and tallied on an inventory sheet. It was a test – after that he put me in charge of the main storeroom, where very rapidly I learned all the names of the various articles and their uses, values and manners of storage. Brazilians are wonderful, warm, friendly people and they went out of their way to teach this lanky “gringo” their language and manners.

My boss was greatly impressed but I was completely covered with dust and grime from head to toe. On my return home Grandfather nearly had a stroke as he was categorically against any Kalageorgi doing menial labor!

It was not long, approximately 6 months before I became the general superintendent of the entire vacuum tube manufacturing operation, supervising 50 people before I was 20 years old.

I owe a lot to this wise gentleman as he gave me some important managerial skill lessons. I remember one time we had a power outage in the plant. I immediately rushed out onto the floor and moved all the lathe and other powered equipment operators to work benches and gave them some manual assembly tasks. Very proud of myself I cockily strutted back to my desk where the boss was standing and watching me. “What are you doing?” he said. I replied – “Avoiding idleness and getting everyone to work while the power is out”. “Is it their fault that the power is out?” he asked. “N...o” I replied. “Then get them back to their equipment, I don’t care if they sit and chat! They deserve a break”. I sheepishly complied and started looking at my employees through more human eyes as people and not pieces of labor.

I worked very hard and by 21 became a supervisor over Production Control and Material Handling for that operation. I matured very rapidly in those days and learned 1<sup>st</sup> hand on how major corporations, such as Standard Electric, make their wealth. At the shipping dock, my attention was drawn to a freshly arrived load of “new” graphite anodes priced at US \$50.00 each (a very handsome price for 1955). On closer investigation it became apparent that they were all reworked, used components from vacuum tubes that exceeded their life span and were sent to “scrap” in the US! When I pointed this out to my boss, he shrugged his shoulders and said “This is business”.

Alexander Ivanovich, who was one of Grandfather's fellow cadets at the Suvorov Academy was a giant of a man. Well over 6’6” tall, weighing about 250 lbs with a ruddy pleasant face with sparkling bright blue eyes and a full head of snowy white locks. He showed up at my desk in the plant looking for a job. Since he was over 70 years old, I was a little hesitant in hiring him. On noticing this, the old gentleman bent down and effortlessly lifted a 120 lbs copper radiator and set it on my desk. I immediately hired him for our repair and salvage section where he became the mascot of the locals who enjoyed his good humor and gracious gentlemanly manners even though he never learned to speak Portuguese or English.

About that time my mother married again and moved to Sao Paulo, 400 miles south from Rio de Janeiro, where my new step-father had a job managing a small movie theater and Rank Studio films distributing for Brazil. I then was able to take over the rental of the apartment that we lived in.

Life in Rio de Janeiro was very pleasant. Summers were hot but not unbearably so because of the balmy cool sea breezes. Nine months of the year I would go to the beaches, either Ipanema where I lived or Copacabana just a short tram ride away. Often I would just walk down there casually stopping at frequent outdoor beer pubs for refreshments. Many a weekend, I would remain in my swim suit for 60 continuous hours. Swimming and body surfing or just laying in the sun, getting a tan and watching the string bikinis strolling by, fascinated by their “Carioca wiggly” walk.

My boss loved to play handball on the beach with a feathered “puck” and I got to be quite good at it, finally beating him quite often. He also loved to drink and enjoy the young ladies who were plentiful in the vicinity of his lush apartment on Copacabana Beach. He became my “pseudo” uncle and often had me over to keep him company, be a drinking buddy and “watch his back”. Needless to say the arrangement suited me very well since he picked up all of the expenses for our adventures. Quite a life for a 19/20-year old!



*My boss and I on Copacabana beach – he is a little disgruntled since I just beat him at handball*

The apartment, that I lived in, was located a block away from the scenic beach of Ipanema and I arranged for a work buddy from my plant to move in and split the rent. The apartment had 2 bedrooms and a maid’s room, so shortly after we found another mutual friend to move in and thus further lower our rent expense. We all had ample incomes and threw parties every weekend and often mid-week till the neighbors started complaining and calling for the police.

Our standard operating procedure was to drink relatively lightly on Friday evenings till about 1:30 am, then swoop down to a large nightclub close by and collect all of the young homeless prostitutes that were left without customers at the 2:00 am quitting time. Since they had no place to go, they were happy to have a safe place to spend the night and we would party-up the whole

weekend. Occasionally there would be some liability since some of them would steal anything that was not nailed down and I lost some nice articles such as watches, jewelry and clothing.

Later on we got another boarder; he was a Peruvian political refugee, a college student from an affluent family in Lima who had to leave the country because of his radical views. He was somewhat short-tempered and got kicked out from his prior lodging for beating up the owner. He asked to spend the night and ended up staying 8 months. We made a cot for him in the corner of the dining room.

My first boarder, work buddy Pavel, who was Russian from China like me, resigned from his job at Standard Electrica and based on the knowledge gained there where he worked on the TV assembly line, started his own business as a TV repairman. In those days it was very lucrative as only rich people could afford TV sets. The 2<sup>nd</sup> boarder, Anton, was a Hungarian who worked as a Refrigerator repairman, in this way we obtained a fine refrigerator for our apartment. Carlos, the Peruvian did not work because of his violent temper. He received a monthly living remittance from his mother and paid for his stay with us by keeping the apartment and kitchen spotlessly clean as well as wash and iron my shirts and underwear.



*The "gang" at Ipanema Beach - 1956*

Many nights my room-mates and I would go riding on an Italian 2-seater Lambretta motor scooter with 4 of us hanging on, tearing down the streets of Copacabana, drunk and crazy. It is a miracle that we weren't killed or maimed for life although we took many spills and had quite a few very close encounters with buses, cars, pedestrians and police.

On one beautiful Saturday, the four of us were strolling in Copacabana along the wonderful white sand beach. We were all feeling "all – OK" after numerous visits to the beachside beer stands and by nightfall unanimously decided to take a dip in the rolling surf to refresh ourselves. Since none



of us had bathing suits we just dropped off our clothes in a pile on the deserted beach and attacked the gentle waves, splashing each other and cavorting wildly in the cool water. After about an hour of these activities we went to look for our clothes spending another frantic 30 minutes running up and down the beach to find them. Finally after locating the pile, we dressed and strolled down to the closest beachside open air Cafeteria/Bar at one of the many prestigious hotels along the Copacabana beach. On our arrival there we were met with a standing ovation from the customers and as we looked back at the beach from the bar, we saw that the combination of the white sand and full moon turned the beach to a well-lit stage.

On another weekend my buddies and I took the cable car to the top of Sugar Loaf Mountain (Pao de Acucar). In a bar on its summit, about 500 feet above sea level, we finished off about a dozen of liter bottles of strong (18%) Brazilian beer and proceeded prance around on the viewer rail doing handstands at the cliff's edge. We were showing off to some of the pretty "meninhas" and each other on how agile and "macho" we were. I slipped and fell off the railing landing on my side on a tree stump approximately 12 feet down. There I was dangling with my head looking down at the waves breaking on the jagged rocks nearly 500 feet below. My friends found a rope and hauled me back to safety before the police arrived and took me home where I collapsed on my bed. I woke up in the middle of the night in great pain and discovered that I had fractured two ribs in my adventure. We were afraid to go to the hospital and undergo questioning which would lead to a police report, so my buddies assisted me in tightly wrapping a bath towel around my middle and supplied me with ample amounts of vodka for two days to alleviate the pain. For over a month I went to work on the company bus with a plaster bandage tightly wound around my lower chest and in great discomfort.



*One of the "Samba Schools" in the Carnaval Parade*

The Brazilian Carnival is an unforgettable experience, especially in Rio de Janeiro! Miles and miles of parading “Samba Blocks” in exotic, colorful and very skimpy costumes. The “Samba Blocks” are co-ordinated groups from the “favelhas” – blocks of shanty houses on top of the low hills in the center of opulent Rio, behind the rows of fancy high-rise apartments and fancy luxury hotels bordering the beautiful beaches where the rich Brazilians lived and played. These poor people normally work as maids, cooks, servants and manual laborers for the most part of the year. But for the 4 days and 5 nights of Carnival (Madri-Gras as it is known in the West), they descend to the city in disciplined groups with rich, coordinated and thematic costumes, which they spent the entire year designing, sewing and preparing. Each “Samba Block” has its own music, theme and performance. It is a wonderful and beautiful sight to behold.

The rest of the populace joins these activities, dancing on the sidelines or just cheering the procession with occasional beer breaks and “ether sniffing”. One can purchase small bottles of compressed gas with ether with which you could squirt the ice cold ether at semi-nude bodies of pretty girls. One could also squirt a handkerchief with the ether and sniff on it for a mild high. This was illegal and could get you arrested if noticed by the patrolling police. Brazil Carnival performance participants delve into their roles with the help of colorful and elaborate costumes. Ateliers work up to eight months in advance making the costumes by hand. Bright parrot colors, feathers, beads, satins and sequins are typical materials used in Brazil Carnival costumes.

Although the street festivities were fun to watch, the best parties, prettiest girls and greatest entertainment was in the clubs which charged an entrance fee to keep out the “riff-raff” (like us). We were usually limited in funds to buy the tickets so were constantly on the lookout of how to get in gratis. One time we found an unguarded boat on the beach and tried to get into one of the fancier hotel/clubs in their back door on the beach. We were nearly successful until a watchful guard saw us and prodded our boat into the open water with a long pole. Another time we found a club that was ridiculously cheap only to discover after entry that all of the “beautiful” girls were transvestites. We did not stay long and left followed by their laughter and finger-pointing.



*One of the “Samba School” procession during Carnival*

The “Samba School” parades were awesome, they involved the entire population of Rio’s poor population that lived in the “favelas” on the hills behind the plush Copacabana region.

About that time I also regained contact with a couple of my fellow “sea travelers” who disembarked in Sao Paulo. They invited me and my Russian room-mate, Pavel to take the inter-city bus and come on down for a visit. We did that and pretty soon it was “party-time” again.



*Home parties with my Russian expatriate friends in Sao Paulo*

During the years 1957 to 1959, I assisted my grandparents by contributing 10% of my income. Since they refused to take any money from me, I used the excuse that I would have my noon meal with them since they lived close to the factory where I worked. I also paid for their cooking fuel on the same pretext.

An exciting event was to observe the annual New Year’s Macumba ceremonies at midnight when believers gathered on the beach lit bonfires, danced to the beating tom-toms and threw flours into the surf for departed spirits.

Rio Macumba ceremonies have African elements in their rituals which include an outdoor ceremonial site, the sacrifice of animals (such as cocks), spirit offerings (such as candles, cigars, and flowers), and ritual dances. Macumba rites are led by mediums, who fall prostrate in trances and communicate with holy spirits. Roman Catholic elements include use of the cross and the worship of saints, who are given African names such as Ogum (St. George), Xangô (St. Jerome), and Iemanjá (the Virgin Mary).

Another pastime on the Ipanema beach was to watch the Giant Manta Rays swim by during the fall. They were magnificently, periodically jumping out of the water as they swam along the beach line. They would come quite close and some of the more daring swimmers would swim out to them – not I, since I had enough sense not to mess with a 2 ton fish.





*These graceful swimmers swim by moving their wing-like pectoral fins, which can grow up to 30 feet wide. The largest weigh about 3,000 lbs. Mantas are dark brown to black on the dorsal side with pale margins; they are mostly white on the ventral side.*

Summer of 1958 brought another “Guardian Angel” experience. The beaches of Rio have very dangerous surf and undertow. Flags are posted at prominent locations – green for “safe for swimming and surfing”, yellow for “take caution” and black for “stay out of the water”. One morning as a bunch of us were sunning ourselves and lazily oggoling the string bikinis of passing girls, I decided to cool off in the surf. My friends pointed out that the flags were black because of a strong wind. I haughtily told them that I am a “world class” swimmer and an experienced lifeguard. This was said in a loud enough voice so that the girls next to us could hear this and be duly impressed.

I entered the surf to my knees, and then decided to go a little deeper. Suddenly the undertow got me and pulled me out to the thundering surf which was about 20 feet high. A voice told me “Dive!” and I dived under the surf before it broke. Coming up I swam furiously towards the beach but before I got half wave the next wave was on me and I dove again. I did this numerous times and was starting to tire out. I thought “This is it!” suddenly as I came to the surface for what I thought would be the last time a hand reached out and grabbed my hand. The lifeguards, seeing my distress, formed a living line from the beach and pulled me out.

I was threatened with arrest but talked my way out by pretending to be a “dumb” foreign tourist who could not speak Portuguese and was ignorant of the flags. That weekend 6 people drowned on the beaches including an official from the Soviet Embassy who was an Olympic swimmer.

In winter of 1959, my grandparents got into some financial difficulties, primarily caused by my uncle’s heavy drinking and the resultant constant unemployment. All three of them and my cousin temporarily moved in with me. My buddies had to move out to create room for them and this put

quite a strain on my budget even though Mother would send some funds from Sao Paulo to assist us.

My uncle was only 10 years older than me but he was well on the road to chronic and severe alcoholism. He would drink daily a mixture of pure ethyl alcohol mixed with water. One night he got mean-drunk and started to verbally abuse my grandfather, who was in his 70's and somewhat frail. When the abuse turned to physical I stepped in and we got into a fight. I have a violent temper that I usually keep under strict control, but here "I lost it" and nearly knocked my uncle senseless. Grandmother, who was a super "co-dependent" and extremely protective of her youngest son, called the police and had me arrested.

This was my first experience with incarceration and it was my good fortune that I was then exceptionally big and strong, by Brazilian standards, and that they also arrested my uncle with me and we could watch each other's back.

They threw us into a common cell with approximately a dozen other detainees and we spent the night covering each other while the other slept. Some of the prisoners were hardened criminals and the few unfortunate drunks and petty thieves had a very hard time, losing all of their finer clothes and throughout the night fighting off sexual molestations and attacks.

This incident sobered me up for a while and I tried to improve my behavior. However, after an unfortunate romance with a local Russian girl whose parents did not approve of me due to my past reputation as a "drunkard" and shipped her out of the country.

After a period of despondency and some self-pity, I got drunk again and decided to look up one of my former room-mates who had moved in with his aunt in a high-rise apartment building close by. Due to frequent burglaries, apartment buildings would lock their front doors at 11:00 pm and it was well past midnight. This did not stop me. I climbed over the fence of an adjoining house and scaled up the back of the apartment building till the 4<sup>th</sup> floor where he lived. I knocked on my friend's window but he wasn't home. I climbed down and proceeded across the yard of the adjoining house.

Suddenly there was a shot and I heard the bullet strike the wall within a foot of my head. I froze where I was; the owner of the property was a young army officer who thought I was a burglar. He held me at the point of his pistol until the police showed up. I spent the next few hours convincing the police at the precinct station that I was gainfully employed and not a criminal. They finally released me when I sobered up sufficiently.

In early 1959, my immediate neighbors, tired of the ruckus and my partying, petitioned the landlord to evict me, using the premise that I was not the original lease but a sub-lease to my stepfather. In lieu of going through the hassle of finding another residence in Rio, coupled with the heartbreak of my terminated romance, I resigned from my well-paying job even though they offered me a new position with a healthy increase in pay and responsibilities. I packed my few belonging, shipped all the furniture to my grandparent's new residence and moved to Sao Paulo.

Another part of the story is that my next door neighbor who was married to a naval officer who was often absent – hit on me and I did not respond. She came over when I was alone on the pretext of getting her alarm clock fixed, and as I fiddled with it she casually laid her breast on the

palm of my hand. That might have contributed since she was the prime complainant. Oh, well! She wasn't hard to look at.....opportunity lost but my virtue retained!

This was 1959. I was 25 years old, healthy, very fit with a good job and in my mind fully capable of handling anything including liquor, just requiring a little self control and will power. Definitely not an alcoholic requiring help, that was for the poor derelicts lying on the road next to the church. However 1959 was a very depressing year for me. I felt very much alone and although the Brazilians were very friendly and hospitable, I was still the foreign "gringo" not accustomed to their ways and not fully accepted in the "nicer" wealthier families. Although I was Russian, I was not a Soviet and never lived in Russia, could not write or read in that language. I was born in China, but not a Chinese, I could not even speak the language, except swear, even though I spent my childhood and teen years there. I was truly a "Man with NO country".

My depression sometimes bordered suicidal and although I never actively tried to take my own life, I would do crazy things like balance on a 4<sup>th</sup> floor balcony while drunk or chase around on Pave's Lamberts at high speed among night traffic and get into scraps with local toughs at night clubs.

When my eviction notice arrived, I finally moved to Sao Paulo on May 29, 1960. Immediately after my arrival in Sao Paulo I started to look for a job. Deciding I would start with the biggest company I applied at General Motors and promptly got hired on June 1, 1960 as a senior clerk in the Inventory Control section of their Material Department. My job involved assisting my boss's boss in the preparation and presentations of the monthly Wholesale, Production and Finished Product Inventory reports to the plant's upper management. This gave me a lot of valuable education in the planning and forecasting of industrial plant activity as well as good visibility to the plant's upper management.

Foreign capital for manufacturing was copiously flowing into Brazil in the 1950's and got a strong impetus from the development plan that President Juscelino Kubitschek put into effect between 1957 and 1960. During his campaign he had promised "50 years of progress in five." To fulfill this, he established a "program of targets." The greatest emphasis in this program was placed on the steel, auto, shipbuilding, and machine tool industries and upon electric power and transport.

A diminutive part of the new direct foreign investment in Latin America really came from their country of origin. A mere 12 % of the funds came from the enterprises' US, European or Japanese headquarters and was often the result of transfer of already used machinery, goods or simply an appraisal placed by the enterprises upon their industrial "know how", their patents and their brand names. The rest came from internal profits and internal credits or from international credit sources which put these nations deeply in debt to the International Monetary Fund.

I remember visiting GM's newly built engine plant in Sao Jose only to discover that all of the expensive automatic machinery came from the GM Gray Iron Engine plant, which was closed and all of the machinery designated as scrap since it was completely depreciated from the books – another lucrative way to get rich at the expense of the customer since all of this machinery was entered as NEW machinery in GM do Brasil's books and the depreciation initiated again in the finished product cost.





*General Motors do Brasil S/A in Sao Caetano de Sul*

When I joined GM do Brasil S/A, one of the Brazilian President's plans was to encourage foreign car manufacturer investments and to boost local industry by installing progressive percentages of local versus foreign content by US \$ value and weight. Initiation of the plan was at 90% foreign and 10% local content, progressing in 10 years to 50% foreign/50% local content. This was a good plan for it gave opportunities to a lot of small workshops to start building automotive parts and also in time allowed the US to sell a lot of "used" equipment and machinery for "as new" prices. The entire engine foundry, assembly and machining factory in Sao Jose the Campos was equipped with freshly painted old equipment from the obsolete Tonawanda Chevrolet site that was fully amortized, scrapped and written off the books.

In Sao Paulo, I had two groups of friends. A Russian émigré crowd of heavy drinkers, talented musicians and singers. They were lots of fun, full of the ethnic background and customs that I was familiar with from childhood. The second group was comprised of my old classmates from Shanghai with their Brazilian friends who were very well off and were social drinkers but crazier in a "playboy" type of way.

I alternated between the two groups, keeping my wits and "coolness" with the second group and getting gloriously drunk with the first one, often waking up in various homes not remembering how I got there and what happened during half the night.

Life was good except for one major shock – my close friend and room-mate from Rio, Paul, was killed in an auto accident. He got drunk one night and decided for some unknown reason to drive at night on the new highway between Rio and Sao Paulo. Shortly after leaving town, he drove his

jeep at a very high speed under a parked tanker truck. He was killed instantly. This was my first experience with death of a close friend or relative. I vividly remember visiting the morgue and seeing his body. However the shock was not sufficient to get me to look at my own progressive addiction more closely.

My last Carnaval experience was in the port of Santos, about a 2 hour leisure drive from Sao Paulo. The festivities were just a small shadow of Rio's splendor but we had a great time anyway. After 3 days and 4 nights of heavy carousing and drinking, I woke up early on Ash Wednesday with a major hangover and decided to take a stroll on the deserted beach to clear my head and return to humanity. After a short stroll I came on a shack with a sign that read "Fresh oysters ~ 50 cents a ½ dozen". I stuck my throbbing head in and ordered 2 dozen. The proprietor asked me "How soon are my friends coming, because the oysters spoil in the hot sun". I curtly replied that there were no friends and the oysters are for me! He looked me up and down, shrugged his shoulders and went back into the shack.

In a few minutes he re-appeared with two trays holding 1 dozen of dinner plate size oysters, quickly followed by two more of the same. I expected oysters of the regular egg size and was shocked to see those "humongous" oysters. The owner stood there to observe what I would do. My young "macho" nature did not allow me to back down and with great difficulty I swallowed the lot. As soon as I got out of his sight I threw most of them up and didn't touch oysters for a few years.

None in our group were affluent enough to possess a car, but one of our buddies worked as a salesman and was provided with a Volkswagen for his "official" duties. On weekends we would pile into it – 3 couples with some gymnastics and contortions and speed away merrily to the seaside at the small town of Peruibe which was approximately 80 miles east of Sao Paulo or about a 90 minute drive. Prainha Beach. was situated between two other beaches and contained clean, fine white sand, clear blue-green water and an incredible panoramic view.

My then supervisor, who was an expatriated Coptic (Christian) Egyptian, was very financial savvy and purchased a small cabin there in the early 60's. We would spend the weekend there swimming in the gentle surf, lying in the sun and cooking shish-kebab in the beautiful dusk at sunset. He was also the only one who had an apartment in town all to himself. It was small, just two rooms with a small kitchen and bathroom, but nevertheless he threw some fine parties there.

The parties were all "Dutch Treat" and we would all share in the expenses, however the individual contributions were never in round figures like \$5 or \$7 but we each would receive a bill for \$6.29 or something like that with an itemized sheet showing items like toilet paper, matches, soap, detergents, etc besides the food and liquor. He would also insist in providing us the exact change as his policy was to NEVER enter into debt to anyone, financially or morally. No wonder he ended up a millionaire in his early 40's.

Another one of my close friends was an accomplished jazz drummer and astonished us in one session at a dance with a live band when he asked the drummer if he could try the drums during an intermission. It came out that his uncle was one of the top drummers in a professional band in Shanghai and taught him how to play from 5 years of age.

We also had some very talented and accomplished singers and excellent piano, guitar and accordion players in our Russian group and were always welcomed at a local Russian night club with free drinks provided as we would add to the atmosphere by singing and playing folk songs from our days at the various Russian clubs and festivities in Shanghai, Tientsin and Harbin from where most of us emigrated to Brazil. We also had some “bona-fide” Russians who defected from the Soviet Union with their parents during WWII and came to Brazil from Germany, Hungary and Poland.

I fluctuated between those two groups and “Life was Good”. On one of those visits to Sao Paulo, we had a great party at the residence of one of our Russian friends. He worked at the main power station which was a few miles out of town in a semi-deserted area. Four of us stepped outside to clear our heads when we were surrounded by a group of young thugs from the “shanty town” close by. I reached into my pocket to wrap a handkerchief around my fist, when the leader, mistaking my intent, yelled – “No! none of that. You don’t have to shoot, we will leave.” And they backed off and disappeared into the bushes.

Brazil in those years had many opportunities for entrepreneurs and some of my classmates from Shanghai did very well for themselves. One of them started by checking the US “junk” magazines for novelty items, such as playing cards with racy semi-nude gals, miscellaneous gadgetry like props for blankets at one’s feet and other small junk. He would finance a trip to New York and buy a few suit case loads, bribe them through the Brazilian customs and sell them at a street corner in Rio. He eventually progressed to getting crates of fancy playing cards shipped to him with the Ace of Spades deleted from each deck and mailed to him separately in regular envelopes. When the crates arrived at Customs he would refuse to pay the duties and the crates were confiscated and auctioned off. Of course since the card decks were worthless without the aces, he would pick up the lot for a very low price. Then he would sell the cards after replacing the aces for a big profit. He eventually progressed to getting shipments of cars that had a door removed and dumped in the jungle for his pick up. Needless to say he became a millionaire very rapidly.

Sadly his story did not end well. He wanted to escalate his “business” and was investigating diamond smuggling from Antwerp, Belgium. On one of his return flights to Rio de Janeiro from Antwerp, he felt ill after having a drink. On arrival to the airport, he expired from a heart seizure. There was no proof of malice but most of us believe that he was poisoned during the flight, you do NOT mess with the “diamond cartel” in Antwerp. He was only 28 years old.

Another classmate, noticing the interest in small plastic purses, hired a few older immigrant ladies and set up a shop in his basement for their manufacture by cutting patterns from a catalogue and stitching them. His wife would sell them at the local department stores.

With the growing local automotive industry and the governmental decrees on nationalization of content, many of the skilled mechanics and handymen started manufacturing of small car parts such a metal brackets and hose connections in their garages and basements.

One of my buddies had no patience for those activities and chose a more rapid path – he courted and married the daughter of a wealthy Brazilian rancher. However, things did not quite work out as he planned, since the father of the bride made sure he was supplied with all of his needs – great food, designer clothing, all the liquor and cigarettes that he wished, an excellent car – but NO



cash! Story had a sad ending, driving back from a wild party on a winding mountain road, he was sleeping in the back seat while she was driving. She fell asleep at the wheel and hit a tree at fast speed. He was thrown through the windshield and died immediately, she was crippled for life.

On a lighter note, another of my classmates got a job as a tour guide and would take American and British tourist up into the hills of Rio to see “Macumba” ceremonies. This was a local custom of talking to dead spirits. The ceremony is very colorful and dramatic. The performers consume a lot of a strong alcoholic drink made from sugarcane called “Cashassa” and swirl rapidly to a rapid beat of drums. They then fall on the ground and the spirits speak through their mouths,

On one of those visits he was approached by one of the “elders” and scrutinized very closely from head to foot. This startled him a little but he waved it off. The next day, while at home, he got a knock at the door and on opening saw three of the “elders” standing there. They politely asked him if they could come in and talk to him. Out of curiosity he concurred and the told him of their proposition. They were convinced that he was the “selected” channel for their long deceased leader to communicate with them. They offered to pay him well for his services. All he had to do was come to their hill once a month on a specific day and consume their drink. Being an adventurous type he agreed to try it out.

After a couple of sessions in which he got so drunk he could not remember what happened, they showed up at his door again with a small leather pouch full of semi-precious uncut stones – topazes, amethysts, etc. This went on for a couple of years and he ended up pretty wealthy, bought a penthouse apartment overlooking Copacabana beach.

I had my share of opportunities. One occasion, a rich Serbian woman, after meeting me and hearing that I was “a Kalageorgi”, pursued me with great vigor as she was determined to have “a Kalageorgi offspring”. Fortunately at that time I was already assigned to go to the General Motors Institute and escaped! She was a good person and threw a great farewell party at which one of my unknown inebriated guests defecated on a rug in one of the numerous ante-rooms. I guess he could not find the toilet and “when you gotta go ....you gotta go”

Another of my “shenanigans” involved a match one night late at the Copacabana beach where I got into a fight at a bar – capoeira versus boxing. Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian art form that combines elements of martial arts, music, and dance. It was created in Brazil by African slaves by mixing the many fighting styles from many of their tribes, sometime after the sixteenth century. Participants form a circle, and take turns either playing musical instruments, singing, or ritually sparring in pairs in the center of the circle. The sparring is marked by fluid acrobatic play, feints, takedowns, and with extensive use of leg sweeps, and kicks.

The fight did not last long, my opponent nearly took my left eye out with a kick and I bloodied his nose with a well placed punch. This sobered both of us and realizing that there really was no cause for violence, we embraced each other and went back for another drink.

## **Inserts**

### **To Chapter V – Brazil**

- Ipanema revolver incident

## Chapter VI – General Motors Institute (1961 to 1963)

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we do.” - Confucius

Notwithstanding all the parties and good times, I still worked hard and well and must have impressed my new boss for in August of 1961, with less than a year with General Motors I was offered to go to the US to attend a 2-year, 4 semester course at the General Motors Institute in Flint for a BS in Industrial Engineering with all expenses paid and a healthy living allowance.

In those days, when GM had approximately 51% of the US automotive market and selling over 4 million vehicles in the US, no expense was spared in giving me and my 3 Brazilian colleagues a royal send-off. We fly 1<sup>st</sup> class on a flight from Sao Paolo to New York. Former Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek was seated 2 rows ahead of me and champagne was served with our delicious dinner meal.

We arrived in New York on September 14 at 7:30 in the morning and were met by the GM coordinator who took us to the plush Park Sheraton hotel near Central Park. There we met the other boys – 23 in all (2 Germans, 3 Argentinos, 2 Peruvians, 4 Australians, 6 Brits, 1 Swiss, 1 Frenchman and us 4 from Brazil). After a brief orientation and breakfast we immediately proceeded to go sight-seeing. We toured Central Park, the Empire State Building, Hayden’s Planetarium, the Latin Quarter, Greenwich Village, and the Stock Exchange, a boat ride around Manhattan Island, Rockefeller Center, Radio City, Chinatown, the American Museum of Natural History and many other interesting and exciting places. We checked out the Bronx, where we automatically bunched up close due to the “tough” neighborhood and following GM’s advice stayed out of Harlem. On our final night in New York, GM took us to see a Broadway Show – “How to succeed in business without really trying”, with a statement that “this is NOT the way to go at GM!”



*General Motors Institute of Technology – Flint, MI*

We flew into Detroit the following Saturday evening and were lodged at the St. Regis hotel just across the street from the GM Building. Sunday morning we were all taken to a neighboring church and to compensate that night most of us went to an “adult” movie and a live burlesque strip tease show with terrible looking women next to our hotel.

Monday we were finally in Flint where we registered at GMI and set up our semester curriculum.

We, from South America, were amazed at the abundance of automatic vending and service equipment here. There were automatic laundries and everywhere we went we encountered vending machines for cigarettes, soft drinks, coffee, sandwiches, candy, chocolates, chewing gum, combs, tissue paper, etc and etc! Our only disappointment was the shortage of attractive, well groomed girls as the ones that we saw were mostly plainly dressed in sloppy sweat shirts, jeans and often with curlers on their heads.

I was amazed by the beauty of the autumn season, or Fall as it is called here. We were taken on a short tour to the Northern Peninsula by some of the Seniors and were astounded by the beautiful color leaves in gold, bright red, purple, blue and various other hues and shades. I have never seen such beauty in nature as I experienced there.

Academic life was relatively easy for me. Although I did not study very hard and had a lot of time for partying and sight-seeing, I carried a load of over 24 credits per semester for my entire stay, finishing with an 84.5 GPA. At that time I also purchased an entire 54-volume set of the “Great Books of the Western World” and started to expand my knowledge of western philosophy, ethics and history. At my work sessions, I would read Homer, Plato and Aristotle as well as Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Virgil.

The Junior year started with 4 academic weeks at GMI in Flint, MI alternating with 4 work weeks at the GM Truck & Bus factory in Pontiac, MI. GM paid for our tuition, books and supplies and while we were at the factory we were paid the going wage for a 5<sup>th</sup> level clerk.

My work sessions at GM Truck & Bus were like a vacation for me, more like play than work. I was greatly “over-classified” to do a 5<sup>th</sup> level clerk’s assignment which was mainly filing and fetching. On my first encounter with the plant’s student coordinator, I told him that I came to use my brain to learn GM procedures and not to do meaningless labor of a “high school dropout”. The coordinator was startled as no student ever talked back at him, however he recovered and reluctantly agreed with me. From then on I more or less chose to do what I wanted. Mainly chatting with various supervisors and senior personnel to understand what their assignments and duties were. I always got home early, went swimming at a local Y.M.C.A., relaxed and took it easy. At school with my academic load and much homework, it was seldom that I got to bed before 2 am!

As the Christmas holidays approached most of us overseas students got very depressed and homesick. Many of us, myself included, have never been away from our families and loved ones for these holidays or for any length of time. Some of the boys even seriously considered in dropping out of the program and heading home. I had my hands full in talking them out of it and this greatly alleviated my own depression.

In early 1962, Joao Goulart, who was the Vice President of Brazil, was causing nervous concerns in the US due to his initiation of national reforms, he proposed decrees expropriating oil refineries



and uncultivated land owned by foreign companies, as well as Land reform. Politically, these reforms were marked by the government's closer ties to center-left political groups, and caused conflict with the more conservative sectors of the society. I was badgered with queries of “Is Brazil going to Communism?” I told them that I had no interest in politics and “Que sera, sera” – what will be, will be.

Shortly after my return to Brazil, on the night of March 31, 1964, a military-led coup overthrew Goulart. The coup installed successive right-wing hardliners as heads of state who suspended civil rights and liberties of the Brazilian people. They abolished all political parties and replaced them with only two, the military government's party called the National Renewal Alliance Party (ARENA) and the opposition's Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). However, the MDB had no real power, and the military rule was marked by widespread disappearance, torture, and exile of many politicians, university students, writers, singers, painters, filmmakers and other artists.

João Goulart died in Mercedes, Argentina in December 6, 1976 of an alleged heart attack. Since Goulart's body was not submitted to an autopsy, his real cause of death is unknown.

In those years there was great paranoia in the US with regards to the “Red Menace” and I requested my mother to ask my uncle George not to write to me directly so that there were no “hammer and sickle” stamps or envelopes arriving in my mailbox.

My first spring was wonderful! After my years in Brazil I forgot about seasonal changes. It was very exciting to see the snow disappear, the tree to get budding leaves, the green grass appear and the flowers to blossom.

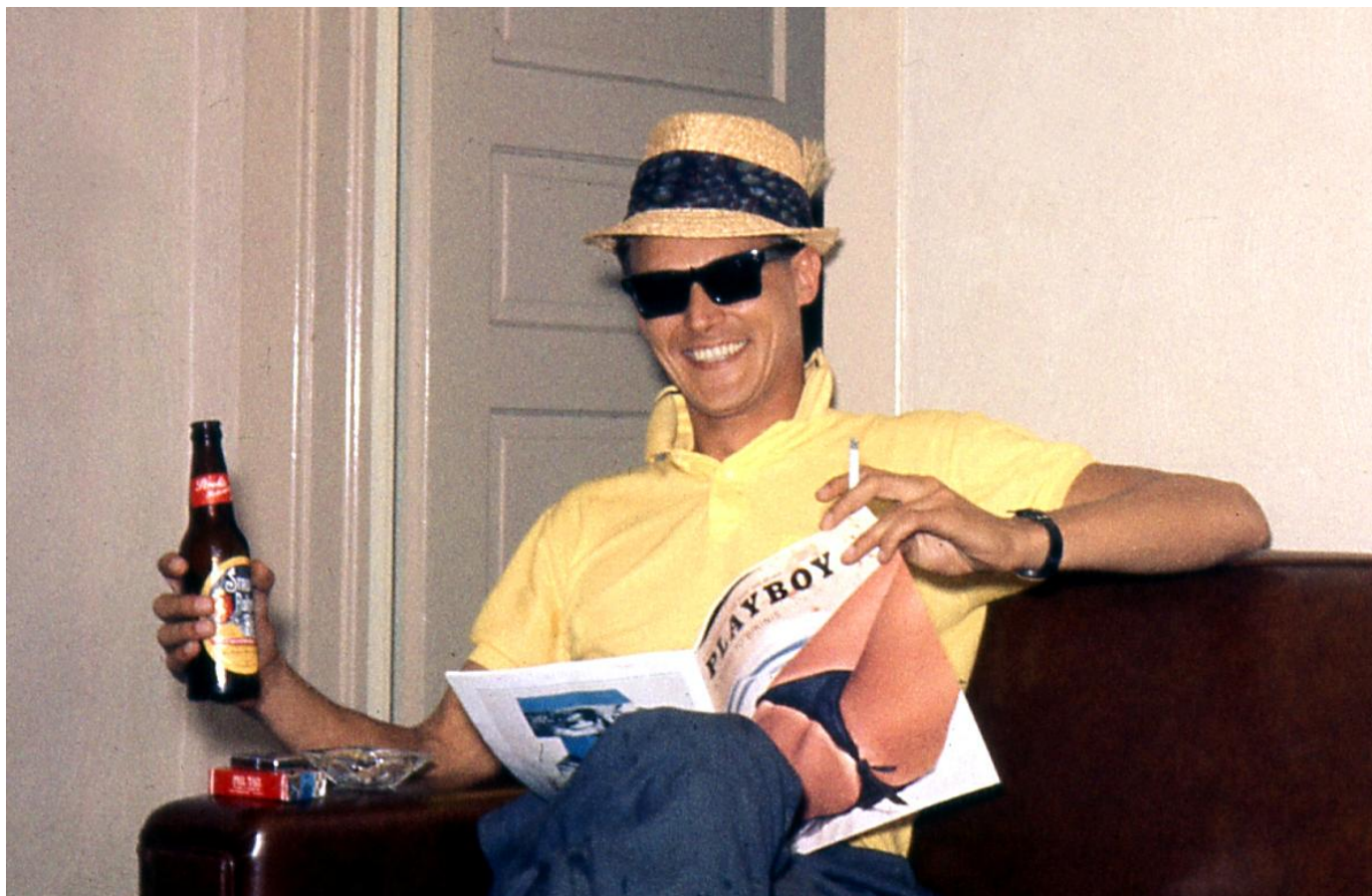
I went through my junior year with flying colors, my grades were good and I was popular enough with my fellow expatriate classmates to be elected as the president of the International Club comprising mainly of overseas students as well a handful of the “more worldly” local ones.

The membership of the International club was about 80 students and its theme was to develop better understanding between the different countries and to exchange information and knowledge between local and overseas students. The overseas members of the club acquainted themselves as much as possible with the United States by taking motor trips to the West Coast, Florida and around the Great Lakes. Information about the various foreign countries was presented in films, slide shows, social evenings and informal talks.

The club also received many requests from local schools, churches and community organizations for members to give talks about their own country and their impressions of the American way of life in the objective of promoting friendly relations and understanding between people of all countries.

There was substantial beer drinking and since American beer was lower in alcohol content than the foreign beers that we were used to, we could carry our load easily. Hard liquor was beyond our budget and not the common drink in our environment. We would often gather at “Betty Jane's” tavern, fondly known as “BJ's” right across the street from GMI's main entrance between class breaks and enjoy a few “cool ones”.

All of us, overseas students, were older than the local boys (there were no girls in GMI till about 1980s). Our ages ranged from early to mid 20's. This made us pretty popular with the locals as "beer providers". We refused to buy any hard liquor, except for ourselves.



*Study Time at GMI*

After my 1<sup>st</sup> semester, in summer of '62, I met a girl who was attending the Hurley Nursing School next door to GMI. We dated steadily and for a while my drinking was reduced substantially. Things were progressing along pretty smoothly for nearly a year until an old boyfriend showed up and proposed to marry her. That was the end of my romance as she told me she could not see me anymore.

My reaction was predictable – I got drunk. That same night I drove to a party and on the way got into a head-on collision with another car. Although my car was totaled and I physically twisted the steering wheel, fortunately no one was seriously injured. The Flint police in those days were very lenient, especially to "foreign" GMI students, and let me go even though there was an unfinished open bottle of bourbon in my car.

I took a cab to the party and rang the doorbell. The hostess opened the door and I smiled at her and said "Hi". She backed off in horror. Seeing the bewilderment on my face, she exclaimed "My God! Don't you know?" and quickly led me to a mirror. I could not see any difference until she asked me to open my mouth. Then I saw my tongue dangling on two slim shreds on each side. In my accident I must have bitten right through it and came very close to a permanent debilitating loss of speech. Guardian Angel at work again!

Two months after innumerable stitches I was on a diet of baby food.

One would think that by now I should realize that excessive drinking was making me do insane and dangerous things to myself and others. Nevertheless, in 3 months I remember speeding down deserted Flint streets at 3 in the morning, zipping past stop signs and intersections with three petrified, white-faced and sobered buddies in the car. One of them with his leg in a cast from a recent skiing accident.

On October 14, United States reconnaissance saw the missile bases being built in Cuba. The crisis ended two weeks later on October 28, 1962, when the President of the United States John F. Kennedy and the United Nations Secretary-General U Thant reached an agreement with the Soviets to dismantle the missiles in Cuba in exchange for a no-invasion agreement. Khrushchev also requested that the Jupiter and Thor missiles in Turkey be removed, the United States did not remove them immediately but did so secretly shortly after.

As Kennedy gave his first public speech on the crisis on October 22, 1962, my roommate and I were driving to a Laundromat for our weekly washing. Suddenly the sirens went off and we froze and looked at each other. The thought in our heads was – “This is IT and we are in a PRIME target area!”.

In April of 1963, I and a couple of my classmates went to Detroit to see the musical “Camelot” with Kathryn Grayson, whom I admired for years. We also visited the campus at University of Michigan, where I met two Russian exchange students. Although I understood what they said, I was greatly embarrassed by my “tongue-tiedness”. I discovered that after a year of not using the Russian language I forgot much of it. This made me determined to seriously devote myself to expand my vocabulary by learning how to read and write in Russian on my return to Brazil.

My work sessions at GM Truck & Coach were very interesting and helped me a lot by rounding out my knowledge of Automotive Manufacturing. As mentioned earlier, I had full control of my work schedule and rotated my activities to really get an “insider’s view” and exposure to the different techniques and rules of major departments.

One of my most interesting work assignments was in the Purchasing department. The Buyer to whom I was assigned always had a collection of vendors waiting for him outside his office and prior to each lunch period he would ask me what food did I fancy. Then he would stick his head out and call a name telling the “lucky” vendor that he was selected to take us out for lunch. Occasionally these lunches, which always included some martinis, would extend to an outing of golf. When I asked my mentor how does he get away with so much leisure time he looked at and said – “Kid, if the boss wants a pink suitcase with purple polka dots and he wants it Pronto, I can get it for him – Pronto at a good price!”. “I provide and he leaves me alone – simple – capich?”

Another time I spend with manufacturing cost analysis, this was a small group that devoted themselves to monitoring that assemblies, parts and accessories were designed so as to provide minimal expenditures of material and/or labor. For example if a sub-assembly can be held together with 3 bolts instead of 4, they would bring this to the attention of the Product Engineering people. Safety, of course, was always considered but “over-engineering” was reduced for cost savings. This group also made sure that customers, particularly on fleet sales, were not sold commercial vehicles (trucks) that were of a substantial higher capacity than that what was required for the customers’ purposes.

On another occasion, I was asked by a manager in the Material Control department to periodically visit an individual sitting in an office along the wall. I strolled over and saw an older man sitting at an empty desk. He was delighted to see me and we chatted for a while about general subjects. Afterwards I asked the manager what that was about and he shared with me that this person was a former supervisor that was demoted from his job which was given to a younger individual but kept on the payroll since he was approaching the retirement age.

Detroit in the early '60's was a very different city from today. Downtown had many stores, nightclubs, restaurants and bars. We, students, would often pile into our cars and go there for a night out. One time, with one of the English boys driving, we swung out on West Grand Boulevard going down the wrong side of the street. On seeing a wall of headlights facing us we weaved onto the grassy central partition and immediately saw a red flashing light pull up behind us.

The police officer told us all to get out and looked us over. After a short conversation he told us to get back in and follow him to the precinct station, which we did. On arrival, we were surprised by the friendliness of the sergeant who told us that he recognized the accents and it brought memories of when he was stationed "Over There" in Britain during WWII. He told us to get some coffee and head on home staying on the "right side" of the road!

In June, I drove with a couple of buddies to Chicago where we spent two days. We did a lot of walking since parking was very difficult to find and visited various museums including one that had an authentic WWII German U-boat that we could enter and tour. We also took a helicopter ride over the city and certainly visited the original Playboy club. We did not encounter any Chicago gangsters although we kept a wary eye for them.

At summer break it was traditional for the overseas students to form car teams and drive cross country for a couple of weeks either to the West coast or Florida. Normally we would have a fifteen day break at school but this particular summer GMI was making a major schedule shift to a 6-week school/work session schedule and we were told that we had to take our 2-weeks of our work session which would reduce our income. Everyone howled on this unfairness and was generally very upset but accepted this decision. Everyone, with one exception – me. With my grandiose and arrogant attitude I was determined to get to the West coast anyway but kept my plans to myself, sharing my secret only with one very close room-mate who tried his best to talk me out of it.

In early June, the day before my departure, I was invited to a water skiing party. I arrived in my usual status – "half crooked". After a couple of clumsy attempts I finally got up on my skis and had a good but somewhat dizzy run. Near the end I lost my balance and took a bad spill, fracturing the same two ribs again.

The next morning, with my waist again tightly wrapped in elastic bandage and my discomfort fogged over with alcohol, I was on a Greyhound bus heading West to California!

I arrived 2-1/2 days later on a Monday and stayed a week till Friday early morning so that I could get to class the following Monday. My visit was brief but boisterous. I was met by my Russian friends from Sao Paulo, Brazil and it was non-stop party time again.



At the end of my visit I met the daughter of a childhood friend of my father (*see page 2*) and fell in love.

When I returned, after missing a week of classes, I tried to nonchalantly enter my “Great Ideas of the Western World” class. As I tried to show up non-conspicuously, I was met with a “standing ovation”. The teacher smiled and told me that I had to report to the Dean’s office before he could accept me in his class. I marched off to the Dean’s office where he told me with a “stone face” to sit at a desk and write out a full report on my prodigal activities.

After some consideration, I wrote the following – *“I t is my belief that due to my exceptional heavy academic load and my relatively high performance, I deserved some time off. Being financially limited, I could not afford to miss a week from work with no pay. Realizing that if I went through the proper channels my request would be denied, I took the responsibility on myself after advising a colleague (unnamed) where I was going so he would inform the proper parties in case of an emergency. I respectfully request to be re-admitted into my studies so that I can graduate with my class”.*

I signed and submitted this note to the Dean. He took it without a word and went into his office. Through the glass window I could see him making a couple of phone calls. The first one was somewhat agitating with his usually blank face coloring slightly. The second call was very differential and short with much nodding of his head. He made me sit there for nearly an hour until he came out and curtly told me to return to my class. This was the closest that I came to being sent home and possibly fired from an employment. As I later discovered, only the direct intervention of the GMOO Personnel Director saved me. However this erratic behavior was a “black mark” on my record for a long time and could have been the cause of early promotion losses.

Graduation was on July 26, 1993. I ended up with a total of 100 credits or nearly 30% higher than the best overseas student in a 2-year period. My GPA was 84.5, mainly due to my poor performance in Basic Electronics which I “sloshed over” due to my California adventure.

Final couple of weeks were spent in assisting the newly arrived group of Overseas Students get their bearings in Flint. Find lodgings for them, show them around, introduce them to our friends in Flint and the neighboring areas and generally be “the big knowledgeable brothers” to this new group of neophytes.

Some of us also needed to dispose of our old cars, a few of them being in a pretty poor condition. I remember one of my buddies, after gleefully stating he was going to dump his “clunker” on some poor soul, pleading for 20 minutes on the phone to some elderly potential buyer why she should NOT buy his car. When we laughed at him, he told us he could not do that and have a clear conscience – he was obviously not going to make to the “upper echelons” of GM management!

Most of the last semester was a “breeze” with much partying, socializing and saying goodbye to dear friends, both from the US as well as from abroad. Addresses were exchanged and promises made to keep in contact – some of us did, even till today.

GENERAL MOTORS INSTITUTE-FLINT, MICHIGAN  
PERMANENT RECORD

44042

Kalageorgi, Leo  
GMC Truck & Coach - Pontiac

High School-Name \_\_\_\_\_  
-City & State \_\_\_\_\_  
-Date Graduated \_\_\_\_\_ Class Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
Birthdate 9-9-35  
Address 208/44 Rua Tagipuru, Perdizes, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
Parent or Guardian Catherine Kalageorgi

ENTERED 10-2-61 4 YR. DIPLOMA \_\_\_\_\_ DEGREE \_\_\_\_\_  
WITHDREW \_\_\_\_\_ 4 YR. OPTION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE AWARDED \_\_\_\_\_  
RE-ENTERED \_\_\_\_\_ 2 YR. GRADE AVE 84.5  
3rd & 4th Yr. Certificate 4 YR. RANK \_\_\_\_\_  
7-26-63 2 YR. TOTAL CREDITS 100

Transferred Credit From \_\_\_\_\_

SYMBOL	DESCRIPTIVE TITLE	CLOCK		CREDIT	GRADE	SYMBOL	DESCRIPTIVE TITLE	CLOCK		CREDIT	GRADE
		HR	LAB					HR	LAB		
FIRST SEMESTER 1961-62 (24 CR)						44042 1-62 (24 CR)					
B-17	Anal. Geom. & Calculus I	5	1	5	87	H 41	PSYCHOL IN INDUS	3	0	3	92
F-27	Speech	2	2	3	84	G 43	PROB IN INDUS PUR	3	0	3	95
G-47	Principles of Costing	2	3	3	95	H 46	BUS FLUCT ANAL	3	0	3	83
H-32	Principles of Econ.	3	0	3	81	H 61	COMP SOC ECON SYS	3	0	3	93
H-60	Reading Improvement	0	2	0	Cr.	N 33	ENGR ECONOMY I	3	0	3	80
L-12	Mfg. Processes	4	0	4	84	M 45	MANAGEMENT SEMINAR	3	0	3	87
M-20	Industrial Mgmt.	3	0	3	93	F 46	MASTERPCS OF LIT	3	0	3	88
N-34	Methods Analysis	1	3	2	78	F 60	ADV PUB SPEAKING	3	0	3	89
F-32	Plant Coordination Report	-	-	1	Cr.	44042 2-62 (23 CR)					
SECOND SEMESTER 1961-62 (23 CR)						E-40	Basic Electronics	2	3	0	67
A-60	The Automobile	3	0	3	94	G-44	Business Law I	3	0	3	72
B-42	Statistical Analysis	4	0	4	78	H-63	Great Ideas of the Modern World	3	0	3	92
F-44	Conference Speaking	3	0	3	90	H-64	Contemporary Social Problems	3	0	3	88
G-46	Sys. Anal. & Data Proc.	3	0	3	92	M-42	Union-Management Relations	3	0	3	70
H-20	Prin. of Psychology	3	0	3	92	N-40	Plant Layout & Material Handling	3	2	4	77
H-13	Prin. of Sociology	3	0	3	85	P-49	Tool Design	2	2	3	70
M-32	Pers. Administration	3	0	3	90	R-31	Salesmanship	3	0	3	78
N-44	Prod. Plan. & Control	3	0	3	70	W-41	Senior Lectures	1	0	1	90
R-41	Traffic	3	0	3	90						
F-33	Plant Coordination Report	-	-	1	Cr.						

*My Final GMI Report*

During my two years at GMI, I got a very productive and educational exposure to other cultures. Our small group of General Motors Overseas Operations (GMOO) students comprised of young men from many different countries of the Western world – England, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, South Africa, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico and Brazil.

Although they all spoke excellent English and dressed alike, each had a different “cultural flavor” and mannerism.

The “Aussies” were the most gregarious, full of fun and “frontier attitude”, because Australian beer is far more potent than the US version with a higher alcohol content, they could drink anyone under the table and still have a relatively clear head. They were usually the “designated” drivers at party events.

The Germans were very stolid and correct, always wore dress shirts, ties and jackets to class and were often mistaken by freshmen for teachers. One of them, at our boarding house, got fed up with all the kidding by some local students after watching the then-popular TV series “Combat” and “Hogan’s Heroes” in which there were many scenes of German troops either being slaughtered or made fun off, offered to take one the whole group either individually or collectively.

The Latin Americans found a common stream among them although the Brazilians spoke Portuguese while the others spoke Spanish, and had many fun parties with music, songs and dancing. However they were the ones that were most bothered by snow or “the white s—t” – “merda blanca” as they called it when they were digging their cars out of a heavy snowfall to get to school.

The “Brits” taught us a lot of “pub” songs and educated us in the “Cockney” dialect of London. One of them, who was rather short (~ 5 foot), and very “baby-faced” with ruddy cheeks, had a particular problem – he could not buy beer without an I.D. It was a while before he got his Michigan Driver’s License and since he was 25 years old, the City of Flint considered him “over-aged” for a “Drinking Permit” card.

The French, scandalized the neighborhood by having some “black” girls visiting their house overnight, and were very casual in skipping classes as they already had their engineering degrees and could pass the final exams very easily without “cracking” a book.

One of the Brazilians, prior to arrival and being somewhat apprehensive of the hard study, arrived with a metal “contraption” that he bought through a “mail order” from the US to assist his brain waves to absorb knowledge. This was an aluminum head set with many ribs that one put on the head while doing homework! The salesman must have been laughing all the way to the bank.

The lad from Portugal belonged to a wealthy fish-canning family and periodically received shipments from home of various canned fish delicacies and assorted sardines which he often shared with me.

The Scandinavians were also very gregarious and friendly and one of them had a gorgeous blonde wife who was always a center of attraction in our parties.

One of the Swiss boys married the only daughter of a local millionaire and the others, with their “banking” knowledge saved their money for a return tour of the US on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their graduation from GMI.



*“At the Gates of Learning”*



Although, as mentioned in the earlier chapters, I grew up in a mixed international community in Shanghai, this exposure further helped me a lot in my future dealings with “natives” during my Overseas Assignments with GM. It also provided me with a valuable and socially pleasant network worldwide as I would run into my colleagues often in other parts of the world in my future International Staff Personnel (ISP) assignments. I still correspond with some of them even today.

At the graduation dinner party in New York, our guest speaker was James M. Roche, the GM Executive Vice President for Finance and a Board Member. I, as the President of the Overseas Student Group, was chosen to respond to his speech for the graduated students. The speech went well and I had the occasion to “rub shoulders” with several top executives including the Director of Personnel, who shared with me on how close I came to get expelled and shipped home for my California escapade

A few years later on June 1, 1965, when I was working in Fremont, James Roche was elected as the Chairman of the Board of General Motors. On a whim I wrote to him congratulating his election/promotion referring to our meeting in New York. Much to my surprise I got a swift reply stating that he remembered me well and thanked me for my good wishes. *Time* magazine called "Roche a folksy sort who never shows his temper and whose greatest failing, according to companions and competitors alike, is that 'he may be too much of a gentleman.'

I casually left that letter on my desk for view to my constantly curious fellow workers who did not quite know how to take me.



*My Graduation photograph*



After graduation I was requested to stay an additional 6 weeks at the New York Head Office for specialized training with the Supply Department. During that time I more or less behaved myself and gained some points with the Executive Staff. With my usual manner, I was never intimidated by all of the fancy offices and would regularly pop in to see top executives, without appointments, often to their amusement at my “brashness” and to the horror and annoyance of the lower management and secretarial staff.

I took advantage of my extended stay to look up an old classmate of my grandfather from the Suvorov Cadet Academy, retired General from the Imperial Russian Army. This venerable gentleman and his wife were in their late 70's. They lived in a small apartment tastefully furnished in the old style with numerous photographs of Tsar Nicolas II and the Imperial family on all of the walls. Dinner went well until I mentioned proudly that I am a lover of Russian literature and just completed reading Leo Tolstoy's “War and Peace”. At that moment the elderly gentleman's face turned purple, he struck his fist on the table and yelled “That Revolutionary! All the trouble started with him and his ideas!” I was aghast and after that quickly changed the subject and told him about my grandfather's life in Brazil.

During that period, I more or less behaved myself and was easy on the liquor, primarily because I was in love again. During my California visit, I met Irene, a Russian girl who was the daughter of my father's childhood friend (see page 2) and ran up my hotel telephone bill with long distance phone calls from New York to San Francisco, culminating with a marriage proposal after being fortified with six vodka martinis (stirred, not shaken).

She came over with her mother to visit me in New York and we spent a couple of weeks touring Greenwich Village every night, listening to the “beat” singers and bards and getting to know each other. In those days it was not uncommon to see and hear Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and others perform live in some of the smaller coffee houses.

## **Inserts**

### **Chapter VI – GMI**

Find class photo

## Chapter VII – Return to Sao Paulo (1963 to 1964)

“You can't do without philosophy, since everything has its hidden meaning which we must know” - Gorky

Shortly after my return to Sao Paulo, my dearly beloved grandfather, Nicolai Grigorievich, passed away on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1963 he was only 75 years old. To this day I miss him very much, I remember as child, I after cuddled on his lap while he gently scratched my head with his finger tips, in his soft voice telling me tales of this little goat that was wandering through my golden curly locks looking for his mother after mischievously wandering away from home.

I also have deep regrets that I did not spend more time with him. In our too-short encounters he shared many stories with me of his years as a young officer, imperial courier and page at Tsar Nicolas II's Winter Palace and the “Tsarskoye Selo” palace (now called Pushkino) outside St.Petersburg.

He and his fellow officers would wait till the Tsar's four teenage daughters, the Imperial Princesses would go on their daily afternoon stroll in the palace garden, and line-up at attention in their fine imperial uniforms, giving them a sharp salute as they passed. The Princesses would acknowledge them with a slight nod and sparkling smiles. Then after they have passed, the young men would run behind the bushes and line up again further up the known path and repeat their salute much to the amusement of the young ladies. This would go on for the entire stroll as etiquette forbid the young officers to speak to the Imperial Highnesses.

On another occasion, he was hurrying down to hallway of the palace to the main entrance with an important task to perform, when a ball rolled to his feet. He looked around and there was to Tsetsrevich (Crown Prince) Alexis standing looking at him. He picked up the ball and gently tossed it to the Prince. His Imperial Highness, who was about 5 years old at that time, thought that was fun and tossed it back thus starting a “catch-the-ball” game. Grandfather was devastated, he was already late on his mission and here he was unable to continue on his way without an Imperial release. Fortunately at that moment, the Emperor stepped out of his study and saw the scene. He chuckled and called for the Prince to throw the ball to him, thus releasing my grandfather to continue on his journey.

He also shared with me his disturbing and uneasy meeting with Rasputin when he had to share the Imperial rail car with him on one of his trips. Rasputin's hypnotic eyes and arrogant grin nearly provoked him to reach for his sword and to avoid killing the scoundrel and causing a disaster; he left the cabin and stood at the exit till arrival at his destination. Rasputin prophesized that a year after his death imperial Russia would cease to exist – he was right! Tsar Nicolas II abdicated exactly one year after Rasputin's murder.

I remember when in late 1956, the Broadway success show – “Anastasia” was released as an Oscar-winning movie with Yul Brynner and Ingrid Bergman in the starring roles. I thought my grandfather would enjoy the movie and took him to see it. The elderly gentleman was highly irritated by the movie – the uniforms were all wrong, the palace scenes were all wrong and mainly Ingrid Bergman did NOT look like the Grand Duchess Anastasia at all. He got so angry that he made us leave before the end and did not speak to me for a couple of weeks! I suspect that he had a secret “crush” on the young princess who was very pretty.



*Grandfather in his uniform on graduation from the Officer/Page Academy - 1908*

Less than three months after my return to Sao Paulo, Irene and her father flew down and we were married on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1963 in a Russian Orthodox Church ceremony. We rented a small 2-room apartment not far from my mother's house in the Perdizes area of Sao Paulo.

Our marriage went well in the initial years. I tried to keep my drinking under control and introduced Irene to my friends. We really did not have a "honeymoon" but went out quite often to some good restaurants and clubs. Also one of my friends had a small house on the beach at the Peruipe

Beach area, approximately an hour and a half drive from Sao Paulo and we went there for a long weekend.

In August of 1964 Irene got pregnant. It was a joyful event until she was diagnosed with an Rh factor incompatibility with my blood type which could result in the loss of our first-born and eliminate the possibility of having any further children.

This was a major shock and in November we decided that for better medical care she should return to the US and I would follow later. I put her on a plane to San Francisco and resumed a “bachelor’s life” for the next 4 months until I could obtain a visitor’s visa to join her in the US.

During this period, I gradually drifted to my former boisterous life style, working hard during the week but getting completely plastered nearly every weekend. In Brazil, being south of the equator, it was summer time and I spent many days at the beach at Peruipe with my friends.

Getting ready for my trip to the US, I sold all of our furniture and appliances to avoid the moving expenses and so had money to burn or party up. One episode earned me another night in jail for getting into a bar fight. Another time I woke up in an alley with my wallet stolen, fortunately with no physical harm except a major hangover – “Guardian Angel” again.

One party was held at an isolated location in the hills north of Sao Paulo. In the middle of the night I decided to stroll out to clear my head a little and in the poorly lit area was confronted by a group of “locals” who were looking for some “gringo” to mug. There were about 5 of them and I realized I was in trouble. I reached in my pocket to wrap a handkerchief with some coins in my fist, when one of my would-be assailants got spooked as he thought I was reaching for a gun. “OK!” he said, “We do not want any of that – just let us go”. I nodded and they took off, me too in the opposite direction!

At work things went well, I continued working in the Inventory Control Department which was a key center of the analysis of the plant’s performance since it involved the study, planning and maintenance of the plant’s 3 main factors – monthly Sales, Production and Finished Product Inventory status and forecast, both short (3 months) and long (18 months) ranges. I prepared data for monthly presentations to the plant’s top executives – Plant Manager, Works Manager, Treasurer, Comptroller, Sales and Supply Managers and the Personnel Director. Here I was just barely 25 years old and in full visibility to the top Executive Staff of the Company.

I discussed my pending departure from Brazil with my manager. He was extremely understanding and, after some consultation with the Head Office in New York, told me that I did not have to resign from GM, after my GMI education and on-the-job experience, I was too valuable an employee to lose, so he had arranged a transfer for me to the GM operation at a newly constructed plant in Fremont, CA just an hour’s drive from San Francisco. I was elated, fortune smiled at me again!

I finally obtained my Brazilian exit passport on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1964 and received a US Non-Immigrant entry visa from the US Consulate on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1965. I left Sao Paulo on a VARIG flight to Los Angeles, CA on March 14<sup>th</sup> and obtained my 4<sup>th</sup> Equator Crossing certificate signed by King Neptune.



An interesting note about that flight. In those “hey-days” of GM’s power and wealth, when they had over 54% of the world automobile & truck market, they flew us “prospective executives” in 1<sup>st</sup> class. Thus we had the pleasure of being in the same cabin with Jose Kubitchek who was the President of Brazil from 1956 to 1961. His term was marked by relative economic prosperity and political stability, and he was most known by the construction of the new capital of Brazil, Brasilia, in the middle of the Amazon jungle. He was on his way to New York for a session of the United Nations.

Being somewhat shy in those days, I did not approach him, although he did smile at me. The flight was rather uneventful and I dozed for the major part of it. In New York it wasn’t long before I transferred to my flight to San Francisco and was on my way to my new life in “America”.

## Chapter VIII – San Francisco, USA (1965 to 1971)

“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost. That is where they should be. Now put foundations under them” – Henry David Thoreau

I arrived in San Francisco, California on March 14, 1965. Three days later on March 17<sup>th</sup>, our first son, Igor was born on Wednesday at 4:07 pm. Although he was 8.5 lbs and 21” long he spent two seemingly endless weeks in an incubator fighting for his life before our eyes because of the incompatibility of the Rh factor in our blood. Seeing him today at 6’- 4” tall and weighing over 200 lbs makes it hard to believe that it ever happened.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, I drove up to Fremont, which is approximately 54 miles north of San Francisco over the Bay Bridge and got hired in as an engineer at the newly built General Motors Buick/Olds/Pontiac factory (BOP). I was assigned to the Work Standards and Method Engineering Department. My first job was as a Work Standards Analyst in the Hard Trim Assembly Department where components such as the steering column, instrument panel, main wiring harness, floor consoles and heater/air-conditioning units as well as all of the interior trim was installed. The job involved in time study of the different operations, take note of inefficiencies such as excessive walking, fetching stock and tools and other extraneous efforts on the part of the line or sub-assembly worker. It also covered “line-balancing” that is spreading the labor as evenly as possible and looking into “grievances” filed by the UAW representative on complaints from workers on excessive and/or hazardous individual workloads.

Working at GMAD Fremont was very rewarding and pleasant. The manager was a kindly older man who was a year from retirement. He welcomed me to the department and made sure that I felt at home. The rest of our team also met me with much friendship and support. I learned a lot about “real responsibility” when I wrote my first report on a meeting which was going to Head Quarters. Before mailing it I brought it to my supervisor and asked him if he needed to approve it, his reply was – “Why, are there any errors or missed information?” I stammered “No”. “Then send it on he said”. Thus I learned that we are always responsible for our behavior and do not blame mistakes on others.

After working there for 8 months, in early December, the manager called me into his office and said – “Young man. Do you realize that you still did not take your annual paid vacation and have a week left over from last year? I want you out of here starting tomorrow and not see you till next year! Merry Christmas”

I enjoyed my new job very much, it was enjoyable to interface with the line workers and foremen. There was a lot of good humor and harmless pranks to relieve the monotony of the endlessly moving conveyors and I really learned a lot of “people skills” by chatting with the workmen who very often were very educated and knowledgeable. Many were “drop-outs” from a year or so of college, Vietnam vets and various “hippie” types. We rented a small apartment near Golden Gate Park. Neither I nor Irene wanted to move to Fremont away from the San Francisco social and cultural life and I did not mind the one hour commute since it gave me time to prepare for my job as well as unwind at the end of the day. The traffic was very heavy but always in the opposite direction so that worked out very well for me.



*"King of the Hill" – Life was good, I was young, healthy and "Full of P--- and Vinegar"*

That summer, I attended the first annual company picnic. I went alone since Irene did not care for that kind of activities and felt I would have a better time without her by getting to know my working colleagues better. There was a lot of beer flowing and, deciding that I should release my inner tensions and inhibitions with strangers, I consumed a large amount. That, plus some exceptionally good hands in a couple of poker games, decided for me that after the picnic was over, I should make it a night and go see the fabulous bust of "Carol Doda" at a famous topless go-go joint on North Beach in San Francisco. After which, fully primed, I decided to visit some of my more rowdy Russian friends for partying, booze and "camaraderie".

I remember driving down deserted San Francisco streets with my friends whooping and hollering in the car with one of the more daring girls sitting on the hood of my vehicle cheering us on. The ride culminated when I ran a stop sign and got hit broadside by a Volkswagen. Fortunately no one was seriously hurt but I had a few minutes of panic because I could not see from my left eye and as I placed my hand on it I felt a thick flow of blood. I was sure that I lost an eye, however at the emergency center of the hospital, it was discovered that a small chip of glass hit a vein right above my eye and my eye was not damaged.

The following morning I had a heart-to-heart talk with my father-in-law whom I respected and loved very much. That dignified, knowledgeable elder gentleman, calmly and logically explained to me that I was on the road to self destruction. It was obvious that my consumption of alcohol was becoming uncontrollable and he offered his support for me to enter treatment. I went to see a doctor, supposedly knowledgeable in these matters and he prescribed on Valium which I took for a period of approximately a month.

For a period of nearly 7 years I did not touch a drop of alcohol. At first it was not easy, for in the Russian culture there is a lot of social drinking. I was constantly exposed to a lot of alcohol being consumed at family dinners, parties, festivities and other social functions, but it got easier as time went by and was even enjoyable to be the only clear-headed one in the crowd and watch all the weird and humorous things that people do when they are slightly intoxicated and let their

inhibitions go. I also became the reserve “sober driver” in case someone was too impaired to drive and needed to be taken home. I also gained a lot of self-confidence and respect.

Early that fall I learned what it was “working the American way”. At that time each year the automotive assembly plants would go a “Model Change Over”. This involved building out that year’s models and completely inventorying and emptying the plant, doing a thorough clean-up and starting the installation of equipment for the new models. This included conveyor re-routing, re-arrangements of work stations and material holding areas and other main reworks. The assembly line also had to be completely re-balanced for the new operations.

We worked continuously 6 days a week for 10 to 12 hours each day for over a month. In addition to that, after finding out that GM would pay for my tuition and books, I signed up in a local University for night classes to get my Bachelor of Science (BS) in Mechanical Engineering. This involved three nights a week of classes plus home study and assignments for 2 years. Between work and school I just had time to eat and sleep devoting Sundays to family time with our son. As a result of this hectic pace, and possibly my earlier affliction to alcohol, I was diagnosed with a peptic ulcer. This put me on a special diet, including drinking half & half instead of milk. My ulcer was cured but I gained 25 lbs to my heaviest weight of 230 lbs in my birthday suit!

Shortly, after obtaining my “Green Card” as a permanent resident, I initiated the documentation for an entry visa for Mother, my step-father Harry and the rest of the family. This was a long process because Harry dug his heels and resisted all moves that would put him in debt to me. He was also estranged from his daughter who resided in Oakland, California, close to us and would not write to her. She in turn was angry with him for abandoning her with her mother when she was still a baby. I did a lot of “shuttle diplomacy” but to no avail.

About that time I found a few of my former Shanghai classmates and friends who have settled in the Bay Area. It was interesting to compare notes of our experiences since we left China and gossip about our mutual friends who were scattered throughout the globe. Some of them progressed to prestigious PhD degrees, some ended in prison and others died some tragically in accidents.

In March of 1966, we moved to a larger apartment on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, just a short walk from my father-in-law’s Russian Bookstore “Znanie”. This was convenient since Irene could help out at the bookstore which gave her some social outlet while I was putting long hours at the factory. My in-laws paid for a Russian speaking nanny who took care of our son and introduced him to Russian fables and fairy tales which he loved and memorized till to-day.

Life at 318 – 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue was good, the boys were growing up healthy and I got to meet many of Irene’s childhood friends, some of which I knew from Shanghai. We had many friendly house parties in a mixed “Russian-American” style – that is with semi formal many course Russian style dinners, American cocktails in lieu of Russian manner of straight vodka toasts (although we had a few of those), lots of dancing to mostly American music, some guitar-playing and singing of old Russian songs. The spoken language was generally a mixture of Russian and English. Although most of our friends were descendents of the “White Russian” émigrés who ended here in the US because of the Russian Revolution, there was a lot of interest in the Soviet Union and quite a bit of empathy for its development. Nevertheless most were rather intimidated to go there for a visit.



When we settled at our new home on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, it was decided by a vote of 3 against 1 to get a house pet. I reluctantly agreed on a kitten as long as it was –

1. Male with no expansion of progeny
2. Well-behaved and litter-trained
3. Cute and cuddly.

I was successful on #3, with time and much cleanup we finally obtained #2 and assured of #1 by Irene, we gave him the very manly name of “Iliyah” in honor of Iliyah Murometz, a very powerful Russian warrior from folklore.

Everything went fine and Iliyah became very attached to me. He was a “Maine Coon”, grew big and strong and very fluffy and I accused the family of overfeeding him since he was getting very large. One night, he seemed more than usually upset and mewed a lot. He finally climbed up on my chest as I lay in bed and delivered 2 kittens right there! So much for kitten sex identification and it was a mystery for a long time how Iliyah managed to get “in a family way”, since we never let her out. This mystery was solved later, when I stepped into our bedroom one warm summer day and saw Iliyah laying on the sill holding paws with a large tomcat through the window that was open a crack. I guess, at some time, we must have left the crack open a little too wide.



*Our home at 318 – 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Francisco also my 1<sup>st</sup> newly purchased absolutely new car*

Also that summer, I experienced an excruciating pain in my side in the middle of the night and was driven to the hospital by Irene with a very frightened Igor at my side. It was immediately diagnosed with an enlarged kidney stone and that night I went into surgery to pass it. Everything went well but on waking up post-surgery and still groggy from the anesthesia, I was startled to see a dark hooded figure entering my room. Scared the daylights out of me – I thought “This is it! Death has come to claim my soul”. It came out that the famous Russian Archbishop “Father Ivan”, was making his nightly rounds visiting the Russian Orthodox people who were in hospitals and prisons. He blessed me said a short prayer and offer me a bowl of holy water to drink from. In my ignorance I stuck my fingers in thinking it was for washing my face. The accompanying deacon hissed at me loudly – “Drink it! Drink it!” Much to my embarrassment I corrected my error and they left.

In late November of 1966, Irene discovered she was pregnant again. This caused a lot of concern since our Rh incompatibility was expected to put even a higher strain on the next child than on the first. We went through another very anxious and stressful months as her pregnancy progressed and on our pediatrician’s advice induced an early delivery in late May.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1967 at 3:15 pm, our second son, Andrei was born. He was 20” long and weighed 8 lbs., however like his brother, he spent 2 anxious weeks in an incubator fighting for his life. But after that stressful and emotional period, we all relaxed and were more apt to attend social functions and parties, and since I quit drinking my wife enjoyed those outing much more since she did not have to worry about my behavior. Life was good in general and although I still carried a load with my work and night classes, I still found time to spend with my boys taking them out to parks, strolls and short trips.



*Hard at work in GMAD Fremont – Solving GM's problems*

Earlier that year consumer activist Ralph Nader published the book *Unsafe at Any Speed*, which criticized the GM-built *Corvair* as being unsafe. Public opinion about automobile companies was changing from praise for producing cars which allowed freedom and mobility to dissatisfaction due to poor quality and insufficient safety features.

In August of that year, I was promoted to a newly introduced job – Motor Vehicles Safety Standards (MVSS) engineer. This was initiated by Ralph Nader's campaign with the US Congress to improve the safety features of automobiles and trucks. My job involved the monitoring and assurance that the new Federal Safety Standards would be followed in the assembly and installation of the Steering Column and Gear Assembly, Vehicle Glass Assemblies, Seat Assemblies, Instrument Panel and Floor Consoles Assemblies, Exterior Lighting and the Heating and Air Conditioning Systems. Since all of these systems were assembled in the Hard Trim department, I knew them well and just walked around puffing my cheeks and looking important.

However, one morning as I came to work, I was told by a colleague that my boss wanted me to meet him in the Body Shop. I was puzzled since I hardly ever went there in my entire employment at GM Fremont and went looking for him.

I found him standing in a circle of the plant's top managers looking at a new car Dashboard and Floor Panel Assembly. I walked up to him and stood silently looking at the unfamiliar object. In a minute or so, the plant manager looked at me and said – "Well, what do you think? Is it a go?". Not having a foggiest notion on what he was talking about, I quickly replied – "I am not fully complete with my analysis, sir. I will let you know shortly". He nodded his head, spun on his heels and in parting told me he expected a full report in an hour in his office.

After everyone left, I asked the area's foreman what was that all about. He told me that the circumference of the three bolt holes in the dash board metal panel were  $\frac{1}{4}$  "off center. It was then that I realized that my Safety Systems responsibilities covered practically the entire plant and I had a lot of catching up to do on my knowledge of how an entire car body is assembled. I bluffed this one through and reported in time that that discrepancy was acceptable and to my fortune did not ever hear of any malfunctions down the line of the steering column assembly. But, from then on I daily toured the plant and checked drawings and specifications to enhance my knowledge of total vehicle assembly operations. This helped me a lot in my future career with GM.

I applied for and received my US citizenship on March of 1968 and proudly wrote to my mother that now I am a fully acknowledged "Americanetz". I even got a draft card classified as 5A, meaning I was fully healthy to serve in the military but had a family with children and would only be called on in a full wartime emergency. Since the Vietnam war was in full swing at that time, there was some concern in the family and I seriously considered at that time of joining the marines but got talked out of it by my father-in-law who with many others greatly disapproved of that war which was considered immoral and incorrect by a large percentage of the American population.

There were many student demonstrations and since we lived close to two famous universities – the University of California in Berkeley and Stanford University in Palo Alto as well as the famous Haight/Ashbury area in San Francisco, we saw a lot of them. Many of them took place in the San Francisco Park which was just a 10-minute walk from our residence





*Anti Vietnam Demonstration in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco CA*

These were historic days, the Vietnam war was at its worst, with body bags arriving daily with our young boys, gruesome images of two anti-war activists who set themselves on fire in November 1965 provided iconic images of how strongly some people felt that the war was immoral. On October 15, 1969, hundreds of thousands of people took part in National Moratorium anti-war demonstrations across the United States; the demonstrations prompted many workers to call in sick from their jobs and adolescents nationwide engaged in truancy from school.

During the Vietnam War period, we had a regular tradition with Irene's father, Semon Ivanovich. Each evening after returning from work and just before dinner, he and I would go to his study and watch Walter Cronkite and Eric Severeid on the Evening TV News. After watching those two great journalists we would discuss the "happenings" and the sad process of that costly war.

Semon was a very gentle, educated and very knowledgeable man, he was a young officer in the Tsar's White Army during the Russian Revolution, fresh out of college with a degree in "Mountain Mining Engineering". He was like a father to me, one that I never had and I loved him dearly. He was always soft-spoken, with long pauses before answering to think about what was said, and never replying in a confrontational manner. I learned a lot from him, and his memory would give me much guidance in the future.

He always wore a clean shirt and tie, a modest suit and a hat. He was extremely systematic in his manner and life, for 20 consecutive years, he would have lunch in the same restaurant, sit at the same table and order exactly the same thing – hamburger with fries, no onion and a glass of warm milk. I always enjoyed visiting him at the "Znanie Book Store", where he had a little room in the back with a cot and a couple of chairs with a small table. Also a small range to heat the tea kettle and we would often take a break, munching some home-made pastries. The store was like a small social club and many of the regular customers would just drop in on Saturdays for a friendly chat, review of current affairs and just plain gossip. All the conversations were in Russian.

This being the '60s we also had many Rock groups stopping by, such as "The Jefferson Airplane" and the "Grateful Dead", there was always a lot of interest in the Soviet Union, Russian literature and art. One time, Semon's car broke down and the "Grateful Dead" group gave him a lift home in their car. I still



visualize the awesome picture of the very distinguished gentleman, holding on to his hat, in a bright orange Cadillac convertible with bearded, beaded and colorfully dressed occupants and driver. Where was my camera when I needed it!



*Corner of Haight and Ashbury Streets in San Francisco*

The district is famous for its role as a center of the 1960s hippie movement, a post-runner and closely associated offshoot of the Beat generation or beat movement, members of which swarmed San Francisco's "in" North Beach neighborhood two to eight years before the "Summer of Love" in 1967. Many who could not find space to live in San Francisco's north side found it in the quaint, relatively cheap and under populated Haight-Ashbury. The '60s era and modern American counterculture have been synonymous with San Francisco and the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood ever since.

Following his China visit, Nixon met with Soviet leaders, including Brezhnev in Moscow. These Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were aimed to limit the development of costly anti-ballistic missiles and nuclear missiles. Nixon and Brezhnev proclaimed a new era of "peaceful coexistence" and established the groundbreaking new policy of *détente* (or cooperation) between the two superpowers. The two sides also agreed to strengthen their economic ties, including agreements for increased trade and exchange of scholars, journalists and tourists. As a result of their meetings, *détente* would replace the hostility of the Cold War and the two countries would live mutually. This resulted in my first contact with "real-life" Soviets.

I received a phone call from an acquaintance asking for my assistance in providing transportation to a visiting delegation of Soviet Photojournalists. He knew I could speak Russian and would be interested in making contact with some "real life Reds". I accepted and this opened up a whole new chapter in

my life. One of these journalists was a world famous photographer with whom I established a warm friendship that is still alive today.



*Dinner with Soviet Journalists at our home on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Francisco*

It was of major interest for me to see the USA from a completely new viewpoint and eyes – not hostile, just curious, inquiring and which perceived many relatively minor details and mores from a different perspective and social background. It was very educational and, unknown to me at that time, it prepared me for a major turn in my career with General Motors in later years. This was a first of many future encounters with official Soviet visitors as well as Soviet exchange scholars who came to the University of California in Berkeley and the Stanford University in Palo Alto.

These “students” were usually in their late 20’s or early 30’s with Ph.D degrees in sciences such as Physics, Chemistry, Pharmaceuticals and Mathematics. However, they were very lively and gregarious, extremely knowledgeable in literature (ours and theirs), and full of humor and anecdotes. We spent many pleasant evenings hosting them at our home for dinner or just “chit-chat”. As they got to know us better, they shared with us a lot of personal details about themselves, their families and their life in the Soviet Union.

This occasioned an unexpected visit. One afternoon, answering a knock on our door, I saw a pleasant looking, tall man in a dark suit standing on our porch. He quickly showed his credentials and identified himself as a FBI agent. He requested my permission to enter and chat with me briefly. After I concurred and we completed the usual pleasantries, he stated that it was observed that we had quite a few Soviet visitors. He quickly added that there was no problem with that and that the US government encourages these contacts “across the Iron Curtain”. He asked me if I would be willing to

share any information that I might have on our visitors' personal lives such as marital problems, dissatisfaction with their government, excessive drinking, interest in pornography, etc. I got angry and told him – “These people are our FRIENDS, and we do NOT gossip about friends! If there were any subversive approaches to me to undermine the US government, I would certainly report to you on that. All other matters are strictly between them and us”. He thanked me politely, told me he respected my candor and gave me his business card. Prior to leaving he also cautioned me on my pending trip to the Soviet Union, telling me to watch out for any provocations that may lead to blackmail through the placement of local prostitutes in my hotel room without my knowledge. I thanked him for his thoughtfulness and said that I did not think I was an important enough person for them to go to all this trouble. His parting remarks was – “Of course you are important. You are an engineer with General Motors!”

On June 6th of 1968, I accompanied my mother-in-law, on our 1<sup>st</sup> visit to the USSR. We spent three weeks touring Moscow and Leningrad as well as seeing her sister Alexandra (Sasha) and her older (Vadim) and younger (Oleg) brothers whom she hasn't seen since 1949 and some of the members of their respective families. Since many areas in the interior of the USSR were still restricted to foreign visitors, we all met in Moscow. By the rules in those days we were limited to within a 25 kilometer radius of Moscow and other “open” major cities such as Leningrad (now called St.Petersburg), Kiev and a few others. Due to my limited vacation days, I only stayed for three weeks visiting Moscow and Leningrad, while Nina Andreevna stayed for a month and toured with the “Intourist” organization. She was escorted by very pleasant, courteous and knowledgeable English-speaking guides to Stalingrad (now called Volgograd), Kiev, Sochi and Rostov-on-the Don.

We arrived in the late evening and missed the Intourist bus to the hotel so we had to take a taxi. Near arrival at the Hotel Berlin, where we were booked, my mother-in-law leaned to me and spoke softly in my ear – “I guess tipping is not customary here”, at this point the taxi driver turned his head and said – “What idiot told you THAT!?”

The hotel “Berlin” was small but very lavishly furnished. It was strictly used for Western foreigners, we later found out that Lee Harvey Oswald stayed there when he defected to the USSR, the entire hotel was “bugged” and under constant surveillance, but that did not bother me at all since I had nothing to hide and welcomed the additional security for my nightly strolls.

The hotel was also strategically placed close to the Dzerzhinsky Square on which was situated the famous “Lubyanka” prison or the KGB Headquarters with the statue of “Iron Felix” Dzerzhinsky in its center. Iron Felix was a 15-ton iron monument, it was erected in 1958 by the sculptor Yevgeny Vuchetich and was a Moscow landmark in Soviet times. Symbolically, the Memorial to the Victims of the Gulag (a simple stone from Solovki) was erected beside the Iron Felix.

Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky was a Polish Communist revolutionary, famous as the founder of the Bolshevik secret police, the Cheka, later known by many names during the history of the Soviet Union (NKVD and KGB). The “Iron Felix” monument was removed in August 1991, after the failed coup of the hard-line Communist members of government. The memorial to Dzerzhinsky was toppled by a cheering crowd with the help of a crane. In the following disenchantment of Russians with their unhappy experiences with attempts at a “free market economy”, capitalism and “western style” democracy, in the year 2010, there was much debate on restoration of that monument.





*Dzerzhinsky Square with the Lubyanka KGB Headquarters and the statue of "Iron Felix" which was torn down in 1991*

On the night of my arrival, I could not sleep. Waves of emotion went through me ranging from euphoria at being finally in the land of my ancestors to apprehension in remembrance of the FBI agent's warning. I decided to do a brief reconnaissance of my immediate surroundings. On descent to the lobby, I found it deserted with the ever vigilant duty lady fast asleep at her desk. I quietly sneaked out and went to the corner of our block. In the dim lights of the ancient street lanterns I discerned a glow in the distance. Carefully noting my way back I proceeded on the empty street until after a short distance past a large building I came to a huge open space with the sight of an object that I only saw in an illustrated history book – St. Basil's Cathedral! I realized then with tears in my eyes that I was on the Red Square. I stood for a long time drinking in the scene, and then slowly made my way back to the hotel and to a sound sleep in my bed.

The next day after a sumptuous breakfast in the ornate hotel restaurant with gilded walls, mirrors and authentic crystal chandeliers, we were ready to start our tours. I was impressed by the volume of history surrounding us at every turn. Checked out the "Boots of Peter the Great" but I think they would be small for me. Went to the theater and flowed a lot of tears. Saw an opera at the Bolshoi Theater and noticed President Aleksei Kosigin and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko seated not far from us. Went to the Novodevichy Cemetery and stood at the graves of Gogol, Chekhov and many other great writers and artists. Some of my ancestors, as well as grandfather's sisters are also buried there. I did not look for them as I only found out from my Aunt Galia after we left the area.

On another visit to the Bolshoi we watch the fabulous ballet "Swan Lake" performed by Maya Plisetskaya who was one of the most famous and talented dancers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the conclusion of the performance as we stood up and were getting ready to leave, Galina Brezhnev, the daughter of the Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev came up from the front row where she was seated. As she approached me she "checked me over" from head to toe to the amusement of our guide who whispered in my year – "Oh, oh. You may be in trouble!"



It was a very unique experience strolling down the streets of Moscow and hearing Russian spoken everywhere, seeing all the street, shop and establishment signs in Russian and history everywhere we cast our eyes. Here was Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gorky, Chaliapin, Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky and etc, etc, and etc. I remember noticing that there were no billboards, neon signs or any advertising of products. Instead there were bright banners strewn across some streets with slogans such as – “Peace to the World” and “Communism is our Future”. There were no signs on the stores except plain identification such as “Bread”, “Meat”, “Men’s Clothes”, “Shoes”, etc.

I also noticed a lot of pedestrians of the same gender, strolling along and holding hands, this was a token of friendship, nothing more. The streets were very clean, constantly being swept. I later found out that some of the sweepers were persons that were arrested for drunkenness and were penalized by the judge to do civic work. One could tell them apart because they also had their heads shaved!

Since it was summer, Moscow was very warm and most Moscovites were on vacation at resorts and health spas, but the city was full of tourists from the other republics of the USSR. In the parks, stores and theaters as well as on the streets, we observed many of them in their native costumes from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and many of the other “Stans” all of them strolling around in small family groups in animated conversation and enthusiasm at being in the nation’s capital city.

It surprised me to see many men, particularly soldiers and sailors in uniform holding hands or embracing each other as they were napping on a park bench. Later I realized that it was just friendship expressed in an open, non-threatening way. It amused me once also to watch a young man holding his crotch in contortions outside a public toilet while a “babushka” was sweeping it down, the poor fellow as pleading – “Babushka, please hurry up” to which she curtly replied – “подождеш” or “you will wait”.

Being adventurous, I decided to try a bus ride on my own. After a few stops, I politely leaned down and asked a woman which stop do I need to get off for Gorki Street. She told me it was 2 stops away and a couple of blocks right at the intersection. I thanked her and leaned back – immediately another woman seated next to her told me in a loud voice – “That is wrong! Go 3 stops down and turn left”. At once a woman across the aisle jumped in and said – “They both don’t know what they are talking about, get off at the 4<sup>th</sup> stop and walk back a block”. At this point they got into a heated discussion and I got off at the next stop to try my luck walking and looking at street signs.

Car traffic was heavy and undisciplined, just like in Brazil. We closely avoided being run over, more than once, since here “the pedestrian does NOT have the right of way”. There are clearly marked street crossings, many of them under the streets and there are serious fines for jaywalking. I had to talk my way out of a couple by showing my US passport cover and telling the militia man in intentionally broken Russian that I was a dumb American tourist that did not know better. We quickly learned how to use the Metro. There are very clearly illustrated signs at each entrance and exit color-coded and showing all of the stops, duration of travel times, transfers and connecting lines with large print names and sufficient detail that it was purely impossible to get lost. Each Metro station was a museum in itself with beautiful marble, granite, mosaic, paintings and sculptures depicting the different themes of each

All of Moscow was under renovation, older houses were being demolished and new modern high-rise buildings were replacing them, streets were being widened and re-laid with new asphalt and concrete.

All historical buildings were being restored and brought back to their original state. No modern building were permitted around the city center, that is the Red Square and all of the modern hi-rise apartments were at the outer ring around Moscow.

My Aunt Galia visited with us in Moscow. She looked very good, very pleasant and jolly. Uncle George (my mother's older brother) sent me a note expressing his deep regrets that he could not come. His legs have weakened with age and the hardships he had endured during his 8 years of labor camp and this trip would have been very difficult for him. Even for me, young as I was, this visit was a little stressful as it involved a lot of walking to see and experience everything.

Aunt Galia said they would correspond with us regularly now that the "Cold War" has thawed a little and direct communications are much easier with no fear of repercussions. However shortly after that when I asked her where she was staying in Moscow, she replied – " With relatives, but unfortunately they prefer not to meet with you since you are from the US".

We also took a short visit to St. Petersburg, then called Leningrad, and had the wonderful experience of seeing the "White Nights". We attended a theater performance one early evening and as we came out after a 3-hour performance we were startled to see that it was still light outside. Everything was in a gentle white foggy light on the streets with many couples strolling along the banks of the Neva River. It was so beautiful that after I escorted Nina Andreevna to our hotel, the "Astoria", I went back to the river bank to sit on a bench and admire the surroundings. Shortly after, a couple of young women sat on the other end of the bench and had a lively conversation – "Where do you think this foreigner is from?" said one, "I don't know but I think he is cute" "Do you think he is married?" "He has a big gold ring with a stone on his finger" (my GMI ring was next to my wedding band). After that comment, I did not have the heart to speak to them in Russian and embarrass them, so with a smile I rose and went back to my hotel.

On my walk back to the hotel, I got into a conversation with a young man, one of the "dark ones", Georgian, or from one of the "Stans. We got into a deep discussion about the Vietnam war and I mentioned how fortunate it was that the USSR did not have any troops there. To this he chuckled and replied – "don't you think we have enough Asian looking people in the Stans to send some and pass them off as Vietnamese". He suggested that we pick up a bottle of vodka and continue our conversation at his apartment which was close by. I said where are we going to get the vodka all the stores closed long ago. He winked and asked me if I had 10 rubles. I handing him the money and he walked to the curb. In a few minutes he whistled and waved and a taxi pulled up. After a brief discussion he came back with a wide grin and a bottle of "Stolichnaya" vodka in his hand. He said in Moscow you can get anything if you have the money and knowledge where to go to spend it.

We had a very interesting discussion and I learned a lot about the "underground life" in Moscow with its bohemian artists, dance clubs and young meeting places. Later I was exposed to some of them and was amazed at the talent of their sculptors and artists. It was also very enjoyable to listen to their "bards" singing anti-establishment songs accompanied by guitar or accordion. Sadly and for good reason I was not permitted to take any photographs.



*The Moiseyev Folk Dancer at our home on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue in San Francisco*

The Moiseyev Folk Dance Group arrived in San Francisco in the summer of 1970. All the tickets were immediately sold out, however we unexpectedly met a couple of the dancers at the Znanie Bookstore and helped them to see part of the city's tourist attractions. In gratitude they gave us a couple of passes to their performances. After their spectacular performance to repeated standing ovations, during intermission, one of their members took us backstage to meet his colleagues. We ended up watching the rest of the stage from there and, being an old ham performer myself, I enjoyed it greatly.

The dancers were all very young, energetic and full of life. We spent their entire stay together. They would have two performances a day, then we would bring them over to our friends' homes where they would drink and party all night, then to our place for breakfast, a short nap after which back to their daily morning full rehearsals. I do not know how they could do it! I had about 8 hours of total sleep during those six days and could barely stay awake during my commutes to and from Fremont.

After the last performance, the entire ensemble was invited to the home of a local millionaire. They insisted that we come along. Irene demurred but I went and had a good time observing the local rich fawning over the young handsome and pretty dancers. I stood near a wall with my arms crossed observing the scene when I noticed a couple of local ladies twittering to each other close by and looking at me. "Do you speak English?" one of them asked. "Certainly" I said. They asked me which dance did I perform and when I told them that I do not dance, they left in a hurry being positive that I

was the KGB agent accompanying the group to prevent defection. When I told this to the dancers they were greatly amused and told everyone that I was their greatest soloist but did not perform this time out of “prima-donna caprice” and a bad humor.

Later that year, we made friends with some Soviet exchange students that were at UC Berkeley. One of them, a Moscow Journalism professor, invited me to join him for the annual San Francisco Film Festival. It was very hectic but enjoyable. Many of the films were being shown simultaneously based on different groupings and themes. We would move from a brief 15 to 20 minute exposure to each film so that he could accumulate data for his critique and reporting. My head was spinning with the different story plots and actor performances. However, I did get the opportunity to join him on an interview with the maverick independent filmmaker and actor John Cassavetes. Also to observe Rosalind Russell, Paul Newman, Peter Falk and others at close range on their live appearances on stage. My friend asked me half jokingly and half seriously if I wanted to meet David Lean and have a screen test for a Hollywood contract which he might be able to arrange. I declined – wonder till today if I made a correct decision!

The boys were at a very interesting and active age. Both were growing tall and healthy, very active and full of wisdom and mischief. They looked very much alike but were quite different from each other in mannerisms and behavior.

The older boy, Igor was a little philosopher; he loved to read the Encyclopedia and was very methodical and analytic in his decisions. He liked to mull things over and his favorite word was “Why?” He was quite capable at chess at an early age and loved mathematical problems and science. He was very social and the favorite of adults due to his courteous and mature behavior in their presence.

Andrei, the younger, was very lively, quick thinking and fast with the words and actions. This resulted in quite a few bruises and squabbles with his brother. He would get into everything even when he knew full well that he should not and will get punished. He and his brother were inseparable and spent all of their time together.

It was a pleasure to spend time with them and we would often go to the Golden Gate Park, which was close by, and watch the ducks and swans in the artificial lakes. I would often take them to the San Francisco zoo to see the animals and birds. I remember on one of those trips, at the elephant enclosure, where there was a female with a newly born cub – “Look at the little elephant”, Igor immediately started looking at the grass near a small bush. I said “No not there” and pointed. He took one look and told me in a grieved voice – “ That’s NOT little”. I guess perception is different depending on our size and age.

In 1971, we gained a new member to our growing family – a beautiful thoroughbred German shepherd pup from Irene’s Aunt Elena in Washington DC. We were not far from the Pacific Ocean and although the water was always freezing cold there were still some hardy types, in wetsuits, surfing. There were also seals basking in the sun on the rocks at “Seal Cliff”. I would often take the boys and our young Shepherd for a walk and run down the beach.





*New addition to our family – “Polkan”*

The boys and I often took “Polkan” for strolls in the Golden Gate Park. The pup was very playful and loved to run with the boys, however he was also very big and would often knock poor Andrei off his feet much to the latter’s annoyance.

Those were happy days with many fond memories about the boys growing up, they were totally immersed in the Russian culture due to their being surrounded by loving relatives who only spoke Russian among themselves as well as all the Russian fairy books and colorfully illustrated children literature that was available at the “Znanie” Book store. They started speaking English only when they started Grade School.

The Richmond area of San Francisco in those days (‘50s to ‘70s) was very heavily populated by the “1<sup>st</sup> wave” immigrants from Russia, that is the ones that experienced the Russian Revolution of 1918 and WWI. They were the officers of the White Army and members of Russian nobility that left Russia when the Communists (Reds) took over and killed the Imperial family. There were many Russian restaurants, a couple of nightclubs and the main Russian Orthodox Cathedral of San Francisco. Many of that generation did not speak English and socialized completely amongst themselves. There were many highly educated people among them and many of them had tenure as professors both at the University of Berkeley and Stanford University in the Russian, History, Mathematics and Physics departments.

There was also a very active Russian Club that held regular balls, concerts and festivities in line with the events that were celebrated in Russia during the days of the Tsars.



*Igor and Andrei in their room at 318 – 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, San Francisco*

On October 6th, 1968, I was notified by my mother, who was still in Brazil, that I lost my surviving grandparent – my grandmother, Evdokeia Pavlovna Kalageorgi passed away. I was never very close to her, since I always blamed her for favoring my errant uncle, Paul who was only 10 years older than me. But still I was deeply saddened by her passing and the diminishment of the Kalageorgi family. She was buried in Sao Paulo, beside my Grandfather. Not much later, in 1970, I was advised that my younger uncle, Pavlich also passed away. He was only 45 years old.

In the summer of 1968, as I came home from work, I found a note pinned to the door written in Russian letters – “I was, you not” signed Ivan. I unsuccessfully racked my brains on who this “Ivan” might be. Finally, after a week or so, an old GMI buddy appeared on my door step. He had shoulder length hair and a full beard, dressed in clean but tattered jeans with a tie-dyed tee—shirt. I knew him by the name of John during my school years at GMI. It came out that after graduation and a short work stint at a Chevrolet plant in Michigan, he “hit the road” and drove to California from where he hitch hiked all the way to South America. He canoed down the Amazon river and foolishly drank the river water resulting in a near-death experience. Some local Indians found him and nursed him back to health. He wanted to stay longer and pursue his dream of painting, however the Indians would not have any “gringo” strangers in their midst and once he was well enough to travel, they encouraged him to be on his way by prodding him with their spears. He proceeded on his journey south, catching rides with truck drivers, smugglers and locals, learning to speak Portuguese on the way as well as Russian from some natives that he met on his way. After a year or so in Sao Paulo where he taught English, painted and got married to a wonderful Brazilian girl, he made his way back and appeared on my doorstep. He asked me to help him get employment at the Fremont plant as he was still a

graduate engineer from GMI. I agreed as times were good and GM was hiring, however he would have to start at a “junior” level because of his long absence.

John worked for a year at the Emissions Lab in Fremont and became quite well known by management as a “royal pain in the butt” for his agitation against GM in sufficient compliance to environmental safety levels. Finally after getting into the national newspaper headlines by being a part of a group that demonstratively buried a brand new Chevrolet in the Fremont hills, he was laid off and returned with his family (he had 2 kids by then) to Brazil. Last that I heard of John was a photograph of him in another headline story in the Sao Paulo leading paper, hailing him as the leading “Graffiti Artist” in Sao Paulo, painting “leftist” slogans on public monuments and statues.

Life for me at the Fremont Plant was good. I loved my job and did not mind the 54-mile commute each way. I gave me time to gather my thoughts and plan my activities on the way out and unwind and relax on the way back. The commute was made easy, since everyone else was going in the opposite direction during the “rush” hour as most of the folks lived in the suburbs and worked in San Francisco.

In later years I learned of the benefit of having some “self time” based on the Zen philosophy, so I am sure these years rubbed off on me. Couple of time I picked up interesting hitch-hiker. This was discouraged by the law and could get me a ticket for stopping on the highway, but I did it anyway. I remember on one occasion I picked up a young fellow in a black leather jacket, on his way to Oakland. For a while we sat silently, then I asked him where he was from – he told me he was just released from prison and on his way to see his mother. After a while I ventured to ask him what was he in prison for and he told me he served 6 years for manslaughter. I was glad when that ride was over and hesitated for a while to pick up any others.

My work in those days was in the Methods and Standards Department which was later renamed as the Industrial Engineering Department. It involved the preparation of efficient work stations and car assembly flow in the manufacturing process of putting vehicles together. It required the knowledge and analysis of vehicle assembly operations and ways and means to reduce inefficient (non-value added) activities such as excessive walking, reaching, lifting and process effort. I got along fine with the line workers since I always went out of my way to be fair and explain to them the benefits to them of the lesser strain and wear, however we were seldom trusted as we were seen as “management tools” to add more work to them.

I was consider an “unconformist” by management because of my longer than usual hair length and would occasionally find an envelope on my desk with a few coins and a note – “get a haircut”, I also wore boots in lieu of the standard wingtip shoes and was once sent home for appearing at work in a pale blue shirt instead of the standard white. I gave me great satisfaction when Ed Cole, who was an Executive Vice President of the Corporation, showed up at the plant in a bright red shirt!

Around that time, I also experimented a little with “pot”, sharing a “joint” with a female maintenance apprentice, however it did not have any effect on me and I stuck to “booze” to get a high.

About that time, our family decided to send the boys to a Russian “Young Pioneer Camp (Russian: **Пионерский лагерь**) in the USSR on a summer vacation designed for “Children with a Russian Parent” that were not native to the USSR. The purpose was to expose them to other kids with Russian roots and tone-up their language skills.





*Group photo of a group of "Young Pioneers" at Artek*

These Young Pioneer camps were the place of vacation for children from the Young Pioneer organizations of the Soviet Union during summer and winter holidays. The "Young Pioneer Camp," Artek was very popular with Russian heritage parents like us from the US and Canada. The fee was very modest and we felt that the boys would benefit from the experience.

The All-Union Young Pioneer camp *Artek* is a resort in the Crimea, Ukraine, on the northern coast of the Black Sea near Gurzuf, a former Crimean Tatar village, now a part of Greater Yalta. It was made famous by Alexander Pushkin who visited the place in 1821.

It was very difficult to apply for accommodation to Artek, as it was very popular with the local people, but through the Znanie Book Store contacts we succeeded and the boys had a great 2-week experience at the camp that had a very broad section of youngsters from all of the various Republics as well as many kids from the US, Canada and Europe.

During that time, I also had an opportunity to meet Lev Tolstoy daughter, Countess Alexandra Lvovna Tolstoy. She was on a visit to San Francisco to speak at some function and stopped over at the "Znanie Bookstore". She was a very impressive, square-built lady of 80 odd years, with a very firm crushing handshake and a "no-nonsense" air about her.



## Chapter IX – My 1<sup>st</sup> GM Overseas Assignment – Europe (1971 to 1974)

*“The Mind is Everything: What you think, you become” – Gautama Buddha*

Following WWII there was a rapidly expanding vehicle demand instigated by the returning GI's. To economize on the building of new plants, GM organized the new Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac (BOP) Assembly Division in 1945. These new plants would build those well known GM brands on the same conveyor lines. In 1965 the B-O-P Assembly Division was replaced by the GM Assembly Division with the Chevrolet brand included. Purely Chevrolet Assembly plants ceased to exist and were incorporated into GMAD.

GM's market share increased to 49.2 percent in 1967, the year GM produced its 100-millionth vehicle. In October of that year, a complaint was filed against GM accusing it of violating antitrust laws. The complaint alleged that GM's acquisition of suppliers enabled the corporation to control its costs and fatten its profit margins by forcing other automakers to buy its parts.

The US government lawyers argued that GM's dealership strategy was anti-competitive. "After GM achieved a dominant position in about 1919, it adopted the policy of requiring its dealers to drop competitive lines and sell only GM cars."

The complaint also alleged that GM imposed "planned obsolescence" on the auto industry through annual product redesigns begun in the late 1920s. "The effect upon competitors is obvious and dramatic."

The US government proposed to segregate the Chevrolet Division from the rest of GM creating a separate independent company. GM by merging Chevrolet into the GMAD lineup in all of the assembly plants made this very difficult.

There was also a major side benefit from assembling the four brands on the same line – the most efficient method for each operation became apparent and resulted in major saving in labor, material and tooling costs.

GMAD Industrial engineers became “stars”! On this basis, GM Executive Group Vice President Elliott M. “Pete” Estes was looking to improve the direct labor costs on vehicles being assembled in GM's Overseas plants in Europe. He specifically requested for a GMAD engineer – and there I was.

My initial assignment was to develop a workable model to monitor and improve the direct and indirect labor content in the assembly of Opel and Vauxhall vehicles in four small plants. These plants were located in Antwerp, Belgium – Copenhagen, Denmark – Bienne, Switzerland and Azembuja, Portugal. The period was for 6 months starting on November 1, 1971.

The assignment involved six week visits at each of the four plants to familiarize myself with their Industrial Engineering organizations and to develop a standardized version following the GMAD model to enable proper comparisons on the assembly of similar vehicles between the four operations. The purpose was to improve their methods of assembly to maximize their labor and operational costs efficiencies. This was a rather challenging assignment since it involved four very different cultures and approaches.

Between each of the six weeks of being overseas, I was permitted a week at home in the US, a couple of days reporting in Detroit and the rest of the week at home in San Francisco.

This relatively short assignment went well and after a presentation in London to the two Regional Directors that were responsible for the plants, resulted in a year's International Staff (ISP) assignment to develop and coordinate a new program through the GMAD model of Industrial Engineering in the four European plants.



**4 Plant Locations**

On April 1, 1972 I relocated to Antwerp with my family and started doing monthly visits to the other 3 plants. I was considered “the Hit Man from Detroit” and all four plants vied with each other to keep me happy and in good humor so that I would write favorable reports on their operations to the “Great White Fathers at HQ in Detroit”. My work schedule only permitted me to be home 2 or 3 days a week, the rest of the time I spent travelling between the plants, leaving my family comfortably stationed at Villa Zilverenhoeklaan 14 in Ekeren Hoogboon just 15 kilometers outside of Antwerp. I was given a generous expense account which I hardly touched since the plants made sure that I was taken to all of the finest gourmet restaurants, night clubs and exotic shows at their expense.

My arrival at the plant in Antwerp, as I later found out, caused quite a stir with the local populace. In order to create an office for me on the main floor close to the Factory Manager, the plant's maintenance department moved the wall partitions of the dozen existing offices two feet to create a 20 foot wide office for me. Obviously I did not win any popularity contest at the start of my assignment!

All this attention went a little to my head and feeling like the “big man on campus” as I was given practically “A Carte Blanche” for the entire assignment. I naturally started drinking again. First wine or beer with my meals in the “European fashion”, depending which country I was in. Then cognac and liqueurs in the evenings to unwind and finally keeping a bottle or two in my hotel room. I avoided

getting drunk in the presence of others and managed to keep a good professional appearance. However, alone in my hotel room especially on weekends, I imbibed quite a bit.

My wife, Irene, noticing a difference, initially became a little alarmed, but after a while settled down when she saw that I had everything under control and was behaving like an executive. Of course she knew nothing about my occasional side trips to the red light district of the port in Lisbon and the sex shows of Copenhagen where I would “let my hair down” more and more frequently and really belt them down!

In spring of 1972, I sent Irene and the boys on a train to Moscow for their first visit to the Soviet Union while I drove by car from Antwerp through East Germany and Poland to join them. This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to the USSR and the most interesting one. The drive was pleasant and very interesting especially through Warsaw, Brest and Minsk. I was not permitted to stop the car while I was crossing East Germany and had to follow a specific closely monitored route. Once I crossed into Poland everything changed. There were many pretty girl hitchhikers and nice picturesque villages to drive through. Early in my drive I picked up a male student who was very politically minded and lectured to me all the way to Warsaw. This resulted in all of the pretty female hitchhikers to either decline my offers of a ride or only go for a short distance – oh! Well.

Warsaw surprised me in its modernity and liveliness. There were many outdoor cafes, music and street activities till late at night – nothing like Moscow and the other communist cities that I have visited before.

After arriving at the border crossing at Brest and being given a thorough search of my belongings, luggage car and self, I was on my way to Minsk where I would spend the night prior to driving to join my family in Moscow. In Minsk, Belarussia, I visited with a couple of the exchange students whom I met in San Francisco a couple of years earlier and their families. They were extremely hospitable and were overjoyed to see me. One of them took me on a tour of a factory building large heavy-duty trucks and road building equipment. I could not help but notice with my professional eye the low efficiency and poor housekeeping in the plant but kept my mouth shut not to offend my host who was obviously very proud of his factory.

On my arrival in Moscow, I was met by a very distraught Irene who just lost her purse with all of her traveler's checks and passport. We obtained a temporary passport from the US Embassy in Moscow, cancelled the traveler checks, had some funds wired to us from Antwerp and we were back to normal.

Our tour went well and we met some of the Soviet visitors to the US who we have hosted in San Francisco. They went out of their way to make our visit interesting with daily tours and evening dinners at various restaurants and homes. We were ready to drive to Kiev, when one of our journalist friends asked if he could come along to visit his mother who lived there. My initial reaction was concern, since I knew this was frowned on by the local authorities and may even cause some serious penalties to our friend. He assured that he will be OK as long as we are discreet so I reluctantly agreed.

As we were leaving Moscow on the route that was designated to me on a map provided to me by the Intourist Travel Agency, my friend said he knew of a shorter way that would save us much time and enable us to see better scenery of the Russian/Ukrainian countryside. I was again a little hesitant since the Intourist office was very adamant that we had to travel only on the specified route. My friend

kept insisting so I complied. After traveling a few kilometers we were flagged down by a militia sergeant. My friend jumped out of the car and had a brief conversation with him and he waved us on. Another few kilometers and we were stopped again, this time by a lieutenant, again my friend jumped out, again there was a brief conversation, a little longer than the first but again we were permitted to proceed. I noticed my friend got silent and in deep thought. Finally a full major appeared on the road. This time I was asked to show my passport and travel documents. This time we were requested to turn around and go back to our initially designated route. After travelling a while in silence, my friend suddenly burst into laughter. After he calmed down a bit he shared with me that the reason we were restricted from that routing was because the missile defense system for Moscow was in that area!



*Russian Pioneers (Girl Guides) inspecting our car with great interest*

Our visit to Kiev went very well, as I was standing with my friend next to our car, we were approached by a short dark individual who muttered something to my friend from the side of his mouth. My friend laughed, shrugged his shoulders and waved him off. When I asked him what that was about, he told me it was one of the local “businessmen” interested in buying my car for 100,000 rubles (about US \$25,000 at the official rate).

We toured various beautiful churches and museums, ate in picturesque local restaurants and greatly enjoyed our visit. On departure our friend’s mother loaded us down with food – home made borscht, boiled potatoes in butter and chives, smoked marinated herring, fruit pies and meat piroshky.

Our return to Moscow was uneventful except for one minor incident. After dropping off our friend we checked in a motel selected for us by the Intourist Agency. As I reached for the key to our apartment, the clerk slipped a note into my hand with a “knowing” look.

I gave the key to my wife and told her to take the boys and go ahead while I will go look for a kiosk to buy some cigarettes. After she left, I looked at the note. All it had was a room number. I proceeded to



the number and was met by a pleasant young man who identified himself as a member of the KGB. He invited me to a table loaded with fruits, chocolates and champagne and told me he had a proposition for me to work for them. I lied to him that I would “take his offer under advisement” and needed some serious thinking before I could commit myself. He was very pleasant and told me that I was a “natural James Bond” and would benefit greatly working with him. All I had to do is make a stop at their embassy in Vienna, Austria, from where I would be surreptitiously transported to their special facilities in the USSR for intense training in the art of espionage. I played along and after a couple of glasses of champagne excused myself and joined my family.

The next day we departed for the West and during the entire trip I was counting the minutes to the border, being chided more than once by my wife for speeding. On my return, I kept this to myself and avoided any more visits to the USSR for a few years

Portugal held a special attraction to me since I knew how to speak the Brazilian version of the language. This resulted in much amusement to the locals since Brazilian is like speaking Texan to an Englishman. I would get much entertainment in going to small local restaurants in Lisbon and watch the concern on the waiter’s face who was wondering how he would talk to this “gringo” and then see his surprise when I would order in Portuguese. I would also greatly enjoy visiting the “Fado” clubs – these were small night clubs where they served Sangria and smoked spicy sausage. Amateur singers from the street would come in and sing melancholy songs about their life on the streets, prison life and other sad personal experiences. Some were exceptionally talented and great voices and lyrics.

On one of my business trips to Portugal, after work, as I was returning from the red light district in Lisbon with a couple of girls in a car driven by an acquaintance, he skidded on the wet cobble stoned street and smashed into a light pole and overturned the car. In my attempt to shield one of the girls from being hurt I fractured my pelvis bone. Everyone else got out unhurt, however I spent 3 months in a hospital pinned to my bed like a displayed insect specimen. The whole issue was hushed up because I was not driving and the driver, a German diplomat, had diplomatic immunity.

After occupying 6 seats on a plane to fit my stretcher, I was flown to Antwerp and placed in a private hospital run by nuns. Per my request my room was rearranged into an office with telephones and filing cabinets so that I could continue my work from there. Good meaning friends would come and visit me nearly every day bringing me good cognac, wine and liqueurs to cheer me up and speed up my recovery. My only discomfort was being woken each morning at dawn by the tolling of the church in view from my window and witnessing the funeral procession for one of the hospital’s elderly patients.

Alcohol was starting again to take over my life, but at that “heady time”, I did not recognize it and after every excess, I would castigate myself and determine to have better self control. Also at that time I was under great pressure from the ISP Works manager who was responsible for the Antwerp plant. He was “a good ole boy” from one of the former GM Chevrolet plants in the South. His plant was taken over by GMAD and he lost his job and was shipped to Belgium which he hated. He also hated GMAD and as a result my interference in his “turf”. He had a spy reporting to him on all of my movements and conversations, even taping some of them. When I presented one of my reports to the Home Office illustrating some of the improvements that I was proposing, he took it as a personal attack on his performance as Head of Manufacturing at Antwerp. He wrote to the Head Office that I

was being “tyrannical” with the local supervisors, threatening them with dismissals and generally a disruption to activities. He said I should be immediately re-called home and preferably fired.

I got a telephone call from Detroit in the middle of the night (not unusually due to the 6-hour time difference) to get on the first flight home and to report to the Executive Director of Manufacturing. I arrived the following morning and spent 2 uncomfortable hours sitting in the Director’s lobby awaiting his call. After finally being brought into his office by his secretary and the usual amenities and pleasant exchange of greetings, he asked me to sit down while he will dictate a letter to Antwerp.

The letter after the usual lead in stated – “.....*we are aware of your discomfort with Leo Kalageorgi’s approach and tactics and realize that his work cannot proceed satisfactorily without your co-operation. On this basis we are willing to re-assign him to another operation. Vauxhall’s Manufacturing Management has been closely following his progress and is eager to accept him in their plants*”.

The Executive Director was well aware of the intense rivalry between Antwerp and Vauxhall (England) and was not surprised when Antwerp backed down as asked for my return. However in parting the Director told me that he could not guarantee my stay there for longer than 6 months which would be the conclusion of my European assignment. He said he had another project opening lined up for me and would let me know in a couple of months.

At the conclusion of this assignment, the Factory Manager, who was a Belgian, shared with me that he and his staff were very grateful for my hard work and dedication to the improvement of his operational effectiveness and efficiency. He told me to bear in mind that it was “my fellow Americans” who made my progress difficult and felt that I was a threat to their careers and the “feather-bedding” of their foreign assignment. My personal frugality and responsible handling of my expense account put their in the spotlight and caused unwanted scrutiny from the GM auditors.

Overall this first Overseas assignment was very memorable, culturally educational and did a lot to increase and expand my awareness of the world and the nuances of European mores and behaviors. My initial arrival in Copenhagen was like a fairy tale from Hans Christian Anderson. I was booked in one of the luxury rooms on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor of the Royal SAS Hotel in the center of the city with a gorgeous view of the surrounding area. I remember looking out of my window on the evening of my arrival and being fascinated by the sight of the gently falling snow in a dark starry sky and the snow-clad spires of the churches and picturesque sloped roof tops of the restored housing and buildings of the center. I later discovered that by law all of the buildings in the central parts of the city had to maintain their ancient architecture devoid of advertising signs and modern high rises. The hotel was an exception and towered over everything. Most of the streets in the center were “walking street” prohibited to auto traffic. I kept expecting Santa to whiz by on his sled – it was like a beautiful Christmas card.

The next day I went for a stroll and learned that it pays to be steady on your feet. As I turned a corner a gust of wind hit me in the chest and I literally skidded on the icy sidewalk for nearly half of the block. At the end of my skid, a little Asian man ran out of a building and stood close to me grinning at me for protection against the strong wind. Gingerly we made our way to the end of the block where he thanked me and hurried inside.

In Antwerp I was introduced to “private clubs”. This was an arrangement that was made to restrict entry of “undesirable elements” (mostly natives from the former Belgian Congo) to the various all-night disco clubs. A small fee was charged at the entrance which then provide you a 1-night membership card for entry. Antwerp was an “all night” town and we would often dance all night at the various clubs, sipping strong cognac and going early at dawn’s early light to the port area for a hearty breakfast of fresh bread, eggs and croissants with “filtered” fresh coffee.

Portugal was also a treat for me since my knowledge of the language as well as having a good GMI friend who lived in Lisbon gave me a very good access to the night life there. I usually scheduled my trips so that they would include at least one weekend or local holiday so that I could “relax” after or before a “strenuous” visit to the plant. One of my visits to a local restaurant was a repeat of my earlier “oyster experience” as mentioned on pages 45/46. I complained that my steak was smaller than a neighboring customer. Wordlessly the waiter grabbed my plate and disappeared into the kitchen. Fifteen minutes later the kitchen doors were flung open an a procession appeared headed by the waiter carrying a platter with a 24 ounce steak, smothered in onions with 3 fried eggs. He was followed by the entire kitchen staff who stood watching as with great difficulty I ate the entire portion.

Switzerland was a challenge in another way. After silently listening to my lecture on the need to improve efficiency and reduce vehicle assembly hours, I was politely asked to accompany the hosting Swiss to a section of the plant that was normally closed to visitors. When I got there I could not believe my eyes. Before me were dozens of freshly imported vehicles from the US – Cadillacs, Buicks, Oldsmobiles, etc. All were in various stages of disassembly! When I asked why this was so – I was told that these vehicles would not be bought by the Swiss due to their poor quality. I went and looked closer and to my embarrassment saw the poor fits, ghastly gaps between major body parts such as hoods and decklids, defective paint, sagging trim and many other deficiencies which the US public was ignoring. Switzerland was not going to accept sloppy workmanship for better labor efficiency!

In the winter of 1971, I took another trip to the Soviet Union at the request of my father-in-law to handle some business for him. I was really not dressed for the Russian winter and had to borrow an overcoat from him – vintage of the ‘50s! That plus a Russian fur hat with flaps, sturdy motorcycle black boots and red & black ski gloves completed my attire. On arrival I was met by a senior official of the Soviet “International Books” organization dressed in a stylish Italian raincoat who looked me up and down with unconcealed amusement and told me that I looked more like a refugee from Siberia than a “Western” businessman.

The visit was very pleasant with many happy memories, one of which was swimming in the large outdoor pool that was built on the location of the present rebuilt Trinity Cathedral. I unintentionally caused my escorting friend some embarrassment in the locker room. As we went there to change into our swimsuits, I noticed that there were elderly females mopping the floors. After the initial surprise, I decided “that when in Rome, to do what the Romans do”. Just as I dropped my shorts, I heard loud murmurs from the women – “Hooligan, Shameless one!” at which point my red-faced friend grabbed my arm and turned me around so that my back was to the women. I then realized that the proper etiquette is to point your butt towards the opposite sex, since butts look the same whether they are male or female. The outdoor swimming experience in heavy curtains of steam was also very unique and caused a lot of minor harmless collisions with others, many of them fairly attractive women. Nice way to make friends.

I remember my early impressions of the USSR. The crowd on the streets, the animated conversations and the large quantity of readers of serious books. Everywhere that you turned someone had a book that they were avidly reading. The Russian knowledge of literature, both theirs and translations of the world's literary giants like Hemingway, Sinclair, Sartre, Dumas, Dickens, to name a few was phenomenal! Public transportation was very inexpensive and efficient by underground subway – the Metro, or buses and trollies. There were also a large amount of taxis for a reasonable fee. Streets were swept regularly and ashtrays were available every few feet apart.

Men often walked holding hands in friendship and all greeting were always accompanied by hugs and often with three kisses. I learned quickly that we could enhance our Russian Rubles budget by purchasing items at the special “hard-currency” store called “Berezka” or “Little Birch Tree” by paying in US \$s and getting re-embursed by our friends in Russian Rubles 3 times the official rate. Dishonest – yes but everyone except the government was happy.



*My winter visit to Moscow – 1971*

My European assignment involved much work and offered many opportunities for growth, both career wise as well as personal. As the assignment included 4 different countries, cultures and languages it was quite a challenge for me, however with my “foreign” background and upbringing in the Far East made it easier for me to be accepted by the natives than by some of the highly career-motivated hacks that were the common contingent from the US.

For starters, I was considered a personal affront to the chief US expatriate who was the Works Manager at the GM Continental Plants in Antwerp, additional he was very hostile to anyone from the



newly formed General Motors Assembly Division (GMAD) since they took over all of the former Chevrolet plants and replaced all of the management, including him. As a typical US expatriate he hated his assignment to a “furriner” location and isolated himself and his wife from any socializing with the “locals”.

He tried to get my new secretary to spy on me and give him weekly reports on my activities, and when that did not work he used a fellow expatriate from GMAD to weasel into my trust as a former colleague and daily reported to him on my conversations and frustrations.

Other than that, my assignment went relatively well. It took me some time to get accustomed to the stiff formality practiced by the Belgians. My first experience was when I tried to be “American friendly” with one of the minor clerk by telling him he could call me by my first name rather than Mr. Kalageorgi, his response was – “Sir, I do NOT give you the right to call ME by my first name”.

As time went by, as we were somewhat ostracized by the expatriate community, mainly due to our desire to get to know Europe through the eyes of Europeans, we made some good local friends who took us around and introduced us to the wonderful Antwerp night life, while the other US expatriates clung together as a group with their bridge games and “complain sessions”, constantly leery of the “natives”, not bothering to learn the language or local customs and generally paranoid about the “foreign” surrounding.

My attempt to learn Flemish was discouraged by the locals who were fluent in English as well as at least 2 other languages. They laughed and said – “Why do you even consider a language that only a small minority speaks, is harsh and sounds brutal to the ear and you have to listen to the last word in a sentence (the verb) to understand what is being said”. They recommended that I enhance my French which is much more beautiful, flowing and commonly used. One benefit of my early attempts with Flemish was the picking up of a few words in German, which was very helpful at times in our travels in Europe.

My secretary, who became very loyal to me, tipped me off on many occasions of some of the plots at the plant that were directed to make my job tougher. She was married briefly to a Congolese star soccer player and had a son about our Igor’s age. He was a little mischievous and not easy to handle. At Andrei’s birthday party at our house on arrival he got a little unruly and got his mother embarrassed. The boys were sent to the yard to play while the table was being set. On their return he was unusually well behaved so I called the boys aside and asked what happened – “Nothing” Igor told me nonchalantly, “We just took him behind the house, beat him up and told him to behave”.

My job had me on the road every week as I had to rotate between the four plants in four different countries. Most of the time I flew but later discovered it was quicker to get by train from Antwerp, Belgium to Bienne, Switzerland. My first trip was a little harrowing since I was unaccustomed to the different signs, track, platforms and crossovers. But after I made it, it was the best way to travel, especially at night when I would get a sleeper and could use the dining car for a great dinner.

One of the perks of this assignment was that each plant vied to make me happy – I was “the man from Detroit”, so on every trip, every evening, the local managers would take me to dinner at the finest gourmet restaurants in their respective city. Europeans are very meticulous about their meals out of the home and would compare notes with each other on what restaurant and chef excels in particular gourmet dishes. I had to really watch my weight with all of those epicurean activities.

Each country had its own charm and flavor.

Copenhagen, which was my first glimpse of Europe was like a winter fairy tale to me. I arrived in the middle of winter at night and remember till today the beautiful view from my hotel window of the ancient sloped roofs and slender church spires covered with clean white snow under a bright starry dark blue sky. It was a joy to wander down the “walking” street where no vehicles were permitted except for early morning delivery of goods and supplies.

I also discovered the “adult shows” that were prevalent in those days and made myself popular with the visiting colleagues and managers from the US and the other plants.

I was amused and annoyed with one US visitor who was sent down to assist me in a specific problem. He arrived on a Sunday and I met him at my hotel. After dinner he asked me what is there to do here at night. I told him that I could take him to a local bar close to the hotel which was famous for the most beautiful “professional girls” in Europe. But I cautioned him that they were extremely expensive and we are going only to look. He concurred and off we went. After sitting at the bar of “The Purple Parrot” for about an hour and refusing propositions from various gorgeous ladies who would put Hollywood stars to shame, we returned to the hotel and our respective rooms. After about 30 minutes I remembered a question that I had and called his room. There was no answer, so I went to sleep. The next morning as I was at breakfast getting ready to go to the plant, he showed up and with some agitation told me that his wife was ill and he had to immediately fly back and not go with me to the plant.

I realized that he went back to the “Purple Parrot” and probably blew his entire expense account and was too embarrassed to ask for a loan. Boys will be boys – even in their early 50’s.

Bienne or Biel as it is called by Germans was a peaceful small town amid the Swiss Alps at the northern tip of beautiful lake Neuchatel. The scenery was gorgeous and the Swiss were wonderful hosts. I had my first exposure to tasty cheese fondue and apricot and pear brandy. The plant had a 2-hour break for lunch since the natives insisted on eating at home with a short nap after their meal. The plant cafeteria served beer and wine with their 3-course lunch for the management and coffee with liqueurs was served in an adjacent room where there were newspapers and periodicals to browse as one digested his or her meal and smoked a cigar. Women were rare in the management levels in those days so the clientele was predominantly male.

The hourly work force in the plant was highly composed of immigrant labor from Turkey and the Southern European countries like Spain, Portugal and Greece. All the signs and instructions in the plant were in 4 languages – French, German, Spanish and Turkish. Getting any changes done on routine procedures was quite a challenge linguistically as well as culturally.

The native born Swiss were somewhat snobbish and were shocked to discover that a US executive like I would eat in a restaurant next to my hotel. “It’s a people place” they told me used by many of the foreign laborers.

Lisbon and Azambuja in Portugal were another story. The Portuguese were delighted with my Brazilian Portuguese and were highly amused on some of my terminology. They are a very happy, gregarious and hospitable people. I would amuse myself by avoiding the tourist centers and wander

around the native sectors of Lisbon, checking out the wonderful food in small restaurants and chatting with the staff.

One of my former GMI colleagues, who was from Lisbon, introduced me to the red light district. On one of my journeys there, I met another colleague from Germany, together we did a little “carousing” in the area which resulted in us picking up a couple of ladies who agreed to take us to their apartment in central Lisbon. The weather was very bad with a lot of rain and poor visibility and my friend and I were pretty inebriated. He was driving and I was in the back seat with one of the ladies. As we approached the apartment, he lost control of the car, skidded and hit a tree. I twisted to shield the lady from the broken glass. We got out of the car and I walked her to the apartment which was close by. As I started to mount the stairs I got nauseous and felt bad. She helped me up the stairs and I lay on the couch. The pain got worse and she called for medical help – it came out that I had fractured my pelvis and needed to be moved immediately to a hospital. At that point I passed out only to waken on a bed in a private room at the hospital.

My main office in Antwerp was notified and in a couple of days I was transferred closer to home. The trip started with some concern on my part, since the local attendants were unsure of how to fit a 6’ 4” frame into their 5’ long ambulance. After some adjustment we were on the way to the airport with my feet sticking out of the rear doors and my head nestled between the driver’s and helper’s seats in front. The plane was easier; I was laid on a special stretcher along 4 rows of double seats, an 8-passenger 1<sup>st</sup> class ticket for myself! In those days GM did everything in style.

Arriving in Antwerp, I was placed in a small secluded hospital run by nuns. It was in a retirement community and my room window faced the chapel, where every morning the bells would toll and a coffin bearing some elderly resident would be transferred for family viewing and burial – not a very happy way to greet the morning and a great motivation to get out of there.

Being a “workaholic”, I had a file cabinet put in my room as well as a typewriter and a local plus an international telephone, so that I could continue my project and keep in contact with the 4 plants as well as the Detroit office. Friends would come over and visit me regularly, bringing snacks, chocolates and fine brandy to keep up my morale.

I was laid up for over 6 weeks till my pelvis healed. In the later weeks I would have a young female therapist come and exercise my legs, I caught her a few times peeking up my shorts. On my release she kindly offered to stop by at my home to check on my progress. My wife very firmly declined! As I gained mobility, I was given a pair of crutches and told to walk up and down the main hallway twice a day. The little old ladies, who were patients there, heard about this and would line up outside of their rooms calling out to each other with excitement – “Here comes the truck! Here comes the truck!”

The Works manager at Antwerp, a “good ole boy” expatriate from the US, took a particular dislike in me from the start. First, since I came from the GMAD group, I was the symbol of the group that shut down his home plant and forced him to take this “foreign” assignment. Second, I had the audacity to show that his operation could be made more efficient and thirdly, I was a “darned furriner” from California and not a true “Midwesterner”! He went to the length of getting another “overly” ambitious expatriate, to feign friendship with me, visit my office each morning, and report “out of context” all of the gripes that I voiced about the management of his operation.

In 1973, the United States officially ended its adherence to the gold standard. Many other industrialized nations also switched from a system of fixed exchange rates to a system of floating rates. This caused a major “shudder” in our operations in Europe. Early one morning, all of us expatriates (in those days only Americans), were invited to the Treasurer’s office, and after being seated at the conference table, each was given a sheet of typed paper. For 5 minutes there was total silence, until one of the group asked – “Does this mean we are not getting paid this month?”

The answer was, unfortunately – “Yes” and worse, we were also told that at the new exchange rate our wages would be reduced by ~ 15%! Oh, well, after a while life went on. We were just a little more frugal with our spending and travelling. We did not frequent any fancy social clubs or take 1<sup>st</sup> class guided tours and lived closer to the “local” style than any of the other expatriates.

The GMOO financial arrangements were pretty simple, straight-forward, and in my opinion fair – GM deducted 15% of my Gross Income for “adequate” housing and paid for the balance. “Adequate” meant approximately the same square footage that we would have back in the US. They also paid in full for any education expense for the kids (tuition, books, supplies and transportation), they provided a local car (in my case it was an imported Pontiac, since it came out that I did not know how to drive a shift) and a living allowance based on the US State department’s index for the area. The idea was that we should not be penalized financial for choosing a foreign assignment, but also we should not get unfair financial advantage over our “domestic” colleagues.

The smart “wheeler dealers” took advantage of the expense reports, padding them and having junior members (like myself) picking up the tab at restaurants and bars during “meeting” sessions and “working meals”, while including their individual cost in their own.

Abuses were many and certainly noticed by the “locals” on one occasion, when one of the local staff was queried about the amount of phone calls that he had made home to his bed-ridden wife – he said “You are criticizing me for being overly concerned about my family and spending \$50 on long distance phone calls, when you approved an expense bill of \$1,200 for Mr.X to sent his cat to the US for treatment!”

I remember, how on arrival in Antwerp, I was met by a company chauffeur who was dressed in an immaculate grey individually tailored suit, spotlessly sparkling white shirt and faultlessly arranged black tie. Made me look like a refugee by comparison. At another occasion, I recall passing by the Personnel office and seeing a group of teenagers and young adults sprawled on the corridor floor, in ragged jeans, dirty flip-flops and straggly uncombed and unwashed hair and beards, being passed by local employees in suits hardly containing their dismay and disapproval from showing on their faces. These were children of senior US executives that were stopping by to pick up their pre-paid airline tickets to return to the US.

This 1<sup>st</sup> ISP Assignment taught me a lot about different cultures. Due to the nature of my job as well as personal desire, we associated a lot more with the local employees than with the other US – ISP staff. We learned quickly the basic cultural differences between the 4 groups that I had to deal with, they were all very hospitable and fun-loving after we got to know them, but there were subtle differences in there outlook on life – Antwerp was a 24-hour city, restaurants, night clubs and beer halls were open all night and always full and lively, however there were very few public drunks or rowdy quarrels in any of the establishments. The Swiss were a little stuffy and formal at first meeting,



but they also had a great sense of humor and enjoyed showing us the beauty of their alpine panorama, gorgeous lakes and spectacular countryside. The Danes were also very hospitable, proud of their culture and very open minded about sex, giving us “boys” quite a tour of their “private” clubs with exotic performances. The Portuguese were very flattered when they discovered that I could speak their language and took me to a few “fado” performances, where individuals would wander in to a tavern and sing original sad songs about the harshness of life, something like our “country western” ballads. I was also exposed to many Brits, Germans and Dutch, each having a distinct ethnic flavor and mannerism although all of them spoke fluently in at least 4 languages.

### **Inserts**

#### **To Chapter IX – European Assignment**

- More descriptions of “Culture Shock”
- Visit to Soviet Foreign Ministry and meeting with automotive executives ~ 1975

## Chapter X – My 2nd GM Overseas Assignment – Iran (1974 to 1978)

“Treat your superior as a father, your equal as a brother, and your inferior as a son” – Persian proverb

In the fall of 1974, I received a call from the Detroit Home Office asking me if I would be interested in another overseas assignment. The new job involved the initiation and development of an Industrial Engineering Department in a new assembly plant in Teheran, Iran. My responsibilities would cover the hiring of personnel to develop the layout, work stations and production readiness for the CKD (complete knock down) assembly of the Opel Rekord sedan. The car parts would arrive in crated metal stampings, trim and chassis parts, engine and transmission assemblies and drive train, wheels and tires. I was told to get on the first available plane and fly out there ASAP. I jumped at the chance thinking that this was just the change of geographical exposure that I needed. The Moslem countries had “dry” laws and this would help me combat my alcohol concerns as well as assist to put my GM career on the right path again. My wife was horrified at the thought of leaving Europe, which she got to love, and go to a male-dominated Mid Eastern nation. I however convinced her that if she could not cope there I would guarantee our return to the USA in six months.

Iran was a tremendous culture shock, everything was alien, we could not read any of the street signs, could not wander anywhere unescorted and could not understand a single word or body sign. For example the usual way of saying yes in Iran was a slight clicking sound of the tongue and a jerk of the head in a backward nod. My Chinese background helped me some but my poor wife was thoroughly intimidated, devastated and frustrated and ready to return home after the first week. After less than 6 months, as promised, I sent her and the boys home to San Francisco for an extended stay and buried myself in my work.

Again I had “carte blanche” for my activities and enjoyed greatly setting up a superb Industrial Engineering Department. A third of the people that I hired spoke English and had some job experiences during their studies in the USA or Europe. They in turn translated my directions to the other Iranian staff who were not bi-lingual. I also soon discovered to my pleasant surprise two things – one that Teheran had some beautiful skiing close by in the Albroz Mountains, about 14,000 feet above sea level, with miles of downhill ski runs and two, that Tehran was far from dry, on the contrary, the Persians believed that they were the ones who have invented vodka as well as chess.



*On the slopes at Dizin – beautiful “downhill” ski area*

My family stayed “States-side” for nearly 6 months and although I missed them a lot, I kept myself very busy, both at work and at play.

An additional “boon” was that the Plant Manager was an American of Russian descent, although his Russian language was very limited, as he was born and raised in New York, his Russian-born mother, who accompanied him on this assignment, was overjoyed to be able to converse with us in her native tongue.

I enjoyed my work assignment thoroughly for I could create a department from the ground up and use all my knowledge and skills in the process. The Iranians were a pleasure to work with, they were very quick learners, extremely dedicated and full of good humor and fun to be with. We had a few cultural clashes but fortunately I learned very quickly how to adapt my “Western” ways to their culture. For example – never look at my wristwatch during meetings, never cross my legs in their company, sip a lot of tea and be patient through all of the initial pleasantries and small talk before getting into business negotiations or directions.

Due to the local requirement we were all assigned personal drivers, this was due to the fact that if we were driving and injured any local person, we would inherit the welfare of their family as our personal responsibility until he or she are fully recovered! And if any male member got killed we inherit their family forever. Each of our offices also got a “tea boy” who would periodically serve strong freshly brewed tea with rock sugar which one would hold in their teeth while sipping the scalding brew.

On weekends I did a lot of skiing which I learned in my own “hard-headed” way. After 3 pairs of broken skis, innumerable lost ski poles, a dozen broken ski glasses and six stitches on my head, I became a better than average downhill skier – bad form, no style, but steady on my feet and capable of module skiing, mild jumping and being able to handle nearly every slope in the area. I also met a lot of interesting people on the slopes, including members of the Shah’s inner court and some of his personal bodyguards, one of them a seven plus foot giant who took a liking to me and practically dragged me to some fancy night clubs with “imported” British hostesses. I also got involved in a couple of minor car accidents but was not too worried since they were all company provided cars and new ones were always available.

When my wife and sons rejoined me, I was well on the road to regular weekend drinking, however, I could still maintain a decent appearance and her concern was greatly tempered when I introduced her to some of the “fancy” society people that I got to know. She entered into social activities of her own and pretty soon our group of friends included some of the most powerful people in Iran. Many of the foreign embassy personnel, especially the military attaches, were convinced that I worked for the CIA, and were constantly hinting to me, at the frequent diplomatic cocktail parties, how they would like to get to know me better for some serious exchanges. For my amusement I played along and made enigmatic comments which could be interpreted in many different ways.

On one weekend I sent my family ahead to the Dizin ski resort and drove up the following day alone. On the way I stopped over at a restaurant that was well known for their fabulous lamb shish-kebabs. It was also the only place on the road to the ski area that sold liquor. After a liberal amount of vodka and a fresh bottle in my car, I proceeded on my way. On the narrow, winding icy mountainous road with solid high rocks on my left and a drop of 200 feet on my right, going very fast, I lost control of the car and slammed into the mountain side. Recovering my senses, and realizing that I was a hazard to

anyone following me, I put the car in reverse and immediately hit, with full force, a police car that has just arrived on the scene. My political connections kept me out of jail and I soothed it over with the local authorities with some sumptuous gratuities, however our GM Treasurer gave me a personal tongue-lashing since this was the 5<sup>th</sup> vehicle that I have destroyed in that year.

That cooled me down for a while and I devoted myself to some fine skiing with the boys. They became excellent skiers as the local ski patrol adopted them and taught them how to ski on modules, do minor jumps and go through downhill races between ski poles.



*Igor and Andre in front of the Club House at Dizin Ski Area*

We enrolled the boys in the local American School but after listening with horror to their language which became spiced with 4-letter words, we pulled them out and enrolled them into a local foreign language school called Iran-Zamin where they intermingled with other kids from mixed Iranian-Foreign families. The courses were all in English with the Farsi language as a required subject.

The boys loved living in Iran, all the Iranians loved their blonde hair and with their natural love for children, pampered them constantly. We also had a small swimming pool in the back and the boys loved to slash each other and dive in to retrieve coins or other objects that I would toss in. Every night at bedtime I would lie with them in the bed and tell them my slightly altered version of the “Fellowship of the Ring” starting with “The Hobbit” until they would fall asleep.

Also at that time I resumed strumming on my guitar and would sit on my back porch on summer evenings, watch the stars in the clear dark indigo sky and sing Country Western songs and ballads. I was unaware till Andre told me that I had one fan – the younger daughter of our neighbor would sit under the brick wall of her garden and listen to my attempts at the “Grand Ole Opry” repertoires.

Crime was pretty prevalent in Teheran, although none of it was violent like armed robbery or “mugging”. The Iranians are basically a peaceful people and do not usually go to physical mayhem or



assault. However, burglary and thievery were very common since the people were very poor and often could not feed their families or even themselves. On one occasion, on a warm summer evening, we had a friend over for dinner, he was on his way to the lake shore on the Caspian to meet with his family who had preceded him there. He parked his car with his suitcases and supplies in the gated and locked driveway near our window. The meal went fine with nice conversation and humor, enjoyed by all. At its conclusion we bid him goodbye and saw him to the door. Very shortly after he rang our bell and we opened the door to his very agitated figure. "I was robbed" he exclaimed, "all of my suitcases and supplies are gone!" Sure enough during our dinner, right under our noses, the thieves got through the locked gates, opened his locked car, and made off with his belongings, all without a sound.

At another time, in the middle of the night, I suddenly woke up to go to the toilet. Before returning to bed, I thought of checking the boys who were asleep in an adjoining bedroom. As I entered their room, I noticed that the window was open a little wider than usual. As I came to the window I saw one of my wife's costume necklaces laying on the floor. It was then that I realized that we had an intruder in the house whom I scared away by waking up and in his hurry to escape he dropped the Necklace. An inventory of her jewelry box confirmed this as there were two inexpensive rings missing.

The worst was when my driver, who would arrive early to drive me to work in my car which was parked in a gated driveway, rang the doorbell and I handed over the car keys. A short while later, he rang again, and when I opened, asked me – "Sir, where is the car". It was soundlessly stolen during the night through the locked gates! Ali Baba was still alive and in business!

My work was proceeding very well and I was expanding my staff with very good, loyal and intelligent personnel. I loved to watch how rapidly they were progressing and learning the best methods and techniques in the layout process of effective operational work stations on our manually operated assembly line. Production was set at 6 vehicles per hour which meant that the line operators physically pushed the car body trolley down a fixed channel track to the next station. The line supervisors monitored this process and in turn were watched by the superintendent and my designated area industrial engineers. It was primitive but it worked. I also stressed quality as the first rule and sloppy, ill fitting work was not accepted.

The criteria that I used in hiring my "key" staff was simple – a BS equivalent degree from a Western University, knowledge of English and some actual industrial work experience in a Western factory. Progress was slow as the people meeting those requirements were scarce. One morning I got a call from the Personnel office that a candidate was found meeting all of my requirements. I noticed a slight hesitation in his voice and ask – "But what?" After a little pause, the Personnel manager told me – "the candidate is wearing high heels". The candidate turned out to be an Iranian woman married to a Texan, a graduate from Texas A&M University and had three years experience in one of the Texas manufacturing plants. At the conclusion of our brief interview, I told her I would hire her with absolutely no distinction of her gender. She would have to prove herself capable of handling her all male peers with no "protection" or "special treatment" on my part. She accepted gladly and thank me saying that she had her full of the discrimination she had to face in her US job and would prove to me that she was as capable as any man to do her assignments properly and efficiently.

It proved a good choice for in little over a year she was fully capable to replace me in running the Industrial Engineering department and released me for other responsibilities. Shortly after I was assigned to be the Production Manager of the new Cadillac Seville assembly operation.



*First Assembled car off the line – January 1974*

Our 1<sup>st</sup> residence in Teheran was a 2-level apartment situated in a modern section on the outskirts of Teheran. We occupied the lower (ground) level which had a large tiled courtyard with an ornate iron latticed lockable gate and space enough to park 2 cars. There were 3 bedrooms and a large sitting/dining room. All the floors were mosaic-tiled with Persian patterns, the master bathroom had gold painted ornate fixture handles, and there was a private bathroom in the master bedroom and a small, glassed-in arboretum in the center of the apartment running to a skylight on the roof. In the back there was a large yard with a stone and brick fence and a large field beyond that. There was also, much to the boys delight, a fair-sized swimming pool, about 30' long by 20' wide and 5' deep.

The pool had no circulation pumps and after 7 to 10 days would turn green with algae and had to be drained, hosed down and refilled, a good 8 hour job. There was air conditioning and central heating as well as a fully equipped modern American-style kitchen.

Our landlord was a rich Iranian lady married to a retired army colonel and lived on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level over us. She was a nice portly lady, very gracious with us but “hen-pecked” her poor husband constantly. We all got along fine – mainly because we could not communicate, since neither of us understood the other’s language and our communications were restricted to smiles, nods, bows and waves of the hand in greeting. Unfortunately after a year, our landlady sold the entire complex and we gained a new landlord.

This was an entirely different individual, he was a product of the “Persian Market”, a Jewish trader who made his money at the local market, poorly educated, rather crude in manner and dress but

extremely shrewd and conniving. He wanted us to vacate our apartment ASAP and did all forms of harassment for us to leave 6 months before our lease would expire.



*The boys – could not wait till the pool was completely filled*

The small (25' x 20') swimming pool in the backyard where the boys would splash around each summer did not have a circulating system so it turned green with algae after a couple of weeks and had to be drained, cleaned and refilled, however the boys helped a lot and gave me no peace until they could dive in it and “horse around”.

In the summer of 1974, my mother-in-law came over for a visit and we all packed up in a car and drove to Isfahan and Shiraz, fabulous picturesque ancient cities of Islamic culture with their stately minarets and mosques, palaces with magnificent mosaic and bustling bazaars where craftsmen displayed and sold finely engraved brass, silver and copper trays, beautiful hand woven wool and silk carpets and many, many other items. Also there were many antiques (real and fake) of items abandoned or sold by the Imperial Russian White Army as they were retreating from the victorious Bolshevik Red army through Persia for Egypt and the West.

Irene and Nina Andreevna stocked up with the old Russian Samovars, ornately hand-engraved silver plated platters and decorative plates, various Persian hand-carved figurines and miniature paintings. Overall it was a very nice and educational trip seeing the different parts and peoples of the Iranian culture, ranging from the darkly covered women of the extreme Moslem believers in their black “chadors” with only their eyes showing to the brightly colored, be-jeweled Kurdish women in their broad multi-colored skirts and beaded jackets. There were also some occasional Arabs in their white robes and kefirs and many semi-bewildered imported Koreans who came on contracts to drive the huge transport trailer trucks since Iran had imported more goods than they had drivers to transport those loads. The boys had a “ball” following their grandmother around and showing off their language and bargaining skills.





*Igor with Grandma's purchases at the open market in Isfahan*

On February, 1976, I finally received word that my mother arrived safe and sound in San Francisco. This was over 10 years since I seen her last in Brazil and after two entry visa approvals and interminable pleading, coaxing and cajoling her to come to the USA.



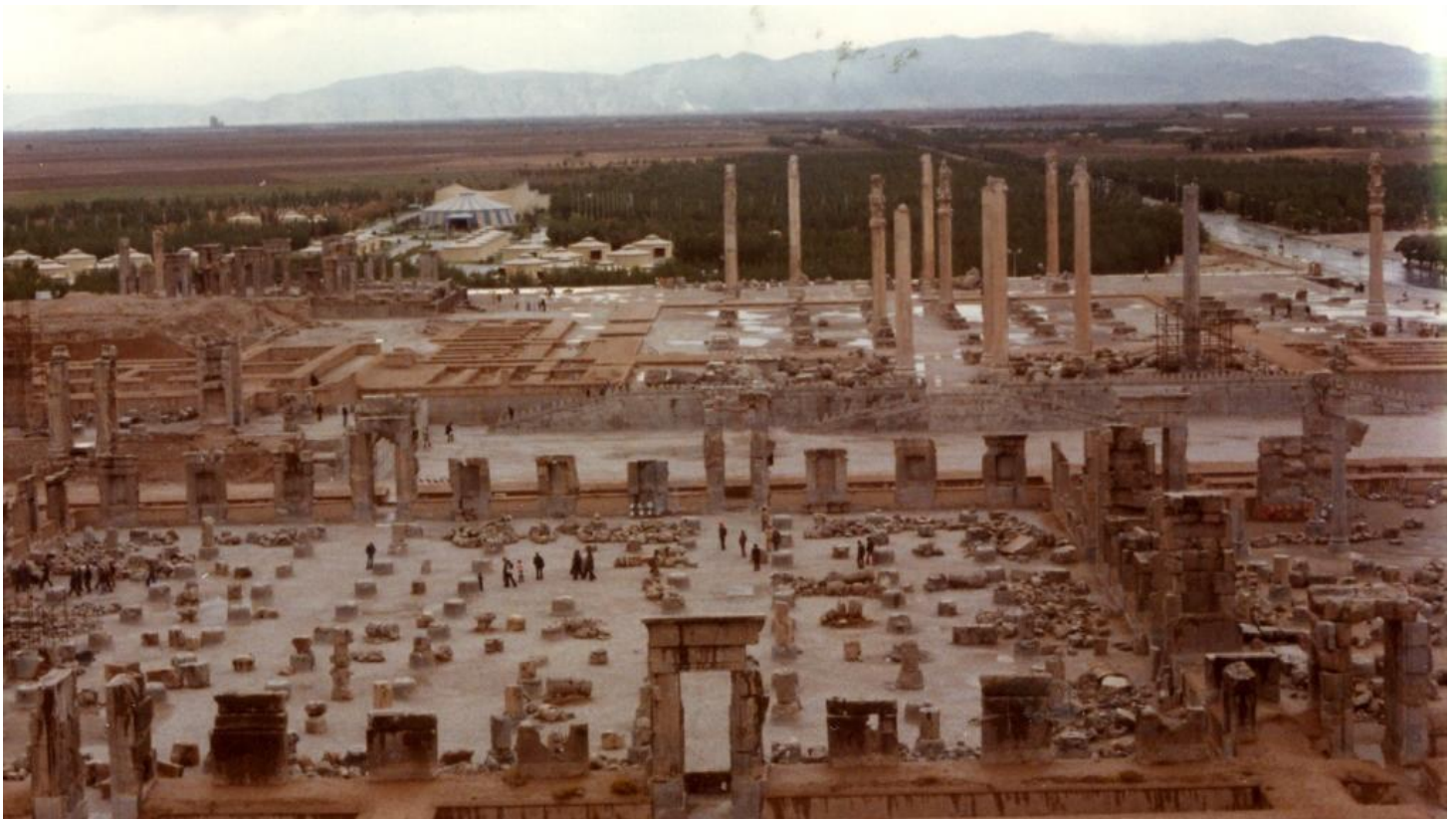
*My mother Ekaterina Nicolaevna in San Francisco – 1976*



That winter Home Leave we finally got together and she had a chance to get acquainted with her grandsons.

In the summer of 1977, while Irene and the boys were on one of their frequent visits back to the US, a GM colleague and I loaded a company car with four spare tires, a spare battery, four 5-gallon cans of gasoline, assorted belts, spark plugs, and other spare critical parts and started on a 1,000 mile round trip to Abadan on the Persian Gulf and back. Most of the trip was through mountain passes and arid desert with a view of oil wells spouting fire of burning gases and derelicts of overturned and crippled trucks about every hundred miles. In the flush of Iran's oil boom and expanding industry, Abadan, a major port on the only semi-paved highway to Teheran, was overloaded with freighters full of perishable cargo. The Iranian government purchased from GM a fleet of 75,000 trucks and then discovered that there were a major insufficiency of qualified drivers. They were forced to import drivers from places like Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines, who spoke no Farsi or English and had questionable qualifications. They were also paid by the load and tried to make the trip as fast as possible. The highways had no lights, signs, many sharp curves and shifting sand that would blow over and cause skidding.

The trip went well and it was wonderful to visit Persepolis, the capital of the ancient Persian Empire, which Alexander the Great burned down in a drunken orgy in 330 B.C. The building of Persepolis dates to around 515 BC. It is believed that Cyrus the Great chose the site of Persepolis, but that Darius the Great built the terrace and the great palaces. I wandered around the ruins savoring ancient history and trying to imagine how it was over 2,000 years ago.



*Ruins of Persepolis*

During the winter of 1977, I got a phone call from a voice of the past. It was my old KGB “friend” asking me to meet one of his “residents” in Teheran. I reluctantly agreed and met this dour young man at a local skating ring. He knew about my drinking preference and ordered vodka. I arrived prepared by swallowing half a bar of butter to oil my stomach and insisted on matching him drink for drink. As a result I got him somewhat inebriated and he left as he was cautious in bringing attention to himself. This occurred a couple more times until he finally left me alone. I stayed uncommitted but somewhat worried about future attempts of recruitment.

In October of 1977, as I was returning to Teheran, I made a weekend stop in Athens which I always wanted to see. Coming back to my hotel on my last night I wanted a snack before going to bed. As I sat at a table in the deserted hotel restaurant, the waiter approached me and politely told me that the kitchen was closed. As I stood up to go, he noticed my room key on the table with my name displayed as was customary there. He asked me if that was my name and got somewhat agitated when I said it was. He asked me to sit down and ran off, returning in a short while with a wonderful lamb stew with other Greek delicacies. Noting my confusion, he explained that it was an honor to serve a member of my family and that there was a street in Athens named “Kalagiorgi”

Back home I arrived just as the first snow fell. The roofs in Teheran are all flat with no slope and after a heavy snowfall can build up to 6 inches or more of snow. Some of the locals walk down the streets hollering “Barf!” at the top of their voices – this was offers to shovel the snow off your roof for a small fee. I decided that we can save the expense and do it myself with the help of our boys. On the first attempt I scooped a load of heavy wet snow on the shovel and dumped it off the edge of the roof coming with an inch of dumping myself with it. That was the end of that – I hired the “Barf Man”

That winter was exceptionally cold and our water pipes froze. I called for a local “plumber” who arrived and assessed the situation. As I was sitting in the kitchen, enjoying my cup of coffee, I was startled by a burst of high flames. I rushed out to see what was happening and saw our “plumber” pouring gasoline on a spot in the yard next to the kitchen feeding a roaring fire! He calmed me down indicating that that was the local method of thawing underground piping and not to worry since the building was all brick and stone and would not catch fire.

At work , things were proceeding relatively well, but in the winter of 1977, after skiing most of the day, I decided to try my luck at the discotheque. Around 4 in the morning, completely plastered, I tried to walk back to my cabin in a blinding blizzard, dressed in my thin “après-ski” outfit and wearing wooden clogs on my bare feet. Half-way I lost a clog and in my efforts to find it, wandered around in circles, completely disoriented and blinded by the heavy blowing snow and sleet. Starting to freeze, I made my way in my bare feet through the heavy snow to a light in the distance and in desperation smashed through a window severely lacerating my hand and wrists on the jagged glass. When a washroom attendant found me, shortly after, lying on the floor of the clubhouse’s restroom, I was lying in a pool of blood totally unconscious. I was told later that I lost 4 pints of blood and came very close to death.

Guardian Angel again!

My recovery was rapid but about that time, in early 1978, GM decided that it was time to send me home, however when my travel orders arrived, without any prior consultation with me, the Shah’s court intervened and requested GM to extend my stay for another year. This did not sit too well with GM’s upper management in Detroit and my new plant manager told me in no uncertain terms, that

although they would comply with the Shah's wishes, as far as he was concerned, my career with GM is finished if he had anything to do with it. My growing personnel file in Detroit must have gained another interesting chapter.

My three years in the Middle East taught me a lot on cultural differences. I tried to share some of my experiences with the GM Home Office representatives, but they lived in their own world, looking down on all "foreigners" and maintaining a superior, arrogant and "know-it-all" attitude during their brief visits to the site. The favorite expression was "I am here to get things started and not to win popularity contests". I remember one visit when a senior engineer from the US asked me if it was alright for him to visit the assembly line. I told him to go ahead and I would join him as soon as I could break away from a meeting that I had to attend. After a short while I caught up with him to find him agitated and pale with the line operators yelling at him and shaking their fists. I quickly got him out of there and asked him – "what did you do?" "Nothing", he said "I just told them that they were doing a great job". "How could you do that, not knowing the language", I asked. He replied – "very simply, I just showed them a thumbs up with my fingers". Well – "thumbs up" in the Middle East is the same as showing the middle finger in the US.

Another time we had a close rebellion when we prepared the initial plant layout and had the toilets position so that the rear end was facing Mecca! I also learned very early that "the person in authority" – in this case, me, must never praise the subordinates, must be stern but fair in all circumstances and is the authority in everything even the subordinates personal family life and problems. Much of this cultural education was extremely valuable to me in this and my future assignments. Most Americans that are sent overseas by corporations such as GM, are badly trained for the cultural differences of their more "exotic" assignment. In their insecurity, they tend to band together, flaunt their more "affluent" status and alienate themselves from the "real" natives – the ones that do not speak English or imitate the American life-style. This is very sad, since many of these expatriates are kind, well intentioned people that do not understand why they are viewed with suspicion and hostility.

Some Multi-Cultural lessons that would have helped enormously -

- Do not pet children on the head in the East. The Easterners, especially the Hindus, believe that the soul resides in the head and should not be touched by strangers.
- Do not check your wristwatch during meeting or when with new friends or hosts. This illustrates that the person with whom you are talking is less valuable than your time.
- Always offer to share food or drink when with others. This signifies your concern for others and your social graces which are highly valued in the East.
- Never cross your legs and show the sole of your shoe to anyone that you respect. The sole of your shoe or foot shows disdain to the person that you are dealing with. It demonstrates your contempt.
- Do not sprawl in a chair, sit straight. This demonstrates your sloppy character and that you are a person that is unfit for your position since you have no discipline over your own behavior.
- Do not sit on the floor. Peasants, servants and slaves sit on the floor.
- Be aware that finger and/or hand gestures have different meanings around the world. The uplifted thumb in the East is the same as the uplifted middle finger in the West.
- Purses, briefcases and duffle bags on seating areas like chairs and benches. Lack of respect for others that may want to sit down.
- Wearing shorts and short sleeves. Religious beliefs do not advocate the show of bared limbs, especially for women.



Also one must remember that Eastern societies, particularly in the Mid-East, are very layered and do not understand or desire our “western-styled” democracy. The general population wants order and direction from the top. Autocratic strength with justice is much more understood and tolerated than “wishy-washy” democracy which leads to chaos and exploitation of the masses.

Of course, corruption in such a society is often prevalent, but it is dealt with if it gets excessive and wise, educated rulers appear at the top.



*The boys with Empress Farah in Dizin*

Another “boon” of this assignment was that I met a very interesting grouping of people. The International Staff Personnel (ISP) team was very international – we had 4 Americans, 2 Danes, 1 Brit, 1 Belgian, 1 Austrian and 1 Frenchman. Additionally in the group 3 were Russian speakers. This last factor was publically advertised in the local press by a “smart-aleck” reporter alluding that this was “some coincidence” with Iran being bordered by the Soviet Union.

The Austrian member, Klaus, was an excellent all-round athlete. He was a particularly capable horseman and talked a bunch of us to go horseback riding in the semi-desert in the outskirts of Teheran. We concurred, and after some minor difficulties in finding the “right” horse for me that was tall enough that my legs did not drag on the ground and gentle enough that it would not be a challenge to my lack of experience. That accomplished, we were off, with Klaus galloping away over the horizon and 3 of us “rookies” plodding along slowly and chatting. In a while, Klaus appears again and trotted to us to see how we were doing. On seeing that we were OK, he took off again in a gallop.



At this point something happened to my docile horse – its ears perked up, she snorted and took off in a gallop following Klaus.

I hung on for dear life, my legs flapping sideways and my butt taking a severe pounding on the hard saddle. Fortunately, this did not last long, and due to my weight and size, the horse finally stopped, wheezing for breath and snorting. I climbed off and walked back on shaking legs.

That evening we had a cocktail party and I showed up a little late, walked in “bow-legged”, since the inside skin of both of my thighs was completely rubbed off from crotch to knee, and remained standing the whole evening since even soft cushions would not permit any contact with my black and blue butt! Of course, everyone, especially Klaus thought it was very humorous. It was a long time before I ever attempted to ride a horse again.

During the winter, on the ski slopes, I hung around with a group of very boisterous and fun-loving Austrians. The leader was the cultural attaché at the Austrian Embassy, he was multi-lingual and able to speak, read and write in English, French, German, Farsi and Turkish. He had a “hollow leg” and could drink an enormous amount of vodka without showing any sign of intoxication. I suspect that he had a 2<sup>nd</sup> job, at their embassy, dealing with intelligence as he was very friendly with the military attaches of all of the other embassies, Iranian colonels and myself. He was also extremely talented and played the concert piano and many other instruments ranging from the clarinet, the trumpet and violin to guitar, accordion and drums. It was great fun to be with him and his crowd as they would constantly pull pranks.

Once in the middle of very heavy peak traffic, during the “rush” hour they stopped their car in the center of an extremely busy intersection and unplugged one of the ignition cables. After standing there, hunched under an open hood for about 30 minutes and causing a major traffic jam with irate natives honking their horns, waving their arms and getting hopelessly tangled up by trying to pass him, he would reconnect the ignition cable, start the engine and with a broad smile, slowly drive off.

Later on my assignment I was again surreptitiously contacted by the KGB. A man called me at our home in Teheran and identified himself as the person that spoke to me some years earlier in Moscow. I maintained my composure and spoke to him calmly and acknowledged my recognition. He asked me if I could meet one of his colleagues at a local ice-skating ring. My first reaction was to refuse and report the incident to our consular staff. However realizing that that may mean the termination of my GMOO assignment or worse the possible recruitment to work as a “double” for our intelligence services, I agreed.

The meeting went relatively well and I used my “alcohol tolerance” to get the agent well on the road to intoxication. Caution caused him to abort the meeting at that time and save it for later. This occurred several times but I managed to stall any commitment and fortunately reach the end of my assignment without getting “drafted”!

Another interesting person was an American GM engineer who also owned a bar in Detroit. On one of my trips to Detroit, I had a day off and decided to look him up. He was pleased to see me and we had a pleasant beer together. At that point he told me he was invited to a garden party at a friend’s home and if I would like to join him. I concurred and we were off to Bloomfield Hills.

The host met us at the gate of a gorgeous palatial residence with a large lawn in front. I remember being a little surprised at his deep tan and steely hard eyes, but his smile was very pleasant and sincere. He looked “hard” like some of our seasoned factory floor superintendents but was dressed in very expensive, well-cut designer shirt and white slacks.

The lawn was laid out with delicious snacks, barbecued pork, chicken and prawns, and many other wonderful dishes. However I noticed a few rather largely built, thick-necked men with mirrored sun glasses standing around sipping from their glasses but not mingling with the main crowd.

I got a drink and a plate and wandered closer to the house to find a place to sit on. As I approached, I saw a fantastically beautiful woman reclining on a chaise lounge. She beckoned to me and offered a seat nearby. I casually strolled over admiring her shapely long sunburned legs. After a brief exchange of pleasantries a tall white haired man walked up and she introduced him as her husband. He was also very tanned, in a well-cut expensive summer suit and had the same steely eyes as the host. In our conversation I mentioned that I worked with my buddy for GM overseas and he responded that “he occasionally visited the old country”. Noticing his Italian name I noted that I have been to Italy a few times. At this he said – “Italy, hell! I go to ChiChily!” It then clicked in my mind who my hosts were. Later, I button-holed my buddy and he laughed his head off – “Are you afraid? This is the safest place in town”. Our host was one of the top capos of the Detroit Mafia.

In the last year of my assignment, GM hired various consultants in efforts to smoothen relations between the “Home” team and the local staff. I was fortunate to merit the friendship of one of them who was a professor of Mid-Eastern Studies from the University of Oregon. He was a former Peace Corp volunteer who spent a few years in Iran, married an Iranian lady and was fluent and literal in Farsi. He asked me – “Leo, if GM is here to make money, why are they trying so hard to change the culture?” This was a valuable lesson to me in dealing with other cultures.

GM however never learned and never could understand their lack of success and progress in foreign assignments and markets. I remember on one of Home Leave visits noticing a Nationalist Chinese flag on the flagpole at the entrance of the Delphi Headquarters and being told that they were anticipating some visitors from the mainland Chinese People’s Republic! Fortunately they had time to switch to the correct flag after I brought it to their attention and avoided a major diplomatic blunder.

I left Teheran, Iran for good in December of 1978, however my wife stayed behind with our boys for nearly another year due to some interests that she developed on her own.

My main regret of that assignment is that I did not take the opportunity of visiting Beirut during those years of my proximity. It was in those days considered “the Paris of the East” with beautiful buildings, parks and a lively night life. This was soon to be completely wiped out by the savage wars and bombings between the Israelis and the Palestinians. What a waste!

The positive side of my Iranian assignment was that I started to realize the wisdom and value of “Listening to hear instead of listening to answer”. This helped me a lot during my future assignment in Russia. Also the different version of “Don’t just stand there – do something” which in foreign assignments should be – “Stand there – do nothing”.

Iran, formerly called Persia, is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to 7000 BC. The blossoming of Persian literature, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics and art became major elements of Muslim civilization.

My memories are filled with Iranian hospitality, humanity, humility, courtesy and kindness. They are a wonderful people especially after you gain their trust and respect. Their humor is awesome and never at someone's expense. I would love to visit Teheran and the country again. I still keep in touch with some old friends and am appalled about the erroneous things that I hear on the news media today about Iran. Based on their beliefs, usury (making money from money by charging interest on loans) is a grave sin and 10% of all earnings must be donated to the poor. One of the mosques that I visited in Teheran had, at its entrance, a 3 meter clear plastic cube with a slot on each of the four walls filled with currency and coins donated for the poor. Widows and orphans are cared for and the only urchins that I have seen, panhandling on the streets and offering to wash your car's windshield with dirty rags, were Armenian Christians. The predominant Muslims were Shi'ites but they lived harmoniously with the minority Sunnis, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians.

There were 2 types of holidays, happy ones and sad ones. On the happy ones, usually the end of fasting or the birth of some great prophet, involved family outings and picnics. The sad ones, occasioned by some prophets' martyrdom, were grim with male processions in the streets chanting and flailing themselves with leather tongs across their backs. All of the expatriates (infidels) were told to stay indoors. I discreetly watched one of the processions through shuttered windows and was appalled about the fanatical devotion of the participants.

Iran, especially Tehran, modernized very rapidly. Oil money brought in a lot of wealth, corruption but also much confusion and congestion. The city street were one constant grid-lock nightmare and a challenge to drive. The rule of thumb was "never make eye contact with another driver", just barrel ahead at every opportunity. No one paid any attention to stop signs at intersection, one just beeps the horn and drives through, very exciting when 2 cars come to the intersection simultaneously! Fender benders were very common and generally ignored as all of the vehicles had bumps and scratches on them. I remember once being stuck in a tunnel on the way to the Caspian Sea beach. There was absolutely no ventilation and the tunnel was full of fumes to a point that one could not see 6 feet away. I finally got out with my family and we walked out of the tunnel holding our breath and waited for our driver and car at its exit.

The oil money brought many tankers and container ship loads of Western food and delicacies; unfortunately there was insufficient transportation from the southern Arabian seaport of Abadan to Teheran so a lot of the ships were stranded with cargo for months. There was much spoilage and damage from the hot sun and a lot of the food was thrown into the sea. GM did very well by selling to the Iranian government 25,000 trucks in one "super" fleet sale. However it became apparent that Iran did not have anywhere close to that "qualified" drivers. The problem was partially solved by importing 10,000 South Koreans to drive these trucks. The Koreans did not speak a word of Farsi and it was interesting to see how they handled themselves in the traffic jams – often "karate versus knives".

Although Iran is a devout Moslem nation, there were many night clubs, bars and dance clubs in Tehran. In the dance clubs, many of the girls were imported from Europe – particularly England and Germany. Also quite a few rich Iranians married Western women who had to convert to Islam and

follow all of the segregation rules. Drugs were also very prevalent with the “upper crust” especially opium. I remember one evening I was “commandeered” to drive a daughter and her body guard to a hospital in Tehran from the ski resort in Dizin. She O.D’d and although we got her there in time and she recovered, 4 months later she was dead – she was 22 years old the only daughter of a billionaire father.

Our ISP group was small but a pretty culturally mixed group composed of Americans, Danes, Belgians, Germans, Austrians and a Frenchman. One sharp reporter also noted that nearly half of the group could speak Russian. This raised a few brows due to our proximity to the Soviet border. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Plant Manager was a very “social” type. He played the piano and was very popular with the “elite” Iranians, particularly our billionaire partner, however he made a major “cultural” error when our partner, noting that he liked black caviar, sent a 5 kilogram container to his office in Detroit. Instead of thanking him for the gift and donating it quietly to the executive lunchroom, he sent it back, greatly offending the donor. Another one of our executives made the error of complimenting our partner on the beautiful silk \$10,000 carpet in the hallway of his home. On his way out he was startled to find this carpet rolled up and ready for transportation in his car. It took a lot of tact and polite conversation to convince our partner that GM does not permit, by policy, accepting such expensive gifts.

I also had my hands full with visiting “experts” from the US. One group came over to start out a new carline and after I gave them my standard “cultural awareness” speech, they told me that they were over to “build cars and not win any popularity contests”. Needless to say their contributions were very negligible and even negative in some aspects of our general acceptance by the Iranians.

Nearly all of the ISP’s hated this assignment and kept secluded from the natives. Parties were on nearly every weekend at the different expatriate home, mainly at the Plant Manager’s palatial residence as he enjoyed seeing his staff drunk and thus loosen their tongues so he could keep track of all of the office gossip. With the very heavy drinking going on and the dislike that the expatriates had of their assignment, each foreign executive and manager had a personal bar in his office at the plant.

Of course all this did not escape the notice of the Iranians and did not help much on their low esteem of our culture. However, I managed fairly well because the Iranians saw that I was very professional in my attitude with them, never drank on the job, and was very systematic in developing their skills to replace me. They often went out of their way to help me in my cultural understanding of my surroundings. On one occasion when I praised one of the supervisors on doing a job well, an observing native asked to speak to me privately. When we stepped out of the office, he leaned to me and quietly told me – “Sir, with all due respect, I see that you are new here. I wish to give you a small piece of advice. Never complement any of my countrymen, this only leads to him thinking that you are weak and he can fool you”. Seeing my surprised look, he added – “You must be stern but fair, requiring each to do their job. Lack of censure from you is enough of a compliment to them, when they understand that in your stern silence you are pleased with their work.”

Many times later, I saw how sound his advice was.

The boys very quickly became very accomplished skiers and would enjoy zipping down the slopes at the two ski resorts – Dizin and Abadan. Mostly Dizin which was more challenging with a 7-mile run



down the main slope to the resort cabins on the roofs of which they would enjoy to land with, occasionally their Dad.



*Igor and I on the Dizin Sky Slopes*

Theft was very common in Teheran, once we had a friend over for dinner. He was on his way to his summer house on the beach and stopped over with his luggage and belongings in his car. We let him park in our drive-way under the dining room window in a locked, gated area. We enjoyed our dinner quietly and as dusk set in he got ready to leave. As we walked him out we discovered that all of his luggage and belongings disappeared out of his locked car and past our locked gate, right under our noses!

Another time, during a hot summer night, I woke up and went for a drink of water. It was then that I noticed that one of the windows in our boys' bedroom was open, although I remember clearly of locking it before going to bed. Coming back to our bedroom I saw that my wife's fake pearl custom jewelry necklace was missing.

Traffic in Iran was horrendous, once returning from the Abali ski area, we were rear ended by a truck. The boys were in the back seat and fortunately were not hurt, just shaken. However their skis that were in the trunk were shattered.

Close to the conclusion of my 3-year assignment things were starting to get rough. Three Rockwell American employees, were ambushed in their car on their way to work and killed by gunfire. The next day we were visited at the plant by the security representative (CIA) from the US embassy who gave us some pointers on avoiding a similar incident –

1. Do not sit in the rear as an “important person” but sit besides the driver.
2. Do not wear a tie or jacket, just a plain shirt with short or rolled-up sleeves.
3. Do not leave the house or work at the same time daily – change your schedule
4. Do not go the same route every day – change routing frequently
5. Park your car on mud and check for footprints around it in the morning
6. Check your tailpipe each morning for any possible inserted object.
7. Mess up your hair and do not shave regularly.

One of our members expressed concern on the safety of his family, to which the agent responded – “these Islamic terrorists only go for the men as it is considered cowardly in their culture to hurt women or children”. Another said “I am not an American and will put my national flag on my car”. The agent chuckled and said “You are a white Westerner – to them you are ALL Crusaders and Infidels”

Iran had its share in contributing to my “foreign cultural education”. In Europe at least I could read most of the signs, here it was impossible, I could not even read the numbers! Body language was completely different from the West, for example a slight jerk of the head accompanied by a quiet “Tsk” click of the tongue, denoted “No”, while a thumb up did not mean “OK” or “good” but was equivalent to the western extended middle finger. Complimenting subordinates was very dangerous for this generated disrespect on their part and led to serious discipline problems very shortly in the future. Direct dialogue is considered confrontational and impolite, as one Iranian told me there is a Persian saying – “If you want the door to listen, talk to the window”.

Whenever the Shah came to Dizin to ski, he was always accompanied by his elite personal guard. These were huge guys, usually well over 6 foot tall and very solidly built. They would constantly exercise with Iranian weights which were shaped like bowling pins but weighed a lot more. They would twirl them over their heads and bodies in elaborate patterns thus strengthening their upper torso and arm muscles while gaining agility and speed.

One late night at the Dizin Ski Resort, as the disco and bar closed, I was heading back to my cabin when I spotted an acquaintance of mine, a Russian/Persian fellow who was standing halfway up the spiral stairway of the hotel which led to the wealthier guests’ rooms. He was in an animated conversation with two of the Shah’s burly guards. I called to him to bid him goodnight but he quickly spoke to me in Russian and scampered down the stairs to join me. As we stepped outside, he heartily thanked me and took off. The next day when I saw him I asked him what that was all about. He replied that he will be eternally grateful to me for saving him as the guards were planning to take him to their room and “gang rape” him!

On another occasion, a ski instructor with whom we sometimes stayed during our visits, had a couple of the guards over for drinks. Thinking of being funny he took a toy pistol that one of my boys left behind and came out of the kitchen pointing it at them yelling – “Gotcha!” In a blink of an eye both guards somersaulted behind the furniture and he was facing two loaded and cocked revolvers. His face turned white as one of the guards told him – “You will never know how close you came to getting your head blown off. Never, never, do this again”. He never did.

I also had the occasion to meet one of the Shah’s personal bodyguards – he was a giant over 7 and ½ feet tall. I met him one night in our hotel lobby after the bar closed and he asked me if I wanted to go with him to an exclusive night club. I agreed and he climbed into my car. This was a full 4-door sedan but I had to lower the back of the passenger seat so that he could sit with his head resting on the rear window

shelf with his huge feet under the dashboard. After we got to the club he gathered a group of girls, mostly imported from England, and ordered drinks for everyone. Then he took off with one on each arm, leaving me with a young redhead. I told her she was free to leave but she shook her head in fright saying that was not possible because he ordered her to be with me. Nevertheless, I got up and started to leave at which point the manager stopped me and gave me a horrendous bill for all of the drinks. I refused and told him I will only pay for mine, shoved a banknote into his jacket pocket and walked out. He yelled after me “Never come back”, I definitely did not plan to and drove back to the hotel.

Once, while coming back alone from one of my GM business trips to Detroit, on a weekend, I routed my trip through Copenhagen, got a company car and took the Ferry Ride to Malmö for short visit with friends that I skied with in Dizin, Iran. Arriving at Malmö, I drove up the center of the Scandinavian peninsula meandering between Norway and Sweden.

They lived in a small town about 200 miles north of Malmö, I do not recall the name. Most of the drive was through lush thick northern fir forest with bubbling streams by the side of the road. The nature was wonderful, peaceful and quiet with beautiful shades of green and yellow. After a few miles my feet felt hot in the car and I pulled over to rest. Getting out, I took my shoes and socks off and sat by the road dipping my feet into the bubbling stream. I jumped up about a foot in the air – the water was below freezing cold! It came from icebergs further north.

I located my friends with little trouble, the town was very small and on arrival, I asked a little girl if she knew my party by name – she replied in good English – “Of course that is my mummy and daddy”. They were equally astonished to see me and invited me to stay and have dinner. I asked if we could have a drink to toast our meeting, but they told me that with the stringent Swedish laws they had no alcohol in the house. They suggested a “bottle store” in the town and we proceeded there. On arrival at the store and after selecting a bottle (1 liter) of Scotch whiskey, I was shown a big book by the owner to write and sign my name along with my passport number for the purchase of this item. Surprised, I asked my friend what that was about and he informed me that by law in Sweden, one can only purchase 1 liter of alcohol per day in a store. The next “bottle store” was 200 miles away. So we had to settle for a liter between us. Needless to say that I drank probably 2/3 of the bottle myself.

The next day I was off to Stockholm to catch the ferry to Malmö and return the car for my flight back to Teheran. The trip was scenic but uneventful and Stockholm was very expensive and boring. I spent the night in the smallest hotel room EVER! The room was literally the size of the bed with a little indentation for a sink and toilet. I wandered around the deserted streets for a while, it was Sunday and everything was closed, then went to bed early.

The following morning, I drove onto the ferry and was off to Malmö (so I thought). The ferry ride was an eye-opener. As we got out of Swedish territorial waters, the bar opened! Because of the Swedish stringent alcohol controls, the Swedes went wild here and everyone got roaring drunk, including myself. The next morning, bleary eyed with a horrendous hangover, I saw a note under my door telling me to see the purser.

It came out that I overslept my stop at Malmö and was on my way to Kiel, Germany. They were pretty nice about it although my car was a major inconvenience for the unloading of the other passengers at Malmö. They charged me the extra fare and politely suggested that I stay out of the bar till departure.

During my assignment, Iran was a “police state”, with the Shah’s dreaded secret police “Savak” in constant alert of all our actions. Our American Works Manager got himself into some mild trouble by unintentionally placing the mandatory Shah’s portrait beside his desk next to a waste paper basket. This was immediately reported and he was chastised for not showing the “proper respect”.

Another unique feature that I ran across in Iran was the European concubines for rent. These were mostly German women that rented out to rich Iranians and Arabs as concubine/wives for a fixed period, usually a year. This was done all legally and properly and some of the women had their mothers or close female relatives along with them for protection against abuse. They were paid very handsomely, had no chores to perform except share the master’s bed maybe once a month or less. Many saved enough money to buy a house and get married when they returned home.

During my tenure at GM Iran, we had some organizational difficulties. Like all “classic” overseas manufacturing operations, the policy was to shift daily operational responsibilities to a local staff at the earliest stage possible. In Iran, there were a lot of highly qualified personnel for this task, however cultural differences caused some glitches. For example, we discovered that our key, highly capable, local production manager, had a new GM-owned engine put in his private car by the plant’s workers. He was severely chastised and fired. Many years later I discovered that it was common practice for some of our top executives in Detroit to use GM-owned parts and labor to enhance their personal cars. When caught in an audit, they paid a ridiculously low fine and got a very mild tap on the wrist.



## Chapter XI – Return to GMAD Fremont (1978 to 1982)

“You think Change is Easy – Go talk to a Butterfly” - Anonymous

After a brief stay in Detroit, where I twiddled my thumbs and sat at an empty desk reading automotive news magazines and an occasional Playboy to stay current with Hugh Hefner’s philosophy page, I was transferred back to Fremont, CA on January 1, 1978 as a Senior Engineer in the Plant Engineering and Maintenance department.

It was great getting back to my old plant and working with my old friends again. This was an upward move for me and my new job was very interesting and educational as the plant was going through a major model change and I was responsible for the purchase and installation of over \$25 million dollars of new equipment by outside contractors. The Plant Engineering department was an “exclusive” club of the best electrical, mechanical and civil engineers who represented GM’s interests with major outside conveyor and installation contractors and builders. I felt great belonging to this elite group whose motto was – “Work Hard and Play Hard”.



*GM Fremont plant – my desk was at the 4<sup>th</sup> window from the left on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level*

I remember on one of my weekend assignments when I was the GM plant representative (the Owner) with a team of contractors who had to mount “China Caps” on six 20 foot high paint booth stacks. The caps each weighed a couple of hundred pounds made of welded sheet metal and were six feet in diameter. They were positioned by helicopter and attached by a contractor millwright on a high ladder. Because of the air turbulence caused by the helicopter blades, I went to an adjoining rooftop about 200 feet away. As I watched the operation I saw to my horror that the last cap was being put on the wrong stack. Yelling and waving my arms was futile and by the time I got to the contractors the job was done, the helicopter gone and they were calmly enjoying a coffee break. When I told them of my observation, the foreman said – “You are S---ting me!” After we went and took a look, he shook his head and they went into a huddle. Then he told me “The copter is gone and I can’t get him back. Please go and have a coffee on us in the cafeteria, it’s best that you do not watch as we will take care

of it". After some thought, I took his advice, on my return 45 minutes later the job was done and they were all grinning at me with satisfaction and some relief. To this day I shudder to think how they managed to do the job with 5 men, ladders and muscle power!

During my tenure as a plant project engineer and working closely with contractors, I learned a lot about Industrial Safety Practices. GM prided itself for the high safety record that it had for years with a very low level of in-plant accidents. Those were the early days of Federal programs such as Occupational Safety Hazards Agency (OSHA) and their representatives were often visitors in our plant. This education was of much value to me in my later years, overseas and domestically.

I greatly expanded my knowledge of the details in equipment installations, functions, their merits in all disciplines – mechanical and electrical. I learned to read electrical ladder diagrams and how to look for hidden flaws in equipment placement such as access to their critical parts for maintenance and repair. To make sure that all grease access holes and power shut-off valves are easily reached. That there were no "trip hazards" and sufficient "head room" for the maintenance personnel.

I also enhanced my knowledge of proper project control, understanding of real costs in machinery, labor and "extras", preparation and updating of progress charts, "punch lists" and job walks. Also the advantages of making lists to –

- Itemize key requirements for memory
- Categorize the items for "Urgent", "Need to be done", and "Nice to get done"
- Prioritize from the most important to the least
- Satisfaction in crossing out "done" items
- A record of my accomplishments

One summer, one of my boys, as he was touring the plant site with me on a weekend, was offered a job as a "fire watcher" by one of the contractors who was my friend. After some hesitation, I agreed, the job was relatively safe as all he had to do is stand by at a safe distance with a fire extinguisher during a welding operation being performed by one of the contractor's welders, and extinguish any slag that fell away from the weld. He was overjoyed when he received his 1<sup>st</sup> paycheck of \$75 for his work and immediately blew it all on pinball games at the convenience corner store.

Another time, I watched with awe as a complete section of overhead conveyor carrying car bodies in the plant's Body Shop, collapsed due to poorly welded supports – fortunately it was during a shutdown period and no one got hurt. I myself was once caught between two massive welding fixture due to a lapse in caution. One hit me in the back and the other in my chest, with amazing adrenalin-fed force I shoved them apart and came away with only bruises in lieu of broken ribs.

We also were hiring many African-Americans at that time in Fremont. I got to know some of them very well. I remember one of the assembly line repairman telling me he was going for a coffee and would I like him to bring me one. I said "Fine, thanks. No milk or sugar". He looked me straight in the eye and said "You mean Black, right".

Another new feature was the hiring of female line operators. Because of the new "affirmative action" and "civil rights" legislation, GM was required to comply to the "non-discrimination" statutes and hire female line operators. This was quite an undertaking since there were no female restrooms in the plant and the assembly line was an all male operation. The restrooms were really the least of our

problems – the different male/female liaisons, jealousies and mood swings were a “handful” for our Human Relations and Line Foremen.

My 1<sup>st</sup> and only job of supervising tradesmen was rather embarrassing. The Maintenance Superintendent, who was very open and friendly, offered me the job of supervising some electricians to put up a line of lights in the Paint Shop. In my usual trusting manner I indicated to the tradesmen where I needed the line and assuming they were professionals, left them alone to do that. Bad mistake! The General Foreman of that shift was a former Electrician Foreman and resented my “college boy” presence on his turf. I suspect he set them up to mess with me, because at the end of the shift I had a zig-zag line of lights which looked terrible. I had no proof of manipulation but any professional electrician would never do such an ugly job. Lesson learnt but I was never assigned any tradesmen anymore after that. As the saying goes – “Fool me once, shame on you – fool me twice, shame on me”. All that this accomplished was to make me a harsher less trustful supervisor in the future as was reflected in my attitude with contractors later at the Hamtramck plant project

At the close of 1978, my supervisor came to my desk and told me with a whimsical smile – “Leo, this year you have been selected to be the representative for our group” – it came out that since our department dealt a lot with outside contractors, it was customary for each member to receive a Christmas gift of one bottle of booze from several of them. To avoid having to bring alcohol onto the premises, each year a member was selected to receive several cases of choice high-grade liquor for later distribution with the others.

On the designated day, I agreed to make the transfer in the plant’s salary parking lot. As the contractor’s car pulled up to mine, I looked up at the engineering building and saw a row of faces staring down at me – these were the less fortunate employees that were not on the receiving list! I hurriedly told the contractor to abort the transaction and follow me out in his car to behind the plant out of sight of envious judgmental eyes. Just as we started transferring the first case, the factory whistle blew and all of the workers started leaving the plant. There I was, in my white supervisor’s shirt with my name boldly displayed on my chest, receiving “bribes” from a supplier!

In early 1979, my wife and my boys returned to the US after nearly a year of much concern and worry on my part because of the instabilities in Iran caused by the Shah’s abdication and the rise of the Ayatollah Homeini with his Islamic revolution. They first settled at her parents home in San Francisco and later to the home that I owned in Palo Alto, just over the bridge and only 15 minutes away from me by car.

Later that year, she filed for divorce with her gaining and settling in that house and I received unlimited rights to spend time with our boys who were 14 and 12 years old at that time. I did not contest the divorce since, after some honest “soul-searching”; I determined that I contributed more than a small share to the cause for this to happen. We parted amicably however the boys were severely shocked and mortified – poor Igor held his head and kept repeating “Why! Why!”, Andre took the shock silently but I could see the sorrow in his eyes. Sadly children are the ones that suffer most during the initial stages of divorce. I bought a nice small condominium in Fremont just 5 minutes from work, and since they lived just 15 minutes away by car, they were over nearly every other weekend. The rest of the time I buried myself in work and some “serious” bachelor living.

I visited my Mother in San Francisco about every other weekend and became a regular at a small Irish bar just a block from her house where I would drink Guinness with an occasional shot of bourbon. On one of my visits, Danny the owner and bartender appeared a little agitated, I did not pay too much attention and ordered my usual. In a little while one of the customers who was sitting slumped at the bar got up and went to the restroom. At that point another customer who was at the pool table followed him in. There was a quiet “thud” and the second customer emerged from the restroom and walked calmly out of the bar. Danny edged to me and whispered – “Leave NOW!” I followed his advice and read in the local paper a couple of days later that some one was shot dead in a local Irish bar – IRA business!

In June of 1979, I took Mom and my two boys to Disneyland for a 4-day vacation. Our first stop was at Marine World where the boys enjoyed their 1<sup>st</sup> snorkeling experience swimming with baby sharks, sting rays and other tropical fish. There was one minor glitch, one of my boys, in high anticipation of the adventure, locked his snorkeling suit along with his regular clothes in the changing locker. After some sheepish embarrassment the rest of the trip went well and we all had a great time with poor Mom bravely enduring some of the wild rides at Disneyland which the boys insisted we accompany them on.



*Igor, Mom and Andrei on our way to Disneyland – June 1979*

Most of the time, I stayed out of trouble, never missed work and was thoroughly sober when the boys were over. However one time I got pulled over and arrested for reckless driving late one Sunday night as I was making my way home from San Francisco. I really should have been charged with a DUI since I had about 1.2 alcohol content but a good lawyer got me off with a lesser charge.

The next two years passed in the same pattern, hard work and long hours, fun parties at my bachelor pad at least twice a month which became the talk and envy of less fortunate GM personnel all the way back to visitors from Detroit, and frequent peaceful warm outings with my boys. We would often



go to a local “drive-in” movie theater and I would have a pint of Jack Daniels in my boot. Not a very good example to my boys which I later regretted very much. My mother, who lived in San Francisco, approximately 55 miles south, often came on weekends, always burdened with my favorite things to eat and with remedies to alleviate my hangovers.

I took a couple of trips on my own, I visited my old Shanghai friend Hans Conrad, who I have not seen for over 20 years, and his grandmother in Brisbane, Australia for 2 weeks. There were two wonderful surprises in this visit – the 1<sup>st</sup> being that his grandmother spoke perfect Russian since as a young bride she travelled with her husband from Switzerland to pre-revolutionary Russia to build a fish cannery and processing plant and stayed there till the revolution and WWI forced them to emigrate to China. The 2<sup>nd</sup> surprise was that Hans was an established renown “Gourmet” with published articles in the Gourmet/Restaurant section of Brisbane’s main newspaper. This entitled us to have gorgeous 5-course dinners every night at exclusive restaurants where the chefs vied with each other to get his approval and favorable write-ups. Needless to say I gained 15 lbs on this visit! I also briefly visited Mexico City where I had a battle with “Montezuma’s Revenge” by succumbing to some delicious looking roadside grilled shrimp and also went to Honolulu for a weekend.

In early 1980, I decided it would be better for both of us if Mother would re-locate from San Francisco and live with me. I sold my condo and bought another one in the same complex with an additional bedroom and transferred her over to Fremont. In San Francisco she had a small apartment, which was really a shed in a back yard with a room, a bathroom and a kitchenette. I rented a small pickup and asked my boys to help with the move. I calculated that with her small place one trip would do it. To my amazement it took four trips with full loads before we were done! We could not believe the amount of boxes and crates of wool and sweaters that she had accumulated!

About that time, I took advantage of the “free tuition” practice in the State of California in those days, and took a few courses at the local branch of the University of California. One of them was “Tai Kwan Do”. On the 1<sup>st</sup> class that I attended, it became obvious that I was out of my league – the next oldest student was 15 years younger than me! I was ready to quit until the instructor walked in – a gorgeous lanky redheaded gal. So I endured 3 months of excruciating pain in contortions and muscle stretching, not to count the occasional pounding. The majority of the students were actually Dance Majors and grace and form was more important to them than lethal martial arts – this saved me from serious pounding. Also my former Judo training helped a lot but I was glad when it was over.

I took a few more lecture courses on general subject but did not dedicate myself, often missed classes and even showed up drunk a couple of times. Not the proudest memories for me, however in later years this reinforced my dedication as a teetotaler to never expose myself in such a shape to my new daughter and be a better father image than I sadly was to my boys. Life goes on and just like understanding that dwelling on the past does not change it, as Janis Joplin once said, one can also destroy one’s now by worrying too much about tomorrow.

I did devote much of my spare time to my boys and we had some fun time going to the movies. However in those days I wore cowboy boots and often had a pint bottle of bourbon tucked in my ankle for imbibing during the show. We also spent a lot of time on the weekends around our condominium club house pool and sometimes lifting weights in its little workout room.



*Andrei, me and Igor – Summer of 1979*

My boys were over regularly and one day Andrei decided that I should get a pet to keep me company. He recommended a hamster and to humor him I agreed. This was followed by an encouragement to get a 2<sup>nd</sup> hamster to keep the 1<sup>st</sup> one from getting lonely. Everything went fine with the two critters frolicking and chasing each other in the cage. On Easter Sunday as I sat down for breakfast with Mom, I noticed a twinkle in her eye as she said – “we have a surprise for you” and nodded towards the cage. I peered in and at first saw nothing but celery leaves – however after a few moments I discerned 6 little wiggly, pea-size pink things – that was when my “hamster invasion” began. In a relatively short while I had over a dozen full grown hamsters and in major need of a larger cage!

This ordeal finally ended when one of the cats tipped over the cage in our absence and all of the hamsters disappeared through an open back door into the neighborhood. For weeks I waited with great trepidation to hear of a hamster invasion, but fortunately all was peaceful and quiet.

During those days I had substantial time alone. It gave me occasion to do a lot of pondering, some dark, some light, some educational. Honesty, to me is the highest virtue. Liars always get found out and misinformation can cause serious misconceptions, strife and damage. At work I had two handicaps -

- My difficulty on keeping a straight face and looks of disbelief at my colleagues during their distortions of truth during Management/UAW meetings. This resulted in me being excluded by my “peers” from the meetings because the UAW reps learned to watch my face when one of the management team lied.

- A senior manager's advice to me – “Leo, your face gives you away. Smile in their faces, then kick ‘em in the b---s when they are not looking!” My response was “Boss, if that is what it takes to go up the executive ladder, I will never make it for that is not my style”.

The most important honesty however is to yourself. I remember the beautiful opening words of the “Desiderata” written in an old church in Baltimore in 1692 –

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

By mid 1981, a rumor started that the Fremont plant, along with the other two California plants in Southgate and Van Nuys, was going to be shut down permanently and by December this became a reality. Because of my good job performance record, I was one of the first to be offered a re-assignment with no loss of pay or position level and a complete coverage of relocation costs, to a new Plant Replacement Task Force (PRTF) that was involved in the construction and equipment purchase and installation of three new assembly plants in Hamtramck and Lake Orion, Michigan and Wentzville, Missouri.

I remember the sad task of shutting down an entire plant. GM Fremont at its peak in the mid 60's had an employment of nearly 5,000 people. This was a small town with a very diverse population. I would often see big muscular black men wearing slogans on their chests stating “Black is Beautiful” and “Power to the People” working shoulder to shoulder with Southern white men with slogans such as “Don’t Thread on me” and Confederate flags. Yet all was harmony, each group stuck in their own “clique” and did their job. There was also much humor and jokes to pass the time of doing dreary, monotonous, repetitive tasks. There was also a great team spirit when breakdowns occurred and the skilled tradesmen would instantaneously drop their card games or porno magazine reading and jump right in doing the dangerous tasks of getting the moving conveyor untangled or starting up jammed and stalled machinery.

Walking through the empty buildings, seeing the sagging open doors of employee lockers and the various pieces of discarded cover-alls, gloves, safety glasses and other paraphernalia in the gloomy silence, saddened me deeply

After arranging the rental of my condominium, a close Fremont buddy and I drove in tandem to Detroit with rest stops along the way in small towns and pleasant motels, arriving in Detroit in April of 1982.

The trip took about 4 days of easy driving with a few minor incidents – crossing the Rockies around Lake Tahoe we encountered a snow storm and blizzard. We were forced to pull over and put chains on our tires. My buddy did not have a problem since he was raised in Indiana and quite familiar to this process. I had a real hard learning experience. Every time that I was close to completing a chain application to a tire, a semi would zoom by and cover me and the car with 6 inches of snow. My buddy, after nearly wetting himself from laughter, took pity on me and put them on in a couple of minutes. Passing through Salt Lake City, I ran out of cigarettes and have a lengthy, frustrating and futile search for non-existent cigarette vending machines in this beautiful Mormon capital.

The Rockies were gorgeous and I became quite an expert on playing “Liar’s Dice” in the various small bars that we stopped in for refreshments and meals. At one of the ramps to the freeway, my buddy stopped his van for a little longer time than usual before entering. Much later he turned off onto a small town with me close behind. As I pulled up beside him, his passenger door opened and a young woman with a child stepped out. I nearly flipped. Was I following the wrong van all those miles??? Where was I and what happened to him???

When he climbed out of the van with a broad smile, I realized that unbeknown to me he had picked up a hitchhiker at the ramp to the highway.

Before our arrival in Detroit, we had a final stop at Warsaw, Indiana, a small town 50 miles southwest of Fort Wayne, where my friend’s mother, a wonderful lady in her mid 80s, resided alone after the passing of her husband. She greeted us joyfully and when we offered to take her out to dinner, she replied – “You boys save your money for beer and I will feed you with a good home-cooked meal”. That night I had my first taste of “pigs in a blanket” along with some delicious home-made noodles. We stayed a few nights as my buddy did some chores and minor repairs around the house and in the evenings we would catch a few “cold ones” at a local bar, way past closing hour when the doors were locked and the local sheriff would share the news and brews with us at the same bar.



## Chapter XII – Transfer to Detroit (1982 to 1985)

“If you understand, things are just as they are; if you do not understand, things are just as they are.”

This period in my life was about the most turbulent one. My ex-wife decided to move to Paris, France with our boys. Her parents were horrified and tried to talk her out of this move. I, on the other hand, gave her encouragement and full permission (since we had joint custody of the minor children). I agreed with her that a European education and environment would be better for them even though the thought of not seeing them as often was very painful to me.

After the move and their settling in a small apartment, I contacted an old Shanghai friend who had a very senior position with a prestigious European firm to have his people surreptitiously check up on their welfare, which they did and reported back to me that they were doing well.

Irene enrolled them both in one of the most prestigious high school in France - ***The Lycée International of St Germain-en-Laye*** located on the outskirts of Paris. The school was unique in bringing together students from different origins in twelve national sections. According to the French educational system, these students are prepared for a final examination (the Baccalauréat) in either fields of literature, social economics or sciences. The campus also contained a pre-school, a primary school and a secondary school. It welcomed international students who wished to master the French language. The principle of the Lycée was that students who speak French must be bilingual when they enter whereas international students who speak a foreign tongue will grow, either to become bilingual or multilingual with the teaching of the French language.

In the fall of 1983, I took a trip there and visited with them. I also introduced them to a couple of my former classmates from Shanghai who could help them if needed. One of them was kind enough to donate some furniture for their use.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in late 1983, GM closed the Fremont Assembly plant. I was one of the more fortunate ones and instead of being laid off, was transferred on January 1, 1984 with all expense paid to the Plant Replacement Task Force (PRTF) stationed in Detroit for the planning, construction and development of 4 new GM plants – Hamtramck, MI; Lake Orion, MI; Wentzville, MO and Flint, MI.

On my transfer to Detroit, after staying at a Holiday Inn motel for 8 weeks I started to look for a permanent residence. I told the real estate agent that GM assigned to me that I was not fussy and would like to live close to the Hamtramck plant where I would be eventually assigned. She shook her head and said “I don’t think so” and after a brief tour of the neighborhood I had to agree with her.

I found a suitable condominium at “Fox Chase” in the suburb of Mount Clemens and moved in to start my “bachelor” life in a new environment. The neighborhood was very nice, with friendly neighbors (many divorcees), a beautiful club house complete with pool tables, a fully equipped but sparsely used work out exercise room, meeting area and a beautiful outdoor pool of a fair size which my boys used a lot during their summer visits with me.

For about a year I lived there alone and kept myself busy with long (10-12 hrs) at work and unwinding on weekends by getting “plastered”. To keep me company I got myself a Siberian Husky pup.



*My "nameless" Siberian Husky pup.*

The pup grew very fast and since I was at work most of the day he did a lot of damage out of boredom on being left alone at home. He started by completely destroying the carpeting on the short flight of stairs between my 2 levels and on another adventure tore up a pair of my nicest shoes. Being a husky, he was unable to bark but occasionally would let loose with a mournful howl and scare himself.

One day as I took him for a run in an adjoining wood he gave chase after some animal in the bushes and I lost him. Notices and searches were to no avail, I suspect that someone stole him as he was very friendly and naïve with strangers. This added to my depression and feeling of loneliness and isolation.

After my relocation to the Detroit suburbs and getting myself reasonably established, I moved my mother from San Francisco to join me so that she would not be left alone 5,000 miles away and we settled down in a larger condominium in Mount Clemens with her, four cats and a very talkative parrot. Being isolated from my sons and my close friends made me very lonely and depressed. As a result my drinking increased proportionally, approximating two fifths of bourbon each weekend and often in mid week. Mother made sure that I ate well and had a good supply of clean clothes so that I maintained a decent appearance. My dedication and pride in my work ensured that my performance and attendance was superior.



My job assignment in the PRTF group was very satisfying and educational. I lucked out in being assigned to one of the best managers that I ever worked for. He was demanding but not “hovering”, he trusted my knowledge and judgment and let me do my duties and work with minimal supervision.

I was given the responsibility in determining the layouts and equipment requirements for the General Assembly area – building the car from the painted shell to a finished product, as well as all of the equipment and accessory requirements for the plant’s maintenance, tooling and material handling needs. I was responsible for over 50 million dollars worth of equipment purchases and installation contractors’ costs. This greatly expanded my knowledge on the basic and detailed requirements of putting together a quality performance vehicle assembly facility. I was responsible for writing the bid specifications, preparing the qualified bidder lists, reviewing the bids on receipt and awarding the contract. This involved interfacing with all of the plant’s and GM key departments, such as Financial, Purchasing and Personnel as well as meeting a lot of representatives of major contractors and sales people.

It was very educational and rewarding work and honed my skills in dealing with “difficult” people. At work I wore, as was required, a hard hat. Stencilled across front were the words “Because I am the Owner” and on the back “Same to you, Buster”





*Bird's Eye view of the Hamtramck Plant after the construction of Main Building*

My boys came to visit with me in the summers of 1983 and 1984. On their last visit, prior to returning to France, my youngest son, Andrei, decided that he was not going back but wanted to stay with me in Fremont. After many emotional and lengthy long-distance telephone calls to Paris, it remained that way, as I told my ex-wife although I agreed with her Europe was probably better for him than the US, there was NO WAY that I would force him to leave, he was 17 years old and had the right to making his own decision. The following fall, my oldest boy, Igor also decided that he wanted to live with me and returned from France.

To this day, I am uncertain if this was a right decision on my part. Although I was very happy to have my sons with me, I am afraid that I was a very poor role model. I was often inebriated and erratic in my behavior, expressed very little discipline on their actions and provided very limited guidance to their behavior. They grew big and strong and very “street-wise” at an early age and had more than their share in citations for reckless driving and “DUI’s”.

There is much sad truth in the statement – “Do not be overly concerned that your children do not listen to you. Be more aware that they see you!” I was NOT a model father and was a poor role



model, it is extremely fortunate and a credit to their character that they turned out as good as they did in later years.

One summer, I took both boys, separately a week for each, to Club Med in Paradise Island. We had a grand time, although on one of the early mornings, as we were recovering from the night before, one of the local maids came into our room and stole a \$100 bill from my older boy's wallet.

In July of 1985, the boys brought a little kitten home. We already had 5 cats so I was not overjoyed by this addition, but they badgered and pleaded with me. They said they found it outside and it would die without a home – so “Dimok” or “Dimmy” for short became family.

Plant life continued to be interesting. On one occasion a Serbian friend of mine asked me if I could go with him on a brief inspection of some “temporary hired” drafts people that he got to help on our project. Not anticipating any secondary agendas on his part, I went along. On arriving at the large drafting area with its row of boards and busy drafts people hunched over their work, I could not help noticing a woman scrutinizing me from under her drafting lamp. After a short period she timidly walked up to us and asked my friend in a quavering voice – “Is this him?” my friend with a twinkle in his eye nodded slightly. She immediately seized my hand and, before I could stop her, kissed it with the words “Your Excellency!” Embarrassed and confused I retreated as quickly as I could with my “buddy” trying very hard to keep a straight face. On exiting the room I asked him what that was about and he calmly replied – “I just told her that you are the {Kalageorgi}, she's from the old country and still awed by royalty”

Life at the Fox Chase condominium complex was good. I worked long hard hours at the Hamtramck and Lake Orion plant sites, preparing specifications, bidding and ordering machinery and equipment for assembly, maintenance, material handling and tooling for the new plants. This included as a “fringe benefit” much “wining and dining” with the prospective contractors and bidders.



*My boys with me at a Lion's game*

Every month or so one of the major contractors would invite a selected bunch of us to their private box at Joe Louis Arena to watch a Red Wings hockey game or some Ice Skating or Rock Performance Event. This always culminating in a lot of drinking and carousing. However once in a while I could treat my boys to a concert or an occasional Lion's game.

Although I partied hard, I also worked long hard hours, often up to 12 hours a day including Saturdays and even an occasional Sunday. The overtime pay was good so to relax I discovered "Club Med". My 1<sup>st</sup> trip was to "Playa Blanca" on the west coast of Mexico, near Puerto Vallarta.



*Club Med at Playa Blanca*

Clube Méditerranée, commonly known as **Club Med**, is a French corporation of vacation resorts found in many parts of the world, usually in exotic locations. Each resort provides a list of services and activities in one single package. This includes lodging, food, use of facilities, sports activities, games, and shows. However, certain items such as alcoholic beverages require the use of beads or tickets as a form of payment. Club Med staff are called "GOs", or *Gentils Organisateurs* (Gracious/Nice Organizers). Clients are "GMs", or *Gentils Membres* (Gracious/Nice Guests/Members). The resort is known as a *village*. The resort manager is called the *chef de village* (Village Chief).

The special feature of Club Med is that the GOs and GMs play, dine, drink, and dance together every day and night. Outdoor buffet dining (usually on tables of eight, mixing GMs and GOs), daytime sport-playing and evening show with extensive audience participation are part of the holiday experience.

A particular institution is the communal dance or *crazy signs* led by the GOs at varying intervals during the day and evening. The dance steps for each song are standard across the organization with some new ones introduced each year. The evening shows, often requiring detailed choreography, are also standardized and include both new and established routines.

The loose and friendly atmosphere of my 1<sup>st</sup> visit, plus the free-flowing alcohol, wine and beer, hooked me forever and I made many visits to the other Club Med locations.



*Taking part in a friendly tug of war – all the “topless” photos disappeared after my marriage to Bev*

My next visit was to “Buccaneer’s Creek” in Martinique, which was considered the “wildest” of the Club Med clubs and was shut down by the local authorities for some drug-induced nude orgies (so the rumors said). I nearly poisoned myself by chewing on some exotic plants after a “Rum Run” which involved sailing to an island imitating the boot-leggers and smugglers while imbibing large amounts of the favorite local beverage – rum!

As I mentioned earlier, this phase of my life was very turbulent, but I was blind to the signs and warnings that were all around me. The boys were getting into various “situations” – DUI’s, poor grades and attitude problems. Once I called the local AA line for assistance on the boys, in response the person on the other end of the line started querying me on my behavior and recommended me to come to them personally for assistance – I hung up.

I am sure my hangovers did not go un-noticed on Monday mornings at work, but since I was always punctual, work long hours and had an excellent performance level, my supervisors looked the other way. Drinking was a common practice among my “manly” macho peers and came with the job!

I am still paying today with a slightly damaged liver and irregular heart beat. But life went on and I proceeded full steam ahead on my journey to self destruction.

## Club Med. in Paradise, Bahamas



*My role on stage as “Satchmo Armstrong”*

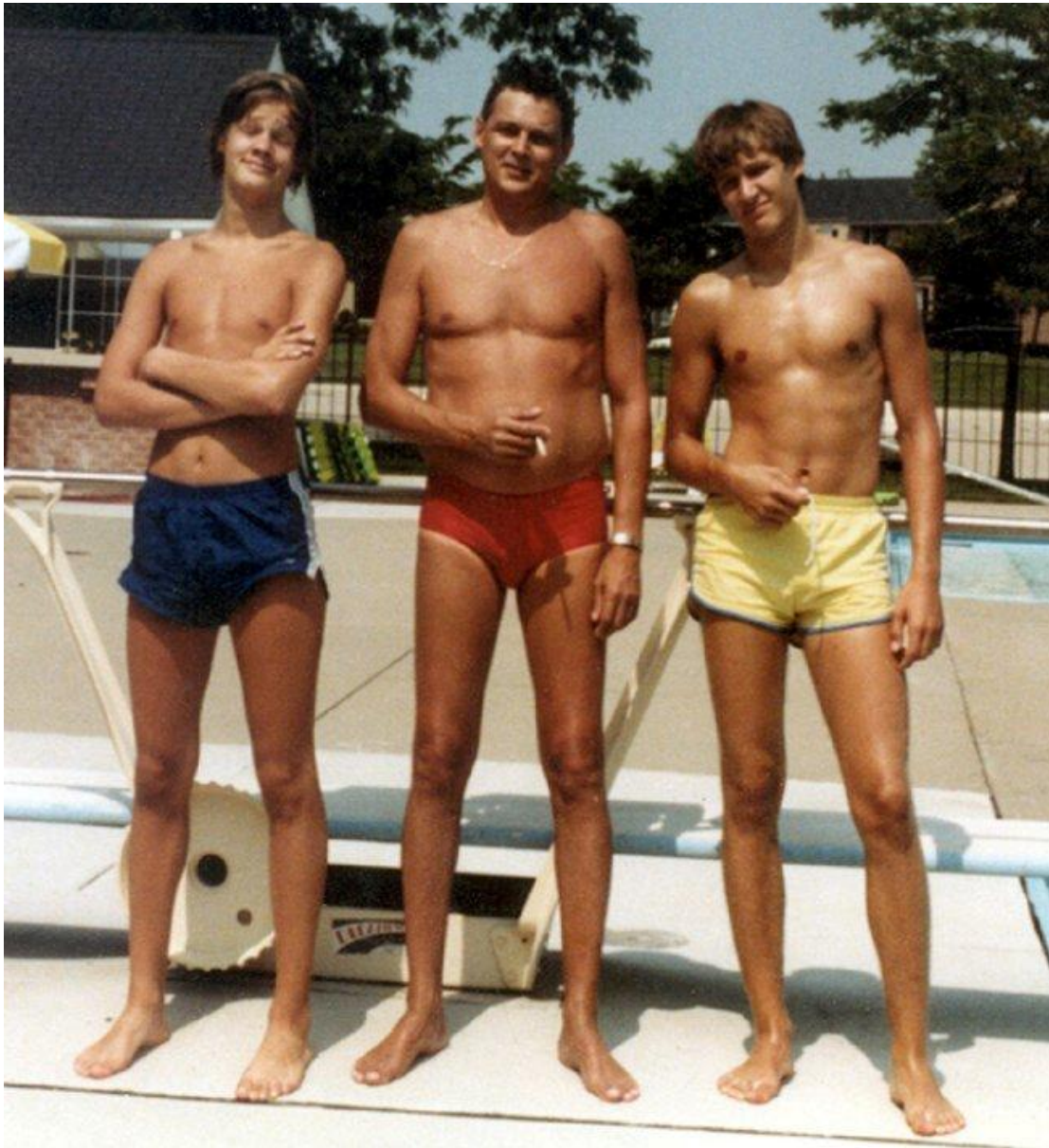
In late 1984 I received the shocking news that my mother had terminal cancer of the colon. She was a very brave and determined lady and fought it with all of her strength, going to chemotherapy treatments and frequent short stays at the hospital. She was in severe pain but she hid it from me, suffering silently while I was at home but occasionally screaming with pain when I was gone to work and Andre was in high school.

In mid 1985, she was fading fast before my eyes. I tried to curb my drinking for a while, but one night got somewhat carried away with my grief and depression and ended up getting arrested on a DUI charge when I bumped a car in the parking lot outside of a liquor store.

Mother passed away on September 10, 1985, one day after my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was cheerful till the last day, wishing me a “Happy Birthday” as I left for work. After the funeral, I determined that I had to



get a grip on myself and set my life straight. Mother was no longer around to cater for me and I had the responsibility of my two boys who have always shown great concern over my drinking and were of the age now that they also started to “fool around” with beer and pot.



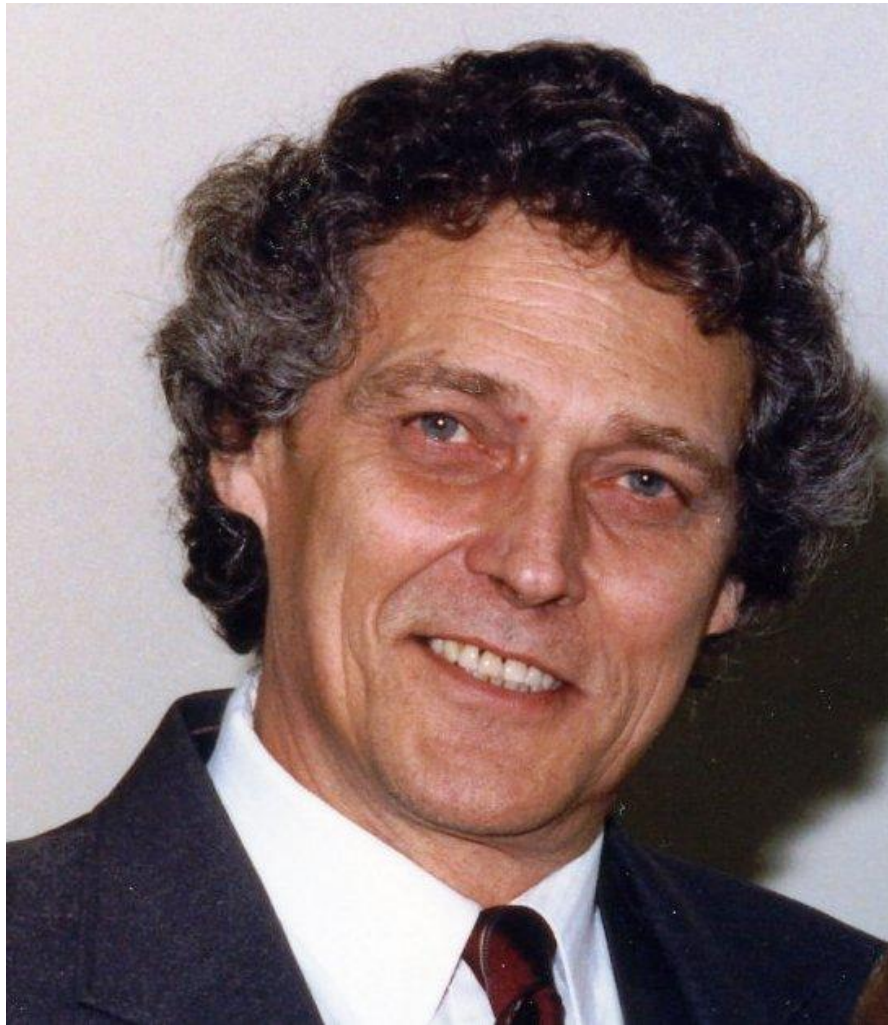
*The Kalageorgi Trio at the “Fox Chase” pool*

Summers we spent a lot of time at the “Fox Chase” pool where I lazed in the sun while the boys did some “fox chasing”, sometimes in reverse when one of them would run in to our apartment through the front door and bolt out through the rear, breathlessly telling me that they were not at home as they were being stalked by a couple of neighboring “teenie-boppers”.

Another time as I was getting a tan by poolside, one of the younger kids was slashing close to us. Andrei leaned over and with a straight face told the youngster – “Watch it kid, you nearly wet my dad and when he gets mad he’s an ANIMAL!”. The poor child’s eyes popped and he scurried to his mother.

At work I had a more benign image, I was know as “The Uncle”. The word around was “If you got a problem, see Uncle Leo, he’ll fix it”. Some of my solutions were a little unorthodox – but they worked.

My basic philosophy was very simple – “How do pygmies eat an elephant? – one small chunk at a time.” All problems when they are broken down to basics and root causes, end up fairly easy to be corrected.



*Hamtramck Assignment ID photo – 1986*

In those days of planning, construction and equipping of the new Hamtramck facilities, a lot of time was devoted by GM to improve the supervisory skills of their management from the 1<sup>st</sup> line foremen all the way to their plant staff executives. This involved many lectures, exercises and games with leading “gurus” such as Tom Peters (*In Search of Excellence*), Louis Tice (*Investment in Excellence*), Philip Crosby (*Quality is Free*), W. Edwards Deming (*Out of Crisis*) and many others.

Two of my favorite lessons were -

***“The mind is everything; what you think, you become” – Gautama Buddha***

***“Aim is to get to the Truth – Not to win the Argument” - Plato***

### **Inserts**

#### **To Chapter XII – Return to Detroit**

- Copy of degrees – Crosby (1985) and Deming (1990)
- Working long hours – 10 to 12 daily, many weekends – “Work hard, Play hard”
- DUI – overnight in cell



## Chapter XIII – Major Life Change (1985 to 1986)

*“When you need to cross the river, the boat will be there”- Zen saying*

Mother spent much time over her last 2 years at the St. Joseph of Mercy Hospital in Mt Clemens. After one of her short stays for chemo treatment, mother came home all elated and told me that she found the right partner for me – her attending nurse over the past year called “Beth”. Mother spoke very highly of her and went on in great length on her virtues, good looks and gentle character. I told mother that I was perfectly fine did not need a partner and had no desire to get married again. She insisted that I would get married and have a daughter! “Mom!” I said “I am close to 50 years old, in good health and perfectly able to take care of myself”. She just smiled, shook her head and said “You will see”. Mother said that we would be a perfect match especially after she found out that we shared the same birthday but 8 years apart. She further gave me “Beth’s” telephone number on a piece of paper which I put away and did not find till a year later.

On August 25, 1985, Mom showed me a booklet of photographs put together by “Beth” illustrating Mom’s sweaters on her and her two children, a beautiful daughter and a comely son. This was my 1<sup>st</sup> glimpse of my future “life partner”.



*Leanne, Beverly and Steven – August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1985*

On September 5<sup>th</sup> I went with my son Andrei to pick up Mom at the hospital. Things were not going well for her so she asked to come home and be under the care of a visiting nurse. She knew her time was limited but did not tell me.

This was my first meeting with “Beth” whose real name, I discovered, was Beverly or Bev. I arrived at the hospital with a major hangover, red-eyed, disheveled and reeking of alcohol. Must have been quite a negative sight. Bev was quietly disapproving but polite and helped me wheel Mom to the car driven by Andrei.

On my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, September 9, 1985, around noon there was a ring at our door and there was Bev, stopping by on her day off to see how mother was doing. Fortunately I was sober and not too

rumpled. Bev stayed a short while then as she was leaving she paused at the door and there was a long silent communication between these two wonderful ladies. I know now that mother was passing me on to Beverly.

The next day was a Monday and after the visiting nurse arrived I left for work. Later that morning as I was in a meeting I received a phone call notifying of mom's passing. In her delicate caring manner she waited till I left the house to move on!

The funeral was a week later and there was a large attendance. Most of my working colleagues from GM showed up as well as many of Mom's friends from Fox Chase. My ex-mother-in-law, Nina Andreevna and her sister Elena Andreevna flew in from SFO and D.C. respectively and after the funeral before departing home, cleaned my house and cooked up a ton of food to load the refrigerator and freezer for me and the boys.

Beverly also came to the funeral and although I was grief stricken by my loss, I could not avoid sinfully admiring her trim ankles and lovely raincoat-clad figure.

On October 5<sup>th</sup> we finally had our 1<sup>st</sup> date, a dinner at Cooper's Arms in Rochester. I was very nervous but on my best behavior. After dinner we went over to her home in Shelby Township where she served me coffee and shared with me some of her photo albums illustrating her kids and relatives. I left fairly early, stopped at a liquor store and picked up a pint of Jim Beam to calm me down at home. After a couple more meetings we agreed on a train trip over the Thanksgiving weekend to Montreal and Quebec in Canada. This trip can very close to not happening, for just a day before the trip, I invited her over for a steak dinner and got quite inebriated prior to her arrival – the dinner was a disaster and I nearly set a fire in the kitchen from splattering grease. Fortunately for me, both of my boys stepped in and pleaded with Bev to give me another chance to show her my true worth, telling her that I was a real good guy, just lonely and over-stressed and a good father most of the time. Bev reluctantly relented and agreed to travel on the following day.

We got on the train in Windsor, just over the US/Canada border at 6:10 pm for Toronto, arriving there at 10:20 pm. The ride was a little tense for I was very embarrassed and ashamed for my ridiculous behavior the night before. Bev was non-committal, calm and not very talkative. I could see the "wheels" turning in her head on whether this was a good idea and what the future may bring. In Toronto we switched trains for Montreal. This was an overnight train with a beautiful and comfortable sleeper compartment and we were on our way at 11:35 pm. There was a fine dining car, where we had a snack and after some tension and small talk, we finally relaxed and enjoyed the calming, soothingly rolling, click-clacking train ride, arriving in Montreal the next morning at 7:30.

We were booked at Montreal's finest and largest hotel, Le Grand, which was frequented by celebrities (we did not see any as we had eyes only for each other), had 750 rooms and suites and 7 exceptional bars and restaurants. It was located on the Place Victoria, just 5 minutes walk from the Railway station in the center of the city. Our room had a beautiful view of St. Laurent street.

After checking in and having a wonderful breakfast, we proceeded to tour Montreal. I was amazed how European it looked with very few American style billboards or modern structures. It was also very ethnically mixed with a Greek fisherman market area, French style cafes, bistros and restaurants all bringing back to me memories of my European GM assignments. We had a fine dinner at one of the



hotel's restaurants and after a good night's rest, the next morning, very early, we proceeded to Quebec.

We boarded the train at 7:55 am arriving at Quebec at 11:00 am. Quebec is much smaller than Montreal but very historic and even more European with beautiful chateaus and castle embankments. It was not as cold as we expected and the snowy landscape made the city look very dreamy and fantastic like in a fairy tale. We hired a horse-driven carriage and had a tour of the city. I impressed Bev with my "Algerian" French since most natives either refused or did not speak English. Our carriage driver was shocked to hear that I do not play ice hockey. In his world ALL healthy males played hockey! We enjoyed a wonderful meal at a small French restaurant, did some souvenir shopping. We left Quebec at 5:05 pm on the return train and were in Montreal by 8:30 pm, time for another wonderful dinner.

The next morning we left for Toronto at 11:05 am, enjoyed a lovely lunch and conversation in the dining car and arrived at our destination at 3:40 pm. After a brief snack at the Railway Station we were back on another train at 5:15 pm, arriving at Windsor at 9:35 pm for a drive home.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> train trip was a visit to Toronto on December 13<sup>th</sup> to see "Cats". We left Windsor again at around 6 pm and arrived at a little after 10 pm. We stayed at the Royal York hotel, just a short walk through a subterranean passage from the Railway Station. This Toronto's biggest hotel with 1600 rooms and one of the oldest but completely renovated. It has the majestic sweeping grandeur of a double spiral staircase in the main lobby, many fine stores and restaurants and a nice swimming pool, sauna and massage parlor.

During the day we visited the famous Casa Loma where there was a Christmas Festival for children. Casa Loma is a 98-room medieval-style castle in the heart of Toronto. This magnificent landmark was built between 1911 and 1914 by a famous Canadian financier who was an "incurable romantic" with a life-long interest in the castles of the medieval times. He used some of his amassed fortune to build a castle of his own. After several years of studying Old World Castles, he brought marble, glass and paneling from Europe, teak from Asia and oak and walnut from America. He used Scottish stonemasons to build the massive wall that surrounds the six acre site. In 1937, Casa Loma was restored by the city of Toronto as a tourist attraction and uses the proceeds to support many community projects. When we toured Casa Loma, a large sector was devoted and decorated for a Christmas Festival for Toronto's and visiting children. There were many beautifully decorated Christmas trees and a lot of characters dressed as elves to amuse the children.

After that we made a brief tour of the city's shopping area and picked up a black leather jacket for Steven, Beverly's son as well as a few other souvenirs and minor purchases. The weather was brisk but not overly cold, or maybe it was the warmth of our budding romance that kept us warm.

The next evening, on December 14 at 8:00 pm, we attended a spectacular performance of "Cats" at the Elgin Theatre. "Memories" is still our favorite song and always brings back memories of our time together. After another night at the Royal York we were on our way home by train via Windsor. After arriving at Windsor and getting ready to cross the US/Canada border we were randomly pulled over for a Customs check. There was some trepidation on our part since we did not declare Steven's new leather jacket, by-passing the duty fees, claiming that it was mine. Since I was at that time a full head taller and 50 lbs heavier than Steven, I visualized my attempts to put it on if so requested by the

custom's agent. Fortunately all went well. There was a very flustered and agitated Eastern Indian man ahead of us that occupied the inspector's attention and we were waved through with just a very superficial check of our luggage.

I had a pre-paid round trip airline ticket to visit my former in-laws, they were now my only family left and I related to them as my parents. I flew to San Francisco for a short visit on December 21<sup>st</sup> reluctantly leaving Beverly and my boys till Christmas day. On Christmas Eve, she took Igor and Andrei for a nice Christmas dinner in a wonderful English-style restaurant called "The Sixpence". Shortly after my return we went skiing at Mount Holly.

Although Beverly was never critical or commented on my drinking, I knew for certainty that I would lose her if I did not control my addiction. On December 11, 1985 after missing a day of work for the first time in my career and the "happening" with Beverly, I came to the late conclusion that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life had become unmanageable. I talked with my manager at GM, he was very understanding and supportive since he had a similar problem earlier with his father who died from alcohol-caused reasons. He arranged through the GM Substance Abuse section of the Personnel Department for me to be admitted in a 6-week rehabilitation program at the Parkview Rehabilitation Center in Chattanooga, TN and on January 9<sup>th</sup> of 1986 I reported there after asking Beverly to keep an eye on my boys.

The early part of 1986 was a flurry of introductions to Beverly's family – parents, brother, sister and nephews and niece. We all hit it off very well and they all welcomed me as part of the family from the start. After my return from Parkview, there was a quick succession of meeting with Bev's Dad, Mom and younger sister Dawn with her family.



*Mom, Dawn, Kenny, Bev and Dad – February 1986*

Parkview was a very enlightening and educational experience for me. On arrival I was told to submit all of the following articles – books and any notes, literature or magazines, all sharp items like razor blades, scissors, penknives, nail files, belts and shoe laces, food or liquid items, cigarettes and lighters. Then we were searched for anything that may be hidden. Our stay was perfectly voluntary and we could leave at any time, never to return, if we did not want to comply to the rules. All of the employees at the clinic were re-habilitated former substance abuse addict and knew all the trick of deceit and concealments.

After being admitted, I was given my schedule of activities –

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
7:00 am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:00 am	Business Office	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time	Free Time
8:30 am	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture
10:00 am	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:15 am	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture	Group Lecture
11:45 am	Lunch & Free Time	Lunch & Free Time	Lunch & Free Time	Lunch & Free Time	Lunch & Free Time
1:00 pm	Lecture	Lecture	Lecture	Lecture	Lecture
1:45 pm	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
2:00 pm	Conjoint Group	Conjoint Group	Conjoint Group	Conjoint Group	<i>Private Sessions</i>
3:30 pm	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
4:00 pm	Video Viewing	Video Viewing	Video Viewing	Video Viewing	<i>Private Sessions</i>
5:00 pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
6:00 pm	Reading & Reflection	Reading & Reflection	Meditation & Relaxation	Work on After Care Plans	<i>Private Sessions</i>
9:30 pm	Lights Out	Lights Out	Lights Out	Lights Out	Lights Out

The Group lectures covered subjects such as an overview of alcoholism, its impact on the entire family and loved ones, changing old pattern and behaviors, roles in a dysfunctional family system, forgiveness and recovery.

Video viewing would cover features on alcoholism and the family, co-dependency, disease versus allergy concept and other related subjects. Private sessions could be scheduled on Fridays with qualified counselors and psychiatrists on request.

The adult group was not very large, about a dozen and a half of individuals comprising of three (myself included) males with alcohol addictions, nine males with drug problems and six females afflicted with “co-dependency”. This was a new term to me and I later found out it is very prevalent and deals with spouses, relatives and close friends of substance abuse victims who in turn become victims in supporting and abating this addiction of their loved one. They would provide the substance and shield him or her from criticism and treatment.

We were housed at 4 per room by gender and talking at night was discouraged so that we could get a decent night's sleep. Surprisingly, I had no withdrawal problems and managed very well without alcohol. Being a little older and more educated, I became the “kindly uncle” figure. I would listen and counsel some of the members while absorbing the lecture material and video sessions. I got to understand that alcohol to some people is an allergic reaction which can be set off with just one drink. As was wisely said – “one drink is too much and a river is not enough”.

On the last week of my rehabilitation period, on February 20<sup>th</sup>, Beverly and my boys came over for a 2-day stay. During this visit, Beverly and I were strongly discouraged by the counselors from taking such a major step as getting married. They cautioned that I was still too fragile emotionally to take on such a “life-changing” event. They suggested at least a year of delay. I was released on February 22, and Bev had her “Bachelorette Party” at her friend Barb’s on March 19<sup>th</sup>. We were married, exactly a month after my release from rehab, on March 22, 1986. I had my last alcoholic drink on December 11, 1985 and stayed dry for the rest of my life.



*Wedding Party – Dad, Mom, Dawn, Sam, Jerry, Me, Bev, Steven, Andrei, Igor  
Leanne, Kendra and Sammy*

Our marriage was a simple ceremony at St. Thomas Presbyterian Church on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, performed by the Reverend Pastor Leroy Haynes. I arrived at the church late since no one gave Steven the directions to the church! Here we were with me driving and the “embarrassed”, slight, teenage Steven in the back seat between my two towering (well over 6 foot) boys glaring down at him – “What do you mean you don’t know where the church is!”

We had our wedding dinner at “Cooper’s Arms”, the same restaurant where we had our 1<sup>st</sup> dinner date. We spent our wedding night in a beautiful hotel in Windsor, Canada and on March 25<sup>th</sup> we were on PanAm flight 72 for our 15-day European Honeymoon. A diary of our European Honeymoon trip (with some mild censorship) is included as **Appendix B**.

After marriage our immediate family was doubled. My boys always wanted a sister, my younger boy always wanted a younger brother, Bev’s daughter always missed an older brother and her son always wanted a brother – in a stroke all their wishes were granted and everyone got along wonderfully right from the start. We also had Bev’s dog, a beautiful white Great Pyrenees called “Sasha” and two of my cats, a solid longhair black tomcat called “Mordan” (Russian for big ugly faced one) who had one workable eye ( he got one damage during one of his nightly forages) and a Maine Coon kitten called “Dimok” (Russian for smoke). I reluctantly had to give away for adoption, my other 3 cats.



On our 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Easter, as a new family, we celebrated on May 3<sup>rd</sup> with dinner at Shelbyshire with my boys after attending midnight mass at a Russian Orthodox Church. Bev cooked a “Koolich” (a cylindrical traditional Russian Easter cake) and Igor prepared the “Paskha” (yellow cream cheese Easter cake).



*Our First Russian Easter together at Shelbyshire*

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, Andrei left for Florida to attend a 10-day course at the Southeastern Travel Agent School. He was planning to get a job on his return in San Francisco as a travel agent at the SFO Airport and be our source for major discounts on flights and overseas travel.

Life went well at 4904 Shelbyshire Drive, Bev's home, however with our expanded family we needed a larger house. We liked the neighborhood and did not want to make a major relocation, so we searched the area for a suitable home which we found relatively quickly. Bev, I and the boys toured the prospective house and got the current resident's young daughters excited, with them yelling gleefully to their parents when we approached – “The Giants are coming! The Giants are coming!”

We purchased our 1<sup>st</sup> home on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1986. It was a custom built colonial home with 4 bedrooms, 2-1/2 bathrooms, a library (which we temporarily converted to a bedroom for one of the boys), a family room with a natural fireplace, a formal dining room and a large kitchen. There was also a finished basement, an outdoor patio and a kidney shaped swimming pool. There was also a large 2-car garage with a work area and a laundry room which Bev converted into a hair salon.



*54050 Sunderland Drive, Shelby Township*

The kids were ecstatic, each one got a room of their own and everyone swore that they would take care of maintaining the outdoor swimming pool. The pool was located under some tall leafy elm trees and Bev took on the task of every morning patrolling the open pool to save all the unfortunate “critters” that may have fallen into it during the night. Behind our back yard there was an extensive wooded area with a natural lake, thus we had a lot of wildlife visiting us – squirrels, rabbits, possums, raccoons, and an enormous 4 foot long snapping turtle which lumbered across the yard after pausing and giving me a tough look that said “Ya want a piece of me?”. The trees were always full of birds and our little mischievous kitten “Dimok” loved to annoy the blue jays.

The move itself was a little complex – we had to bring over our furniture, appliances, clothing, kitchenware and boxes galore of “stuff”. Our garage and front hallway was loaded down for 6 months and it was a “treasure hunt” to find anything. We 1<sup>st</sup> set up the “basics” – a functioning kitchen and utility room, bathrooms and bedrooms.

The animals also settled down in their own way. Sasha and Mordan, being “elderly” established their turf area – Sasha near the French doors to the back yard and Mordan near the kitchen garbage can. There was a peaceful “Cold War” between them – each expressing their dissatisfaction by low growls and hisses when their respective territories were violated. Dimok, the baby, was immediately adopted by Sasha as her child and would be very protective of her from the start.

Life was good at Sunderland, we sold our respective homes and put our joint funds into our new home. Since it was a “custom-built” show home, there was not much to re-decorate or repaint. The wall all had very specially designed wallpaper – beautiful to look at but impossible to re-create. The basement had a large, regular-sized pool table and the kids had a good time playing. The house was well insulated with a heating/air-conditioning system that worked during our entire stay. Steven and Andrei were both musical and had a few joint guitar sessions, Needless to say the maintenance of the pool became mainly Dad’s job but was enjoyed by all, including the visiting relatives and friends.



*Our first, and only full family photo – October 10, 1986*

We were located in a very nice friendly neighborhood. The males in our family and visiting male relatives were particularly impressed when the older daughter of one of our neighbors, a good-looking, busty redhead, would come and use our pool, spending some time bouncing on our diving board in a mini bikini! Our Steven would spend hours playing his electronic guitar in our garage with the doors open and facing their back yard where their cute younger brunette daughter would be sunbathing.

Bev's parents had a lovely cottage on Houghton Lake and we had a lot of happy summer and autumn visits there, swimming and boating on the lake and generally getting to know each other.

With the enlarged family we had double the birthday celebrations – 1<sup>st</sup> was Steven's 16<sup>th</sup> which we celebrated at "Molly McQuire's" on the next day after my release from Parkview, followed by Igor's 21<sup>st</sup> at a small party at Bev's home @ 4904 Shelbyshire Drive. For Leanne's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday we went to "Kyoto", a Japanese steak house. Andre was gone at that time to Florida for a 6-week course in the Southeastern Travel Agent School, he only returned on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June. The following day, Andre, as we agreed earlier, relocated to live with his grandmother in San Francisco to apply the fruits of his studies.

Our early days of marriage included many visits from my "overseas" friends. The 1<sup>st</sup> was Hans Conrad, a close friend from my teenage years in Shanghai. Hans was a former Swiss citizen who is

currently residing near the bustling city of Melbourne, Australia. He is a retired psychologist and county counselor for troubled teenagers. I last saw Hans on my visit to Australia in 1979.

Hans arrived from Australia, after a brief stop-over in Germany and England, on July 16, 1986 just in time to catch Igor before he moved to Paris, France. My oldest boy, Igor, after much debating and soul-searching decided it would be better for him to move to Paris, where there was a job waiting for him in a nuclear research center. Although he was not a scientist, but there was an opening for an English/French speaking clerk. He left for France on July 19<sup>th</sup>.

After a brief visit in our area, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, Beverly and I took Hans on a 10-day New England States tour. (see our Travel Diary in **Appendix C**). We left with some trepidation since we never left the “kids” for so long. However with a written list of clear and specific instructions on the “Do’s and Don’ts” prominently displayed on a notice board in the kitchen, we were on our way.

We came home on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, at which point Hans left us to visit with some friends on the West Coast before returning to Australia on August 6<sup>th</sup>, while Bev and I proceeded to attend Bev’s 25<sup>th</sup> High School Reunion in Elwood, IN.

Our next adventure was Bev’s first visit to San Francisco on August 27<sup>th</sup> to see how Andrei was doing and also meet my former in-laws who, regardless of my divorce from their daughter, were still like parents to me. This trip is recorded in **Appendix D** as the SFO Trip Diary.



*"Great" Grandmother Juanita Thode*



Beverly had a tradition to periodically visit her ex-husband's grandmother, Juanita, who was nearly totally blind, hard of hearing and confined to a wheel chair. She was residing at a "special care" home for the elderly and Bev was her only visitor. She was a feisty "old gal" and took a liking to me on my 1<sup>st</sup> visit when she told Bev that if she was 10 years younger she would "vamp" me! The visits were short but enjoyable. The old lady looked forward to them and so did we. Although she was legally blind she would recognize my figure coming down the hall and wave at me with a broad smile.

September, is our favorite month, as both Bev and I were born on its 9<sup>th</sup> day some years apart. We both love the autumn coloring when the trees in our neighborhood transform into gorgeous bursts of gold, purple, crimson and orange. Life seems to take a slightly slower pace and the evenings are great for leisure promenades through the thickets and fields in the vicinity. The woods around us were full of deer and other wildlife and we enjoyed watching the squirrels, rabbits or an occasional raccoon scamper across our lawn preparing for their winter stores.

On October 11<sup>th</sup> there was a "Fremont Reunion" in Rochester, MI where Bev got the opportunity of meeting some of my former colleagues and co-workers from the GMAD Fremont plant in California that was leased to Toyota and is now called "NUMMI" or New United Motors Manufacturing Incorporated. It is the pioneering joint venture of General Motors Corporation and Toyota Motor Corporation. Established in Fremont, California, in 1984, NUMMI helped change the automobile industry by introducing the Toyota Production System and a teamwork-based working environment to the United States.



*"GMAD – Fremont" Reunion in Rochester, MI – Bob Arabian with Wife and Dick Gazarian with wife and us.*

Today, NUMMI has grown to become a company of 5,440 team members who produce three award-winning vehicles: Toyota Corolla, Toyota Tacoma and Pontiac Vibe.

Throughout its history, NUMMI has worked hard to create a unique corporate culture that borrows from Toyota, General Motors and the nearby Silicon Valley environment. NUMMI's collaborative partnership with the United Auto Workers has been the topic of numerous labor relations studies. The company's core values are based on five cornerstones: teamwork, equity, involvement, mutual trust and respect, and safety.

GM being a very “people-mobile” organization, Bev had a chance to meet many of my colleagues at the GM Hamtramck plant at a whole slew of “farewell and retirement parties”. Some of these folks correspond with us till today.

Later in the year, on November 1<sup>st</sup>, Bev and I attended her Uncle Oldrich and Aunt Fran’s 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and met a whole bunch of new (to me) relatives – wonderful, warm and caring people.



*The wonderful Bitnar family on Aunt Fran & Uncle Oldrich 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary*

Aunt Fran is Bev’s mother’s older sister and lives in Paradise, Michigan (Upper Peninsula). Beautiful thickly wooded area on Whitefish Bay, Lake Superior. The drive up there was about 5 hours long and took us over the Mackinaw Bridge into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Very scenic and pleasant countryside sparsely populated with farms and woods, small lakes, low hills, meadows and fields. Very calming ride with many photo stops. We took advantage of our visit and did a little touring of the area, but it was too cold and we promised to come back in summer or fall of the following year to visit the lakeside of Lake Superior and the wonderful secluded natural woods and brush in that vicinity.

The Bitnars are a wonderful warm and cohesive family, we later had an occasion to visit the older boy, Jerry (extreme left in the photo above) and his lovely wife Karen in Texas on one of our motor tours. We also had several meetings with Janet (next to Jerry in the photo) and her husband John later on Bev’s reunions with her Grade School class.



Our last trip that busy year was on November 28<sup>th</sup> to visit Elena Andreevna Kamkin, Leo's former mother-in-law, Nina Andreevna's sister in Rockville, MY near Washington D.C.



*Elena Andreevna (Baba Lena) Kamkin in her office at the "Kamkin Book Store" – Rockville, MY*

1986 was a truly transformative year for me. The stay at Parkview plus all of the "people" skills training that I was exposed to at the Hamtramck plant Human Resources Advisor training with classes headed by major experts like Edward Demming, Louis Tice, Tom Peters and Denis Waitley to name a few did a lot to open my eyes and smoothen the "rough" spots in my character.

At Parkview, I learned the wonderful creed – *"Grant me the Courage to accept the things that I cannot change, the Strength to change the things that I can and the Wisdom to know the difference"*

In retrospect, I also recognized the wisdom of my ancient Greek heritage in the two "golden" rules –

1. Everything in Moderation
2. Know Thyself

My above average height taught me at an early age not to solve my problems or get my way through physical means – that was severely disapproved by my peers as "bullying". The HRA courses taught me patience and better listening skills (I still have a lot of work to do on the latter). I re-learned the second law of thermodynamics states that, *"heat cannot flow from a cold object to a hot one"*. The moral being – maintain your cool in an angry exchange and thus relieve your antagonist of his/her anger instead of bouncing it back and keeping the "heat" going on.

Beverly's personal philosophy, her demeanor and wisdom enhanced my better side and her arrival in my life was very timely. We are both believers that "there are no accidents and everything happens for a reason, which is always GOOD". The loss of my mother was a severe shock and very traumatic but it led to my meeting with Beverly and resulted in my complete "renaissance".

I became a “super” happy man, because Beverly was my ideal partner. In her, like in a mirror, I see my good features. If something appears that I want to improve on, both of us notice it and improvement is easy and with humor seeing as we were both born on the same day, September 9<sup>th</sup>, eight years apart and on opposite sides of the globe but a mirror of each other!

We are both “Virgos” and the Virgo-Virgo relationship runs like a well-oiled machine. There is never any doubt as to who will do what and both of us are comfortable with this arrangement. Making lists, balancing accounts, and keeping the house and affairs in order are second nature to both of us. We are both well-tuned to each other’s frequencies and always have open and clear channels of communication between us. We are easily adaptable to any situation or social setting. This trait helped us a lot in our future foreign assignments and travels.

We constantly transmit thought and anticipate each other’s actions before they occur. Our Steven, who is very observant, was greatly amused watching us once sitting on a couch talking to someone and both crossing their legs, leaning on an arm or moving our heads in perfect synchrony.

At work, I was very fortunate to get matched up with a short, solidly-built Mexican-American, who was my UAW counterpart to our Management/Union Human Resources Analysis Team. We were both given the title of HRA and initially eyed each other with great suspicion and some animosity. In a short while we became like brothers and supported each other fully. Lupe became like a true brother to me and I miss him greatly! He never took “crap” from anyone, was thoroughly honest and really looked out for fairness and justice on all sides – I learned a LOT from him.

Our joint assignment was to reduce the gap of distrust between management and workers at this new GM facility. Not an easy task considering all the strife and friction of the prior years or Union/Management conflicts. Our role was to show to both sides that we were on the same boat and will either sail or sink together. At that time the Japanese and European imports were really eating into the US market share on our home territory. We learned a lot from the Toyota Production System through our “agents” at NUMMI in California and tried to apply it into our system. Sadly, although management allegedly bought into the general philosophy, GM’s insatiable thirst for the “quick profit” and quarterly returns, destroyed any positive progress as became apparent not to many years later. We were “voices in the wilderness”, but being believers in the benefits of development of harmony at work, became closer than natural brothers. I miss him sorely!!!

During the visits to my old Shanghai friends during our “European Honeymoon”, Teddy mentioned his imminent transfer to a Director’s position with the Bayer Asian Headquarters located in Tokyo, Japan. Paul also mentioned that they were ready to relocate for a Comptroller’s position with the Otto Durr Company Asian Headquarters in Pusan, Korea. The “last straw” was a long-lost letter that arrived at my GM work from Singapore. This letter was a year late and was shuttled by GM to various locations following my transfers. The letter was from another long-term Shanghai friend Theo Tcheau who was residing in Singapore. That did it! We immediately started planning a trip to the Orient to visit those dear friends. See **Appendix E** for that Travel Diary.





*Our 1<sup>st</sup> Christmas Tree together at our new home on Sunderland Drive*

The year ended with our 1<sup>st</sup> family Christmas dinner at our home in Sunderland with most of the family attending.

#### **Inserts to Chapter XV**

- Additional details on Parkview Experience – describe some of the patients, relationships, counselors with addiction histories, relapses, outside trips visiting Civil War battlefield (white affluent neighborhood at night) ~ Pg 174

## Chapter XIV – The Wonderful Years (1987 to 1989)

*“When two Virgos come together, they are likely to organize their lives in blissful harmony”*

We started the wonderful year of 1987 with a January 2 drive to Enfield, Connecticut. We went up there with Steven for a brief visit with Bev’s younger brother, Kenny, his wonderful gorgeous wife Christianne (who we met in Dusseldorf on our European Honeymoon) and their two great boys, my new nephews – Kevin and Scott, Kenny’s 2 boys from an earlier marriage. The boys, Kevin and Scott, reminded me a lot of my own two sons in their interactions between themselves. We only stayed a short while and after a couple of very pleasant days we drove back through the Niagara Falls area and had various photo sessions to make sure that Kodak’s stock stays high.



*Scottie, Kenny, Christianne and Kevin at their home in Enfield, CT*

The weekend of February 7<sup>th</sup>, we went skiing with Steven and Andrei to Mount Holly where Andrei showed us his skiing and a good time was had by all. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I attended a Bob Seegar concert and on April 3<sup>rd</sup> was Steven’s Junior Prom. The next day we were off on our long awaited Orient Trip (see **Appendix E**), where we toured four Asian countries – Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. We also made a stop-over San Francisco going to the Orient and in Hawaii on our way back to the US.

The trip was fantastic and full of great experiences, warm meeting with Leo’s old friends and greatly educational to us both. For starters we flew to San Francisco where Andrei, met us and was a “trustworthy chauffeur” during our brief stay. We visited with Norm Smiley, who studied at SJA in Shanghai with me but being a couple of years younger was unnoticed by us “Seniors” in that period. I got to know him only in San Francisco where he owned a pharmacy a block away from my then in-laws. After being robbed a few times by addicts holding loaded firearms in shaky hands, he sold his pharmacy and relocated to Half-Moon Bay, just across the Golden Gate Bridge. Being a graduate, certified



pharmacist, he had no trouble in finding a job in one of the more prestigious pharmacies and bought a nice home adjacent to a golf course. He had recently re-married a wonderful lady called Bobbi and we had a great visit.

After a brief visit with the Sapelkins, we also spent some time with Andre and MaryTeyssier, Andre was another childhood friend from Shanghai. He was a couple of years older than me and did military service with the French Foreign Legion in Indo-China, experiencing the famous battle of Dien-Bien-Phu. This was the climactic confrontation of the Indo Chinese war between the French Foreign Legion and the Viet Minh communist revolutionaries. The battle occurred in mid 1954 and culminated in a French defeat that influenced negotiations over the future of Indochina at Geneva. Military historians write that Điện Biên Phủ was "the first time that a non-European colonial independence movement had evolved through all the stages from guerrilla bands to a conventionally organized and equipped army able to defeat a modern Western occupier in a pitched battle. The French were "good losers" and Andre was one of many ex-Legionnaires that volunteered to remained behind and assist in repairing the war damages.



*Andre and Mary Teyssier at their home in Oakland, CA*

The flight to Tokyo was one of the longest that we ever flew. We were totally exhausted on arrival and I went looking for coffee at the airport. After my purchase, using the local currency, and as I was heading back to Bev, triumphantly holding the small Styrofoam cup of coffee in my hand, I realized that these 4 ounces of "instant", black coffee cost me 6 US dollars! As I handed the cup to Bev, I told her – "Sip slowly - - - we better check our budget".

Teddy and Andrea were most gracious hosts and very protective of us “pilgrims”. Our stay was very educational, wonderful and colorful due to our good fortune to arrive during the “Cherry Blossom Festival” season. The Japanese people are very courteous and hospitable; there were many smiles and bows in our encounters with store clerks, guides, pedestrians and just about with every native that we met.



*Andrea and Teddy Heinrichsohn with “Kuro”*

Our next stop was in Korea, which was more adventurous since we arrived in Seoul late and missed our connecting flight to Pusan. After some frustration since no one in this International airport seemed to speak English at this late hour, we finally found a train that would take us there. On arriving in Pusan at about 5 am, with our 6 pieces of bright red luggage (bought in that color to be easily distinguished from all the other indiscrete black, brown and gray luggage at the airport counters), we were startled at the small size of the taxi-cabs.

We eventually loaded us and the luggage with two cases on my lap and me holding one smaller case out of the door window! On showing the address to our driver, he chattered excitedly and took off. We seemed to be going in circles and with my prior experience with certain drivers in New York City, I started to get upset for it seemed to me he was loading the meter, although the cab did not have one that I could see. Eventually we stopped at a guard shack next to a large building and it was there that



we realized that Paul Codsi gave us his work address as we were initially anticipated to arrive during his working hours.

The guard in the shack had a home telephone number of one of the “foreign” managers at plant. We called and a “Michelle” answered in a sleepy French-accented voice. We asked if Paul was there and were told in a very annoyed voice – “Certainly not!”. With some irritation we were given Paul’s home number, which we called and finally found our friend. Later in recounting our experience to Paul and Maggie, much to their amusement, it came out that “Michelle” was the wife of Paul’s co-worker who happened to be out of town on business.



*Maggie and Paul Codsi – Pusan, Korea*

Paul and I were classmates in the SFX High School in Shanghai, in the same Boy Scout Troop and lived on the same street. He left China a year before me and immigrated to Canada. He and Maggie were extremely hospitable and gave us a good tour of the local life style and culture. We were particularly enthralled by observing a tour bus with a bunch of elderly women, smoking and chattering with great animation and loud peals of laughter. Maggie explained to us that they were all widows who after a very rigidly controlled marriage in this extremely male society, were finally free to do what they pleased and they were certainly “having a ball” with their new freedom!

On our transfer from Korea to Hong Kong, I temporarily lost my VISA card by leaving it at the Seoul airport, being distracted by a “pushy” female traveler. After some concern and anxiety, the airport clerk in Seoul mailed it to me to our Hong Kong hotel the next day. Good thing, since we had quite a shopping spree in the People’s Republic of China stores, where the prices for clothing was very low.

Next stop was Singapore for a visit with Theo and Cathy Tcheau. I knew Theo from Shanghai, he was a few years older than me but Alex his younger brother was my classmate at SJA. Theo and I often

attended the same parties with Teddy, Hans Conrad and Bobby Augestad in Shanghai and although they were all older than me, I was the “street-wise”, “hard-drinking” maverick.

This visit also went well, all of my old friends were completely infatuated with Bev and extremely grateful that she took a major part in getting me back to normality. We arrived on Easter and attended a string of religious services all of them very peaceful and spiritually enjoyable with wonderful, friendly people and no pressures.

We enjoyed meeting Theo and Cathy’s two sons, Guy and Stephen and their numerous nephews, cousins and nieces. One niece in particular was memorable. She was a tiny thing barely 5’ tall and probably weighed no more than 110 lbs. She was enjoying a very heavy breakfast with us and I commented – how could she stay so slim and fit after eating such a large amount? Her response was etched in my memory – she said “It is not the quantity that puts on the weight, it’s the guilt! One must eat with GUSTO and that will keep your weight down” – I liked that and eat with GUSTO till today.



*Guy, Emma, Theo, Stephen, Lisa, Me, Cathy at the Tcheau home*

Singapore amazed me because I passed through about 30 years later – what a change for the better, the streets were sparkling clean, so were the buildings. Everything painted and in order, no beggars or prostitutes although the bars and restaurants were full of people. We were particularly impressed with signs indicating that smoking was forbidden within 100 feet of hospitals and health facilities.

Culinary, Singapore was also a delight, particularly for me since I greatly missed authentic Chinese food in the US and was also introduced to spicy Malaysian food. Our favorite was “steamboat”, where

one sits around a boiling 3-partioned pot of water and dips in a wide selection of fresh meat, seafood and vegetables followed by drinking the respective water as a soup.

The last leg of our Orient trip was Hawaii, where we spent 3 wonderful days getting a tan and unwinding from our tour. We arrived just prior to the full start of the tourism season and in this fashion had a very pleasant and relaxing visit.

On our return, we celebrated our niece Kendra's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday at Mom & Dad's cottage on Houghton Lake where our nephew Sammy, age 6, had a harrowing confrontation with a squirrel. Later that month we had a "photo session" with Great Grandma Juanita Thode (sadly her last). Then there was another visit to Houghton Lake, this time to join Kenny and Christianna who were paying a visit, culminating with a wonderful dinner at "The Landing" restaurant.

After this wonderful trip, Bev and I started to think seriously about investigate the possibility of getting an overseas assignment with GM. Hence, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, on this basis, I wrote to James F. Waters, who knew me from Brazil and was then a GM Vice President and Group Executive of GM Overseas Operations. I stated briefly that – "I t is my belief that my long experience in Plant and I ndustrial Engineering, Supply, Manufacturing and Human Resources techniques, as well as my foreign heritage, coupled with good in-depth knowledge of other cultures and languages would make me a natural asset to the Corporation's activities overseas."

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, I received his reply – "Your experience at this point in your career is impressive and the multi-language capability is a definite plus. I have taken the liberty of forwarding your letter to the I nternational Personnel Activity. They maintain a file of individuals who have indicated a willingness to relocate to a foreign environment. The international arena will always require the services of people such as yourself, talented people who are eager for new experiences." This was the 1<sup>st</sup> step towards our "Russian Adventure".

In June we enjoyed our new pool at home, celebrated Leanne's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday and visits from Mom, Dad and the Days. Steve graduated from Eisenhower High School on June 15<sup>th</sup> and on July 18<sup>th</sup>, we had a pool party for "big" Sam's parents, Tom and Phyllis Day who drove up from Arizona in their trailer.

In early August, I flew again to San Francisco for a 5-day visit with Andrei at his new pad at 626 ½ Third Avenue and the Sapelkins. On my return we were visited by On September 5<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I attended a Roger Whitaker performance at the Oakland University's Outdoor Meadowbrook theatre. As dusk settled in and just before the performance started, a majestic formation of Canadian geese flew right over the stage and the assembled audience – an awesomely beautiful sight in the purple and red colored sky. Even Roger's mouth dropped open in awe.

In the Fall, we drove on two gorgeous trips – the 1<sup>st</sup> in early September to the upper peninsula, crossing the beautiful Mackinac Bridge to Paradise for a short visit with Uncle Oldrich and Aunt Fran, then onwards to see Tahquamenon Falls and Pictured Rocks. On our return we had a surprise visit on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, by one of my GMI Overseas alumni, Marc Girard, his wife Dori with their teenage son and daughter. They were ending up their US tour with 10 other Swiss alumni from GMOO/GMI and their families to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their graduation from GMI. They have a local

GMI alumni club and accumulated through their fees and careful investments in the Swiss stock market, to finance this 3-week trip. Later that month, Bev and I drove to the Upper Peninsula to see the beautiful fall coloring and visit Picture Rock and the Taquamenon Falls. Also that month, for cultural gratification, we went to see a performance of Sigmund Romberg's "Desert Song" which got me fully motivated to gallop off into the desert dusk in pursuit of wrongs to right!

On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, was Steve's Homecoming Dance and on the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>, we took a 5,440 mile tour of the Southwestern States (see the Travel Diary in **Appendix F**). This trip gave us an opportunity to visit some kinfolks and friends along the route. The first occasion was a brief visit with Darryl and Judi Poole in Fort. Thomas, KY. Darryl and Judi were both classmates of Bev at the Elwood, IN High School, there was much reminiscing of Bev' and their teen years in a very warm and pleasant atmosphere.

Next was an overnight visit with Jerry Bitnar, Bev's cousin and his gracious wife Karen. Not to impose we stopped near their home in search of a motel and called Karen to ask her if she could recommend one – "Why in the world do you want to do that?" she said "You-all come on down, we have plenty of room!" It was wonderful to see them and their lovely ranch-type home with a man-made lake in the backyard.

Further on our route was a visit with Soheila Daneshar, who worked for me in Iran and eventually got my position when I departed. Soheila was an engineering graduate from the Texas A&M University and after graduation and some work experiences in the US with misogynistic managers, returned to her native Iran with her somewhat reluctant but "happy-go-lucky" American husband, Jerry Day. Soheila was a very hospitable hostess and gave us a great welcome, insisting that we spend the night at their home.

After much scenic and historic experiences, including tours of the "Alamo" , "the Riverwalk" in San Antone and NM "Carlsbad Caverns", our next visit was an involuntary one to Mexico. Getting a little confused with our directions to El Paso and the New Mexico stateline we inadvertently crossed the border near El Paso, TX! After some initial panic and agitation, we recovered and got into a mile long queue north to the USA! At the border, the guard glanced at our Michigan license plate and told us with a strictly stern face – "You will have to pull over, since we will need to disassemble your vehicle for search of illegal drugs" on seeing our stricken horrified pale faces, he laughed and said – "Gotcha! Just kidding, move on".

In Phoenix, AZ, we briefly stopped over and visited with Sally and Gene Stotts, Bev's friends from Utica and parents of Leanne's former boyfriend. Wonderful people, Gene was head of GM's photography department till he chose early retirement and moved to Arizona along with many "winter-weary" Michiganders.

Our next visit was with Sam and Phylis Day, parents of Bev's Brother-in-law, Sam. This was another very warm family visit. We were pleasantly amazed at the quality of good literature that was at Phylis's bedside when we were offered her room for the night. She was one fine lady and both she and Tom were great and caring hosts. Long after our departure and many miles away, we discovered that we left our toiletries case at their home, complete with my shaving equipment and Bev's rollers. Unwilling to lose time by retracting from our route, we proceeded on – this became the beginning of a 6 month long "fuzzy" me with a moustache and a beard.



The balance of our trip was relatively uneventful, we were heading home in a rush, covering over 500 miles per day and not stopping for any significant photo shots. Pretty tired of the road and home-sick, but nevertheless with happy feeling on our tour and planning to take many more!

November was pretty eventful, starting with Bev and I taking a GM-sponsored “Dale Carnegie” class and followed by attending some great stage performances of the musicals – “Man of La Mancha” and “Kismet”. Steven in his turn shined at the Cobo Hall with the “Eisenhower High School Choir”.

**1988** was another busy and wonderful year starting with a March 22<sup>rd</sup> to April 13<sup>th</sup> Second European Tour, this time with Igor and Steven (see the Travel Diary in **Appendix G**). This tour, fondly abbreviated as BLIS (Bev, Leo, Igor and Steven), covered the United Kingdom (England/Scotland/Wales), Belgium, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Luxemburg and France, was a frantic but joyous car tour of these 7 vastly different European countries. On this tour I also sported a nice bushy moustache as a result of our prior Arizona trip.

Bev and I started the tour by flying to London, Igor, who was at that time working and living in Paris, France, was scheduled to meet us there shortly after our arrival, coming by train via the “Chunnel”. Steven was to meet us a week later in London.

After some confusion and delays caused by the dockers strike in France, Bev, Igor and I started our tour of Britain. It became apparent very quickly as we departed from Heathrow London Airport in our rented car, that I was not equipped to drive on the “right” side of the road which was the British method of traffic. After a couple of close calls and near head-on collisions, Igor took over the driving during our stay in the U.K.

First stop was a brief but warm visit with one of my GMI classmates, Andy Speight and his wife Janet. We had tea and crumpets, some reminiscing and exchange of news of old classmates. After the visit we spent our 1<sup>st</sup> night in Mansfield at a nice English “guesthouse” where on departure the gracious elderly proprietress let me take a book from her small library at no charge when I asked her if I could purchase it. I was very surprised since it was a very well preserved 1941 edition of “Travels in Tartary” written by Peter Fleming on his travels through China, including Shanghai and Harbin and on to Irkutsk in the Soviet Union in the early 30s.

In Scotland, Igor and I amazed the “locals” by consuming a double portion each of “Haggis”. This is a dish containing sheep's 'pluck' (heart, liver and lungs), minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and traditionally simmered in the animal's stomach for approximately three hours. It resembles stuffed intestines. Although its description is not immediately appealing, haggis has an excellent nutty texture and delicious savory flavor. Haggis is traditionally served with “neeps and tatties” (potatoes, boiled and mashed separately).

In Wales we thoroughly enjoyed touring the castles and trying to read the 26-letter road signs with multiple “LLs” and “Ws”.

Steven arrived one day later than scheduled but as usually everything worked out OK and the four of us set off for the “Continent”. Bev and I brought some Dennis Wheatley “motivational tapes to listen during our drives with the secret wish of exposing the boys to them – No Way, they immediately clamped on their head sets and were in their own world of contemporary music.

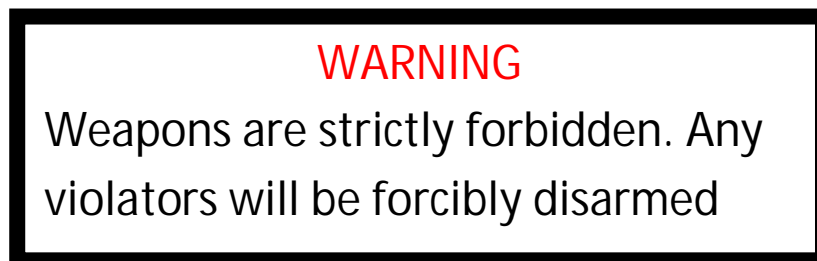
The details of our “Continental” tour are covered in **Appendix G** – “Travel Diary of Second European Trip (March 22 to April 13, 1988). Shortly after our return to the US, Bev’s parents put up their Livonia home up for sale and on May 7<sup>th</sup>, relocated to their beautiful cottage on Houghton Lake.

Steven attended his Senior Prom on May 20<sup>th</sup>, and graduated from Eisenhower High School on June 4<sup>th</sup> and shortly after that we had another visit from “Overseas” – Theo and Cathie Tcheau with whom we took a trip to Florida from June 13 to 20.

Theo and Cathie arrived on Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup> at 20:12 on flight TWA 220 from Singapore to visit with us and attend the 12<sup>th</sup> World Congress of International Council of Christian Churches sponsored by the Council of Churches (WCC). Closing ceremonies were scheduled to take place at the “Gateway to the Stars” in Cape Canaveral, FL on June 16<sup>th</sup>. The visit started with an unexpected welcome to the Tcheaus by a portly, graduating high school senior “mooner” from a passing car, flashing us as we drove home from the airport. Cathie asked us with a gasp – “Is this a usual greeting in the US?”

On the next morning after a short tour of central Detroit and Cobo Hall, we were on our way south to Florida. We proceeded at a good pace (55-65 mph) through Toledo, Dayton OH and Lexington KY spending a restful night, 524 miles later, at the Tennessee Motel in Carryville TN. The next morning, June 13<sup>th</sup> we were on the road again, onwards to Chattanooga TN and Atlanta GA with a lunch stop at Macon GA, a small industrial city and an agricultural center. After Cathie declined a meal of “rattlesnake eggs”, we enjoyed a nice lunch, a pleasant taste of “Southern hospitality” and a brief photo session, we finally arrived in Gainesville FL by 20:45 where we checked into our motel.

The following morning, refreshed after a good night’s sleep, warm morning shower and a nice breakfast, we were off to visit “Space Port USA” and the famous Kennedy Space Center. As we approached the Security Gate at the entrance, we heard a horrified gasp from Cathie, turning and looking at her pale frightened face we asked her what was the matter? She pointed with a quaking finger at a sign and in a wavering voice asked – “Do they really do that?” We looked at the sign which read -



She was under the impression that the arms of violators would be chopped off!

Our visit to the Kennedy Space Center was very interesting and involved much photography. We took a double-decker bus and had a very informative guided tour of the Kennedy Space Center, relaxing in comfort as we visited the various Space Shuttle launch sites culminating in viewing the IMAX film “the Dream is Alive” at the Galaxy Center IMAX Theater.

The next day, we left the Tcheaus to interface with the other members of the International Council of Christian Churches and made our way to Brandon, near Tampa FL for a brief visit with Bev’s Uncle Harlan Whichello, Aunt Pauline and two of her cousins, Patty and Cathie. After a short but pleasant

visit we headed back to catch the closing ceremonies and parade of the flags by the International Council in Orlando. Needless to say, much photo-snapping from all angles by two very determined photo buffs.

The following morning, on June 16<sup>th</sup> we were off, the four of us (I thought) to visit and tour the Epcot Center. It was there that Bev informed Leo, privately, that we had a 5<sup>th</sup> member in our party – she was pregnant! Leo was stunned, overjoyed, incredulous, and in shock. After recovery there were many hugs and kisses and I reached in my pocket, took out my unfinished pack of cigarettes and threw it out of the car window – never to smoke again after a 3-packs a day habit of 35 years.

Next we spent a day at the Disney World Magic Kingdom taking the various rides, seeing the shows and parades and watching the night's illuminated displays. The following day was spent at The Busch Gardens "Dark Continent" taking the Trans-Veldt Railroad to see a large collection of free-roaming animals – herds of zebra, giraffe, gazelle and antelope, rare black rhinos, stately lions and Cape buffalo. Final shows was watching various colorful tropical birds, exotic condors and graceful bald eagles perform. After the show we dropped in to visit Susan and Bob Dellinger in Land O'Lakes near Tampa. Susan and Bob are old high school classmates of Bev's, graduating with her at Elwood IL High School.

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, Cathie and Theo flew home to Singapore on TWA flight 172 from Orlando, and we started to head home after a very pleasant and EVENTFUL week! We arrived home the following day and in celebration of our new "life adventure" went to dinner at "Parochetti's" an Italian restaurant near our home with delicious "home style" Italian cooking from "Mama's" recipe.

On August 21<sup>st</sup> we attended the "Renaissance Fest" with Steven dressed up in his Warlock robes and had a great time enjoying the roasted turkey drumsticks and the general festivities that were happening all around us. Some of the participants went to great lengths in designing and sewing their costumes.

From October 14 to 22 we paid a visit to Elena Andreevna ( Nina Andreevna's sister) and Igor in Washington DC as well as taking the scenic down the Blue Ridge Parkway, stopping at Jefferson's Monticello home and visiting with Bev's Aunt Alice in Moseley, Virginia. This trip is detailed in a Travel Diary in **Appendix G**. The year culminated with a Family Dinner at our Sunderland home with most of the family attending (my boys were absent because they were out of town).

The year 1989 started with "LaMaze" classes and visits to the Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital for our orientation leading to Bev's baby delivery, which was estimated for February. We were amused by the startled and curious glances from the other parents-to-be who were all much younger. The wonderment increased when our response to the question "What is the age of the closest sibling" was "19"!

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Igor started his intensive college program at the University of Chicago. He engrossed himself into "total" study and completed a 4-year Bachelor's curriculum in 3 years of intense studies and zero social life. He committed himself, entirely, to obtain a degree from an "Ivy League" college and make his "mark" in the world. His first choice was Harvard but he was unable to obtain the proper references to get him in there. Nevertheless, he did very well in his academic life.



*Kyra Catrina Kalageorgi – Born February 25<sup>th</sup> 1989*

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Kyra Catrina Kalageorgi made her appearance. It was a laborious but joyous “natural” birth. I was the first to hold her and nearly dropped her when I saw her extremely large, wise, gray eyes checking my face and me from head to foot! There was a deep ancient wisdom in the look and it startled me completely because it was so unexpected. The “look” was gone in the next hour and I never saw it again. That night the hospital set up for us a wonderful candlelit dinner in a private room to celebrate our event.

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, Paul Codsí visited us at our home in Sunderland, he was on his way to visit his grown children from an earlier marriage in Canada. This was followed by a visit on July 12<sup>th</sup> by Danny and Mary Tablada. Danny was a Mexican who was in my class at GMI back in 1963 and was visiting relatives in Michigan.

We introduced Kyra to the pool fairly early, and since she is a “Pisces” she immediately loved the water. I would wade with her in the shallow end, dipping her little feet in the water and letting her float a little on her tummy and back. She and I enjoyed those sessions tremendously. On one of these outings, shortly after she was fed, Bev handed her to my outstretched arms. I took her and tossed her in the air a little which provoked much giggles but some concern on Bev’s part. However I was very careful not to toss her too high and have a firm grasp of her little body. All of a sudden she burped and threw up all over my head and shoulders. Bev who was videoing the event dropped the camera in laughter and did not “immortalize” the event!





*Kyra – age 6 months, ready for her 1<sup>st</sup> 6,000 mile trip across the Rockies*

The summer passed in a whirlwind of family visits and introduction of “our angel” to relatives and friends. One of the asked Bev 3 months after Kyra’s birth – “Have you put her down yet?”. Everyone was enthralled with the possible exception of little Sammy, who asked in a whinny voice – “Does this mean that I am not the littlest one anymore ?”

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Miss Kyra, age 6 months, went on her 1<sup>st</sup> major trip – a Tour across the United States and the Canadian Rockies of over 6,000 miles with Alan and Gitte Engelsen who arrived for a six week visit.

Our tour started with a visit to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Michigan Renaissance Festival, to which we were escorted by two “Brethren of the Dark School” (Steve & Shanan in hooded robes). As we entered the grounds we were greeted by a notice that said – “There shall be NO unhappy people in the Shire of Hollygrove today”. We proceeded to stroll through the wooded paths, checking out the hand-made crafts, feasting on succulently roasted turkey drumsticks and admiring the period-dressed participants and visitors. We applauded the armored fearless knights during their jousts on horseback and attended various performances by jugglers, fire-eaters and jesters as well as some of us eying some of the Bawdy Wenches.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> we took a drive to Port Huron to visit with John and Bev Guske. John worked as Chief Engineer at the GM Iran plant in Teheran with Alan and I back in 1975. John’s son and daughter and their families were also over for a visit and we spent a very pleasant day with them. The following day it was my brother-in-law Sam’s birthday and we celebrated it at the “Red Lobster” restaurant in Novi.

August 19<sup>th</sup>, we geared up, made a “Do and Don’t List” for Leanne, and Steven and were on the road of our main trip – across the USA and Canada. Our first brief stop was a visit with Mom and Dad at their Houghton Lake cottage from where we proceeded on to Paradise to give our respects to Uncle Oldrich and Aunt Fran as well as introduce our guests to the beautiful fall trees in the Upper Peninsula. The next morning we continued on to Canada, entering at Sault Ste Marie and driving west along the northern shoreline of Lake Superior. We checked out the incredible array of Canadian Indian art and craftwork at Agawa, stopped for a “Kodak moment” at the Kakabeka Falls and posed in front of the 4,400 lb., 30-foot high metal goose sculpture at Wawa. Kyra was not impressed, she preferred to sit on a 2-foot high sculpture of a smiling bear cub.

After much photography, meetings with friendly natives, beautiful scenery and wonderful meals we drove through the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, arriving at Calgary, Alberta which was the host city for the 1988 Olympic Winter Games. We took a brief tour of the now deserted Canada Olympic Park and the still lit Olympic torch and proceeded on to the magnificent Banff and Lake Louise area. The Banff National Park encompasses 2,500 square miles of majestic peaks, forests, alpine valleys, glaciers, rivers, hot springs and turquoise lakes. We spent two great days touring that area driving through panoramic roads, observing the wild bighorn sheep with their magnificent curved horns, took the Sulphur Mountain Gondola ride and used up rolls of film at the gorgeous sight of Lake Louise.

From there we continued westwards to the small town of Three Valley Gap, British Columbia, where we could step back in history and relive the pioneer days of the late 1800s. Next stop was at Hope where we stayed at the “Alpine Hotel”. Hope was a favored location for Hollywood films, the 1<sup>st</sup> Rambo film “First Blood” starring Sylvester Stallone, was almost entirely filmed in this community. It was followed by “Shoot to Kill” with Sidney Poitier and Tom Berenger.

After that, we drove to Vancouver where we crossed by ferry to Victoria, British Columbia’s capital city, where its strong Scottish/English heritage was evident in the striking examples of Victorian architecture and the abundance of green open spaces and lavish parks. After some relaxation, a good meal at the “Pioneer House” restaurant and an overnight stop at the “Bluebird” motel in Nanaimo, we continued on in search of my teen-years friend from Shanghai, George Tzvetkoff. On our visit with George and his wonderful wife Jean, we had another pleasant surprise by being joined by Walter Turch, known to me as Vova Tourchaninoff in my Shanghai life. This was an extremely warm and wonderful day and we had a great time, talking about days gone by and mutual friends.

On our return to Vancouver, the following day, we visited with Olga (nee Orlova) Jorgensen and her husband Darryl. I knew Olga in Shanghai when we were both teenagers and have not seen her for nearly 40 years. We had a wonderful Chinese lunch and proceeded for afternoon tea with another old friend from Shanghai, Tania Soboleff, who was visiting her daughter and grandchildren. Tania lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil and was widowed from my old former classmate from Saint Joan of Arc College, Orest Soboleff. It is amazing how small the world is, for during this visit we discovered that the mother-in-law of Tania’s daughter’s husband was the “Irina” who was the eternal love of my Uncle George and with whom he had a length correspondence of an average of 6 letters per month in the last years of his life. Many of these letters are with me today! Many photos, smiles, hugs and handshakes later, we were on the road again – this time back to the USA.

Our next visit was with John and Golriz Lorenz in Portland, Oregon. I met John when I was working at GM Iran in Teheran. He was one of the consultants that GM hired to smoothen the “culture conflicts” that we were experiencing between the expatriates and the local staff at that operation. John was a Professor of Mid-Eastern Culture at the University of Oregon, fluent in spoken and written Farsi, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Iran and was married to a native-born Iranian lady. He was a great resource to me for a deeper and clearer understanding of Persian and Mid-Eastern culture and way of thinking. Unbeknown to me at that time, this wisdom would help me a lot in my future assignment in Russia. Most “Westerners” do not understand that Russia encompasses two continents – Europe and Asia, and much of the Russian mannerisms and outlooks border the “Eastern” way of thinking – their hospitality, suspicion of foreigners, warmth after friendship is established, etc.

From there we proceeded eastward, stopping over at the Bonneville Lock and Dam between the Oregon and Washington states, where we watched the famous salmon runs. At Spokane we visited the Hamilton Photography Studio in Spokane and had a brief tour by Don and Lorna Hamilton. Don was a working acquaintance of Leonid Bergoltzev and in later years assisted Leonid and his family to immigrate to the US from Russia. Bev and I, with our appreciation of the art of photography enjoyed our visit thoroughly, seeing the artistic talented displays and discussing various techniques, filtration photo angles and methods.

From Idaho we continued south-eastward to the Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. We entered the park at the Gardiner North Entrance and drove leisurely to the “Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel” where we stayed for two wonderful days. We saw much wildlife especially elk, deer and bison. The elk would come up to a few feet outside our window and greet us by giving us their morning call. There was much opportunity for photography and we used up a good few rolls of film. We toured the hot springs area with its colorful paint pots and hot bubbling pools and saw “Old Faithful” making its timely performance with thousands of gallons of water thundering into the sky with each eruption.

From Yellowstone we continued east on our way home crossing the Continental Divide at an elevation of 8,262 feet above sea level. We stopped over at the “Prime Rate Motel” in Gillette, WY and visited an “Old Trail Town” a museum of the Old West and a replica of the early 1800s. Then it was onwards to The Devil’s Tower, an imposing national monument.

The next day, we stopped for lunch at the “Wall Drug” in South Dakota and continued on to see the “Mitchell Corn Palace” with its murals and minarets sculptured from husks of corn. Nowhere else in the world is there another such structure, decorated with 3,000 bushels of corn. It was unforgettable! Next on our route was the “Mount Rushmore National Memorial” at Keystone, SD with the four most famous guys in rock!

We drove on to Minnesota and Wisconsin, where Gitte, after dozing for a while, looked out at the constantly continuous flat farmland, commented – “Just like home. I could have stayed in Denmark”. We made a brief shopping stop at “OshKosh b’gosh” and equipped Kyra for the next 3 years. After dining at a ‘50s Drive-in Diner complete with roller-skating car hops with short skirts and pleasant smiles, we went on to catch the carferry “Badger” for a crossing of Lake Michigan at Kewaunee, Wisconsin to Ludington in our home state. See **Appendix I – “Travel Diary of Canadian Rockies and NW USA Trip”** for more details of this wonderful tour.

We got home by September 9<sup>th</sup> in time to celebrate our mutual birthdays at the “Apple Orchard Inn”. The trip was wonderful, however only 2 weeks later on September 24<sup>th</sup>, Alan passed away. He was reluctant to come because he was suffering from terminal cancer, we however encouraged him to take this trip and were very happy that his final days gave him much pleasure and ability to think of more pleasing things. His younger daughter Birte came over to join her mother and arrangements were made to transport Alan’s remains back to their home in Denmark.

Jim Johnson, my former boss from GM Iran and a mutual friend of Alan’s also stopped by and had an opportunity to visit Alan briefly in the hospital.

In early October, Bev and I attended a lecture given by Dr. Leo Buscaglia, also known as "Dr Love". He was an author and motivational speaker, and a professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Southern California. He gained fame on the USC campus through his non-credit course titled "Love 1A," which became the basis for his first book, titled simply LOVE.



*Dr. Leo Buscaglia at the lectern talking about “Love”*

While teaching at USC, Dr. Buscaglia was moved by a student's suicide and to contemplate human disconnectedness and the meaning of life, he began a non-credit class he called Love 1A. He argued that social bonds are essential at transcending the stresses of everyday life and enriching it above the limitations of poverty as well as crossing communication gaps between generations.

His public lecture audiences, which numbered in the thousands, nearly always spontaneously formed a line after his talks in order to hug this outgoing speaker. We each got a hug to at the conclusion of



his lecture. Both of us love his books and learned a lot from them. We still have a series of audio tapes that we wish our “kids” would listen to some day.

October 7<sup>th</sup>, was our first viewing of the stage performance of the spectacular “Les Miserables” at the Fisher Theater in Detroit. It had a great impact on us both and since then we saw it again a couple of times.



*Collapsed section of ramp to the Bay Bridge in San Francisco, CA*

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, there was a major earthquake (6.9) in the San Francisco area and a section of the major freeway at the north entrance of the Bay Bridge collapsed on the commuter traffic, crushing many cars and causing much loss of life and injury. My younger son was there at the time working as an audio technician with some stage performance people. He was in the midst of the aftermath and, as he shared with me later, “wired” Dan Quayle, who was the Vice President at that time, for sound in his interview with the media.

This was a major shocker to me as I drove that section of freeway daily on my way to work at the GM plant in Fremont only a few years ago.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, with my belief in “Persistence and Determination are Omnipotent” and “Tony Robbins - Ask”, I continued my pursuit of an overseas assignment with GM, this time writing to Greg DeYonker, who was the Executive Director of New Business Development, I congratulated him on his new assignment and wrote the following – “My knowledge of European cultures, social systems and history coupled with my ability to communicate in several native languages enables me to work very well anywhere in Europe, particularly in the USSR, and the other countries of the Eastern Block”. Typically, I did not receive a reply from him, but the wheels were turning, for in 1990, about a year later, I received the 1<sup>st</sup> proposal to work on the “Russian VAZ/GM” project in Togliatti, USSR.

November 16<sup>th</sup>, was Kyra’s Christening in Washington D.C. “Baba” Lena was the Godmother and my oldest son Igor was the Godfather. She was christened in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral with an

Archbishop and Bishop performing the ceremony. She took it all in stride and did not even whimper when she was dunked in the water.



*The Alexandrov Red Army Choir performing "Kalinka"*

That winter, Bev had her 1<sup>st</sup> exposure to the magnificent vocal sounds of the Red Army Choir, who were on tour in the US and held a performance on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Fox Theater. It was a great performance and we enjoyed it thoroughly. The ensemble consists of a male choir, an orchestra, and a dance ensemble. The songs they perform range from Russian folk tunes to church hymns, operatic arias and popular music; examples include *The Volga Boatmen's Song*, *Katyusha*, *Kalinka*. They also have a wide repertoire of foreign songs such as arias from operas, songs of the world and spiritual music like "Ave Maria".



*Olga, Nina and Leonid Bergoltsev*

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Leonid, Nina and Olga Bergoltsev visited us at our home in Sunderland. They came over on a visitor's visa arranged by Don Hamilton and stopped over for a few days with us prior to proceeding on a Greyhound bus to Spokane.

We enjoyed their company and they introduced us to some interesting friends, that he made during his days as an Ace Photographer for the magazine "Soviet Life" which was the Russian version of the popular US magazine "Life". One such friend was Linda Shinkle who he met when she was a young graduate student on a visit to Moscow and was currently the wife of Norm Shinkle, Michigan State Senator for the 11<sup>th</sup> District. The Shinkles took us on a tour of the Domino Pizza Headquarters and grounds that were ablaze with Christmas decorations.

More than 900,000 dazzling lights - including a 180-foot tall fiber optic display – showered the winter Michigan sky with a glimmer that could be seen from more than a mile away. A look up at the festive shine that seems to be eternally suspended in air provided an adequate road map to reach this illuminating destination for all "directionally challenged" visitors. The tour culminated in a visit to Tom Monaghan's office, the owner of Domino Pizza, where I was cautioned against sitting in his luxurious black leather swivel chair for a photo moment. I sat anyway but no photo!

We took Leonid and his family on a brief tour of downtown Detroit, had a nice dinner at a Greek Town restaurant and a brief look at the Joe Louis Arena. The weather was very cold to do much walking and the Bergoltsevs were limited in time prior to their departure for Spokane, so we went home and spent the evening chatting about the "old days" and common friends. When we shared with them the possibility of our relocation to Togliatti, they were horrified and kept telling me – "Togliatti is NOT Moscow, it's the province. Very rural and limited in creature comforts or the cultural content of Moscow or Leningrad. It was the end of the road!" They were sincerely worried on how we would cope there.

The year closed with Kyra celebrating her 1<sup>st</sup> Christmas with the family at Houghton Lake. Altogether it was a wonderful year!



## Chapter XV – Preparation for our Russian Adventure (1990 to 1991)

### “To Boldly go where No Man went before” – Star Trek

1990 was a very eventful year with me registering at Oakland University for an MBA program. Igor at the same time started at the University of Chicago – Booth School of Business. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I with Kyra attended the International Auto Show at Cobo Hall, in which much to the amusement of the attendees, Kyra demonstrated her disdain for cars and preference for the higher arts by reading her book in her stroller for the entire visit.

1990 was a very eventful year with me doing a lot of tours at the Hamtramck plant. GM management recognized my Russian language skills and in this “thawing” period of the Cold War, we had many important visitors from the USSR who were given an opportunity of getting a tour of the most modern automobile assembly plant in the world, by a knowledgeable, Russian-speaking guide – “Moi”.

My 1<sup>st</sup> tour involved a group of Soviet High School teenagers, who were very inquisitive and interested in the “American” way of life, including automobile assembly in the most “advanced” factory in the world.



**LEO KALAGEORGI**, a planner with Tech Support at the Cadillac Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center, leads Soviet and American students on a tour of the facility – photo by Joseph Oster.



*"Like most 16-year olds, Ekaterina Sarajkina dreams of the day when she will get her own set of wheels. For the Soviet Union teenager, however, that dream is a long way from reality. We do not have such cars in my country, she said, while gazing at the maroon 1990 Cadillac Brougham parked in the General Motors Building East Exhibit Showroom.*

*You must also be 18 to drive in Soviet Union, added her friend, 15-year old Zinaida Cherednuchenko. Maybe someday we will drive these cars (in Russia), Sarajkina said.*

*The two Russian teenagers were among a group of Soviet and American students who enjoyed a behind the scenes look at GM through tours of the Cadillac Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center and GM World Headquarters on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

*The Soviet exchange students, 10 in all, just completed a month-long stay in Detroit.*

*Their visit to the United States and Rochester Adams High School was the result of a cultural exchange treaty signed in 1987 between Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and former President Ronald Reagan.*

*According to Caye Randolph, principal of Rochester Adams High School, the school entered its name to the list of possible U.S.exchange sites in 1988.*

*Adams high school was selected as one of the 35 American schools to participate in the three-year exchange program.*

*The students, who are from a suburb of Leningrad, and their teacher, Ludmilla Fedorovskaja, arrived in Detroit February 1 and returned home February 27. Ten Rochester Adams students followed their Soviet classmates to Russia March 1.*

*The program is designed to offer the students an overview of American life and all that means, Randolph said. The students have spent half of their time here (in Detroit) in the classroom and the other half touring the area.*

*The students' stops at the GM facilities were their first trips into the day in the life of the American worker.*

*It is a great experience for them to know better the life of many kinds of American people, Fedorovskaja said. We got acquainted with the life of teachers, and the life of youngsters, and now we know much about the life of the workers.*

*The gathering of Soviet and American students and teachers started the day at the Cadillac Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Center.*

*Upon arrival, they were met by **Leo P.Kalageorgi**, a planner with Tech Support at the assembly center.*

***Kalageorgi**, whose parents are from the Soviet Union and speaks fluent Russian, took the group on a complete tour of the center and the process of manufacturing a car.*

*The students portrayed a certain amount of maturity, but they were still kids, which made them very likeable, **Kalageorgi** said.*

*What I thought was neat was I couldn't tell who was from here and who was from there, he added. I remember the people from my trips to the Soviet Union, and there used to be a definite difference. Now it seems as if that difference has evaporated.*

*Jenny Wing, an 18-year old senior at Rochester Adams, also made a similar observation.*

*I think the biggest thing I've learned is that they're just like us. They have their snobs, their quiet people and their brains, she said. I guess teenagers are just teenagers." By Kim Diehr, Staff Writer.*

My job at LAD was also very rewarding, educational and pleasant. My new boss was a very knowledgeable, hard working individual, always pleasant and open to discussions and ideas. I learnt a lot from him and my colleagues on the job. The job involved in "packaging" the automotive components into the metal car shell. I learned about fiber optical sheets that were used to as pseudo sheet metal that compose the car body. My main job involved the engine compartment and how to fit the car engine and all of its working accessories under the hood of the new J-Car vehicle which still did not have a name but was destined to be manufactured at the Lansing Motor Assembly Plant. This again involved many hours and much travel to Lansing and different contractors' facilities. It enhanced my knowledge of product design and functionality of the automobile.

Late in February, I had my first interviews with the AC Rochester upper management for an ISP Overseas assignment in the USSR. A few weeks later I also interviewed for a job at the Lansing Automotive Division (LAD) for a job as a Project Engineer at the Warren Technical Center. These two series of interviews resulted in me accepting the LAD job on the new J-Car as a "mock-up" Project Engineer while I was awaiting final determination on my Overseas assignment to Russia.



On February 25<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated Kyra's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday where without hesitation she did justice to her cake with gusto and both hands.

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, I was fortunate to attend one of the last live lectures by Dr. W. Edwards Deming, who made a significant contribution to Japan's reputation for innovative high-quality products and its economic power. He is regarded as having had more impact upon Japanese manufacturing and business than any other individual. Despite being considered something of a hero in Japan, he was



only just beginning to win widespread recognition in the U.S. I greatly admire his “Key Principles” some of which, as listed below, could have saved “mighty” GM from her fall in later years if they were applied in time.

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service, with the aim to become competitive and stay in business, and to provide jobs.
2. Eliminate the need for massive inspection by building quality into the product in the first place.
3. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service, to improve quality and productivity, and thus constantly decrease costs.
4. The aim of supervision should be to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job.
5. Drive out fear, so that everyone may work effectively for the company. Break down barriers between departments. People in research, design, sales, and production must work as a team, to foresee problems of production and in use that may be encountered with the product or service.
6.
  - a. Eliminate work standards (quotas) on the factory floor. Substitute leadership.
  - b. Eliminate management by objective. Eliminate management by numbers, numerical goals. Substitute leadership.
7.
  - a. Remove barriers that rob the hourly worker of his right to pride of workmanship. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed from sheer numbers to quality.
  - b. Remove barriers that rob people in management and in engineering of their right to pride of workmanship. This means, "abolishment of the merit rating and of management by objective"
8. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement.

That summer, Bev and I enjoyed watching Garrison Keillor, live at the Meadowbrook Outdoor Theater, sitting picnic-style on a blanket on the grass. We are long-time fans of his radio show – “The Prairie Dog Companion” and his tales about the residents of the fictitious town of “Lake Wobegone”. His homely humor and deadpan expression coupled with his red polka dot bowtie and red sneakers lives clearly in my mind.



*Leanne and Jerry Peters Wedding at Chestnut Hollow – July 21, 1990*

On May 20<sup>th</sup> Bev hosted a Wedding Shower for Leanne and on July 21<sup>st</sup> we attended her wedding to Jerry Peters at the Peter's Chestnut Hollow "spread".

That summer we also purchased a new Chevrolet Astro Van which would gain a lot of mileage in our upcoming future long trips across the USA. We also had a visit from Soheila (my former employee and replacement in Iran), her son Jason and new husband Tom Pozzuoli.

Bev brother Kenny, also came over to our home in Sunderland for a brief visit. He was working as a private pilot for some executives dealing with the Far East and as usual was full of enthusiasm and interesting stories about his endeavors and adventures.

My successful role as a Russian-speaking guide for the Soviet students, resulted in a string of other tours since GM was very proud of its most "modern" plant and got good public relations by showing it off to foreign delegations. One of these was Leonid Ivanovich Abalkin, a Russian economist was the director of the Institute of Economics of the USSR Academy of Sciences. A member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR with special responsibility for economic affairs. He later worked as an advisor to Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Under Mikhail Gorbachev he was one of the major advocates of rapid economic reform, and in 1998 became a member of the Economic Crisis Group. Most of his published writings concern the theoretical problems of political economy under socialism.



*With Soviet journalists accompanying the Economist Abalkin*



*With a member of the Soviet Women's Delegation*

Another tour involved a delegation of Soviet Women who were directors of some of the USSR's major enterprises in clothing, houseware and confectionaries.



On another one of these tours we were expecting some journalists from Australia accompanied by James F. Waters, President of GM Overseas Operations. As I was standing in the Executive cafeteria besides the Plant Manager, the group appeared in the doorway. Without any ceremony, Jim Waters when he saw me he gave an exclamation of delight and said – “Leo Kalageorgi! So wonderful to see you again after all of those years”. The Plant Manager and his staff were dumbfounded and Mr. Waters spent the bulk of the visit chatting with me. It was he who hired me in Brazil in 1960, nearly 30 years earlier.

My grandfather taught me from childhood to always walk straight with my vision held level. He always impressed me with his posture which came from his military cadet training and service as a young officer in the Tsar’s Court. In later years it served me well and I always tried to instill the same in our children. I remember once coming to work at the plant, when one of the workers sided up to me and asked me – “What’s your secret?” I was somewhat puzzled and asked him what he meant. He replied – “I watch you walk in the plant every morning and you always look like you own the place”. I chuckled and moved on, however this re-enforced the benefit of “walking tall”.

For a while it bothered me that I never managed to get a promotion beyond the 7<sup>th</sup> Level and had some minor frustration on not attaining the 8<sup>th</sup> Level. However later I realized the major benefit of being a “Master Sergeant” versus a “1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant”. I could always “speak my mind” and “do my thing” without any fear of jeopardizing my “career path”. Because of my contributions to the company, GM kept giving me healthy salary increases which resulted in me making a lot more than the average 8<sup>th</sup> Level and I could always say to my supervisor – “OK, if you disagree, tell me what you want me to do?” passing on the responsibility of failure to him or her. The moral here is – “Better to be the Cardinal than the King!”

That August I met the first Volga Automotive Works (VAZ) group in Flint and with permission from my LAD management, spent 3 days getting acquainted with them and sitting in on the negotiations that were going on between them and AC Rochester on the Engine Management Project. This project was the engineering and delivery of a functioning fuel injection system to a series of VAZ engines. To further complicate the program, these engines were being re-vamped by the German firm “Porche” to incorporate our US system. A “three-way circus” to put it mildly!

Later that month, I located another one of my former classmates from SJA – Albert King, who was a prominent Medical doctor, Surgeon and Mechanical Engineer. He is a full professor at Wayne State University in the Bioengineering field and holds a citation for advances in understanding the mechanism, response and tolerance of the human body to normal and traumatic loading. This did not surprise me for he was always a “straight A+ student” while were in class together. We had dinner with him and his lovely wife Elizabeth (who was an author of a well-selling, Chinese book) at ....guess....a Chinese restaurant!

On September 18<sup>th</sup> Steven departed for his 6-week Navy Orientation and “Boot Camp” in Orlando, FL and on September 20<sup>th</sup>, Bev, Kyra and I left for our one week “Look-See” trip to Russia as the final stage before accepting our ISP assignment.

Although I have visited the Soviet Union a few times, all my visits were restricted to the large cosmopolitan cities like Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev – Togliatti was something of a shock for me and I admire Bev’s dedication that she did not leave right away. Although the city was fairly large with

approximately 600,000 inhabitants at that time, there were very limited amenities or “frills”. There were no grocery or produce stores, no restaurants, no laundries or dry cleaners and if they were there, no signs indicating them in any language. Our hosts gave us a “red carpet” reception and did not notice our concerns and were enthusiastic in showing us the great Sports Palace, Hockey Arena and other grandiose facilities.



*Our “Look-See” Trip to Togliatti – September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1990*

At the conclusion of our tour, the accompanying GM Personnel representative noted in private – “You are not too excited about this assignment, are you?” after a pause he said – “You know we can sweeten it a little for you since this is considered an extra-hardship post”.

They put together a very tempting package for us –

- An additional “Hardship” allowance of 20% of my base salary.
- Three fully paid Rest & Recreation (R&Rs) trips of one week each to ANY location outside of the Soviet Union.
- Bi-monthly shipments of basic food and household supplies
- Annual Home Leave (return to our home town in the US)
- A complete wing of a local hotel comprising of 9 rooms, 4 bathrooms and 4 kitchens (we remodeled one into a laundry room, another to a storage/fitness room and the third to a small office for Bev).
- Completely enclosed the open air balconies and remodeled the whole area in “western style” by hiring a Danish contractor.
- The appliances and furniture was all purchased by us in the US, shipped and installed at GM’s expense at the location.

- And the main prize – a satellite telephone/FAX system that was used world-wide on shipping with direct contact to the USA 24/7!

It was “***an offer we could not refuse***”

Russian living accommodations were rather different than what we were accustomed to in the US. By our standards, the rooms were small, at an average no more than 150 square feet with relatively low ceilings. Normal allocations during the Soviet years was an apartment with 3 rooms + bath and kitchen for a family with children, 2 rooms + bath and kitchen for a couple and 1 room with a kitchen and bath for a single person. Imagine the shock when we were allocated an entire wing of a building – 6 rooms with 4 bathrooms and 4 kitchens for a couple with one small child!

I remember reading about Shirley MacLaine’s 1973 visit to China when she led a delegation of 12 American women. She commented on the crowded quarters when she visited a Chinese family, saying that in America all the family members of her household had their own room. The Chinese guide, smiled and said – “How sad, here if any member of the family is unhappy with another, he or she have no place to go and sulk and must resolve the issue right there along with the other members of the household”.

At the conclusion of our “Look See” trip, we visited with our Russian friends, Leonid and Nina Bergoltzev in Moscow. They were extremely hospitable but shook their heads when we told them of our acceptance of this 3-year assignment. They were both ardent Moscovite and would not dream of living in the “backwoods” of Togliatti. We told them not to worry as anyone can last anywhere for three months (the time between our R & Rs). Over the first years of our assignment we visited them often as we passed through Moscow. We later discovered that the ideal way to travel to Togliatti from the US or Europe was to fly into Moscow, spend the night and the next day take the overnight train from the Kursk Railroad Station with comfortable sleeping cabins to Togliatti.



*Guided tour of Hamtramck Cadillac Plant for 3 Chairmen – Colin Powell, General Moiseyev and Bob Stempel – October 3, 1990*

Later that year, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, I had my most important tour, showing General Moiseyev, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of the USSR, accompanied by his host General Colin Powell, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs and Bob Stempel, Chairman of the Board of Directors of General Motors.

This tour started with the arrival of Bob Stempel at the plant, and on meeting me, asked me to slowly announce my name so that he would “not screw it up” in his opening remarks of greeting to our important guests. Next was the arrival of General Colin Powell and his staff, along with some multi-lingual government people (Security), finally General Moiseyeff and his staff and personal interpreter (who did not say a word throughout my entire presentation in Russian). The tour went well and we all lined up to wish them farewell as they departed on three Blackhawk helicopters.

During the tour, one of the government “civilians” took my name and asked me if I ever considered working for the State Department. I was noncommittal and said I was open to offers but I never heard from him again.

Later that month, Bev and I took a “nostalgic” trip to Belleville, where Bev located and introduced me to her childhood home, Grade school and neighborhood. We also spent a few pleasant minutes with a couple who were her neighbors in those wonderful days. On returning, we were sent by GM to a 5-day “Cross Cultural Seminar” in Boulder, CO. We were both highly amused that the original seminar was postponed for 2 months when the executors read my resume and discovered that not only was I of Russian descent and full fluent in Russian, but that I had numerous trips to the USSR over the years and could probably teach this seminar. It took them a while to gather an impressive group of experts comprising of two professors from the University of Colorado (one in Russian history and the other in Russian Arts & Literature), a Swedish businessman currently working with Soviet enterprises and two recent expatriates – one a soviet computer programming scientist and the other a young lady who married an American (for Bev’s “feminine” questions).

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, I took my first trip as part of the AC Rochester Team to Togliatti for a 2-week negotiating visit. This was followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> one week visit on November 10<sup>th</sup>. There were many lengthy meetings with “official” translators on both sides. My job was not to translate but move from meeting to meeting (some were held simultaneously) to insure everything was going well and that there were no accidental misunderstandings. I always made it a point that I informed the Russians and their translators that I spoke and read Russian – that it was not my intention to “spy or eavesdrop” on them but only to insure proper understanding between our two teams. I particularly avoided correcting the grammatical errors of the translators (and there were quite a few) so as not to embarrass them unless the error led to a “wrong” understanding of the message. In later times the translators appreciated that for they were constantly fearful to seem inadequate in front of their management.

In late November the 1<sup>st</sup> VAZ on-site team arrived in Flint comprised of 4 Yuris and 1 Sasha. It was a “fair trade” – 4 of them (+ a full-time interpreter) versus 1 of us! They were a great bunch and we got to know each other very well. The “leader” Yuri, was a burly fellow, very gregarious and lover of good (or any) vodka. He, as all of them, was an excellent engineer, but he loved to smoke and taking his cue from our head of the engineering program, would close himself in his office in our non-smoking building and frequently set off the smoke alarms which would cause evacuation of the premises for the rest of us. He was very likable but would be very indecisive on the details of our program causing much long distance telephone conversations with Togliatti.





First VAZ Team in Flint at our Home in Sunderland

On November 15<sup>th</sup> Steven graduated from the Recruit Naval Command “Boot Camp” and Bev, Shanana and I went to Orlando, FL for the ceremonies. It was awesome and brought tears to my eyes to see so many proud, crisply uniformed, extremely polite, disciplined young men and women at one place. We were “Sir’d and Ma’am’d” at each turn as the young cadets with sparkling white gloves showed us to the different areas and our seats.

The main ceremony was very impressive with crisp parades, flags waving and orchestra playing the various familiar Sousa marches. Our hearts filled with patriotic pride to see all of this going on. As mentioned earlier, and shown in Appendix A, I come from a long family of military officers of “field grade”. It was always my unfulfilled desire to serve in the military, primarily in the Navy or the Marines.

Commissioned on July 1, 1968, the Naval Training Center, Orlando, was established to enhance the manpower training capabilities of the United States Navy. Occupying the site of the former Orlando Air Force Base, the Navy's third training center was rapidly becoming a show place among training commands in the armed forces.

Orlando was selected because of its year-round climate, availability of transportation, sufficient family housing, and availability of the Orlando Air Force Base under the Department of Defense Base Closure Program.

The newly constructed Recruit Training Command featured modern and functional buildings and presented a campus-like atmosphere. Commissioned with the Naval Training Center, the Recruit Training Command provided a smooth transition from civilian life for enlistees into the naval service.

The Naval Training Center, was tasked with "providing basic indoctrination for enlisted personnel, and primary, advanced, and specialized training for officer and enlisted personnel of the Regular Navy and the Navy Reserve."



*Steven's Graduation from "Boot Camp" at the Recruit Training Center – Orlando, FL*

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, we celebrated Steven and Shanan's wedding, following which they relocated to the Cory Station at the US Naval Base in Pensacola, FL where Steven was assigned his initial tour of duty as a cryptologist.

Located near Pensacola, Corry Station housed the Naval Technical Training Center, Electronic Warfare and Technology School, Instructor Training School and Joint Aviation Electronic Warfare Training. It was also the home of the Marine Information Centre dominance "or CID. The station honors Medal of Honor recipient William M. Corry, Jr. The Naval Technical Training Center, Corry Station was the Centre for cryptology, Corry Station, under the Chief of Naval Operations of the Navy establishment learning centres to support the revolution in training. Entry to cryptology required an above average IQ and his work was very secret, requiring a high "security clearance". This was also another of the reasons that I had so much additional "interest" and scrutiny from the Intelligence Services of both sides of the Ocean.

It was a simple, private wedding with no reception, just family and a couple of Steve's new buddies from the Naval Recruiting Station in Orlando. It was also my 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with Steve's Dad, Keith Thode, who in later years, I found out, shared some of my views of US & World politics.





*Steve and Shanah's Wedding - December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990*

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, due to the delay of our move to Russia, which was caused by the 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War and the resultant restriction of foreign travel to that entire area, we got scheduled for relocation to temporary living quarters in Grand Blanc, MI, close to the AC/Rochester Headquarters in Flint.

GM put our home in Sunderland up for sale and we relocated to a fully furnished condominium in Grand Blanc in preparation of our re-location to Togliatti, USSR for a 3-year ISP assignment. The condominium was nice and roomy with 2 bedrooms, a dining/living room and a fully equipped kitchen. It was on a 2<sup>nd</sup> level and our balcony overlooked the entrance driveway. We also had 2 of our cats with us – “Mardan” and “Dimmie”. Sadly we had to euthanize “Mardan” prior to our international departure since he was pretty old and could not see from one eye. “Dimmie” went with us on our Russian adventure.

Our household belongings and furniture were sent to a storage warehouse at GM's expense for the 3-year span, which later got extended to nearly 9 years. The sub-division that we moved into was very nicely laid out with a small artificial lake in the center surrounding a small island on which was the residence of a swan couple. On our approach to the shoreline, papa swan came across and threatened us with ferocious honking, spread wings and a very aggressive attitude, it became apparent that mama swan was sitting on some eggs and he did not want any intruders around.

The year ended with some serious packing and nice family gatherings at our “soon-to-be-sold” Sunderland home. Christmas was particularly pleasant with the entire family participating. I missed my two boys but they were both far away, one in California with his grandmother and the other in Washington DC with his grand aunt. It was a “happy-sad” occasion since we were scheduled to go overseas very soon and Steven was going back to his Naval duties in Florida. Nevertheless the kids

had a great time opening their presents and enjoying each other's company. Kyra especially had a good time being passed from lap to lap constantly and we all enjoyed Steve's piano repertoire.



*Our last Christmas Family Dinner at Sunderland*

We stayed in Grand Blanc for over 6 months with GM paying for our living expenses that included the rent, utilities and a small daily allowance for living expenses. I drove daily to work at the AC Rochester Flint Headquarters, which was only 15 minutes away and the “girls” occupied themselves in making last minute preparations for our re-location.

Since we were moving to a “First time GM location” and a “hardship post”, we were permitted to purchase the entire furnishing and correctly rated (220 volt/50 cycle) appliances for our new residence in the USSR. In addition we were also allotted US \$25,000 for the purchase of linens, kitchenware, dishware and anything else that a normal household would require. This included 3 television sets, 2 record and VHS players, an indoor bicycle machine and a small weight lifting set for home exercise. We couldn't believe our fortune and looked forward to our new assignment with anticipation, wisely remembering that – *“No two of us have the same paradigms, because our experiences are different - this makes communication and understanding less than perfect.”* We had ample reason to think of that in the early days of our “adventure” and learned that it was very helpful to make lists of our tasks and goals, both personal and professional, and glancing back occasionally to see the distance travelled.



## **Inserts**

### **To Chapter XV – Preparation for our Russian Adventure (1990 – 1991)**

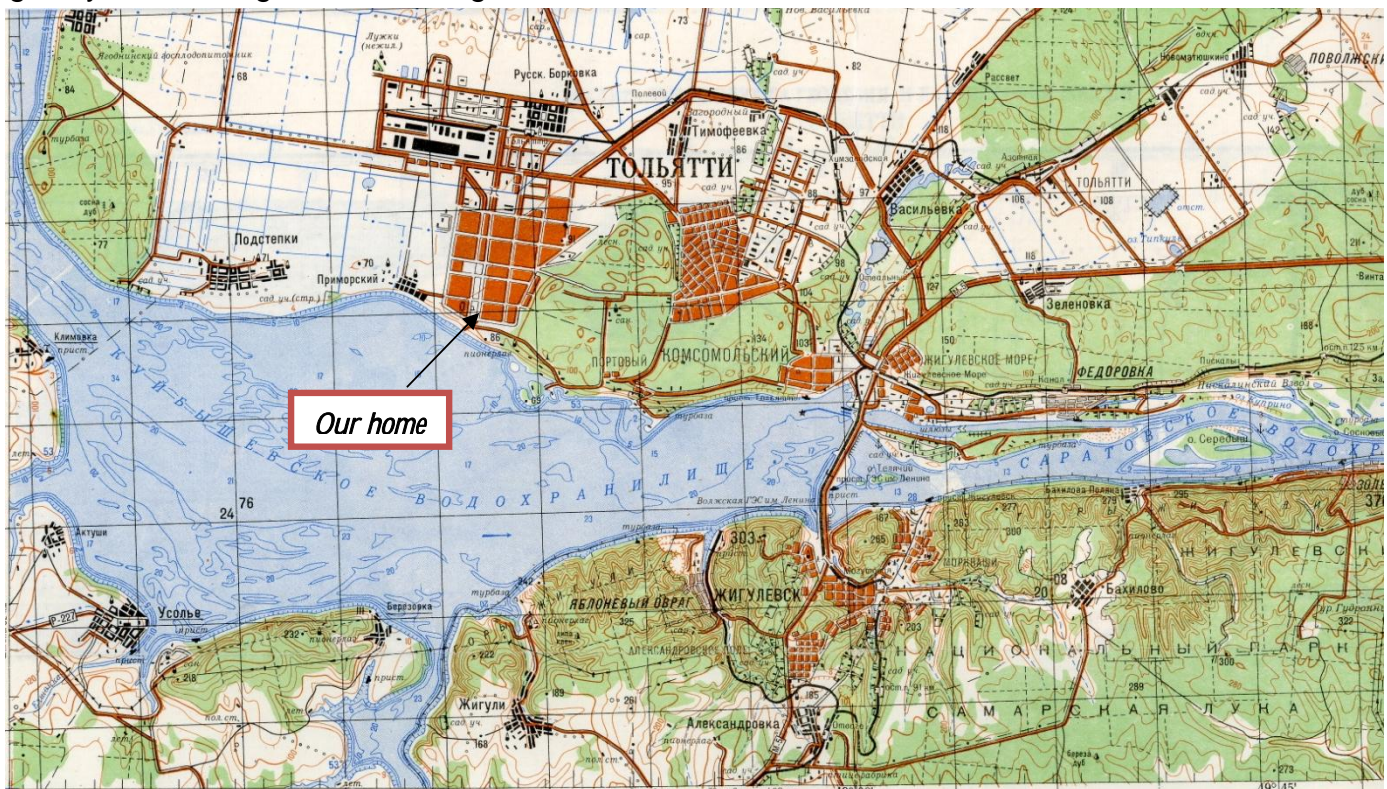
- Farewell Dinner in Flint - Photo

## Chapter XVI – Initial years of our International Staff Personnel (ISP) assignment in Russia (1991-1993)

*“Not all those who wander are lost” – J.R.R. Tolkien*

**A few words about Togliatti...**Half a century ago there was no such town with this name on the map. It was “Stavropol-on-the-Volga”, established in 1737 on a sharp bend of the Volga, sometimes called the Samarskaya Luka. It was the main hangout of Russia's most famous river pirate called Stenka Razin who is immortalized in song and fable as a 16th century "Robin Hood" - hence I felt right at home there!

In 1953 a large hydroelectric power station was built here. It was part of the last major 5-year projects initiated by Stalin in his plan to “electrify Russia” . The town was relocated from its previous location to a new one since Stavropol-on-the-Volga was covered with water. In 1964 the newly born town was named Togliatti, in honor of Palmiro Togliatti, Head of the Italian Communist Party. Presently. It is a large city on the Volga near the Zhiguli Mountains.



*The city of Togliatti and surrounding area*

You may call Togliatti a city archipelago as its 3 districts are scattered in the woods on the banks along the coast of a man-made sea. This makes it possible for the city to trade by sea with the whole world. An international airport is situated 50 kilometers from the city. Togliatti is city of car manufacturers and people who produce energy. Namely here, in the Volga Automobile Works (VAZ) are produced the most popular Russian cars “Lada Zhiguli”. It’s not by chance that the city is called “the Russian Detroit”.

Togliatti is also known as a city of progressive social decisions and the “Mecca of Design”. It is one of the youngest (according to the average age of its citizens) of Russian cities. Here there are about 200 kindergartens, 100 secondary schools, and dozens of colleges, lyceums and gymnasiums (high schools). Only very recently there was but one institution of higher education - the Togliatti

Polytechnic Institute. Humanities and natural science studies had to be “imported” by the city. Today the city can prepare specialists in many fields of knowledge.

A few years ago, the city became the so-called financial capital of the Volga region. But what capital can exist without its own educational center? The International Academy of Business and Banking in Togliatti is a unique educational center in Russia. The AvtoVAZ bank established in 1991 first as a college (High School) for training future bank employees of junior and middle levels, today it became the biggest privately owned educational institution. The Academy prepares from childhood, at 4 years of age, through an uninterrupted system of kindergarten grade school college (High School) university, specialists in various fields of knowledge

**AVTOVAZ**, which is the acronym for Volga Automobile Works, was initiated in the early '70s with the major participation of Italy's FIAT. That's why the town was renamed in the honor of the Italian Communist Party Secretary Palmiro Togliatti. The way things are going now; there is a major thrust by some of the local folks to return the name back to the original Stavropol-on-the-Volga. Current annual production of AVTOVAZ was in excess of 720,000 vehicles of which nearly 300,000 are exported and were the major source of badly needed "Hard Currency". Total employment at this facility was over 120,000 not counting some nearby component manufacturers such as shock absorbers, springs, McPherson struts, etc, who were also part of the AVTOVAZ organization and numbered close to another 90,000 employees. Area under roof of the main plant was approximately 3.6 million square meters with nearly 300 kilometers of conveyors.



*Front view of the “enormous” AvtoVAZ plant*

On January 13<sup>th</sup> we attended some “Inlingua Language Classes” in Cincinnati, OH – a total waste without experiencing daily on-site practice. It was NOT grammar that we needed by verbal skills of communication. The good part was that we had the opportunity of visiting with Bev’s Elwood High School classmates – Darryl and Judi Poole in the area.

February had a string of visits – Igor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Elena Andreevna in Rockville, MD, Aunt Alice and Hibbs in Moseley, VA and Mom and Dad at Hilton Head, SC. Tons of photos and pleasant memories.

In March we had a late 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday party for Kyra and went to see Shirley McLaine on stage in a live and lively performance. Our temporary stay at our condominium in Grand Blanc was extended for 3 months because of the outbreak of the US/Iraq/ Kuwait war (Desert Storm) with all flights in that direction appropriated by the US Military for the transport of personnel and materiel.

On May 18<sup>th</sup> Bev and I with Kyra and Elena Andreevna attended Igor’s Graduation with Honors from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. June had a series of trips for me with the



AC Rochester Team to the USSR and Russelsheim, Germany for intense negotiations to finalize engineering and commercial details of the contract.



*Igor's Graduation - May 18<sup>th</sup>. 1991*

In early July, Bev, I and Kyra visited with Andrei in San Francisco and met his cute girlfriend, Dana Rae. We toured the Muir Woods, the Great America and Marine World Aquarium. Also met with my old colleagues from GMAD Fremont – Ray and Mickie Bangoli, Ron Goevaerts, Dennis Imazeki, and Hal Ross as well as some of my Shanghai childhood friends – Andre and Mary Teyssier, Sidney and Gabbie Shaw and Alfie and Barbara Da Costa. On return Bev went to her 30<sup>th</sup> Elwood High School Reunion and on the 24<sup>th</sup>, we had a formal send-off to USSR by a luncheon and good wishes from AC in Flint.

We finally got to Togliatti on August 8th! It's been quite an endeavor, but we usually do not mess with the mundane and are always attracted to challenges. As you are well aware, some historic happenings occurred here shortly after our arrival. At no time were we ever in any danger as the Russians in Togliatti took very good care of us and kept us fully updated on what was happening. We were also in close contact with the Home Office through our satellite phone connection. GM initiated evacuation plans for us; however it was not necessary to use them.

Our stay during the crisis really gained us some major points, since the Russians, who are very observant, knew that I refused a “direct order” to evacuate but stayed on thus illustrating my faith in Russia and its ability to resolve its internal affairs relatively peacefully

It was very exciting and highly emotionally to see a truly democratic process in action! Yeltsin at the barricades in Moscow, the unarmed citizens defying the armored vehicles and tanks, grandmothers chiding the young soldiers and telling them to go home to their families, grizzled veterans in uniform standing shoulder to shoulder with modishly dressed youths and the calm but firm determination of the crowds to see that the lawful elected process is reinstated! Just like scenes from a modern version of "Les Miserables"!





*A demonstration in the streets of Moscow during the 1991 coup d'état attempt. A BTR-70 personnel carrier is surrounded by the demonstrators*

But all that is old news. Life had been very active in Togliatti during that period. Between visits from various GM Teams and VAZ related activities we were kept pretty busy since we were the only Americans there and therefore, the main source of information and advice on the West!

I always advised my compatriots to be a little skeptical of the Press coverage relative to living conditions in Russia. Life was not easy by far, however food was always readily available, people were well dressed and the only areas where there may be long lines were vodka or beer stores. The biggest problem there was the transition from a Spartan but paternalistic society to a free but scary one. The "Who is going to take care of me?" syndrome was very prevalent, like a bunch of argumentative teenagers who were suddenly turned out of their parents house to fend for themselves on the cold and heartless streets! Everyone there had their own small "kitchen plot" at the town's outskirts and each weekend they were all there merrily planting, sowing and enjoying nature at work.

Togliatti and Flint, Michigan had signed a "Sister City" Charter and exchanged visits by their mayors and members of their City Councils. Bev and I hosted some journalists from the Flint Journal and got interviewed by the local press. A local People's Deputy (equivalent to our Congressman) set up a Business Seminar called "Inter-Volga '91" in Togliatti in mid-November to encourage foreign interest in this area associated with tourism, road building, motels and related issues.

There was a lot of interest in dealing with the West; however, most of the activity was with Western Europe, Germany in particular. We waited too long in the USA and found ourselves isolated from some

of the major business dealings. The main hold-up was always the question of credits and our conservative thinking forfeited the purchase of much major equipment and tooling to Germany. With our current need for job creating work, primarily in the M & E manufacturing in Michigan this seems rather near sighted behavior. But then I am not a "Financial Wizard".

The first group that arrived from the USA were rather "colorful", ranging from a lady looking for opportunities in opening western-type flower shops to a large portly gentleman, who in his words "represented the Wise Guys" and wanted to bring a shipload of used cars for sale from the US. The meetings and program went fine except for one minor incident. Seems like the Westerners were partying too much at the "Zhiguli Hotel" restaurant and did not heed the requests of an old lady janitor to vacate the premises because it was after closing time. When they ignored her, she whipped out a can of "Pepper Spray" and squirted all of the merry participants, clearing the area and sending them off to bed with weeping eyes!

There was also a sort of a "Business Mafia" here who has an erroneous understanding of what commerce and business is all about and considered them, after watching popular US films like "The Godfather" and "Little Caesar", to be synonymous with "Ripping Off" and "Making a Killing". The country had been educated for 72 years that progress and well-being are irrevocably tied to sacrifice, patriotism and the collective benefit. Personal gain, profits and private property was sinfully bad. Now everything was topsy turvy with no clear rules, laws or doctrine! Yeltsin's best bet was to maintain some of the Soviet-style social protection while initiating a controlled, painless introduction to the market. A socialist privatization process with protection for the living standards of the Russian population.



*The Rock Group – "Scorpions" – my travelling companions on a flight from Frankfurt to Moscow in 1991*

On one of my flights from Frankfurt to Moscow, I was accompanied on the plane by the Scorpions, a heavy metal hard rock band from Hannover, Germany, the band has sold over 75 million albums worldwide, propelled in large part by the massive success of the ballad "Wind of Change". The song muses on the socio-political changes that were occurring in Eastern Europe and in other parts of the world at the end of the Cold War. They were a very friendly, playful group and had the stewardesses giggling during the whole trip with their jokes and antics.

We also met some wonderful people in Togliatti who were connected to the stage and arts. A young Dance Group, similar to the Moiseyev Dancers, put on a great performance and would have loved to tour the US. Another business opportunity lost - Sol Hurok where are you?

We made friends with a local Theatre Troupe and their talented Director and his lovely wife who is also the leading lady and a "Distinguished Actress of Russia". They had a large repertoire of performances ranging from Tolstoy & Gorki to Bernard Shaw, Tennessee Williams and many other original plays. We went to five and enjoyed them all thoroughly. This was a "Thinking Person's Theatre", with deep messages and meaning in each play besides the pure entertainment of a very talented group that wrings out a complete series of emotional participation from the audience by their performance. Their international repertoire with simultaneous translation came back from a London Tour. They could have toured the Detroit Area with mutual economic benefit and we felt that this was another untapped source of great talent and opportunity!

Hockey was also a big thing in Togliatti and we've been to a couple of neat games. The local team "LADA" played in the top National league. They also wanted to play in Canada or the US and in later years relocated to Moscow and from there to Detroit, Toronto and Montreal.

I was very fortunate that shortly after the initiation of my assignment; I was introduced to the Director of Chase Manhattan Banking operations in his Moscow office. GM was leasing a room of his office as our temporary Moscow branch. In chatting with him in his office, I asked him if he had any advice to give me after his 3-year experience in the USSR. He thought a little and then told me – "Leo, do not try to do everything yourself. Find and develop some local talent as soon as you can and let them do the work". This wisdom helped me tremendously on my assignment and also gained me a lot of popularity with the natives who were highly educated and hard workers if motivated properly.

The official description of my responsibilities on this assignment as listed on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1991 were as follows –

- 1. On-Site liaison to assist in the coordination between General Motors and the Volga Automobile Associated Works (VAZ) in the manufacture of Vehicles with the GM Engine Management Systems in the C.I.S.*
- 2. Continue the development of the current good Customer/Supplier relationship between VAZ, AvtoLada and General Motors beyond current expectations by continual closer interaction on the existing Supply & Licensing Agreements and the early profitable growth of our Division's Presence in the C.I.S.*
- 3. Support the Product Technology Transfer process required for the Localization of GM Engine Management components and actively assist the local community in the development of closer business relationship with General Motors.*
- 4. Aggressively pursue opportunities for broader cooperation with the Inter Volga business communities for the profitable marketing of other non-EMS General Motors Products and Services.*

*5. Accelerate the implementation of selected Quality Network Action Strategies through the early development of Problem Solving disciplines and Continuous Improvement techniques.*

My initial years were very instrumental, educational and often humorous – on one occasion a lady calls and asks to speak to Lev Platonovich - me). I answer "Speaking"; she responds "Sorry" and hangs up.

The hotel where our "residence" was located catered to car dealers from Kalmykia, Ossetia and Ingushetia. These are regions in the Caucasus Mountains – very tribal, somewhat "Mafioso". In the summer as I would look out of my balcony, I would see many of the "guests" leaning on their balconies wearing skimpy undershirts with their pistols strapped at their back.

One evening as our delegation, consisting of some "green" arrivals from the US, returned to the hotel, one of these dealers was partying it up in the lobby. He was attired in a luxurious bathrobe with a big cigar and a bottle of brandy in his hand, surrounded by his bodyguards. He offered us a toast, all of us politely declined and hurried through. However one of our "greener" members accepted his offer then went up. Fifteen minutes later we had some consistent ringing at our front door. Looking through the "peep hole" we saw our dealer friend standing in the hallway with an enormous basin overloaded with liquor and fruit. It took some effort and patient persuasion to get him to leave us to our rest. We used the baby as an excuse and since the "Southerners" love children very much he apologized and left after leaving his business card with me.

Once I noticed a bullet hole in a lower door window of the LADA hotel lobby, when I asked about it, I was told that some Chechen was having "fun" and got a little carried away. They told me not to worry as he was returned to his native area for "re-education" and assurance that this will not happen again.

In May there is an annual central hot water shut down for maintenance of the supply pumps that provide water to the entire city of Togliatti. In anticipation of this GM equipped us with 4 independent electrically operated boilers. As a result, each May we would have a string of Western guests taking 2-minute showers at our apartment.

During our 1<sup>st</sup> winter we discovered that the Soviet-era had the wind whistling through the gaps and cracks at windows and doors of our residence. We had to insulating the entire living area with duct tape with 30 below zero temperature and gale winds and blizzard outside.

We also experienced an attempted break in at our rear entrance. I called security at the front desk and shortly the person on duty showed up – I expected a burly, muscular ex-cop or military person, instead it was a slim middle aged woman, who without hesitation opened the back door and started yelling at the intruder. He dashed down the fire escape, leaped down from the 2<sup>nd</sup> level hitting the ground hard, groggily got up and ran away limping badly.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, Bev, Kyra and I took our 1<sup>st</sup> train ride to Moscow in a sleeper car. There were 4 bunks to a car so we each got one with one to spare. We later found out that there actually was a passenger with a paid ticket for the 4<sup>th</sup> bunk but he was too polite to intrude on us "furriners" and spent the night dozing in the passage-way.

October was eventful with Bev getting her first lesson from three of the VAZ engineers' wives on "pelmeni" making. These were Russian ravioli with 3 types of meat mixed together (beef, pork and lamb). She also initiated her Russian-speaking lessons and made great progress after we realized



that there was no teacher for teaching Russian to Americans, but a few Russian teachers that were teaching English to Russians.

In November we had our 1<sup>st</sup> R&R trip to Zurich, Bienne and Geneva. This was a wonderful 1-week trip with all expenses paid by GM as part of our contractual agreement. We would get one for every 3 months of our assignment. We thoroughly enjoyed touring Switzerland and looked up some of my GMI classmates – the Girards and the Gronds.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, we took another train trip – this one from Moscow to Copenhagen. We were somewhat amused that the “taxi” ride from our hotel in Moscow to the Railway station, about 20 minutes away cost us US \$ 25, while the train ticket for all three of us from Moscow to Denmark cost only US \$ 12.75!

In Copenhagen, we spent a week with Gitte and her daughter Kirsten’s family, briefly reminiscing about the "Olden Days of Wine and Roses" with GMOO in Teheran. They took excellent care of us and we thoroughly enjoyed spending a Danish Christmas with them. We even danced around the Christmas Tree singing carols in Danish. Wedel and Vivian Keirdtein, my classmate from GMI also dropped by at Gitte’s home to greet us.

At our return departure for Moscow on December 31<sup>st</sup>, we received a rude shock – after much agitated conversation in Danish between Gitte and the railroad agent, we were told there was NO USSR car – because there no longer was a USSR but only the Russia Federation. At the end of 1991, Boris Yeltsin and other presidents of former Soviet republics signed the treaty dissolving the U.S.S.R.; and at the end of December of 1991, Mixail.Gorbachev, (the President of the Former U.S.S.R.) left the Kremlin. Each former Soviet Republic became an independent state.

Our choice was to board the train till Berlin and take our chances there. That was another adventure; here we were with a 2-year old toddler and 6 pieces of bright red luggage. After disembarking we discovered that there were no porters and the main terminal was about a ½ mile away. With patience and forbearance, I lugged our luggage, 2 pieces at a time in tandem 25 feet at a time. On arrival at the main terminal, I discovered that no one spoke English. Fortunately a kind older gentleman with a beard, noting my distress, approached me and asked in Oxford accented English if he could help. Came out that he was a professor from the East Berlin University on his way home. He was also fluent in Russian.

After following his kind directions we found the “Russian” railcar. With great joy we headed for it only to be stopped by the Russian agent who told us the car was full. Here again help came unexpectedly, when another agent, a woman, seeing sleeping Kyra in Bev’s tired arms, felt sorry for us and convinced 4 passengers to give us their sleeper. We arrived at the Belorussia Terminal in Moscow on January 1<sup>st</sup> and were back in Togliatti by the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Beverly’s summary of our 1<sup>st</sup> year in Russia is recorded in **Appendix J – Chapter I**

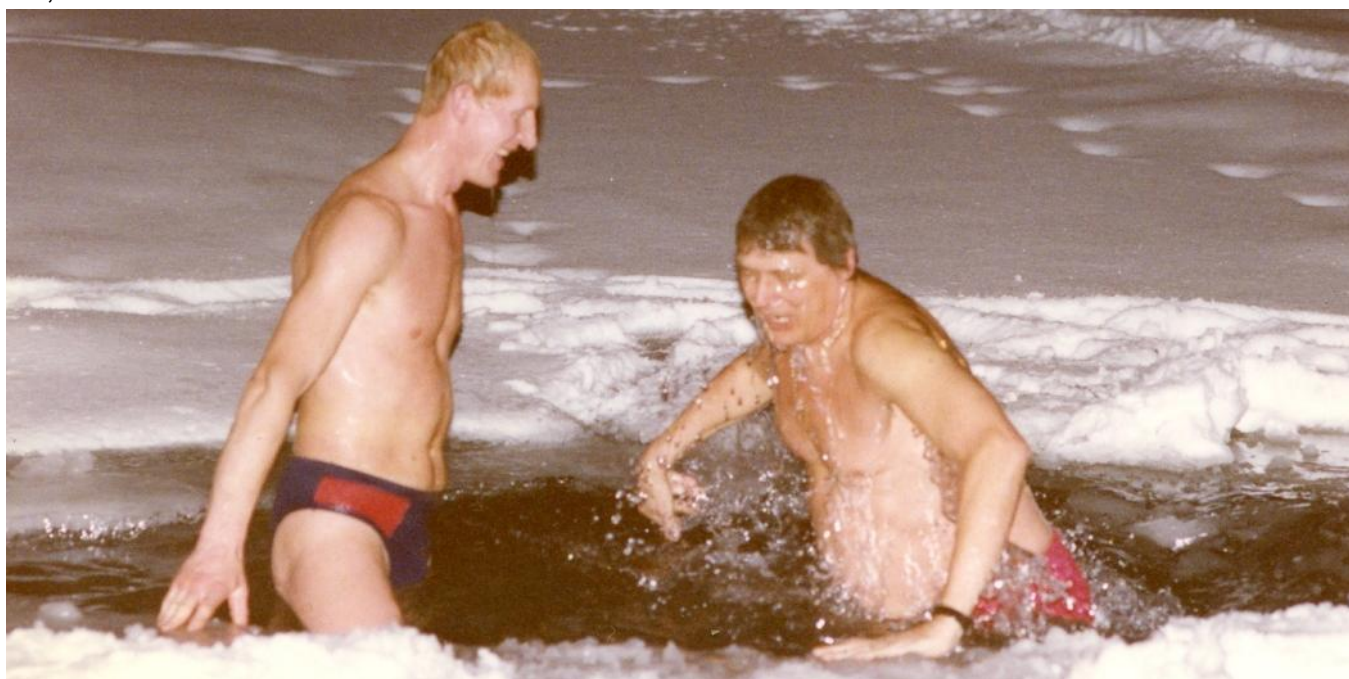
Thus started **1992** for us, our 2<sup>nd</sup> year of assignment in USSR/Russia. At the beginning of the year, just after the breakdown of the USSR, President Boris Yeltsin and his government, listening to the advice of various US MBAs (one of them being Jeffrey Sachs), and with very limited (actual US \$s) external financial assistance, started a hard-lined monetary economical policy which was increasingly unpopular. This policy was called by the general populace - "**a shock without therapy**",

in contrast to the economic reform that occurred in Poland, with **LOTS of financial aid** from the US, named there - "**shock therapy**". Due to breakdown of the USSR and the centralized state-planned economy, many traditional economic and trade ties and markets were lost. Living conditions of the significant part of the Russian population quickly deteriorated. Political and economical crisis was made even worse by the power struggle between President Yeltsin from one side and his opponents in the Russian Parliament (together with Vice President [Rutskoi](#)) from the other side.

Everything was changing daily and at the same time not at all! People were still behaving, as they were accustomed to behave. Iran was good training for me not to expect rapid cultural and social changes. Western influences are basically surface ones. We never realized how "Eastern" this huge country really is! The warm hospitality and personal concern of the people here to us was very reminiscent of the warmth and hospitality that I experienced in Iran, especially outside of Teheran where the Western influence was not so prevalent.

In early January, I was approached by a team of local residents, that were representing the Togliatti City Administration and received an invitation to be an "Adviser" on the Mayor's Board for planning and support on – the ***“Inter-Volga ’92 – International Business Conference”***, an activity that was initiated in 1991 for the search of potential joint-ventures involving foreign Western partners and investments as well as hosting representatives, like myself, of major foreign companies. It was scheduled to be held in late May of this year to encourage foreign interest in this area associated with car dealerships, tourism, chemical industry, road building, motels and related issues.

My contribution was minimal and purely personal, since GM had no interest in this endeavor. In hindsight, I feel that GM lost some good opportunities in establishing some operations for some car dealerships, accessories sales and auto component and parts manufacture at an early stage in Russia, forfeiting those operations to the Germans, the French and the Japanese. The Japanese, Korean and German cars were already available here in force and I had the ONLY GM vehicle in a city of 700,000 inhabitants!



*A hardy native and me in my 1<sup>st</sup> Russian “Bania” experience – January 1992*

In late January, Bev and I had our 1<sup>st</sup> (and only) “Russian Banya” experience – this involves sitting in a extremely hot, wooden sauna till your skin glows red with heat, then running out and rolling in the snow or diving into a hole cut in the ice. Exhilarating, invigorating and just wonderful! Must be experienced to be believed. When we were first approached with this invitation we were extremely negative to it, but after some major coaxing decided to give it a shot. It was an exhilarating experience, like being “born again” with our blood circulating and heart beating. Wonderful experience and we regret that we did not have another opportunity to repeat it due to work and time restrictions.

In mid-February we had our 1<sup>st</sup> official “Home Leave” which with accumulated vacation and work time, extended to about a month. We stayed at the Hilton Suites in Auburn Hills, MI which over our Russia assignment years became our 2<sup>nd</sup> home in the US. We celebrated a “Family Get Together” there as well as Kyra’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday. We got to know the staff of the hotel quite well and really mutually looked forward to our periodic stays there over the next 8 years. We also spent a week visiting family and friends at Venice and Pensacola, Florida.

We returned to Russia and the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on March 22<sup>nd</sup> from our pleasant combination Home Leave/Business visit to Flint and Florida. The weather was a little damp and cool but still warmer than 20 below. The pace of events was very different from the “Western” Rat Race. However how else can they revitalize their economy without applying some of those principles?

Never a dull moment as was portrayed in the press or shown on CNN. Life continued at its usual active pace. Discussions with the Russians are reminiscent of tightly wadding up a sheet of cellophane paper in your fist and then as you lay it on the table, watching it slowly unravel completely!

There was still some snow but it was melting and turning to the icky, muddy time of the year, however the feel of Spring was in the air. Meat and certain basic vegetables were still plentiful at the “Free Market” and winter passed without any major food and basic supply shortages. However prices were very high by local standards and certain products were much harder to get than before

Bev re-established her contact with the Medical Community with a meeting with the town's Chief Physician who was in charge of the main medical facility comprising of 1,100 physicians and 4,000 medical personnel. She considered working with them on an exchange program aimed at introducing western methods and disciplines in nursing. She also took on a project with a Grade School class to initiate pen pals between 11/12 year olds, since we had a niece back home who shared with her class the antics of her Aunt Beebee and Uncle Leo in Russia.

Our youngest son, Steven, who was in the Navy at Pensacola, informed us that we will join the club of “Granparenting” sometime in August of this year. “Gramps” is a title I might have some difficulty in getting accustomed to. Leanne, our married daughter, was still holding fast to her resolution that setting up a home comes first prior to motherhood. Her target year was 1995. The two older boys were still confirmed bachelors although Andre, the musical one, was weakening and had a live-in girlfriend who we met and think is great for him! Igor was a little depressed, since although he graduated with high grades from Wharton School of Business and speaks 3 languages fluently, he still could not get a job due to the economic condition prevailing in the US.

A Danish Joint-Venture Company called “Danish Remot” was completing the renovation of our apartment by enclosing the balconies, weather-proofing the windows and putting in full carpeting on

the floors for better insulation for the coming winter.

In late April, my former brother-in-law, Kirill Sapelkin, arrived from Siberia for a visit with us. He stayed for 3 days and told us a little about his travels by train in Siberia and his search for native artifacts for possible sale in the “Znanie Book Store” in San Francisco. He was particularly interested in articles carved from the tusks of sea lions. After doing some limited tourism in Togliatti he returned home to the US via Moscow.



*My “Barnstorming” experience*

Later that May, I had an exciting flight with a Russian “barn-stormer” pilot on a “Crop Duster” small “Piper Cub” type of plane, taking off and landing in a barren wheat field just outside of the town. I think it was a test of my manhood and I passed with flying colors by not covering my face or even blinking much to the disappointment of my ex-KGB host, who did some sharp spins and dives all the while watching my face from the corner of his eye.

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, our oldest son, Igor (27), visited with us for a month investigating business opportunities between Russia and the US for possible Joint Ventures or other economic activities. We enjoyed seeing Igor again and we met with him in Moscow, where he accompanied me in my brief activities on the GM Expo and visited with some old Russian friends whom we met while still in the US. Then we proceeded by train to Togliatti, where he spent another 4 weeks with us. He also gave a small interview to a group of very interested Russian students at the newly formed College of Banking at Togliatti. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> live young American that the students ever met and the questions came in great numbers. We were proud that he handled them very well once he got over his initial “stage fright”, and shared with them his life in the US as well as answer their questions. The students were thrilled since this was an opportunity



for them to talk with a “real life” American man their age.



*Big “Bro” Igor with Kyra*

We were also kept pretty busy with a lot of activities relative to the Inter-Volga Business Seminar in Togliatti on the surrounding region’s potential interactions of local businesses with the West. I was unexpectedly seated on the forum with the organizers for a concluding press interview. My usual “Silver Tongue”, Dale Carnegie “Ad Lib” training and good old “Shanghai Malarkey”, certainly helped!

In Moscow during the US ‘92 Expo in May, I ran across Gary McMillan, who was the Materials Director at the GM Hamtramck plant when I worked there. He seemed his usual jolly self and we spent some pleasant moments reminiscing about the “good ole days”. He was with the GM Corporate Quality Group and seemed to enjoy what he was doing. Also talked with my old boss at Hamtramck, Andy Obester on the phone a couple of times. He was doing fine too, working with an environmental company after getting an “Early Buy-off” from GM.

Igor returned to the US on June 18<sup>th</sup>, and the 3 of us, Bev, Kyra and I, on June 20<sup>th</sup>, went on our 2<sup>nd</sup> R&R trip to Club Med at Ibiza, a small island off the east of Spain. This was Bev and Kyra’s 1<sup>st</sup> experience with Club Med and its “all-inclusive” program – they loved it and we proceeded in later years to visit ALL of the “Family” Club Med locations, meeting a lot of very interesting and likeable people.

Ibiza is an island in the Mediterranean Sea 79 km off the coast of the city of Valencia in Iberian Peninsula, Spain. It was often called the *White Island* for its typical architecture, and became a major center of tourist attraction during the 1960s, being then famous for its “Hippie-Culture” and nudist beaches. We however stuck to the “family-oriented” sectors, away from the nudist beaches – Shucks!



*Our 1<sup>st</sup> experience with “Family Club Meds” – this one in Ibiza, Spain*

On our return from our brief vacation at Club Med in Ibiza where I was especially appreciative of the scenery on the beach and around the pool, my office received a brand-new FAX and Copier Machine, as well as the arrival of 3 pilgrims from Togliatti’s Sister City, Flint – Greg Allar, John Davidek and Scott Kincaid.

The visits from our operational headquarters in Flint became quite numerous as the program went on. On one of those visits I hosted a small group of the senior members to a dinner at “private” restaurants. This was very new for the Russians and there were no “public” and “family” restaurants in those early days out of Communism. The place that I took them was recommended to me by the VAZ management. They told me that the dinner also included a “western-type” Fashion Show. I was seated with my back to the door when I saw the jaw of one of the GM visitors, facing me, drop a foot. I turned around and – lo and behold there was the show. Kyra, who was there, enjoyed it tremendously. So did my visitors! On querying the owner, a distinguished lady, about her choice, she told me – “Is this not what you Westerners expect and are used to in your world?”





*"Fashion Show at a Togliatti Private Restaurant"*

On Independence Day we spent a nice afternoon with 32 High School teenagers from all over the US who were here on a 2 week visit through the "People to People Ambassador" program. It was a distinct pleasure to observe firsthand the warm interfacing between them and the Russian kids. And on July 21<sup>st</sup>, Kyra had her first day at a Russian kindergarten. Although she was fully bi-lingual and adapted well to the Russian environment, this did not go too well since she was never isolated from one of us for any length of time and Bev had to sit within her sight for the entire duration. We did not attempt it again until she was ready for Russian Grade school at the "adult" age of 5.

Also on 21<sup>st</sup> of July our senior daughter, Leanne (26) and husband, Jerry celebrated their 2<sup>nd</sup> Wedding Anniversary. She was still determined to wait 3 more years before starting a family. She was managing a clothing boutique in a large popular mall.

Next July, we were planning to take a 20-day trip to Siberia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, visiting Novo-Sibirsk, Omsk, Irkutsk and Lake Baikal. We have been asking my last surviving relative that was born before the 1917 Revolution, Aunt Valia Golitzin, to write us some reminiscences of her childhood in Tsarskoye Selo, the last residence of Tsar Nicholas II. I never had much opportunity to discuss with my grandfather about my roots. Where was Grandfather born? Who was "Kniaz Manueloff" and what was his relationship to us? Where were Valia and Uncle George born? Did we have any living relatives in Russia? Did she correspond with Uncle Vasya while he was alive? Any information on my father or Aunt

Assia? On our trip to Lake Baikal, we planned to visit Taishet where Uncle George used to live.

Alas, none of this came to pass and only many years later did I get factual information on my roots through the efforts of Andrei, who lived in St.Petersburg for a couple of years and obtain entry to the official governmental archives.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> , we started a beautiful 8 day cruise down the Volga River with my then boss Rick Merrill, his wife Kathy and a couple who were their friends, Tim and Marylyn Bannon.



*Our 1<sup>st</sup> Cruise down the Volga from Togliatti to Astrakhan – August, 1992*

This cruise was to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea and we really loved it. The weather was wonderful and the scenery relaxing and pleasant. We stopped every day at towns and villages along the way including Balaklavo, Saratov, Kamyshin, Volgograd (Stalingrad), Nicolskoyoe and Astrakhan. Most of these towns were closed to foreigners until just recently and it was great to meet people that have basically never been in contact with Westerners. Took 29 rolls of photos and 3 hours of video. We had numerous “green” stops along the way where we enjoyed freshly cooked “shashlik” and grilled newly caught trout on the banks of the Volga. The entire 8-day cruise with all meals and excursions included came to a total of US \$4,000.00 or less than \$650 per person (excluding Kyra)!

The obtainment of this “semi-private” ship was a story in itself and only possible in the prevailing confusing state of Russia! It belonged to a state-owned sanitarium once used by former USSR president Nicolai Kosygin and our friendly Lada Hotel Director (with numerous ties to influential security & Mafia people), arranged to “rent” it for our exclusive use. He sent 2 assistants, one with a briefcase full of money to “grease” our way through the numerous locks and docking stations en-route and the other one to make sure that the former one (Victor Istrashkin) does not drive us overboard from excessive chatter and small talk.

I learned a good lesson from one of the Russians who arranged the tour. Just prior to boarding the vessel, after the bulk of the party got aboard, a group of young, drunk Russians were shouting some offensive remarks that got me angry and I was about to confront them. As I stepped towards them, our friend got in front of me and in a calm voice said – “Fellows, that’s no way to treat our foreign guests. Why don’t you go your way and avoid any difficulties”. This was said in a calm low but authoritative voice and the young men just sauntered away. I later found out that he was a KGB officer and accustomed how to deal with such situations, but also remembered the wise saying - **“Nothing moves because we**



**judge it, or get angry at it, or try to manipulate it."**

We sailed out of Togliatti on a beautiful warm sunny day to our 1<sup>st</sup> "Green Stop" on Malden's Island near Balakovo, a small agricultural town founded in 1762 and now a nuclear power station. We stretched our legs, and did some fishing, then enjoyed a wonderful outdoor barbeque of freshly marinated lamb kebab (shashlik) and proceeded to the major port city of Saratov. Until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, Saratov was designated a "closed city", that is, strictly off limits to all foreigners due to its military importance. This was due to the presence of a vital military aircraft manufacturing facility in the city.

We were hosted by the Saratov Electro unit Production Amalgamation (SEPO), a former highly sophisticated military supplier, who envisioned manufacturing some of our automotive components in the near-future. They arranged a tour for us of the Radishchev State Art Museum, one of Russia's oldest museums. It was founded in 1885 by the initiative of a prominent Russian artist Alexei Bogoliubov, a grandson of Radishchev. The collection of the museum contains over 19,900 items (including painting, graphics, sculpture and decorative art). The department of Russian art of XIII -XX centuries is represented in exhibition of the works of Briullov, Repin, Levitan and the eminent Saratov-born artists - Paul Kuznetsov and Victor Borisov-Musatov. We concluded the visit by visiting with the newly arrived US Peace Corps representatives – Laurence Eubank and Jeff Schwartz, sympathizing with their tales of woe on the lack of proper equipment and infrastructure to do their job.

From Saratov we sailed to our 2<sup>nd</sup> Green Stop at Kamyshin, a small town on the banks of the Volga which was founded in 1667. There was a functioning Russian Orthodox Monastery and a beautiful church which we visited through the kindness of the local priest – Father Ivan Alekseevich Matvienko.

Mid way through this trip, as we paced through the locks at Volzhskiy, near Volgograd, we received an urgent telegram from the US - our first grandson, Steven Richard, was born on August 26. At that time both papa and wife, Shanan, were going to night school accumulating credits for eventual full-time college. Steve was also selected as "Seaman of the Quarter" and has his picture posted all over the base at Pensacola. He was thinking of going for Officer Candidate Training and a Naval career.

In 1942, Volgograd (then called Stalingrad) became the site of one of the pivotal battles of the war. The Battle of Stalingrad saw perhaps the greatest casualty figures of any battle in warfare (estimated at 1,250,000 killed and 800,000 wounded). The battle began on 17 July 1942, and on August 23 the city suffered heavy aerial bombardment that reduced most of it to rubble. By September, the fighting reached the city center. The fighting was of unprecedented intensity; the central station of the city passed from hand to hand 13 times, and the famous Mamayev Kurgan (one of the heights of the city) was captured and recaptured 8 times. By the winter of 1942–43, the German forces controlled 90% of the city, and had cornered the Soviets into two narrow pockets. On November 19, Soviet forces launched a massive counterattack. This led to the eventual encirclement of Sixth German Army. On January 31, 1943 its commander, Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus surrendered, and on February 2, with the elimination of straggling German troops, the Battle of Stalingrad was over.

We toured this fantastic city with great awe and interests, taking many photos of the various monuments and memories to the heroic Red Army that as General (later President) Eisenhower said – "ripped the guts of the Wehrmacht and turned the tide of WWII". From there we concluded our tour at Astrakhan. For seventeen months in 1670–1671 Astrakhan' was held by Stenka Razin and his

Cossacks. Early in the following century, Peter the Great constructed a shipyard here and made Astrakhan the base for his hostilities against Persia, and later in the same century Catherine II accorded the city important industrial privileges.



*Kyra and "Mother Russia call for Defense of the Motherland"*

From Astrakhan we flew to St.Petersburg where we spent 4 days touring that fantastic city which very soon will put Paris into shadow for historic and architectural splendor. From there, 3 days in Moscow where we finally found the time to tour the Kremlin and back to Togliatti.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, we received a letter from Peter and Cornelia Schnall of the National Geographic Society asking us if we would participate in a TV film of their Explorer series called "Volga, the Soul of Russia". As described by them – "...this project will be told through the very personal stories of the Russian people to show a Russia few Americans have ever seen. We hope to meet and interview you and the directors of the VAZ plant. It would allow us to see you, as the American representative, working in an unusual, successful joint venture with a major Russian firm".

The actual filming took place on September 16<sup>th</sup>, and I was interviewed on video by the National Geographic Explorer Team and appeared in their documentary film of the Volga area narrated by Morgan Freeman called "Volga, the Soul of Russia". Although they filmed me for nearly 30 minutes, I

appear in the film for less than 3 – Oh, well there goes my cinematographic chances for a Hollywood career – again!



*Which one of us is going to tell him "Nyet"? - VAZ/GM Director Stoyanov and Dr. Mirzoev, VAZ Director of Engineering.*

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, we were off again on our 3<sup>rd</sup> R&R Trip, this time for 2 weeks at Club Med in Hammamet, Tunisia where we had a gorgeous time on the beach, pool, horseback and camel riding and visits to historic sites such as the ruins of Carthage. The weather was gorgeous and all of us got beautifully tanned, just right to start the winter season in Russia. We had a great time, Bev won a gold medal in the archery competition and I got some skinned knees after falling over my feet in a 50-meter relay dash. Kyra had a ball with the other kids as well as in the pool where she spent most of the day.

We met some Brazilians working as counselors at the resort and I really wowed them with my ability to speak Portuguese. They were still trying to figure out how an American can be a resident in Russia and weren't quite prepared for that twist!

Club Med at Hammamet was very nice and a little exotic. It reminded me a lot of Iran, with its minarets, mosques, open markets and style of bargaining for literally everything. We had an opportunity of touring the ruins of ancient Carthage, the city that took on the Roman Empire in the time of Hannibal and was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC.

At the Club we met a Russian girl from Mordovia who was working there for the summer as a G.O. (Gentil Organizador) . Mordovia is a large province in central Russia between the Don and Oka rivers, they have their own language which is related to Finnish and are ethnically different from the Slavic Russians. She was, like most people from that area, a very pale redhead with many freckles and big deep blue eyes. She was terribly home-sick and got very excited when she found out that not only did

we speak Russian, but we also lived there. She took a great liking for Kyra and Bev and kept looking for them whenever she had a break from her duties. She has never been out of Russia before and was over-whelmed by the differences in culture and behavior.



*Kyra had a minor confrontation with a social camel*

Bathed in Mediterranean light, Club Med at Hammamet, with its Moorish-style hotel and its characteristic blue-and-white bungalows, was steeped in a strong local culture, which was also reflected in the culinary specialties served in the Club Med Village. Here you will found pleasures to touch all the senses. We had a great vacation beside the clear blue Mediterranean Sea, caressed by a gentle breeze. We also did a few shopping tours of the small towns in that area and added to our growing collection of “native” artifacts and souvenirs as well as small gifts for the family and kids at home.

As usual, the Club was fully equipped with sporting activities such as snorkeling outings, pool aquatics, archery and a well equipped small circus school where Kyra participated in a circus school as a clown and a trapeze artist. I tried the trapeze also – once was enough. The ladies enjoyed archery, at which Bev was getting to be quite skilled. I after some nasty welts and ugly, painful bruises on my forearm from the bow string, was less than enthusiastic about that sport. We were both amused to follow the unsteady progress of an ongoing romance between one of the “GO” archery instructors, a big burly Spanish guy called “Bull” and a small petite German gal who gave him a big “shiner” on his eye during one their romantic discussions.

After a morning of riding camels on the seashore with temperatures in the 80's we arrived in Moscow under sleety snow! What a contrast, of course we all immediately got the sniffles; however all recovered pretty quickly and attended a “delayed in our honor” celebration of Columbus Day at the newly formed Russian/American Club.

This was a very busy year for us with much press attention. Following our National Geographic interview we were contacted in October by Bruce Edwards, a photo journalist for the “Flint Journal”, requesting us for a photo interview session to appear in the major Flint newspaper. We accepted and Bruce accompanied by Carol Azidian, another journalist from the newspaper, arrived in Togliatti to



visit us for the interview at our new home in the re-constructed apartments at the LADA hotel.



Later that October, there followed my connecting with and escorting my former GM Treasurer from GM Hamtramck, George Lee and his lovely wife Peggy who were heading a “People-to-People Ambassador” delegation on a visit to Moscow. I accompanied them in their meetings with local businessmen, banks and government officials. It was very interesting and educational to learn firsthand what is going on in the current privatization process for major industries and attempts to stabilize the ruble. The delegation consisted of representatives of major US businesses, such as J.C.Reynolds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Eastman Kodak, etc as well as a couple of Commercial Banks and professors of State Universities.

All of these interactions with knowledgeable interviewers and high ranking people helped me a lot in developing “people skills”. It showed me the importance of pauses in conversation to –

- Let other to express themselves fully
- Ponder and think about content
- Respond distinctly and not confrontationally

It is tough – still trying to learn to practice this more frequently!

In late October, the “Golden Autumn” ended and there were already frequent snow flurries. The weather was still too warm for any accumulation but temperatures drop below zero at night and early mornings.

We had one more interesting encounter that year when a very agitated VAZ official from their foreign representation office advised me that there was an American journalist in town without the proper official entry documents

It came out that this “unexpected guest” was the world famous Brazilian photographer, Sebastiao Salgado who is particularly noted for his social documentary photography of workers in less developed nations. Longtime gallery director, Hal Gould, considers Salgado to be the most important photographer of the early 21st century, and gave him his first show in the United States.



*Sebastiao Salgado and Beverly – Two “World Class” Photographers with a heart!*

Bev had picked up a lot of Russian by this time and enjoyed the local culture and warm hospitality of the local people. Adding to her busy schedule, she started teaching conversational English two days a week at a special, Western bank-oriented, local High School and was an active member of the Russian-American Friendship Society, attending their board meeting every week.

Our trusty driver, Nicolai, noted that we are meat-eaters and often buy pork at the local market. He told us that we were being constantly over-charged by the “black people” (Caucasians) and could save us a lot of money if we let him purchase an entire pig at the neighboring collective farm where he had friends. We complied and armed with a couple of large ice chests that we provided, took off for the village Tachla, where the collective farm was located.

In a couple of hours he returned with the two chests plus two large carton boxes overflowing with bloody, steaming chunks of freshly-slaughtered pig! Thank God that Bev is a Registered Nurse, I left the premises pronto, while she with a large butcher’s knife and cleaver, spent the next two hours cutting the meat into recognizable chunks for future consumption. Thanks again that we had a very large freezer that was imported for meat and perishables storage. We spent a year without buying any pork at the market!

Nicolai also arranged that we would get a supply of milk every couple of days, fresh from the cows, which Bev religiously boiled and put in glass milk containers for each few days of use. We also had a good supply of fresh berries and apples when they were in season.



*Beverly getting ready to cut a 120 lbs block of butter from the collective farm in Tashla*

Much to my alimentary delight, Beverly also learned the fine art of “Pelmeni-making” (Russian Ravioli)



*Bev and Lydia Maximovna (Babulya) making pelmeni in our kitchen at Togliatti*



We came back to Flint on December 17<sup>th</sup> on our 2<sup>nd</sup> Home Leave to check out our new grandson, visit with family and friends and do some GM business. The days sure fly by fast when you are having fun! It was hard to believe that we had nearly reached the mid point (18 months) of our 3 year assignment in Russia. Our Home Leave was very animated and a little hectic. We stayed nearly a full month between vacation and business visits, during that time Bev visited 2 US High Schools (L'Anse Cruise and Lindeman) to talk to "pen pals" of the Russian HS students and had a meeting with Ken Cameron, Personnel Director for AC and John Davidek with Greg Allar on the Sister City program. We also made some "major" purchases at Mitzelfeld's in Rochester. We returned to Togliatti by train on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1993, stopping for two days in Moscow.

Number #2 son, Andre (25), will be coming to visit with us next year. He was working with a major law firm in S.F. setting up the video and audio staging for their conferences. He is musically inclined, just like Steve, and tried his hand as a lead guitarist with some of the Rock n' Roll groups such as "Guns and Roses".

Beverly's summary of our 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Russia is recorded in **Appendix K – Chapter II**, and provides additional details of the "happenings" in our turbulent but happy days in the "heartlands" of Russia.

**1993** was another very busy and eventful year, as well as technically the last one of our initial 3-year ISP assignment. The 1<sup>st</sup> "Peace Corps" team arrived on January 13<sup>th</sup>, this started a new episode in our lives, as Bev worked quite a bit with them on various local projects and we both tried to assist them over "cultural" bumps. The Peace Corps first brought Volunteers to Russia to assist the development of business, but - "How does one do business in a nation that has 9 time zones and 150 distinctly different ethnic populations and cultures?" Not to mention that it also straddles two continents!

We shared with them that many Russians identify us with "Bucksi" or "Money Disease" that has swept their country, bringing greed and crime in its wake. They desperately need other models of social action than what they get from the deluge of the worst American cheap B movies and soap operas with their images of violence, greed, sex and materialism.

There is much more to Russia than material life. We tend to dismiss the Russian's passionate search for identity, their striving for the spiritual and the gathering strength of religion. Forgetting the great contributions made by Russian scholars, scientists, artists, composers and writers in the past, we say with condescending superiority: "Your previous life is nothing. You have known nothing but 1,000 years of despotism!"

Although the Russians are basically "Caucasian-European" and in many ways look like Westerners, there is a large portion of the "Oriental" characteristics in their attitude and approach to things.

1. They are very patient and know how to use time for their benefit in negotiations and commercial activities.
2. They are very sensitive to disrespectful behavior and slow to forget insults, real or imagined.
3. They are very persistent and will pursue a point with great stubbornness and determination.
4. They are very good planners and strategists. They are great experts in identifying weaknesses of their opponents and using them to their advantage.

Although the "Old Communist" structure is out of power, it is NOT gone. Old ways die-hard and not all of the old ways were necessarily unpopular with the masses.

Some progress was made, but not enough. Some of the Peace Corps personnel ended up marrying



Russian spouses, learned the language and culture and stayed. Others, the majority left in frustration and some cases with erroneous impressions. The Russia programs were interrupted in 1998 when no Trainees entered Russia, because visas were not granted. However, the Volunteers already in country were allowed to complete their service, and the Peace Corps staff remained intact. In 1999, the governmental sponsorship of the Peace Corps moved from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Education.

Russians are highly educated; the official literacy rate is 98%. The Russian education system ranks among the best in the world. It is a highly regulated system with examinations for students and strict credentialing requirements for teachers. Education is free and compulsory until the age of seventeen.

Increasingly, Russians identify English language proficiency as an important step to regaining footholds in international trade, technology, information sharing, and study abroad. This has led to a demand for English language and business English instruction reflected in the fact that 75% of all students choose it as their first foreign language. Because of this extraordinary demand, and because Russian teachers of English have been isolated from native speakers, there is a need for assistance in teaching English. Volunteers who do not have teaching credentials or teaching experience feel at a disadvantage among their host country teaching colleagues. Russia training strains to overcome the discrepancy between the training and experience of Russian teachers of English and the training and experience of TEFL Volunteers.

In May of 2002, Moscow refused to provide entry visas for new Peace Corps volunteers or to extend the visas of nearly half the volunteers already in the country. The move comes at the end of a difficult year for the Peace Corps in Russia, with the Federal Security Service, successor to the KGB, charging that some volunteers were spying. "Among them are persons who were collecting information on the social, political and economic situation in Russian regions, on officials of governmental bodies and departments, on the course of elections and so on," FSB head Nikolai Patrushev told reporters earlier this month.

The U.S. Embassy dismissed the charges as "groundless."

In February of 1993, nearly 2 years after my arrival, I was finally invited to tour a couple of former defense plants in the pursuit of finding some possibilities for conversion to automotive component manufacture. Also on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month we celebrated Kyra's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday on our 4<sup>th</sup> R&R Trip to Zinal, Switzerland. This was our winter skiing vacation with Club Med and proved a little hard on Kyra since all of the kids in her group were either Swiss, French or Austrians who have been skiing since they started walking, about the age of 2! Nevertheless, we all had a grand time.

March and April passed by with its usual super muddy season and on April 29<sup>th</sup> our satellite connection with the US broke down. It was restored in 10 days but did show how uncomfortable it can be without communication with our home and kin. On May 16<sup>th</sup>, Steven was transferred to the US Naval base in San Diego, CA and on the 24<sup>th</sup> we were off again on our 5<sup>th</sup> R&R, this time to Paris, France and Euro Disney. During this trip, we also looked up one of my teachers from Ste Jeanne D'Arc College in Shanghai, the Reverend Brother Gilbert. He did not change much over the years but was losing his eye sight, however he readily recognized me and we had a very nice visit.



*Guy Chaillan, Me, Reverend Brother Gilbert*

We took a cruise down the Seine River and went up on the Eiffel Tower. At the conclusion of our tour, the power went out and there were no operational elevators for our descent. We were very proud of 4 year old Kyra bravely trudging down the multiple steps with not a whimper or complaint! Our visit ended with a short stop at Guy and Irene Chaillan's home in Franconville and on June 1<sup>st</sup> we were on the train in Moscow, heading for our home in Togliatti.

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, Kyra and Bev went to Moscow to meet our niece Kendra, who was arriving with a group from Togliatti's Sister City, Flint, Michigan to take part in the "1<sup>st</sup> Volga Friendship Cruise" scheduled to take place from June 25<sup>th</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup> on the "**Nicolai Gostello**". Due to other commitments, I could not join them until July 6<sup>th</sup> when I flew to St. Petersburg to join the happy group. Leroy Haynes (the minister that married us) and his wife Kathie were also part of this group, however they arrived late and I had to provide a car and driver for them to catch the cruise at Cheboksay, a small town about 2 hours away.

The cruise was extremely successful and the "Nicolai Gostello" left the Komsomol Dock of Togliatti at 23:00 hrs on June 25, with music blasting and lots of handkerchief waving. The ship arrived at Nizhni-Novgorod on the 28<sup>th</sup> for a tour of that historic city, after that the travelers enjoyed a 2-day tour of Moscow on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, as well as some stops at the "Golden Ring" cities of Kostroma-Yaroslavl, Uglich, Rybinsk and Varlaam. After encountering a rather severe storm on Lake Laduga, they arrived safely but a little sea-sick at St. Petersburg, where I was able to join them on July 6<sup>th</sup>. After a 1-day tour of this gorgeous city, the Flint group, less Kendra and the Haynes, flew back to the USA while we continued back on the return trip to Togliatti. We visited Kizhi with its fabulous wooden churches, built 200 years ago without a single nail or metal fastener. Still standing in their artistic glory. We also stopped over at Petrozavodsk with its wonderful fountains designed by the Tsar Peter the Great,

which operate solely by gravity without one single pump. On July 13<sup>th</sup> we were back in Nizhni-Novgorod and the next day at historic Kazan, former capital of the Tartar Khans. At noon the following day, July 15<sup>th</sup>, with the ship's whistle blasting, we sailed into the Togliatti dock.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> we celebrated the 2 year anniversary of our residence in Togliatti by a press interview with the popular local newspaper "Moscow Tribune" and had lunch, in Moscow, with the Russian TV journalist Michael Taratuta, who was hosting a popular TV series – "Life in America". GM got really interested in participating in Russia's future and negotiations were proceeding on a few possibilities. Based on this, we were asked to extend our stay for a couple of more years to which we agreed.

The Inter-Volga '93 Business Conference that was held September 14<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> in Togliatti. Showed a registration of 146 participants including over 40 Americans and other foreigners. There was an interview with Lawrence Eubank, Regional Peace Corps Director for Western Russia, which stressed the US interests of doing business with and in Russia. This time GM was officially represented and so were Hyundai, Price Waterhouse, DHL and the US Department of Commerce.

An agreement was also signed between GMI Engineering & Management Institute and the Togliatti Polytechnic Institute for informational purposes. During our recent visit to Flint, we also had a meeting with Dean Hallam of the Advanced Management School of the University of Michigan-Flint. He was also very interested to establish an exchange with Togliatti institutes of higher education, he said that there is a major drive now for interfacing with foreign universities for accreditation of MBA programs.

Price Waterhouse sent 11 expatriates, mostly British with a couple of Frenchmen and some Americans, for a 3-year assignment in Togliatti working with AVTOVAZ. GM also had big plans for Russia involving half a dozen Joint Ventures to manufacture and distribute automotive parts as well as the assembly and manufacture of vehicles. This was a distinct shift in GM's prior position of not getting into major investments in the CIS. The main reason for my trip to the US in November was to attend a World Wide Sales Conference in Flint where our overall global strategy would be defined. This also caused a lot of high-level traffic through here.

After that we were off on our 6<sup>th</sup> R&R Trip, this time to San Francisco, CA. While we were there Steven and Steve R drove up from San Diego to visit with us. We spent a couple of days admiring our growing grandson, then Steve drove back to report to duty. He nearly did not make this trip, for when he asked for a couple of days off to meet with his mother and stepfather, he let it slip that we were there from Russia on a visit. The senior officer instantly perked up and said – "Hold on, we got to talk"

After Steve's departure, we met with my old Shanghai friends, Sidney, Alfie and others at a United Macau Association (UMA) outdoor barbeque party. We also visited dear Shanghai friends in Oakland, Andre and Mary Tessyier. Andre served in the French Foreign Legion in Indo-China, now Vietnam and experienced the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the most ferocious battle between the French Forces and the Viet Cong, where on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1954 the French were surrounded and surrendered to the Viet Cong after battling for 170 days.

We ended our visit by paying respects at Semen Ivanovich Sapelkin's grave and headed home to Togliatti, via Detroit and Moscow.





*Steven, Steven Richard and me on our visit to San Francisco*

At that time plans were being discussed to construct a major new car plant in Togliatti, valued at US \$3.0 Billion to produce 300,000 Western-style cars annual starting in the year 2000. The financing would be entirely internal with the major Russian Commercial Banks and the local auto industry (AVTOVAZ, GAAZ, AZLK & ZIL) providing the investment as well as through the sale of shares locally.

GM, Chrysler, Mercedes and Fiat were requested to participate as consultants and/or operating partners to share Western administrative and operational know-how. Enter Boris Berezovsky!

He is best known for his role as a Russian oligarch, media tycoon and prominent politician during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s. He has been described by critics as the epitome of Russian "robber capitalism", but denies having ever taken part in the violence that tainted Russian business during that era. Berezovsky was at the height of his power in the later Yeltsin years, when he was deputy secretary of Russia's security council, a friend of Boris Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana Dyachenko, and a member of the Yeltsin inner circle, or "family".

He made "mucho" money by setting up one of our executives to announce on the local public TV network GM's issuance of a "Letter of Intent" for the above mentioned venture. The gullible public took this as a "done deal" and sale of shares skyrocketed. Berezovsky sold the worthless shares at their peak before the venture collapsed during the negotiations. This was his start to fame as a Russian Oligarch.

At that time we did not have an E-Mail address on the Internet although it became quite popular. GM/EDS were afraid of virus contamination and were reluctant to assist me in this matter. So, I occasionally sent short messages to Igor through a young "hacker" at the Russia-USA Society, as follows: E-mail:sdima@alada.vaz.togliatti.su His name was Dmitry Skvortsov and he could get it through for me quickly. I had PROCOMM PLUS software on my PC which we planned to try it out by transmitting data from the ACR office in Flint via the satellite phone to my PC. It finally worked!



Things were reasonably stable in Togliatti but violent events occurred in Moscow on October 3-4, which were the culmination of a long developing conflict. On September 21, 1993, Yeltsin decreed parliament dissolved and new parliamentary elections to be held on December 12th. At an emergency session of parliament (in the Russian White House) Vice President Rutskoi announced that he was assuming the office of President. Parliament and his supporters refused to obey Yeltsin's orders. Despite that Gennady Zyuganov and other top leaders of the Russian Communist Party have not participated in the events, the outermost communist and nationalistic organizations actively supported the Parliament.

In early October there were violent clashes with the police throughout the center of city. A group of supporters of the parliament constructed barricades and blocked traffic on Moscow's main streets. On the next day, a mob of parliament supporters stormed the police cordon around the White House territory (where the Russian Parliament barricaded itself) and seized also the Moscow City Mayor offices. Later, the crowd was greeted from the White House balcony by Rutskoi, who urged them to seize the national television center at Ostankino.



*Russian Army Taman Division tanks, loyal to President Yeltsin, firing at the Parliament Building (White House)*

Same evening, small division of Russian airborne troops (about 40 men) who were on guard of the national television center stopped the assault of Ostankino; part of TV center was significantly damaged. A few hours before, the citizens of Moscow were called to support the President. At midnight, all main channels transmitting from Ostankino abruptly stopped working. One of the main channels continued to work from a reserve studio in another TV center; however, there was almost no information about the attack on Ostankino. Part of Moscovites, who supported Yeltsin, went to the center of the city and constructed barricades to defend the most important and vulnerable offices from

the possible assault by the parliament forces. At the next morning parts of those barricades were still visible.

On the morning of October 4, after a few days of hesitation, several elite divisions of Russian military forces decided to support Yeltsin. Tanks rolled up to the White House at around 5:00 am. Firing began at 7:00 am. The assault continued throughout the day and was accompanied by almost constant sniper fire from the upper stories of several buildings in the downtown Moscow. Defenders of the Parliament were equipped with anti-tank guns and they managed to burn several machines. Large amount of teenagers and other Moscovites attracted by the exciting events walked and gaped around the parliament building; some of them were injured or killed by casual bullets. At 5:00 pm. special troops entered the White House; leaders of Parliament and Vice President Rutskoi were arrested.

A few months later, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, of the next year - 1994, all the leaders of the anti-Yeltsin campaign received a pardon and were released from jail. Official reports placed the toll of the October Events at 146 dead and approximately 1,000 injured. As was written in the local newspapers long after the events, the government spent in 1994 more than 300 million US\$ just to restore and renovate the Parliament building, more than it spent on fundamental academic research and development programs in the whole country.

By coincidence, our satellite phone connection at home broke down through my personal carelessness of pushing the wrong buttons on the equipment. I had to use my connection at my phone in my office at VAZ. This was a weekend and VAZ was closed. After some negotiations and red tape, I was finally let into my office and called Mom & Dad. The conversation went as follows –

- Me – Hello, how are you all?
- Mom – Where is Bev and are you safe?
- Me – Sure everything is OK, but Bev is not here at the moment. We are all safe, why do you ask?
- Mom – Don't you read the newspapers!?
- Me – There are no newspapers on the weekend.
- Mom – Hmmm. Of course! Don't you know that thousands of people have been killed in Moscow?
- Me – No, we have not heard anything like that
- Mom – Hmmm. Of course! Why can't Bev come to the phone?
- Me – Because I am calling from work, our phone at home does not work
- Mom – Hmmm. Of course!

Following this conversation, I made sure that 2 days later, when our connection at home was repaired that Bev had a lengthy chat with her parents.

Our son Andrei arrived in Togliatti on October 10<sup>th</sup>, after things got settled in Moscow and stayed for 3 weeks. He is fluent in Russian and was investigating the business opportunities here, we're sure he couldn't avoid making a memorable impression as he is 6'6", weighs 250 hard pounds and wears his hair in a 3 foot long pony tail! He played occasionally with various Rock Groups and started years ago with "Guns and Roses" before they became famous. He wanted to open up a Pizzeria here and possibly a "Hard Rock Cafe".

Since he didn't quite make it to the Inter-Volga '93, his interactions with the business community was not too active, however... he met Nicolai B----- (a Russian Congressman), Gleb D----- (a Theater Director), Gennady B----- (former KGB officer) and Andrei B----- (a Mafia Boss).

B-----, was an interesting “Mafia-type” young man from Yekaterinburg, he had us over to his place for a great Chinese meal, cooked by his private chef from Mainland China, drove us around in his '93 Cadillac Eldorado, followed by a Niva full of bodyguards. He took Andrei on a cruise on his personally owned "Meteor" hydro-foil craft and wined and dined us at the best exclusive restaurant in Togliatti, which was a private club called "Melponeme" (the Greek Muse of Tragedy) and located at the Koleso Theater.

I first met Andrei B-----, when he showed up at my office, casually inspected the ceiling and asked in a low, conspiratorial voice – “Is it safe to talk here?”, without waiting for my reply he continued by asking me if GM was interested in buying a “Buran”.



*Soviet era Space Shuttle – “Buran” on exhibit in Moscow.*

At this point, he reached into his briefcase and brought out sheets of specifications and technical data pertaining to this “Soviet era space craft” which was still in use. Overcoming my initial shock, I politely refused, thanked him for his kind offer and said that GM’s interests are strictly limited to working with AvtoVaz and the development of automotive emissions controls. We later had quite a few meetings, he was a very likable young man, very tall and well put together and in some ways reminded me of my oldest son. He had a very active and creative mind, and came up with some major projects ranging from building a 45-storey skyscraper in Togliatti’s Green Zone, converting Krushchev’s dacha into an exclusive hotel for business conferences and relaxation for high executives and shuttling the city’s “Meteor” hydrofoil fleet in winter, when the Volga was frozen, to the Mississippi River for temporary recreational use till the Volga thaws out for the craft.

Andre visited the Bank College twice and school #38 once, as a celebrity speaker to a room full of kids! We also had a dinner engagement at another private club called "Soglacja", to meet with Leonid G-----

(Director of the Togliatti City's Foreign Relations Department), and the President of DOKA Pizza. Nikolai B----- also introduced him to some of his affluent friends for possible future business possibilities.

Mafia related activities were pretty prevalent that year. A well known Togliatti District Attorney, Yakutian, was assassinated while returning from his dacha. His car was ambushed and riddled with 27 bullets from AK-47's gunfire. He died instantly. Another young and promising lawmaker, as he was exiting the "Melponeme" restaurant at night after celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, was shot through the heart by a sniper from across a vacant apartment building. I also was offered to leave GM and join the staff of a prominent Mafia Boss Z-----, who controlled the automotive parts black market and had a Geiger counter on his desk to detect poisonous radiation hidden in gifts and packages that were delivered to him.

Ted Turner's GOODWILL GAMES were scheduled to be held in Saint Petersburg in late June of the next year. This was the first competition since the Soviet Union had been replaced by fifteen independent republics, and I was contacted to meet with Jack Kelly, Grace Kelly's younger brother. He was a former athlete himself and won, in 1947, the James E. Sullivan Award as the country's top amateur athlete. In the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne, seven months after his sister's Monaco wedding, he won a bronze medal, which he gave to her as gift of the occasion.

Our meeting went very well, he turned out to be a very pleasant, low-key person with a very warm and friendly personality.

On November 5<sup>th</sup> after seeing Andrei off from Moscow, I was on my way to Chicago on AEROFLOT flight 329. This was my 1<sup>st</sup> trans-Atlantic flight with Aeroflot and was very comfortable and interesting observing the "New Russians" with their newly obtained wealth, lifestyles and burly bodyguards. It won't be long before most of them will purchase private planes for their vacation and shopping jaunts. I spent 2 very pleasant days with Igor in Chicago and then fly off to Detroit for the GM business meetings.

I shared with GM management that more and more "foreign" cars are appearing on the scene in Togliatti, mostly used cars from Europe - VW's, BMW, Mercedes, Fords and an occasional Opel and Chevy. Also a sprinkle of Nissan and Toyota Vans with RH drives. Service Stations with some diagnostic equipment would be very lucrative here also replacement parts such as filters, coils, fuses, wiper blades, brake shoes, batteries, etc. Car Washers, Tow Trucks and Tire Re-Threaders are non-existent at present. There were "golden opportunities" to start some joint ventures and/or sales representations. However, nothing came out of it since GM was leery in putting up any capital in that region which in their minds was still unstable. They were probably right.... We will never know!

Shortly after my return, on November 24<sup>th</sup> we were off on our 7<sup>th</sup> R&R Trip, this time to Zaragoza and Madrid in Spain. There we visited with Phil and Linda Chu and spent some fun time with them enjoying the Spanish "tapas" and touring the vicinity. By December 4<sup>th</sup> we were back in Togliatti after taking our usual train trip from Moscow.

This Christmas and New Year we spent at home along with a small party Bev planned and executed here in Togliatti. She had a bunch of Russian teenagers and a couple of young adults, over to our home, painting Christmas cookies, making popcorn balls, colored paper chains and assorted decorations for the various orphanages and homes for the handicapped children of Togliatti. It was a great gathering with different Christmas Carols being played in all the parts of the house and a wonderful cross-cultural experience for all. We had a ball!



Many of the youngsters were Beverly's future pupils in her "American English" class at the Bank College and we retain contact with many of them till today. Some have moved to the US, some to Canada and England but most are still in Russia and we had occasion to see many of them during our periodic return visits.



*Cookie Painting party at our home in Togliatti with some of Bev's students from the Bank College*

December was also the month of many exciting hockey games in Togliatti and Bev became quite a fan, energetically cheering for the "home" team during the games. The Togliatti team "Lada" was considered one of the best junior hockey teams and many of its players ended up by being recruited by professional teams in Moscow, the USA and Canada.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, we attended a wonderful stage performance at the "Koleso" Theatre called "Butterflies are free". It was very well enacted with much feeling and emotion portrayed by Natasha Drozdova, wife of the director and a very accomplished actress. We got to be good friends with both of them and enjoyed many performances at the "Koleso" with dinner after the performance with them and some of the members of the cast.

There was also a very fine annual performance at Kyra's school with all of students and teachers performing various skits, poetry recitals, singing and dancing to an audience comprised of parents and relatives. It was very well done and enjoyed by all. A great way to end the year.

On Christmas Day we had a party in our honor at the newly formed Togliatti RUSSIA/AMERICA Cultural Club (TRACC) with one of the local music schools putting on a show and an election for next year's Santa with each candidate describing his or her platform (women's lib insisted the office be also available to the ladies).

New Year's we celebrated at home with two young Russian friends, Sergei and Andrew, and an American girl, Jackie, who was in Togliatti, on a working contract with one of the local schools and was tutoring Kyra in English.

**Insert to Chapter XVI**

- Zurich R&R – “Needle Park” - Page 221
- Kalageorgi Family Tree – Page 228, refer to Appendix A
- Flight home with Bev and Kyra when landing gear got stuck prior to landing. ~ 1992 Page 239
- Leroy Haynes at Tashla – encounters with Collective Farm manager and local priest - Page 239
- Nigel Shakespeare and Price Waterhouse
-

## Chapter XVI I – Extension of our International Staff Personnel (ISP) assignment in Togliatti (1994-1996)

“The man of virtue makes the difficulty to be overcome his first business, and success only a subsequent consideration.” - Confucius

There was much activity here in **1994**. We started with a very pleasant “pelmeni” dinner on New Year’s day at the home of one of our local friends who was an interpreter for the Peace Corps.



*New Year's party at a Russian family home.*

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, we had our 1<sup>st</sup> and only “ski experience” in Russia. Some smart “New Russian” entrepreneur opened up a “ski run” on a hill in Togliatti’s Green zone, complete with a rope ski tow. The problem was that as the rope towed you up, halfway, you had to switch sides to avoid a big rock – not for amateurs!

The year also started with President Bill Clinton’s visit to Moscow on January 11<sup>th</sup>. We watched with great interest, as did all of Russia, his appearance on Russian National Television reaffirming the fundamental importance of U.S.-Russian cooperation. He also had a brief presentation at one of the “Youth Palaces” where he accepted questions from the young high school and college students there. At the closing of this session, he beckoned one of the youths to come on the podium with him and shook his hand saying – “When I was a young man I had the opportunity to shake President John Kennedy’s hand. This motivated me to be where I am now. I hope the same for you”. This behavior was unheard of in Russia and after a shocked silence, gained him a long standing ovation!

Later that month, we visited the Russian Orthodox Church in the “Old Town” section of Togliatti and got to meet Father Nikolai, the local priest. He was a tall, middle-aged man, very impressive in his calm gentle manner and composure. We were very impressed on how he listened very attentively to all of the petitioners that approached him, regardless of their age or social status. A “real” priest doing his calling. After our brief meeting, we proceeded to our car where our driver, Nicolai, was shaking his head. As we approached, he commented – “I never realized that the Mafia was religious” seeing our puzzled look he pointed to the row of black SUVs and Limousines that were parked near the church doors. It came out

that a few days ago, there was a “gang war hit” in the Togliatti streets at night and 4 individuals were gunned down. This was the day of their Funeral Service and all the gangs had a day of amnesty to honor their fallen comrades.

On another religious note we discovered that there was a “miraculous” Holy Icon that was found in a small chapel at the village of Tashla, which allegedly had healing powers when prayed to and many pilgrims would come from far to heal themselves. Russians are basically very strong believers and now that the Soviet censorship was gone, many people attended the religious services by going to church on major holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, we had a team from AC Rochester on a visit to tour the Dimitrograd Automotive Component plant (DAAZ) to analyze the possibility of local manufacture of GM components. Dimitrograd is located about 50 kilometers west of Togliatti and in winter the road conditions were very bad, lots of ice and snow with poor visibility at night. We started out late, at dusk and shortly after leaving Togliatti, at 32 degrees below 0 Fahrenheit we came to a sputtering stop because of “wrong fuel”. It appeared that due to the low winter temperatures, a different type of petrol must be used than the one used during the warmer parts of the year. We were not sure what the driver would do but our tour attendant told us not to worry and passed around a bottle of vodka to warm us up.

We were a little cold but relatively calm until we glanced out of the window and saw a flame flickering under the fuel tank. Our escort on noticing our agitation calmly told us to relax and stop worrying, our driver he said was a professional, an accomplished mechanic and handled this a “minor” aberration many times before with no problem. The heat from the flame was necessary to melt the paraffin in the fuel which was clogging the fuel delivery line to the diesel engine of the bus. We all breathed a deep sigh of relief when we arrived at our destination after another stop of this nature before getting to Dimitrograd.

On the next day, I received an invitation from a local “New Russian Biznessman” to visit a newly opened Chinese Restaurant in the Kosomolsky area of Togliatti. On arriving there, I was escorted to a large room with a large round table, loaded with hors d’oeuvre, pastries, cold cuts, vodka, wine and mineral water (for me). Circled around the table were several “Mafia types”, patiently waiting for my arrival. I was given an invitation to attend, with my GM guests, their opening dinner night in a private room with “one-way” mirrored glass (we could look out, but no one in the main room could see us). They claimed that they have imported a genuine Chinese chef from China to provide authentic Chinese dishes.

The idea was intriguing and I sorely missed authentic Chinese food, so I agreed to attend with my team. We arrived in good spirits (some of the team fortified with vodka) and sat down in our elaborately furnished in Chinese décor private dining room. Scantly dressed, long-legged waitresses served us with numerous dishes – but alas, the only thing Chinese about them was the soya sauce. I am sure the chef was authentically an ethnic Chinese but key ingredients, like bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, Chinese cabbage, were not available. I did not have the heart to tell this to our eager host but we did not return for another visit.

Another “cultural shock” came a little later. On our return from our R&R in Zaragoza, we had a flight transfer in Frankfurt where we met a North American professional hockey team on their way to Togliatti. This was a group of very pleasant young men, Canadians and Americans, who were invited by the Russian Hockey Federation to play the LADA team in Togliatti. Everything went well and they



were very graciously received by the Togliatti Mayor's office. Everyone in Togliatti is a hockey fan as their home team was considered one of the best in Russia.

The problem occurred during the actual game. Russians do not believe in excessive violence in contact team sports, which is contrary to "western" hockey where the adage is – "If you have no broken bones and all of your teeth, you are NOT a serious player". The Russian audience was completely shocked at the American team's method of play with heavy body blocks, stick hitting and general mayhem and when one of the Russian players was hospitalized after the game, the Americans were no longer welcome. It was very sad, for some of our young men, visibly contrite and shaken, shared with us practically in tears, how sorry they were and how unaware they had been of the Russian rules of sportsmanship.

Steven, our youngest boy, made 2nd Class Petty Officer and was getting ready for his second 6 month sea duty. Igor, the eldest, was completing his MBA at the University of Chicago, Andre was trying out his skills as a lead guitarist with a rock band and Leanne, our older daughter was seriously considering starting a family of her own. Kyra was now going full time to a local kindergarten and loved every minute of it. By then she was fully bi-lingual and has a ready answer for anything in two languages!

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, to Detroit where I had some business meetings in Flint, while Bev and Kyra visited with family including a rodeo with the Days. We also had an early 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party for Kyra at the Hilton Suites. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> we took our 8<sup>th</sup> R&R trip, this time to spend a week with Mom and Dad who were spending the winter away from the freezing weather at Houghton Lake and were relaxing at a rental condominium on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. We drove south to their rental on a company provided brand new Cadillac. Our stay was very enjoyable, except for a brief encounter with a roving 10-foot alligator, which chose to sun himself close to their condo next to an artificial lake.

After this visit, Bev and Kyra remained for a few days in the Hilton Suites seeing the other members of the family and doing some necessary shopping, like stocking up with a 3-month supply of "previously viewed" VHS taped movies at a neighboring friendly Blockbuster outlet for our viewing in Togliatti. Following a dinner with the Flint Chamber of Commerce, where Bev was the guest speaker, I flew on to Chicago to spend March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, meeting and hosting a VAZ/DAAZ delegation there.

We returned to Togliatti just in time for me to prepare my local office staff to give a presentation at the Russian/American Club on the GM/VAZ Engine Management System (Fuel Injection) that GM was developing for VAZ's new cars to meet the more stringent European and American standards on reducing pollution from automotive exhausts. My intent of this presentation was 2-fold – first to inform the audience in some basic, laymen terms what the contract between GM and VAZ involved and pictorially illustrate how an electronic fuel injection works. Secondly to develop confidence in my employees to practice their "people skills" and ability to present their case to a live audience. Generally, I tried to stay in the background and let them handle the presentation. Everything went extremely well to everyone's satisfaction and in later years, these new (to them) skills helped some of them do well in their careers.

Shortly after, on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Togliatti was visited by a group representing Flint's Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. At the main dinner event, I was teased mildly by the head of a major local bank, who said – "Lev Platonovich is very shrewd with his money, in lieu of making any financial

contributions to the welfare of Togliatti, he donated his wife to be a “pro-bono” professor at our Banking Academy!” He was referring to Bev’s new job as an instructor at the prestigious, new university – the “College of Banking and Business”, where she taught a course called “American English”. This course exposed the students to the American manner of speaking, the American culture and way of life. It was an extremely popular class and opened the eyes of a lot of the students who spoke decent “English-English, but were often confused on the American vernacular and expressions. She also developed some life-time relationships and friendships with her students, many of whom became very successful in later life. One of them became the Director of Purchasing for VAZ, another a successful business woman, with her own produce store.

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, our son Andrei came for his 2<sup>nd</sup> visit this time accompanied by his friend Hugh Skinner who was known as “Huey” by his friends. It became very obvious right from the start, after various raised eyebrows, chuckles and smirks from the local populace that his given name of “Huey” had to change to “Jack”.



*Andrei and “Huey” Skinner on their visit to Togliatti – March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1994*

The main purpose of their visit was to investigate the possibility of opening a “Pizza Parlor” in Togliatti along with a possible “Rock Café”. They were hosted by an influential, local “biznessman” with close ties to the city administration and local “Mafia” groups. There was a lot of activity, including helicopter rides, wining and dining and spectacular “Fashion Shows”, however nothing ever came out of it, although the boys did a lot of research and study for the project. The major problem was, as was usual in Russia those days, where will the initial investment money come from? The banks were not about to lend any money due to the rampant inflation that was prevailing in those uncertain days in

Russia, the constantly changing US \$ to Ruble exchange and the high risk of embezzlement of your capital investment. The boys had a great time but left disappointed.

During this visit, on April 4<sup>th</sup>, Andrei also hurt his back very badly by reaching for a barbell in my workout room at home and slipping a disc in his lower spine. This injury would plague him for many years later.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, Kyra sat for the 1<sup>st</sup> initial sketches for her Oil Painting Portrait with our cat “Dimmy”. The artist was very capable but unfortunately got a little greedy, stretching the task to obtain more “sitting” fees. We eventually had to show him the door. His loss because we were seriously considering additional portraits of Bev and myself.



*Kyra being “put on canvas” by a local Oil Portrait Painter*

May Day was very peaceful here and the weather was gorgeous. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month, I escorted a team from DAAZ, along with a group from the ACR Headquarters on a trip to Portugal for a visit to our component manufacturing plant at Sexial near Lisbon. My Portuguese language skills helped on this trip but still two DAAZ members managed to get “lost” in Lisbon prior to departure in a traffic jam, missed the return flight and stayed over for an additional 2 days. Nevertheless, the trip was very pleasant and we enjoyed the sunny days at the pool in our hotel as well as the wonderful freshly caught seafood at the seaside restaurants. In those days GM was very liberal with its expense accounts covering “Travel and Entertainment” and we had a great time. Actual work benefits from this trip however are questionable in my mind.



Shortly after my return we, as a family, were off on our 9<sup>th</sup> R&R Trip, this time to Sicily where we spent a week at Club Med Kamarina, and took a ½ day tour to the island of Malta. A week after our return on June 12<sup>th</sup>, Bev and Kyra were on a boat again with our daughter Leanne, her husband Jerry and 20 other Americans from Flint on her 2<sup>nd</sup> Friendship from Togliatti, down the Volga to the city of Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea and back passing Saratov, Volgograd and Samara. Along with the 22 Americans aboard there were also over 70 Russians from Togliatti to participate in this cruise.

On July 18<sup>th</sup>, Bev got interviewed by the Moscow TV Channel 2 and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, she and Kyra hosted a Togliatti Student Delegation on a 20-day trip to Flint, coming back on August 18<sup>th</sup>. After a brief stint at the GM/ACR pavilion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Motor Show in Moscow, we were travelling again on our 10<sup>th</sup> R&R to Club Med – Don Miguel at Marbella, Spain where we spent two weeks from September 4<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, touring the Rock of Gibraltar, Granada, and Seville.

During my absence from Togliatti, we had a minor “international” incident. Two ACR team members arrived on their own and during the train ride from Moscow to Togliatti, during a mid way stop at the Ruzaevsk station, they decided to take some photos of the vendors on the platform. This was a strict “No-No”. First Russians resent being photographed by foreigners without their permission, second this was a military area usually closed to foreigners. On arrival at Togliatti, they were met by two soldiers who escorted them to the local police station and their cameras were confiscated. Fortunately, as previously agreed, I had one of my local staff meet the train. She resolved the situation very amicably and quickly, and they were released, irritated with their camera returned but sans film. On their return, they complained bitterly at the home office, greatly exaggerating the circumstances, claiming that the soldiers were armed with rifles and bayonets and that they were interrogated for hours. My employee told me that that was a lot of “bunk” and the police were very amused by their white terrified faces during 15 minutes of detention.

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> we return on our 1st Home Leave of this “extended” ISP Tour of Duty. We met the family at the Detroit airport Marriott Hotel and then proceeded on a flight to Los Angeles, where we rented a car and drove down to Spring Valley to visit with Steven and his family. We all visited the Sea Port Village and Sea World, then spent a day touring Steve’s Missile Ship, the “Valley Forge” on a “Family Day” which included a short cruise and display of a missile readiness operation. The next day Steven left on a 6-month Sea Duty Tour to Panama, the Caribbean and the coast of Venezuela. We drove north on the scenic Hwy 1 hugging the Pacific coastline, met Bev’s brother Kenny at the LAX airport for a brief chat, then drove by the Big Sur heading on to visit San Simeon and the Hearst Castle – awesome to be so rich! After a few days visit with Andre and Nina Andreevna in San Francisco and a nice dinner with my old friend Boris Maslekov and his lovely wife Lydia in San Bruno, we returned to Detroit.

Boris was more than a friend, he was like a brother to me during my life in San Francisco during the ‘60s and ‘70s. He had a wonderful vibrant tenor voice and sang popular Russian songs with deep passion and feeling that would bring many of our eyes to tears. His emotional renditions affected our hearts and nostalgia of “Old Russia”. He also performed as the Choir Master in a San Francisco Russian Orthodox Church which by tradition relied strictly on the harmony of voices with no musical accompaniment. His daughter Masha was my “god daughter”. She is seated next to Bev in the photo.





*Boris Maslenkof and his family*

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, Igor obtained his MBA in Analytic Finance from the University Of Chicago, Booth School of Business and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> we flew to Savannah, GA to spend Christmas with Mom and Dad at their rental on Hilton Head Island. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, we were back in Detroit, where after our annual physical exam, I ended up at the McLaren Hospital after being diagnosed with cardiac dysrhythmia or as commonly known – arrhythmia.

During this stay, I also learned by phone from Togliatti, that our driver, the wonderful and trusty Nicolai Korneich passed away from a sudden heart attack. I was deeply saddened, Nicolai was like a member of the family, I remember his dry humor, the twinkle in his eye, the chuckle when he would point out the KGB agents that we would often encounter at functions or in restaurants, his friendly wrangles with our housekeeper, when each would tell the other that they did not know how to live right, and the time I walked in when they were both watching a Mexican soap opera with tears pouring down their cheeks.

He was always very protective of me and our family and enjoyed bringing his grandson, Serezha, to play with Kyra. We had many outing together in the summer on his dacha which was located close to the banks of the Volga and always abundant with apples, berries, cherries and grapes. He also made sure we were properly supplied with fresh vegetables and potatoes, and mildly annoy me by always parking on the sidewalk to limit my walk to the entry of any building or store that I was going to.



*Nicolai Korneich Kochubei, our trusty driver and loyal friend*

One of the strangest stereotypes about Russians in the West is that they are humorless. I can't imagine where this comes from, since a more joke-loving nation is hard to imagine. Russians have a rich culture of humor, going way back to the wandering bawdy minstrels and folk drawing with comic texts and verse, through satirical writing, plays and then films in the pre- and post-Revolutionary periods, to the underground culture of jokes — *anekdoty* — in the Soviet era.

There are many kinds of jokes in Russian. *Shutka* is a joke in the sense of "I'm just kidding." *Baika* is a tall tale, purportedly true ("My best friend's brother told me this..."). *Prikol* is a gag and also teen-talk for anything cool and funny. *Zagadka* is a riddle. *Chastushka* is a four-line comic rhyming ditty that is often quite bawdy. But the grandfather of all Russian jokes is the *anekdot*: a story — either short or long — with a punch line.

Nicolai and our housekeeper, Lydia Maximovna, would be constantly joking with each other and kept us all "in stitches". We had a very happy and humorous household.

**1995** – Because of my medical situation, our departure back to Togliatti was delayed by a month. On January 5<sup>th</sup>, I underwent a cardiac catheterization with good results and on the next day, was released from the McLaren Hospital in Flint. We celebrated by having a fabulous Italian dinner at "Salvatore Scallopini" a few blocks from the hospital. After a few more medical tests, I was pronounced fit to travel and finishing some more last minute shopping and relative visiting we were on our way back to Russia on January 16<sup>th</sup>.



A week later, I was off to Arjeplog, Sweden for the Winter Testing of our VAZ vehicles with the GM engine management (fuel injection) system. This was a small town just within the Arctic circle where temperatures were below 70 degrees Celsius at night. The area was very sparsely populated with humans but had a lot of curious reindeer who caused some hazards in the driving. There were also many frozen lakes on which we could test our braking system by reaching speeds of 90 mph and then slamming on the brakes and spinning around on the snow covered icy surface of the lake – quite an experience!



*Winter Tests at Arjeplog, Sweden*

At the conclusion of our testing, our GM group “fuehrer” treated the VAZ/GM team to a dinner in Stockholm, there were 11 of us and the bill came to over US \$2,500! Mostly because of the liquor which is very expensive in Sweden. Thank goodness for the generous GM expense account. GM Headquarters were not too concerned because they were charging the Russian outrageously high prices for the GM Engine Management System components, about 2 or 3 times of their wholesale prices in Europe. The Russians, not being dumb, caught on pretty early and started developing their own components at the idled military defense plants with technology that they obtained from Bosch, Siemens and other European firms. This lost us the initiative that we have gained by being the 1<sup>st</sup>

major US manufacturer to establish a major contract with Russia and caused the Russians to look at all US firms with suspicion and wariness.

On my return, on February 10<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Mirsoev, the VAZ Director of Engineering, who also had a heart condition, recommended me to his cardiologist, a Dr. Lydia Giorgeevna Zubrilkina. She was a very pleasant, motherly lady who took very good care of me for the balance of my stay in Russia with weekly check ups and blood work.

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, we were off to our 11<sup>th</sup> R&R in Club Med Pontresina, in the Swiss Alps, located on the sunny south-west slope in the highest valley of the area. Pontresina was a strung out village in the midst of thick pine forests, 4,000m above sea level. There were ski runs of up to 10km through stunning glacier scenery, where we skied till March 8<sup>th</sup>. Not long after our return, a prominent Togliatti citizen and attorney got assassinated on his way home from his dacha. His car was ambushed and riddled with AK-47 bullets. I met him earlier at a party when he expressed an interest to become a GM car dealer.



*Cutting of the Ribbon at the Opening of The Togliatti Russian/American Cultural Center (TRACC)*

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, Bev officially opened the “Togliatti Russian American Cultural Club” (TRACC) with funds obtained from a grant from the Mott Foundation in Flint and support of the Togliatti City Administration, the local community and volunteers of the US Peace Corps. TRACC was a non-profit organization with the goal of interaction and mutual development of understanding of the cultures of Russia and the USA. It included a large library with over 5,000 books, donated by the Rotary Club of Flint, as well as numerous magazines, video tapes and text books to assist the local teachers of



English for use in their classes, and for the general public who were interested in learning English and the American culture.

In May, 1994, the General Motors Corporation announced that it would merge its AC Rochester and Delco Remy divisions, creating a single unit responsible for most of the auto maker's electrical and engine management systems. Although it had no immediate plans for layoffs or plant closings because of the merger, the administrative work force of the combined organization would be reduced. The combined division, was named Delphi on July 1<sup>st</sup>, will be based in Flint, Mich., and will have a combined worldwide total of 32,500 employees in 37 plants and nine engineering centers. This move did not immediately change my status but revised my reporting direction to the Technical Center Luxemburg (TLC).

My new boss's boss, Bill Warren, the Director of the Luxemburg Engineering Center, was scheduled to arrive in Togliatti on May 3<sup>rd</sup> to have a direct meeting with the General Director of VAZ, Vladimir Kadannikov. This would be a private meeting with only me present to interpret between the two executives.

The endeavor started with a little "glitch", I set out for the airport to pick up my boss early so as to help him with the formalities on arrival, a few miles out of Togliatti, one of the tires of the VAZ supplied vehicle sprung a leak and had to be changed. When we took out the spare, we discovered that it also was flat; it had not been replaced by an earlier driver. Fortunately there was a store on the road that had a phone and enabled me to call the duty clerk at VAZ. It was about 90 minutes until I received a replacement vehicle with a replacement driver. On arrival at the airport there was not a soul in sight except for a short middle-aged man in a hat with a suitcase and a briefcase. I approached him and asked if he was Bill Warren, to which he dryly replied – "Who wants to know?" I quickly identified myself and explained the circumstances. He chuckled and replied – "Well, here I am on my 1<sup>st</sup> visit to Russia, no language skills, having the foggiest where I am, not a friendly face in sight. So I decided to just stay put and wait".

Actually we got along very well, he was a very experienced, knowledgeable, capable and most importantly, flexible manager and our meeting with Mr. Kadannikov, who also had a great sense of humor, went very well. Also since my original 3-year ISP assignment was scheduled to end on July 31<sup>st</sup> of 1994, I was officially asked to extend my contract by another 2 years in order to –

1. Train a local replacement with total capabilities to perform all the functions of an excellent Delphi-E accounts manager for Russia fully capable of performing all the required functions with no on-site ISP supervision
2. Trained an on-site support office staff with total capabilities and equipment.
3. Develop an interchange between Delphi and AvtoVAZ for the possible initiation of some limited localization with a controlled phased scenario with minimal investment from Delphi.
4. Facilitate the development of alternate financing for EMS deliveries with terms that would increase Delphi's annual sales volume.
5. Make initial contacts for Aftermarket sales in the Togliatti/Samara area and the lower Volga region.

Thus the period of our residency in Togliatti was extended to July 31<sup>st</sup> of 1996. Actually, the first 2 items were well on their way since I always believed that the primary responsibility of any ISP was to eliminate the need of his presence overseas and develop a suitable local replacement and staff.

Sadly, this was not always done especially in pleasant assignments like Paris, London, Zurich or Sao Paulo, Brazil.



*The "Golden Trio" at Club Med - Kos*

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, InterVolga '95 opened up and after a brief participation we were off on May 24<sup>th</sup> on our 12<sup>th</sup> R&R to Club Med on the wonderful Greek island of Kos for 2 weeks with side tours to Patmos and Rhodes. This beautiful island was one of our most pleasant vacations, we spent two wonderful weeks there under sunny cloudless skies, swimming and snorkeling in the crystal clear blue Mediterranean Sea, watching dolphins frolicking in the gentle waves. We came back with a fantastic golden glowing tan and great spirits to get the wonderful news from Leanne that she was pregnant and expecting twin girls!

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, Bev and Kyra attended the Business Woman Conference in Samara which included a short cruise on the Volga River on the steamer "Bagration". The ladies had a great time and were very amused by the delegation which included some very dedicated "Woman Libers" from the USA. On one of the sessions, a US speaker asked the audience of Russian women if they wanted the same rights as their husbands on obtaining a job – "Heck no!" responded one of the attendees "Let the jerk go out and work and let me take care of the house. All he does is lay on the couch and have the ceiling mirrored in his eyes when they are open".

On July 18<sup>th</sup>, were assigned a brand-new Lada model 21099 by VAZ as a company vehicle complete with an assigned driver. This lasted 2 days, on the day that the vehicle received its new license plates, it was stolen from outside our driver's apartment where he stopped for lunch on the way to pick me up. Shades of Stenka Razin still abound!

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, Bev initiated the 1<sup>st</sup> “Camp Russia/America” at the Spartak Camp belonging to the Bank College. I was on a business trip to Luxemburg so I missed the opening ceremonies. Camp Russia/America was literally a bit of America in the middle of Russia, it provided a chance for 50 Russian students of the English language to experience the language and culture of the country that they were studying. It gave them an opportunity to become “an American” for 10 days.

The students, picked from a competitive test of 300 applicants from local schools and ranging from ages 14 to 16, spent the entire time, along with their counselors, who were local University students and Peace Corps members that volunteered their time, teachers and directors at the site of a popular summer camp. For the entire duration of the Camp, they spoke only English, attended three daily classes, lived in cabins named after a US State of their choice, celebrated American holidays, ate American food, and played American games and sports. They learned English songs and each morning there were dual flag raising – a Russian Flag and an American flag with the respective anthems.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, I finally found my appropriate replacement. He was a young Russian man, fluent in English and a former employee of the VAZ Commercial branch – AvtoLADA. He was very knowledgeable, very hardworking and well-versed in our contractual agreements with VAZ. He was also a very pleasant likeable person with a great sense of humor. I fought hard with Headquarters to provide him a fair and decent salary and support.



*Desert/Mountain Test Drive – September 10, 1995*

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, I accompanied a joint GM/VAZ team on a trip to Denver, CO, Zion National Park and Las Vegas for a “Desert and Mountain Test Drive (Las Vegas was an extra perk). The drive went well with 2 minor “glitches”. I was a little embarrassed when the Russians showed me some simple tests that they performed on the fuel from our local gas stations – it was 5% watered down! They were embarrassed when we relieved one of their key engineers from the driving when we caught him drinking a couple of glasses of pure gin for breakfast, disguised as ice water.

On my return, I focused on developing my team and preparing for my transfer of responsibilities to my local replacement. On October 30<sup>th</sup>, I initiated our first regular weekly office meetings with my staff. This was very new to them since they were accustomed to “do what they are told” and not question authority or give suggestions and/or recommendations for alternative options to perform their tasks. I started out by sharing with them – ***“The Important Twelve”*** which I also translated into Russian for double effect –

1. Don't ever let your Boss be surprised.
2. Admit your mistakes frankly and promptly.
3. Have a recommendation ready.
4. Have at least one alternate plan.
5. If you don't know – admit it.
6. Have the facts and figures ready.
7. Make it a rule to date everything.
8. Don't pass the buck – grab it. (*this one was tough to translate and explain*)
9. Don't write long memos.
10. Pass along good suggestions.
11. Train an understudy.
12. Try your Boss' problems on for size.

On our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting all of the team sat there surreptitiously glancing at one another waiting for someone to speak first, but gradually, with a little encouragement from me, they started to participate and from then on they looked forward to those weekly meeting and made my job a lot easier and more rewarding. I also initiated some English language classes and encouraged them to get proficient on Microsoft computer programs like Wordperfect, Excel and Powerpointe.

Our Engine Management project with VAZ was proceeding well and I gained some points by saving GM close to a million dollars in equipment negotiations. We were approaching the certification of our last series of engine adaptations and initiating training of VAZ technicians on diagnostic service and repair of the electronic modules of the fuel injection systems that were installed on the VAZ engines on their latest model cars. The Engineering team from Luxemburg was replacing the original ACR team from Flint. I was also investigating the possibilities of GM automotive component sales through the local parts & accessories stores and checking on the ability of some of VAZ's parts suppliers to manufacture our components.

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, we were off to our second visit to Club Med at Don Miguel since it was winter and we did not want to ski but go somewhere warm. When we arrived at Malaga, Spain the temperature was below 50 degrees Fahrenheit! Fortunately there was a large indoor pool and a well equipped hotel. Also the small town of Marabella had some nice souvenir shops where Bev and Kyra found some bargains.



On December 22<sup>nd</sup> we received word that Leanne gave birth to twin girls – Kelley and Kelsey and we were off on our Home Leave, eager to see the twins and their joyous mother.



*Kelsey, Leanne and Kelley – December 22, 1995*

After spending a day with Leanne and our newly born twin grand-daughters we were off again to Los Angeles for a pre-arranged 3-day visit to Disneyland and the Universal Studios with Steven and his family. After a grand tour of “Fantasyland”, “Spirit of Pocahotas”, “The Indiana Jones Adventure”, “Country Bear Hoedown” and some wonderful fireworks at the “Fantasmic Show” and a visit to the “Petting Zoo”, the Thodes returned to San Diego and we proceeded to San Francisco for a 5-day visit with Andre and Nina Andreevna. There we met Andrei’s current girlfriend, Theresa and had some wonderful meals in San Francisco’s fabulous Chinese restaurants. This was a “Whirlwind Year!!!”

The year **1996**, started with a couple of visits to old Shanghai friends in the “Bay Area”, then after some “power shopping” at Stonestown, on January 4<sup>th</sup>, it was time to return to Detroit. From there, after arranging a rental car for Bev, I continued on alone to Russia, while Bev and Kyra stayed for an additional 2 weeks with Leanne and our two new grand-daughters.

On January 21<sup>st</sup>, I met them in Moscow and we proceeded on our favorite journey by train from the Kazan Station to Togliatti. Those train rides in a 4-person sleeper car were very pleasant and soothing with the gentle swaying of the train, the occasional hoot of the whistle and the clickety-clacking of the wheels on the rails. After a while we got to know all of the train conductors who were educated middle-

aged women and enjoyed our brief chats with them as they brought us tea. We would also often purchase some warm meat pies (pirozhki) from the vendors at the stops on the route. This being a night train we would get a sound night's sleep before arriving at the Zhiguli station in Togliatti by around 9 am.

February 25<sup>th</sup> we celebrated Kyra's 7<sup>th</sup> Birthday at home and she asserted the sanctity of her room by putting up a sign on the door - "Private Keep Out".



*Kyra had a little difficulty with her spelling – she was fully bilingual at this stage but sometimes mixed Russian with English letters*

Bev at this time was deeply involved with "Este Lauder", a US manufacturer and marketer of skin care, cosmetics, perfume and hair care products. She worked with their Moscow representative in searching for appropriate outlet stores in Togliatti and Samara. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, she accompanied Mrs. Kadannikov, the wife of VAZ's General Director to Moscow, where this lady got a complete facial and hair treatment at the main "Este Lauder" salon there.

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, I shared with my local staff that my ISP assignment will come to an end in December and they will have to be self-sufficient by then. They were a little alarmed at this prospect but I assured them that they are fully capable of performing their responsibilities and were able to handle anything as well as I would – even better since this was their country and culture. After some "Wailing and Gnashing of Teeth", everyone settled down and assured me that my faith in them would not get disappointed.

March 21<sup>st</sup>, we decided on another skiing vacation in the Alps, this time at Club Med – La Plagne. This was a "serious" skiing resort in the French Alps. La Plagne is made up of 6 high altitude resorts located in the Northern Alps with slopes ranging from 2,100 m to 1,800 m, Club Med was located at the heart

of the resort where there was all that one needed in terms of shops, bars and accommodation. We stayed a week and I had some “adventurous” runs. The ladies did well also but with a little more caution.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, we finally got our e-mail installed and on the same day got a visit from a KGB Colonel in plain clothes. He was very polite, courteous and correct and after introducing himself, stated the purpose of his visit. It seemed that 6 months earlier, I had a visit from an extremely tall Englishman with a military carriage, who was investigating the site for the Price Waterhouse local office in Togliatti. We had a brief and pleasant chat during which he attentively listened to my advice and recommendations, then left and I never saw him again. Well, according to my visitor, this Englishman was an agent of MI-5 and had been deported for “activities harmful to Russia”. I related to him the extent of our brief conversation, he thanked me and left.

Well, life goes on – some things change, some don’t but “C’est La Vie!” Years later one of my Russian friends shared with me that I also caused a large share of interest in the circle of local Security People when I arrived, fluent in Russian with a load of cameras and telephotographic lenses and tape recorders. Especially when I expressed an interest in visiting Kuibeshev (Samara) which was a highly sensitive military town with factories producing aircraft and missile parts.

May was an eventful month – on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Krystal Cosette Thode was born, giving us a 3<sup>rd</sup> granddaughter. And on May 10<sup>th</sup>, our son Igor accepted a job with the prestigious Management Consulting firm A.T.Kearney for an astronomical salary. He worked as a Consultant to this large French multi-national distributor of consumer goods. He was based in France and sent on assignments to Asia. He developed an in-depth knowledge of both European and Chinese/Asian marketplaces and successfully advised clients in supplier negotiations and product mix / pricing strategies. He also managed the development of an entire private label (“store brand”) product line for one of the world's largest retailer's Taiwan operation.

A week later on May 17<sup>th</sup>, the Flint Rotary Club, led by George Carpenter, arrived for a visit to Togliatti and a local business group, affiliated with VAZ, hosted them on a new “Boat Hotel” that they were promoting and a performance by a talented young flutist – Igor Liakh at a local restaurant. Business was expanding in Togliatti and various restaurants and night clubs were opening up, however most of them were not “family-oriented” and catered mostly to businessmen and Mafia-types with their girlfriends – no wives or children. They were also very expensive and served mostly liquor and snacks – not “decent” meals.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, I went with my “selected by me replacement” to the ACR/GM Headquarters in Luxemburg for a Program Review and Orientation for him to prepare him to take over my job responsibilities. We went through a whole slew of boring presentations to which my friend shared with me on a break – “Those poor chaps must have no one to talk to so they make up by filling the ears of our captive audience with useless facts”. Matter of fact, he was a lot more knowledgeable and versatile than any of them and was fully capable of taking on my responsibilities at a moment's notice.

On our return to Moscow, on June 7<sup>th</sup>, Bev and Kyra met me and we proceeded on our next R&R, this time to Club Med at Gregolimano, Greece with brief visits to Zurich and Athens on the way. At the resort we had 7 days of wonderful seaside weather, watching dolphins swim past on the beautiful blue waters, do some catamaran sailing and snorkeling.



We returned to Moscow just in time to meet Sammy and Kendra and after a restful night at the Slavanskaya Hotel, we all returned to Togliatti by train. On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Bev, Kyra, Kendra and Sammy were back in Moscow, where they had an “American” lunch at McDonald’s, I asked one of my Russian friends if he has ever been there, he replied – “Yes, 4 times”. When I expressed my surprise because the meals were relatively expensive and asked him – “Do you like hamburgers that much?” He said – “No, but I enjoy watching Russian waiters being polite to the Russian customers”.

After lunch, the group (less me) sailed away on a 5-day trip down the Volga on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volga Friendship Cruise around the “Golden Ring Cities” of Uglich, Yaroslavl and Kostroma, and after changing ships, onward to Nizhni-Novgorod, Kazan and Nicolaevsk, returning to Togliatti on the 28<sup>th</sup>, for participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Camp Russia/America which started on July 1<sup>st</sup> at the Bank College “Red Sails” summer camp grounds on the bank of the Volga and where Sammy served as the “American Sports” authority and coach. They flew back home to the US on July 11<sup>th</sup>.

During this period, I had my hands full with GM/VAZ meetings related to the Engine Management Project, payments and localization of certain key components. Also accompanied my “protégé” on various training and orientation meeting in Luxemburg. I also intensified my local team office meeting and assigned some specific tasks to various members such as – localization, aftermarket, component quality issues and office accounting. Bill Warren was a frequent visitor and we had many meeting with Vladimir Kadannikov and other senior VAZ Directors.

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, there were also the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Presidential Elections and Boris Yeltsin won with a thin margin of 53.7% of the popular vote versus Gennady Zhuganov (Communist Party Candidate) who received 40.4%. This election was very interesting and historic since the Russian political elite hired American consultants to help with Boris Yeltsin's reelection campaign when his approval rating slipped down to single digits. This is chronicled in a film “Spinning Boris” on which one of Bev’s students from the Bank College worked as a consultant and appears in the closing shots of the film.

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, Bev and Kyra left Togliatti to attend Bev’s 35<sup>th</sup> Elwood High School Class Reunion in early August. I could not go with them because of a whole series of meetings involving the wrap-up of the GM/Delphi/VAZ project and various discussions pertaining to the localization of key components at various Russian de-commissioned military hardware plants in the Volga region.

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, I attended the Moscow Motor show and assisted in our Delphi exhibit. It was there that I first met the representatives from ELAZ and reviewed the possibility of taking on another ISP assignment for the GM Truck Division in Elabuga, Tatarstan which was a town about 500 miles northeast of Togliatti.

I flew to Detroit on August 25<sup>th</sup> to rejoin my family for our 16<sup>th</sup> R&R at the Hilton Suites (our home away from home). After a round of family meetings and updates along with some office business time at the Delphi Headquarters in Flint. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, I was interviewed at the Truck & Bus Headquarters by Tom Stephens, Ron Pniewsky, Barbara Mahone and Carol Kaiser. It went very well and they even offered me a 4<sup>th</sup> annual R&R, which I declined out of modesty (should have accepted...Oh, well)

On September 4<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I flew, (sans Kyra who stayed with her sister, Leanne) to the Old China Hands (OCH) reunion in Las Vegas, which had my old schoolmate Mario Machado as Master of Ceremonies. Mario Machado, was at the Ste Jeanne D’Arc college with me in Shanghai, China, in the 40s he is an 8-time Emmy Award-winning television and radio broadcaster who made television



history when, in 1970, he became the first Chinese-American on-air television news reporter and anchor in Los Angeles and perhaps in the nation. On the big screen, as well, Mario often portrayed a news anchor or reporter, notably as Casey Wong in the three RoboCop films. Among the other notable films in which he plays the reporter are Brian's Song (1971), Oh, God! (1977), The Concorde ... Airport '79 (1979), Rocky III (1982), Scarface (1983), and, St. Elmo's Fire (1985).

The Old China Hands Reunion of 1996 has produced results that are still ongoing. At that event 1,100 former residents of China from all corners of the world gathered at MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas for a reunion that has been called by attendees the biggest and best Old China Hands Reunion. The collection of oral histories of individuals who left China in the 1940's and 50's gathered by Machado, at this event, formed the nucleus of the Old China Hands Archives housed at the Cal State University at Northridge. The University's geography professor Robert Gohstand, who happens to be one of Mario's Shanghai classmates, recognized the importance of saving these stories for posterity, and now heads the oral and video history project at Cal State Northridge where the Old China Hands Archives was inaugurated in 2002.



*Mario Machado and I at the OCH '96 in Las Vegas*

The reunion was great fun and I had an opportunity to see a lot of my old friends from Shanghai and introduce them to Bev. There were some minor confusions as the people were mostly in their late 80s, a little hard of hearing and seeing. Since Mario introduced us as coming from Russia, we were constantly surrounded by sympathetic people telling us how wonderful it was that we were free from Communism. I tried to tell them that we were Americans stationed in Russia but to no avail. There was also an incident when Mario nearly had a heart attack trying to load 1,000 bewildered elderly people on busses by numbers to go to Chinatown for a “Noodles Fest”. Fortunately another one of my old Shanghai friends had his son at the gathering who was a steward on a Cruise Ship, he took matters under control and helped a lot in saving some poor souls from wandering in circles looking for their assigned bus.

We also had a “Tai Chi” exercise, by the pool of the hotel, headed by Nancy Kwan from the “Flower Drum Song” musical and enjoyed doing the “Macarena” with the disoriented but happy guests. The last evening, on September 7<sup>th</sup>, we had a formal dinner at the MGM Grand Hotel where we had our room. It was the same night of the Mike Tyson/Bruce Seldon Boxing Match at the hotel arena. The lobby was closed to the public with Hollywood type velvet cordons, but since we were guests at the hotel we graciously strolled down to our “Gala Dinner” with fans snapping our picture and asking each other who were we! That same night, the Rapper, Shakur was shot four times in a drive-by shooting outside of the hotel. He died six days later of respiratory failure and cardiac arrest at the University Medical Center.

The next night we were off to Detroit and on September 10<sup>th</sup>, we all returned to Russia and Kyra with a look of determination on her face, started Grade 2 at the “Rostok” Grade School in Togliatti as the youngest member of her class. She became the “class mascot” and the older kids watched over her very carefully.

September 15<sup>th</sup>, saw the start of Inter-Volga '96. This one was headed by a very young and energetic new Mayor of Togliatti – Sergei F. Zhilkin. His opening remarks were very dynamic and positive, as he welcomed the participants and guests – ***“Our main wealth are the people of Togliatti who are highly qualified specialists. Other riches of Togliatti include vast scientific potential, modern research and technical developments.”*** There were many opportunities for investment offered, such as Cement products, Construction, Chemical products, Organic fertilizer, Automobile parts and accessories, Purified salt, electronic systems, and many other. Attendance was very good, however investments came more from Europe than the USA. The US participants wanted a quick return on their capital with little faith in Russia’s future, while the Europeans understood the Russian a lot more and started up quite a few Joint Ventures that are in existence still today.

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, I paid my first visit to Elabuga, a small nice quiet city on the right bank of the Kama river. It is of a distance from Kazan of about 210 km and is situated in the North-East of the Tatarstan republic. Elabuga city is very close to Naberezhnye Chelny city and uses its railway station and airport. The population of Elabuga was about 50,000 people and it is an old city - it marked its 1,000-year anniversary in August 2007. But scientists have found many new things underneath the city and moved the data of its formation almost thousand years further back.

The city was very green with much open spaces, and it was the intended, by the former USSR, to build a super-large automotive plant there to produce 3 times the number of vehicles per year than

VAZ or about 2,500,000 cars per year. However they did not get further than layout of the immense ground foundations and installation of a large power plant with a few auxiliary building before the USSR ceased to exist.



*The city of Elabuga on the bank of the Kama River*

In 1995, the Elaz-GM joint venture was set up in Yelabuga, Tatarstan. GM owned 24 percent of the company's shares with the rest split between the Tatarstan and Russian governments. The Tatarstan parliament passed a law creating a free economic zone at the Yelabuga car factory freeing the factory from local and regional tax obligations. Initial assembly was of Blazers from parts delivered from GM's Brazilian factory. The Elaz-GM joint venture produced 1,061 Chevrolet Blazers in 1998, and 1,506 in 1997.

Elaz-GM intended to switch from partial to full assembly of Chevrolet Blazers by 2000, and started working on the purchase of the necessary equipment before it was dis-banded. A Russian produced Chevrolet Blazer was marketed at \$31,500, while its retail price in the US was less than \$15,000. Very profitable for GM, but as usual, very short-ranged. The initial production was nearly entirely bought by the Mafia and government agencies. The price was way beyond the “normal” citizen budget and that, plus the poor management of the project, caused its demise.

But all that was yet to come and I had some good expectations to finally get away from the commercial and “baby-sitting” aspects of my initial assignment into more practical use of my industrial management and factory construction skills.

The 6-hour car trip from Togliatti to Elabuga was exciting and interesting. Not too many of us “foreigners” ventured so far east by car. The roads, when they existed, were, to put it mildly, rather



primitive, mostly unpaved and through isolated villages and farmlands. We did spot an occasional oil derrick – the source of Tatarstan's relative wealth. We only had one minor incident on the road. About 1/3 of the way we were pulled over by a militia man who claimed we missed a non-existent stop sign. After a short conversation between him and our driver, we gained a raggedly dressed evil-smelling passenger with a big bulging sack, who we delegated to drop off at a village slightly off our route in lieu of a traffic violation ticket. We did so and later were informed by the laughing driver, that the passenger was one of the villagers who was sent to replenish their supply of vodka before it ran out.

The visit to Elabuga was brief and involved my meeting with the local Tatar management for mutual introductions and a short tour of the town and production site. All went well with the usual hugs, toasts and dinners. We all got along fine and looked forward to working together, the locals being additionally thrilled that they will finally have an American with whom they can communicate without the delay of interpretation. We only stayed for a couple of hours before driving 6-hours back.

On my return to Togliatti, I was informed by my enthusiastic family of ladies that we had an addition to the family.



*New kitten "Tasha" (Cat from Hell per our Housekeeper) joins the family– October 17, 1996*



While Bev was picking up Kyra from her school, she heard a loud “Meauw” and after looking closely at the early snowfall, she saw a little black kitten looking at her. With minimal fuss the kitten jumped into her van and was instantly adopted into our clan by Kyra. Our housekeeper and Dimmy were horrified, especially as the kitten was extremely adventurous and loved climbing on curtains, dressers and artificial plants that we had in the house, causing some breakage of glassware and pottery. The housekeeper nicknamed her – “the Cat from Hell”, but loved her nevertheless as much as we did. It took Dimmy longer to accept her but as the kitten grew bigger she finally learned to tolerate her.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, we went on our 17<sup>th</sup> R&R starting with a Rhine River Cruise which included a tour of Heidelberg and culminated in week’s visit to Club Med – Coral Beach in Israel. The club was great and we had some of the best snorkeling to-date at Eilat in the Red Sea. There were large quantities of brightly colored fish and coral reefs. We returned on the 16<sup>th</sup> to Frankfurt to be greeted by armed personnel carriers accompanying our aircraft on landing at a secluded tarmac and having our luggage unloaded right there surrounded by a circle of armed militia in full battle gear and holding automatic weapons. This was enough for us to discourage any future trips to Israel!

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, we came home to Detroit where I had meetings with Delphi and GM Truck management for the official transfer of my ISP status between these two GM Divisions. The result was that I would start my new assignment as the official on-site representative of the GM Truck Product Engineering Department, reporting to the Truck Engineering Center in Pontiac as of January 1, 1997.

After a slew of medicals, physicals, pediatrics, dental and vision tests, we were pronounced fit for our new assignment and on December 26<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup>, we visited San Francisco. There we made the usual rounds of Chinese restaurants with Andre and some of my long-time Shanghai friends, paid our respects at Semon Ivanovitch’s grave in the Serbian Cemetery and did a little tourism such as the San Francisco Zoo, Fisherman’s Wharf and Chinatown.

This transfer, as became apparent later, was very beneficial to me. Unbeknown at that time, at least to most of us, Delphi would officially separate from GM and eventually go bankrupt in the year 2000, with severe repercussions to their employees and retirees. They would lose a significant amount of their pensions and all of their medical benefits. I “lucked out” by returning to General Motors and not losing any of my seniority or pay level – “Guardian Angel” again???

In January of 1997, members of the GM/Opel Security Staff visited the GM Moscow office and some of the residences of the American expatriates based there. Their findings were listed in a report on February 14<sup>th</sup>, as follows –

- Trains cannot be recommended as safe modes of travel as foreigners are pointed out to criminals as potential targets. (We were using them constantly with never any problems)
- Every ISP should be assigned a driver so that communications, in particular in the case of an accident, or other contact with the police can be avoided. (We did have a driver who became like a family member, and our relationship with the local police force was excellent and friendly)

We were on Home Leave at that time so our Togliatti residence was not “checked out” but the Delphi office was and, since the occupants were all Russians, only got a very superficial inspection.

## **Insert**

### **To Chapter XVII –Our Togliatti Adventure**

- Air flight in Russia with happy passengers standing in the aisle loaded with bags of liquor, cigarettes and products from abroad.
- Negotiations – like crumpling a sheet of cellophane paper. Veins bulging at neck with red face.
- Sept 25, 93 - Letter from Vice President Al Gore
- Zhilkin assassination ~ Page 266

## Chapter XVIII – Our Elabuga, Tatarstan assignment (1997 to 1999)

**“The man who’s drunk the water knows if it’s cool or warm.” – Zen saying**

As one may notice, this “bio” has a lot of dates pertaining to various events and happenings, this is due to my early habit of faithfully using annual pocket-sized “Monthly & Weekly Planners” where I kept an updated record of coming events, meetings, birthdays and other significant happenings.

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, we were back in Togliatti, ready to take on my new assignment with the GM Truck Division. My new responsibilities were as follows –

1. Set-up a Product Engineering office, with local employees at the Elabuga Assembly plant
2. Develop a local Engineering Parts List for the identification of replacement parts that were required for the Blazer assembly of the GMB and NAO vehicles.
3. Initiate an “Engineering Library” for product drawings and specifications at the facilities.
4. Introduce an Engineering Changes Documentation Flow procedure, compatible to the NAO process for the GMB vehicles.
5. Obtain a complete set of NAO Truck Product Assembly Documents (PAD's) to serve as instructions and guidelines for the assembly operations of NAO and GMB vehicles.
6. Coordinate the provision of a Parts Catalog and a Parts Imager set-up at the Elabuga site for the rapid ordering of replacement parts and “crippled” vehicle reduction.
7. Coordinate and supervise the attainment of Vehicle Type Approvals and their extensions for the GMB and NAO Blazers. Maintain copies of all the homologation certificates at the Elabuga Product Engineering office.
8. Outline to the local management group, the GM discipline requirements for the localization process so that the proper steps can be followed in locating potential local suppliers.
9. Initiate a Quality Control department and develop the introduction of Inspection tickets for regular quality checks at three major phases of vehicle assembly – Railhead Receiving, Final Buy-off after assembly and Pre-Delivery to Customers.
10. Assist the local Service Team by working with the NAO Vehicle Technical Assistance Team on field problems that are encountered on NAO and GMB vehicles

Initially, I loved this new assignment as it enabled me to do what I loved best – work with people on a personal level to assemble vehicles of good quality in an efficient manner. The local workers, engineers and supervisors recognized my expertise and were very eager to benefit from it and we had a rudimentary assembly operation comprising 3 stations turning out over 20 completed high quality units per day in a very short period of time.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> we celebrated Kyra’s 8<sup>th</sup> birthday at Bev’s friend’s home with a simple 2 family gathering. Olga Ignatieva had three sons, the youngest just a year older than Kyra and we had a very pleasant warm evening. Bev was fully occupied with her classes at the Bank College and her responsibility as the Director of the newly formed Togliatti Russian/American Cultural Center (TRACC).

The next day, I was off to visit GM of Brazil with my new boss. It was an emotional trip for me since GMB was where I started my career with GM back in 1960, thirty seven years ago. We arrived on a beautiful sunny day and after a modest dinner at the hotel, retired for the night in anticipation of our visit to the GMB facilities in Sao Caetano. The visit went well and I am sure I aggravated my boss with my knowledge of Portuguese and easy manner with our Brazilian colleagues. After the meeting, in the hotel

he asked me – “You don’t really respect me, do you?” to which I replied “No, I don’t”. That weekend I left him in Sao Paulo, to be dined by the local management, while I flew to Rio de Janeiro to visit my aunt Valia, my mother’s older sister, whom I have not seen in 35 years.



*My Aunt Valentina Golitzina and her friend Stanislas – Rio de Janeiro 1997*

On my return to Sao Paulo, my boss and I took a short trip to see the Cordoba plant in Argentina where the “Brazilian” Blazers were being assembled and on our return he departed back to the USA, leaving me to wrap up the visit. I took this opportunity to see a couple of my old Shanghai buddies whom I haven’t seen since 1960, enjoyed some wonderful local meals that I missed for many years like “Feijoada” made from a pig’s head and black beans and “Camarao a Greco” – large prawns roasted over a grill with garlic sauce and butter.

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, I was home – one day late for the International Women’s Day holiday. However I did catch the performance of “Romeo & Juliet” at the Koleso Theater in Togliatti. This performance was very well done, with Juliet’s Capulet family played by the local Russian actors with spoken parts in Russian and Romeo’s Montague family played by a visiting American group from the Texas Christian University, speaking their parts in English. It was spectacular and the “brain child” of the wonderful director of the Koleso group, Gleb Drosdov, who became a close friend and we visited his theatre often as well as have him and his lovely wife, Natasha, who was an nationally acknowledged star performer, over to our place for dinner and/or tea.



On March 20<sup>th</sup>, we departed for our 1<sup>st</sup> R&R of this new assignment to see the “Phantom of the Opera” in Toronto, Canada and spend some time with our family and relatives in the Detroit area.

In April, after many searches it became apparent that there would be many difficulties in obtaining adequate housing for us and schooling for Kyra. Relocation from Togliatti to Elabuga was put on hold and, starting on April 8<sup>th</sup>, I commuted every week on hazardous roads, every Monday morning at around 5 am for a 7-hour car trip with a driver to Elabuga, returning each Friday by 7 pm in the evening. I did that for 3 years, working 14-hour days in Elabuga and seeing my family on weekends (of which at least 12 hours were spent on work/assignment related activities such as report writing and operational planning), holidays and R&Rs. I covered approximately 40,000 miles of travel by car per year during that period.

Russia is known for her bad roads, and the winter doesn't improve the things. Also, there is a lot of empty no-planted ground, and in the rain or snow it turns into deep mud. The snow and mud bogged down the Napoleon and Nazi armies in their attempted invasion of Russia. It reminds me of the 19th-century proverb: "The only thing Russia has in abundance is idiots and bad roads". Because of this, all ISP's should have an assigned driver to avoid direct encounters with local highway police (GAI) for violation of speed limits and other traffic infractions. Road and highway visibility, particularly in winter was very bad, local pedestrians wore dark clothing and were not “traffic conscious”, most ISP's do not speak or read Russian. Snow removal was sporadic and vehicles often travel at hazardous speeds. This resulted in an unacceptably high risk for the expatriates versus the relatively lower cost of having additional “pool and/ISP-assigned” local professional drivers.



*Kama River Heavy Trucks Manufacturing Plant (KAMAZ)*

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1997, in line with our intent to fully manufacture the Brazilian 4.3L Blazer Van in Elabuga, we went on a tour of the Kama River Manufacturing Plant (KAMAZ) for the possibility of future sheet metal stampings for the metal bodies. Back in 1973, when I first transferred to the GM Overseas Operations, GM was bidding on the construction and equipment of this plant under the name of the “Greenfield Project”. It was a “turn key” proposal for the supervision of the construction and the installation of plant facilities. This was in response to the Soviet request for a proposal that would enable them to build 70,000 Heavy-Duty Trucks per year. Since this would require a large GM overseas manpower commitment that would be necessary to supervise the construction and installation of the Soviet plant facilities as well as the tryout of equipment and tools, the GM Finance committee backed off and offered a counter proposal called “Project Alpha” in which there would be no “turn key” or involvement with plant facilities and all of the technical and supervisory training would be done in the US.

This proposition was considered as an opportunity for GM to penetrate a major market which would materially assist the sale and licensing of other GM products such as earthmoving equipment, locomotives and air conditioners. On the negative side, implementation of this proposal would result in the export of GM technology. After a year of negotiating, the USSR finally gave the contract to the Italian company FIAT as a “turn key” contract.

Our tour of KAMAZ press facilities took a few hours and the rest of the day was devoted to “winning and dining” which was customary for those type of occasions.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, GM of Brazil sent a Senior Product Engineer to give a formal presentation of the documentation and process requirements to officially launch the localization process and on June 10<sup>th</sup>, I formally set up a Product Engineering office at the Elabuga site, with one local employee. The office included an “Engineering Library” containing over 400 product drawings with specifications which covered about 30% of the parts that were scheduled for eventual local manufacturing. Shortly after, I also initiated a Quality Control department with another local employee as shipments were averaging 50% with defective and/or wrongly shipped parts.

By then we had already been audited twice by the Russian authorities to attest our compliance with Vehicle Type Approval (VTA) and received a good rating on both occasions. We received from the GM Truck Group two videotapes - “Global Delivery Survey” and the “NAO C.A.R.E. Common process”, which enabled the initiation of a regular Quality Audit procedure and function at the Elabuga site. In this manner, I contributed on the improvement of the quality of parts that were being shipped by GM of Brazil.

To fill a vacuum of responsibility, I also coordinated and assisted in the initial acceleration to attain a consistent Blazer assembly level of 21 units per day with 23 operators on a regular 8-hour shift. I got mildly criticized by my boss for this, since as a Product Engineering representative, I was not supposed to meddle in Manufacturing, even though it was evident that they needed help and direction. In addition to this, I assisted in the clarification of individual job responsibilities and disciplines in the assembly effort such as Industrial engineering, portable power tool care, salvage, and other required functions of an assembly operation.

Local criminal organizations, coordinated from Moscow and associated with Chechen gangs, were trying to infiltrate its members into the EGM manufacturing process for obtaining information on -

- Methods and scope of service parts and component deliveries.



- Planned routes and transportation.
- Re-serializing of auto bodies and components.
- Influx of workers to Elabuga for the pending CKD operations.

All for the purpose of gaining control of the movements of highly lucrative foreign-made automotive parts for the burgeoning black market.

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, we were off on our 2<sup>nd</sup> R&R to Club Med in Bali this time for 2 weeks. My new boss threw a fit until I pointed out to him the clause in my contract. Bali was the best R&R that we had, the natives were very hospitable and good-humored, they explained to us that they were Hindus and believed in reincarnation, the form of their return depended on how they treated all living creatures in this life. The scenery was also spectacular and we enjoyed the beautiful beaches, the snorkeling and white water rafting. Kyra also loved her rides on a baby elephant and horseback in the surf. I also “shone” in my lip-sing role as Danny in a scene from “Grease” in an amateur performance with great professional special effects.



*Peace to Everyone.....Hmmmm!*

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, we were back in Togliatti and Bev was fully occupied with "Camp America III", which was scheduled to start on July 10<sup>th</sup> at the Bank College Red Sails Summer Camp area. I was continuing on my weekly commute to Elabuga and prepared a 1-hour video screening of my travels to serve as a “Russia Assignment 101” course. It was extremely educational for me to observe all the

little bits and pieces of normal life in the rural areas of Russia and Tatarstan. I was particularly impressed by the hardiness and determination of the Russian truckers, on one occasion; we passed a lone trucker working on his engine. He had the engine out of the truck on a rigged stand and was meticulously cleaning out the pistons, valves and crankshaft. We passed him twice a week and each time observed his progress. As there were no gas stations or service centers for miles each way, he relied on his own tools, skill and an occasional assist by another trucker passing by. The rules of the road were that ALL truckers help one another if asked. In a little over a month he was done and on the road again.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1997, GM admitted that one of the most common concerns of its employees, when considering an international assignment, was an “out of sight, out of mind” fear that their careers might be put on hold or that they would be “out of the loop” while on an international assignment. In this regard a “Mentoring Process” was announced by the GM Truck Division, to assure the employees that someone back home was looking out for their career and keeping them “in the loop” on organizational changes and technology. A Mentor was selected for each ISP. He or she had to be an executive, at least two levels above the ISP, as well as a leader who possessed the necessary experience to coach and counsel others on career development and problem resolution. My mentor was the Director of Global Integration and was my boss’s boss. This did not make my boss happy, but I was very pleased as I had a pretty poor opinion of his capabilities and direction.

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, I was informed that our Moscow Sales Office accepted an order for 50 Blazers for the Police Department and we were requested to revise some of the North American sourced 4.3L units that we had in Elabuga to include overhead “police flashing lights”, siren and other features of a police car. After checking with our Product Engineering department in Detroit, I told the Moscow personnel that this was not possible as the “police car” option was only available on the Yukon model which had a heavier frame, specialized wiring provisions and the proper apertures on the roof for the lighting. Reworking the Blazer model for this purpose would result in claims and warranty disputes which would not be good for GM at this early stage of operations.

This brought more pressure on me as much money was involved but I stayed firm and would not give my authorization. I did not hear anymore about this but made some enemies in our Moscow office. This was an ongoing problem in my relationship with our Moscow Branch Office, since they persisted in directly purchasing materials, and replacement service parts with limited or no consultation with our Elabuga Branch Logistics and Custom Clearance. This resulted in lengthy and costly clearance activities. Most of our ISP’s in the Moscow Branch have not been exposed to a “Russian Cultural Seminar” for a basic understanding of the subtle and not readily observable cultural differences and some understanding of Russian/Soviet labor laws.

One of the ISP senior staff members even tried to compromise me by inviting me to small cosy parties that he would hold in his quarters at the “Hotel California” in Elabuga with much liquor and friendly female companions. I would attend but not participate, he even offered me a promotion if I would “play his game” to which I did not respond. He was a likeable person, very friendly and lively, but also very crafty and self-promoting. He had an antique shop in the US and was consistently purchasing and shipping large furniture antiques, using GM transportation, to his home.



On July 28<sup>th</sup>, using my prerogative as “Chief Engineer” on the Elabuga site, I assigned to myself one of the newly assembled North American Blazer as my ISP vehicle. Our executive director was extremely upset but I stuck to my guns and prevailed. After all, I was the appropriate person to put it to a real road test during my long commute. This did not enhance my popularity with him either.

At the end of July, we all returned to Detroit, where I had a series of business meetings and update reporting. On the way we stopped over in Frankfurt, Germany and met an old friend of mine from Shanghai, who drove up from Koln and had a Chinese dinner at the airport. On arrival in Detroit, we registered in our favorite hotel – the Hilton Suites in Auburn Hills where we met most of our family.

On this trip, I also met my ISP “mentor”. This was a new program where GM assigned a senior executive to be a counselor for each ISP’s that was assigned in “difficult” areas. After some initial “get-to-know” contacts, I revealed to my mentor some of the bottlenecks of my assignment –

- Non existence of a functioning Management Team. “Turf Wars”, position seeking, destructive uncooperative behavior between senior management personnel with much adverse influence on local employees who look at the senior expatriate team as role setters.
- Unclear and non-existent definition of Roles and Responsibilities for key departments and their heads. This resulted in much duplication of activity, contradiction on directions and confusion of the local employees.
- Tensions between the ELABUGA site and the MOSCOW office personnel, primarily due to the above two items as well as the lack of exposure to cultural differences training prior to coming on this assignment.
- Very poor relations with our “senior” partner ELAZ resulting in exceedingly limited use of readily available services such as - Building Maintenance, Portable Power Tool care, Industrial Engineering support, Plant and Fire Protection, etc. Need to recognize that the RIGHT Russian partner will know more about indigenous markets, suppliers, networks and ministries, regulations and cultural patterns than a Western manager could learn in years on the job.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, I left my ladies at the Hilton Suites and flew for a week’s business trip to Elabuga, for meetings with GM Brasil and Opel personnel. I returned to Detroit on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and Bev, Kyra and I went on a short vacation to Phoenix and Sedona, Arizona. We visited Tom and Phyllis Day, where Kyra was given an opportunity to drive a golf cart with near disastrous results that were prevented by Tom’s quick reflexes. Then we proceeded to visit our nephews Kevin and Scott in Flagstaff and spend some time with Kevin his wife, Maureen and their 2 children, Brendan, and baby Isabella and Scott with his daughter Alyssa.

Finally proceeding to our main task of looking at the possible purchase of a “retirement” home for our return from our ISP assignment. We found a beautiful 2,700 square foot home overlooking the “Chapel of the Holy Cross” nestled in the red rocks of a mesa.

The view was gorgeous and the house had a large sweeping balcony from which one could absorb the beauty of the surrounding red rock mesas. There were 3 bed rooms and 2 ½ bathrooms with a possible addition of 3 more bed rooms on the lower level, a great room with a vaulted ceiling and a small back yard with sufficient space to put in a small swimming pool if we so desired at a later date. There was a large open space in front of the house, which was on a sloping hill, with a broad panorama of the beauties of Sedona before us.

We loved it and signed the purchase papers with the real estate agent shortly after seeing it.



*Sketch of our new home at 1000 Lee Road, Sedona AZ*

We returned home to Togliatti by the end of August, just in time for Kyra to start her second grade at Rostok. In Elabuga, I gained a new neighbor across the hall from my temporary residence at “Hotel California”, a KGB Colonel. He was a very pleasantly social man and we would often meet in the dining room for dinner with the usual exchange of pleasantries.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, I sent a car for Bev and Kyra who arrived for the weekend to check out Elabuga and the adjoining city of Naberezhni Chelny. The visit was nice but they were not too impressed and we all returned to Togliatti that Sunday.

October was a very busy month with many meetings in Elabuga, relative to the initiation of the possible assembly of the Opel Vectra sedan in Elabuga. Initial layouts were made and the existing buildings were checked for possible locations. The major starting point was the design, purchase and installation of a high quality Paint Shop with the spray booths and attaching paint curing ovens. The bidding was between two well established paint equipment suppliers, one German and one Italian. As a Product Engineering representative, I had very limited input although I have worked for many years at the GM Fremont plant as a Plant Project Engineer specializing in the Paint Shop which included specifying, purchasing and overseeing the installation and proper operation of paint booths, manual and robotic paint spraying, delivery systems and curing ovens.

In early October, we also received a major fright. One afternoon, just prior to Bev coming to pick up Kyra at her grade school, a couple of well-dressed Russian women and a man showed up in the classroom and told the teacher that they were requested by me to pick up Kyra as Beverly had a

medical appointment. They offered Kyra a “Snickers” chocolate bar to get into their car. Fortunately, Kyra got very suspicious and refused while the teacher being cautious, told them they would have to get authority from the head mistress and told them to go to her office. They never showed up there but quickly left the premises. After that we were extra careful to show up well before class closing time and the school security was put on high alert. This was a rather unusual occurrence because Russians are generally very good and caring with their children, but “western crime movies” have become very prevalent and someone must have seen the popular movie “Ransom” and got some twisted ideas to make money.

October was also a traumatic month for our newly adopted young cat, Tasha. She reached maturity and required to be neutered so on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month, we had a local veterinarian perform the 3-hour surgery on our kitchen table with head nurse Beverly assisting. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Kyra’s school had their annual performance with the teachers and students participating in various skits, dances and poetry recitals. It was very well done and highly entertaining. It was always an amazement to us that all the props, decorations and attractive paintings and artifacts in the school was hand-made by the teachers and students. Russian grade schools are delightful to visit with their brightly colored curtains, walls and woodwork. Kyra’s school also had a small animal farm with rabbits, turtles, white mice and a hedgehog.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, we came back to the US for an R&R and Office visits, including a “Mentoring Session” for me. We also took this opportunity for me to fly to visit with Nina Andreevna and Andrei in San Francisco at the time Elena Andreevna was there too. Bev and Kyra visited Houghton Lake with Mom and Dad as well as spent some time with Leanne and the Days. On my return I flew to Linden NJ, to tour the plant where our NAO Blazers were assembled and then “disassembled” for shipment to Elabuga.

The way this worked was as follows – GM in order to evade paying the Russian Duty Tax for importing completed vehicle to Russia, partially disassembled the Blazers by removing the Doors, Seats, Roof Paneling, Front and Rear Bumpers, Headlights and Taillights and Windshield Wipers. The vehicles had to be “driveable” in order to load them on the transporting trucks and the ship, so a temporary wooden stool was provided for the driver. The removed items were packed in accompanying cartons packed into the respective vehicle. Thus our assembly plant in Elabuga was called SUP (-) Assembly.

An attending problem to this process was that the vehicles, because of the ocean shipment, across the Atlantic Ocean, had to be heavily sprayed with wax against corrosion by the sea salt. This caused some difficulty on the Elabuga site to remove this wax. Our dauntless Moscow Service representative came to the rescue by purchasing some de-waxer equipment for \$ 5,000 without any consultation and/or involvement of the Elabuga Operations personnel. The result was that no one at the site knew how to use it or could obtain the proper solutions that the equipment required. This specific person was a “good ole boy” from the old school of Russia-haters and constantly went out of his way to insult or demean the local personnel at the Elabuga site whenever they complained about the wrong service parts that he was saddling them with.

Also during this visit to the US, I was invited, accepted and gave my 1<sup>st</sup> lecture to a graduating class of MBAs from the University of Michigan on Russia and business climate and opportunities there.

This was a class that was taught by a professor who was an old friend of ours and interacted with us on the “Sister City” program between Togliatti and Flint.

We returned to Russia on November 16<sup>th</sup>, just in time to attend a wedding reception of our British Financial Director at Elabuga and his young Russian bride who was 15 years his junior. The GM guests were flown in from Moscow on a private jet for US \$25,000 of Company expense! At the same time my new Executive Regional Director in Moscow was complaining that my R&R were too expensive and unnecessary. He was doing his utmost to have them cancelled as the rest of his American staff, who were residing in luxurious mansions in Moscow only had one R&R per year and were very envious of our allotment of three per year.

This resulted in me having a “Nose to Nose” discussion with him in the hotel bar, where I pointed out to him the long hours that I spent each week while I was in Elabuga, the hazards of my 7 hour car rides each way to Elabuga and back, the necessity of quality family life and my contributions to him attaining a vehicle daily assembly level well beyond his expectations. Nobody ever talked to him this way before and he backed down and never approached this issue with me again. He and other members of the senior GM management, appeared in Elabuga rarely since access to Elabuga was very laborious. International flights were limited to Kazan by Lufthansa twice weekly and between Nizhnekamsk and Moscow twice daily on a local airline that was cleared only recently by the GM Legal Staff due to the erratic and hazardous behavior of the local pilots. Trains only came to Kazan from Moscow and the Kazan to Elabuga car drive was 3 hour along a highway heavily used by trucks and very hazardous in winter due to shifting drifts of snow, poor visibility and frequent blizzards.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, Kyra started having weekly Russian tutoring lessons with one of Bev’s students. This went very well and greatly helped Kyra to get a firm grasp of Russian as well as gained us a life-long friend. The year culminated with me having dinner with our GM/Elabuga team at a fancy restaurant in Naberezhny Chelny called “Ocean”. A good lesson for me was to never order a beef steak at a fish food restaurant. Our guest of the evening was a Senior Auditor from the GM Financial Staff at Detroit and all efforts were made to impress her with our operation and staff which was receiving more scrutiny as the project progressed in expenditures. I was seated across from this important lady, and in my usual light manner started to tell a joke to “lighten-up” the tension. I was half way through the joke when I realized that it had a “racial” punchline. The lady auditor happened to be an Afro-American. It was too late to stop and I concluded getting a gracious smile from her. The Executive Director who was sitting at the head of the table nearly choked on his fish.

We arrived in Detroit for our annual Home Leave on Christmas Day and after the holidays had our usual annual physical medical checkups including dental, vision, hearing and pediatrics for Kyra. On January 10<sup>th</sup> of 1998, we were on our way to our next vacation at Club Med - Rio das Pedras in Brazil just 80 miles west of Rio de Janeiro, where we spent 2 wonderful sunny weeks on the sandy beach.

We also had an opportunity on this visit to meet with Aunt Valia and Stanislav by taking a 1 ½ hour taxi ride to Rio de Janeiro. We had a very nice visit and one of Aunt Valia’s former pupils in the Russian language, a gracious Brazilian lady, Edif, gave us a tour of the area, giving me an opportunity to visit some of the areas that I frequented as a teenager years before. We also visited the gorgeous, white sand beach of Copacabana, which was just a short walk from Aunt Valia’s apartment and where many years earlier, I and my friends made fools of ourselves as described in



my earlier chapter of my youthful, prankish days in this “marvelous” city. We all enjoyed our stay and Aunt Valia could not stop expressing to me how much she liked Bev and Kyra, and how pleased she was to finally get to know them.



*Enjoying our vacation at Club Med – Rio das Pedras, January 1998*

She worried a lot about me since she was a very regular correspondent with my mother and had all the news about my drinking and erratic behavior of those days. She was particularly concerned when Mom passed away and I was not able to answer her Russian letters to me mainly because I could not (and still cannot) decipher her scrawling handwriting. She was a wonderful, warm-hearted person and had the “coolest” head in our disruptive and often dysfunctional family.



*Aunt Valia, Bev and Stanislav at their home on Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro in 1998*

During our visit we also had some Brazilian barbeque on the fabulous Copacabana Beach and took some short walks in the area. Aunt Valia and I reminisced a lot about my Mom, whom Aunt Valia loved very much and missed her positive encouraging letters during difficult times. Sadly this was the last time that we saw her and Stanislav, as both of them passed away in the following year within a few months of each other.

On January 27<sup>th</sup>, of 1998, we were in Togliatti with 5 pieces of luggage misplaced and delayed in Frankfurt. The next morning I was off to Elabuga from a wonderful 2 weeks of 90 degrees weather to a minus 40 below zero winter in Tatarstan! Last year, due to a delay in the Brazilian assembly of Blazers that were acceptable to the Russian Vehicle Standards (VTA), we started our SUP (-) re-assembly at Elabuga with North American (NAO) assembled vehicles. Our on-site problems were mainly due to broken studs on the inner door panels and trim. Our expatriate Production manager wanted to use double-backed sticky tape, but I refused to allow that, using my Product Engineer's authority to preserve GM's Quality standards and reputation. This caused some lost sales and did not improve my popularity with the Moscow Office.

The arrival of the Brazilian- built Blazers brought other headaches. All of the batteries froze over and had to be scrapped since 40 below zero was unheard of in Brazil. Additionally many of the radiators suffered damage since the Brazilian anti-freeze was inadequate. The poor Brazilian team that arrived on January 29<sup>th</sup>, to correct these problems, some of them lugging batteries in their luggage, were also poorly prepared for this weather. A few of them trained prior to this trip by going to Brazil's highest mountains at the Mantiqueira Range, where there were peaks over 9,000 feet elevation, to harden themselves to the Russian winter. They had to stop over in Germany to buy winter clothing since none were available in Brazil.

They were a likable bunch, happy and mischievous in a nice way. They were ecstatic when they discovered that I spoke Portuguese and still remember the wonderful days of my youth in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. One of them also spoke Russian, since his parents were also born in Harbin like I. I took them in "my protective custody" and watched over them so that they were not mistreated by the "rigidly formal" German Production manager who hated all Russians and other foreigners who he felt were below his level.

Our operational base in Elabuga, for the 1<sup>st</sup> couple of years, was a small western-built hotel, nicknamed "Hotel California" by our American Personnel manager. It was the scene of much heavy drinking and partying between meetings on weekends, when fortunately, I was home in Togliatti with my family. Some of the ISP's would also take overnight trips to Germany and Poland with their young Russian translator/secretaries. There was some attempt to involve me, but I did not "bite", so after a while they left me alone. Later that year, our Moscow Directorate, re-furbished some apartments in the neighboring town of Naberezhni Chelny, where there were more restaurants, shopping and night entertainment. Much of the upgrading work was done by local contractors and paid for by assembled Blazers.

The ISP group at the EGM program was quite an assortment of individuals. The "Head Honcho" was an egotistical executive who once shared the office with GM's current President and would not forget his "days of glory", frequently reminding the rest of us of his "buddy Jack Smith". The Financial Director was a Brit who was hired through a local recruitment effort, he had an eye for the local young pretty ladies

and did some “creative accounting” with the barter of our assembled vehicles. The Personnel Director had an antique store in the US and devoted substantial time to locating and purchasing antique Russian furniture and artifacts, some quite large and bulky, and shipping them home to the US at GM's expense. He also had an eye for the ladies since his wife stayed in the US for the entire duration of his assignment. The Traffic Manager was a “good old boy” from the US. He hated the Russians and was always very rude and confrontational with them when they pointed out to him the short and bad supply of needed parts and accessories. The Production Manager was a German from Opel, who also considered the Russians and Tatars as “an inferior race” and treated them accordingly. The entire group loved partying with heavy drinking and our “Mafia” clients supplied a lot of that as well as free access to the Moscow casinos.

The only good contributor was the Sales Director, who was a young ROTC Army Captain, fluent in Russian which he learned at the Defense Foreign Language Center, located on the Presidio of Monterey, in Monterey CA. He was genuinely liked by the Russians and did a lot of good for the program.

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998, I had a “One-on-one” with the “Head Honcho”, where he did some “venting” on the state of affairs at the Elabuga site. He again broached my weekly commute by saying that it was “unacceptable” to him. My response was that I have been willing and actively pursuing the relocation of my family to Elabuga since March of last year. Presently our minor daughter needed to finish her school term and this would occur at the end of May this year. In the interim, I would not leave my family alone in Togliatti on weekends, I was in constant communication with all the EGM, Moscow, and Detroit Staff by “Voice Messages” and never left the site without concrete, specific and detailed instructions and updates on any actions required to all of the responsible parties.

He conveniently ignored the fact, that only a few months earlier, amazed at the quantity of vehicles that were assembled daily at Elabuga, he personally complemented me on my contribution. As is, I already was causing some “raised eyebrows” at my Head Office in GM Truck for my participation in “non-product engineering” work at the site such as material procurement, tracking shipments through the Russian Customs and supervising the Blazer assembly activities. This situation put me squarely in the middle of a “power struggle” between the GM Truck Division and the International Product Organization.

He was also irritated that I chose to go on a vacation with my family during a visit by two very high ranking GM executives. He was embarrassed by my absence since he had very little knowledge of the facts and figures of the operation and could not fully answer their questions.

That winter, I also had a “heated” conversation with the Production manager for irresponsibly sending the Brazilians “home” to the hotel in Elabuga one night in a blizzard. Our assembly operation was located about 20 miles from the small town across an open expanse of field and concrete foundation slab with absolutely no lighting anywhere. Fortunately I was behind the Brazilians and saw their car lights as they veered off into the wrong direction, they were lightly dressed and had no blankets or provisions in their vehicle. With some effort my driver caught up with them and we led them to the safety of the hotel.

Winters were very severe in Elabuga with frequent blizzards and very heavy snowfall. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, on my return to Togliatti, I ran into one of these severe snowstorms. We made it to the Bugulma region, before we got seriously bogged down. We were part of a convoy of truckers and smugglers



who were using a “borrowed” government snow plow/tractor to open the road. After the snowplow got stuck in the snow and the driver disappeared, things got a little “testy”, when we saw a few of the irate drivers stumbling around with an open bottle of vodka in one hand and a loaded AK-47 in the other, we decided it was time to make ourselves scarce. This was when my respect for the NAO 4-wheel SUP really rose and I discovered the wonderful driving skills of my driver, Zhenia, who was a former Test Driver for the Elaz company. We made it back to Elabuga over open fields and snow banks through heavy shifting snow by 4:30 the next morning.

I got back to Togliatti on the following Wednesday and boarded the train the next afternoon for a visit in Moscow to the US Consulate there to notarize a document for the sale of our Birch Terrace condominium in Fremont, CA. The same day I boarded the train for a return to Togliatti and my family. Following that the next day at noon, I was on my way back to Elabuga for a board meeting between our GM Director and our partners from ELAZ (Elabuga Automotive Works) on the awarding of the contract for our new Paint Shop Facilities.



*“American” Tarzan looking for Jane*



I was back in Togliatti on the 20<sup>th</sup> and we were off as a family again on our R&R to Club Med in Phuket, Thailand. Another fabulous location in Kata Bay, south of Phuket Island, the Club Med Resort stretched out under palm trees caressed by the breeze. Bungalows, built in the style of the local “long-houses” and decorated with teak, silk and marble, refined a Zen spirit in this idyllic garden where one could practice yoga beneath the frangipani trees. A warm and clear sea opened up its underwater depths, filled with colorful fish and abundant flora. Here, we found tranquility and discovered aspects of the Thai culture.

We spent 2 gorgeous weeks here and celebrated our 12<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, visited the colorful, bustling Thai markets, snorkeled in the crystal clear Indian Ocean, visited “Bond Island” on Phans Nga Bay, took elephant and water buffalo rides, played miniature golf in “Dino Park”, toured the lush jungle by jeep and on foot, took canoe trips to native villages and even had me in an amateur stage show as an “American” Tarzan. Did I mention wonderful “full body” massages on the beach? We finally parted with deep regrets, promising to return again to this earthly paradise. Little did we anticipate the tsunami of December 2004 that hit the Patong Beach close to Pukhet and its horrendous loss of life.

On our return to Frankfurt, on April 4<sup>th</sup>, we re-located our 5 pieces of lost luggage and had it shipped separately to Samara. On arrival home, I also discovered that our expatriate Financial Director was fired on March 29<sup>th</sup> for the misappropriation of funds.

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, while at work in Elabuga, I received a surprise telephone call from an old Shanghai friend of mine. In 1952, we parted ways when I left for the West to the USA via Hong Kong and Brazil, he was reluctantly emigrated North to the USSR by his stepfather, who was a dedicated Communist and Russian patriot. We were both very pleased in finding each other and chatted for a while on the telephone and exchanged addresses for a resumption of correspondence. He located me through another mutual friend who visited him in Yekaterinburg and told him of our encounter at the “Old China Hand” reunion in Las Vegas. Years later, in 2002, he and his wife came over to visit us for 3 months and we drove across the US visiting scenic sites and old Shanghai friends. The highlights of that trip are detailed in Chapter XX.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, noting the US interest in the expansion of business relations with Russia, as evidenced by the visits of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore on separate occasions, I wrote to Vice President Gore on May 6<sup>th</sup> -

***Extract from my letter to Vice President Al Gore***

Like Americans, Russians are a proud and intelligent people. They are multi-national, gregarious and friendly. However, to the average Russian our free market economy is not easily understood and the initial warmth, hope and euphoria felt towards Americans at the onset of Russia’s entry to a market economy have gradually shifted to a cautious reality. Much of this attitude is rooted in disappointment and fear for the future and will be dispelled, when meaningful employment is provided.

Unemployment is a major source of crime, family breakdown and other social ills. It also provides a major breeding ground for demagogues and proponents to return to the past. For these reasons our continued efforts are urgently needed in Russia now.

A better understanding of Russians can only be attained by actual “long-term” on site exposure. Seven years of working and residing with my family in Russia, has afforded me an opportunity for personal growth and understanding in a number of areas including:

1. The Russian business mentality
2. Reality of the Russian life today
3. Honing of my fluency in oral and written Russian.
4. Russian history and cultural differences.
5. A view of the “larger picture” in terms of our concerns for the future of the American democracy and the role that America will play in the expanding global economy.

To which he replied on June 29<sup>th</sup> -

***Extract from Vice President Gore’s response***

I am confident that you would be an asset to efforts, and I will retain your correspondence and background material in the event that we need to get in touch with you in the future. Your participation is welcome, and I hope that you will not hesitate to continue to pass along any ideas, suggestions, or comments that you might have.

However, that was the end of it – never heard any more from him or his representatives. Oh, well....I tried.



*Lydia Maximovna and her sister singing “Chestushki”*

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, we were invited to participate on the celebrations relating to the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party of our housekeeper, Lydia Maximovna. Any 10<sup>th</sup> birthday following the 40<sup>th</sup> is called a “Jubilee” in Russia and is celebrated with great pomp, vigour and joy. The celebration was at her home with many family members attending, I fact we were honoured to be the ONLY non-family guests present. It was a wonderful event with lots of food, sensible drinking of toasts, accordion playing, singing and dancing. Lydia M. Had her older sister there and the two ladies did a wonderful rendition of “chestushki”, Russian humorous verses made up as you go along and sung to the accompaniment of an accordion, balalaika or a guitar. The ladies also did some Russian version of “square dancing”; however none of the men attempted to do the Russian Cossack dance – running while squatting! We stayed till late and really enjoyed ourselves. Kyra had a good time too with Lydia Maximovna’s three granddaughters who were about her age.

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, we had a very pleasant outing with the Director of the Polytechnic Institute of Togliatti. He was interested in the benefits of “Industrial Engineering”, which was poorly understood in Russia as all the “glory” went to “Product Engineering” where creativity was admired regardless of costs or marketability.

The outing included a boat ride on his private motor launch to an island where we did some fishing and had a wonderful barbeque. In later years we retained contact and some attempts were made to hire me as a visiting lecturer at his institute, but like everything else, it petered out due to the lack of financial resources on their part.

In the summer of 1998, there were some uncertainties and “tribulations” occurring with regards to my work activities in Elabuga. This was instigated by the expatriate Production Manager from Opel, who resented that he did not have more control over me and could not restrain my criticisms of his activities regarding the quality of the on-going assembly of vehicles and his lack of attention to the local workforce. He sent a FAX to my boss, on May 8<sup>th</sup>, requesting that I be replaced by someone more knowledgeable in Manufacturing Engineering and Quality as well as Product Engineering. This resulted in a series of exchanges between various executives and a possibility of my transfer to China was considered.

However, the end result was that GM Truck gave me full support and requested the Regional Executive Director, who was stationed in Zurich, to give me and my family the required support and on-site assistance. I knew that I was making the local ISP’s nervous by being the “local, sober untouchable sheriff”, so I was extra cautious of the local politicking and attempts at coercion that were dangled before me.

On my next trip to Elabuga, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, I was approached by our Production manager, regarding an offer to become the SUP (-) Assembly Plant Manager. He was passing on the proposal from the Executive Regional Director. When I asked him what salary raise and change of level was involved, he calmly told me – “none”. I laughed and said – “What motivation do I have to take this offer?” To which he replied – “You can continue to stay in Russia”. I assured him that this was not my sole intention and the conversation ended there.

The next day, I discovered that the Paint Shop contract was awarded with gross violations of specifications and the GM Bid procedures, with which I was very familiar since my days as Project

Engineer at GM Hamtramck and GM Fremont. I still suspect that the offer to me was made in the hope of “muzzling” any unfavorable action on my part by gaining “control” over my employment.

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, Camp America IV started at the Raduga Summer Camp and I gave my customary “Environmental” presentation on Jul 11<sup>th</sup>, describing the fuel injection system and its contribution in reducing pollutants to the environment.

On July 31<sup>st</sup>, we were all off to Detroit, where I had a series of meetings at the Truck Product Center as the EGM venture was falling apart. We all stayed at the Hilton Suites and made family visits to Houghton Lake, as well as a visit Igor and Elena in DC.

On August 7<sup>th</sup>, per request of GM upper management, I reported to Carol Best, my GM Home Office Mentor on a list of “progress restrictors” at the EGM SUP assembly site”

- Complete lack of operational procedures even though they were readily available from the various GM “Home Divisions” and other GM Joint Venture operations.
- Lack of understanding and synergizing of the local Russian Labor Rules and Regulations. Many may be obsolete, however to the majority of the local employees they were considered as their “rights”.
- Shortage of qualified ISP’s.
- Daily operational frustrations - personal transportation, telephone/fax disruptions, excessive overtime work.
- Lack of supporting elements such as housekeeping, plant and tool Maintenance, security and fire protection, medical, service contracting, etc. at the assembly operation.

I concluded by offering my recommendations -

- Definition and EGM consensus of a general outline of each department’s responsibilities.
- Adaptation of GM procedures to local conditions and initiation of training for their application.
- Exposure and training of the currently assigned ISP’s to a “Russian Cultural Seminar” for understanding of the subtle and not readily observable cultural differences including some understanding of Russian (Soviet) labor laws.
- Recognition and development of support facilities and services relative to personnel, transportation, communications, equipment and power tool, maintenance, security, personal & family safety, fire protection, housekeeping, etc.
- Organization of above with clearly designated departmental responsibilities.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, we all returned to Samara and I headed on to Elabuga to meet our new Financial Director. This was a very well qualified lady who had many years of experience with GM Overseas and came over from her assignment with GM in South Africa. She was accompanied by her husband who stayed home and took care of the house chores, including cooking their meals. They were both “bikers” and had their personal Harley Davidson bikes shipped over and amazed the local population by their frequent trips over country roads and fields. They were both very likable and “free-spirited”. It was a pleasure to be with them and she quickly resolved a lot of the operational financial problems.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, I had a short business trip to the Opel Headquarters at Russelsheim, Germany. I arrived early and came to the office that was assigned to our project. There was no one there except a young secretary who I discovered was Russian, as I chatted with her in Russian, one of the Opel managers showed up. He rushed to me and in a furious voice told me that I could not be in here but should wait in the anteroom. He thought I was a Russian from Elabuga. When I identified myself and



he realized that I came from Detroit, his whole demeanor changed – he bowed and “kowtowed” and was very subserviently polite. This is the kind of “double standards” that damages GM’s ability to expand in the Russian market.

On a positive note, we decided to expose Kyra to an “ordinary” public Russian Grade school and on September 15<sup>th</sup>, moved her from the “elite” school Rostok to School #77 in our neighborhood. We were very happy with her progress and the teachers there were also very capable and caring. She did well.

Sales were not going too good at Elabuga and they reduced their vehicle assembly to 3 days a week. This also reduced my need to be there so on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, I terminated my weekly commutes to Elabuga focusing more on assisting in the local sourcing of components and assisting in the negotiations of a joint production project between VAZ and GM Opel to assemble the Opel Vectra in Togliatti.

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, our Regional Director decided to give a presentation to a select group of upper managers of VAZ on the proposed joint production project. I was invited to attend and cringed through an antagonizing and totally incomprehensible rendition in terrible Russian by our esteemed executive. I was embarrassed for GM to see the smirks and side glances by the attending VAZ managers and senior engineers, all of whom I have know for some length of time. But this was GM “doing their thing”!

On October 7<sup>th</sup>, I received \$65,000 from GM to pay for my Russian Annual Income Tax. My Russian associates were highly amused and shocked to hear that I am paying any tax at all since no one of the local “wealthier” people believed that they should be doing that since they never heard of income taxes in their “prior” life in the defunct USSR.



*Victoria and Victor – 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party at TRACC*

On October 13<sup>th</sup>, we joined in the celebration of the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party for Victor and Victoria, they were Russian twins who had black parents who were currently in Sierra Leone, Africa. They were born in Moscow during their father's service in the Sierra Leone Embassy there and were Russian citizens born and raised in Russia. Due to the civil unrest that was raging in Africa, their parents elected for them to remain in Russia when they returned home at the end of their assignment. They were a very likable, well-mannered and highly educated young people and Bev sort of took them "under her broad wings".

The Sierra Leone Civil War began in 1991, by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under [Foday Sankoh](#). Tens of thousands died and more than 2 million people (well over one-third of the population) were displaced because of the 11-year conflict. Neighboring countries became host to significant numbers of refugees attempting to escape the civil war. Control of Sierra Leone's [diamond](#) industry was a primary objective for the war. Although endowed with abundant natural resources, Sierra Leone was ranked as the poorest country in the world by 1998. With the breakdown of all state structures, wide corridors of Sierra Leonean society were opened up to the trafficking of arms and ammunition, and an illegal trade in [recreational drugs](#) from [Liberia](#) and [Guinea](#).

We saw them quite often and I tried to help Victor in starting up his own computer accessories store by investigating prices in the US for determining his market strategy and developing his supply sources.

On October 30<sup>th</sup> we were on our way to our 6<sup>th</sup> R&R of this ISP Assignment to Club Med at Lindeman Island, Australia via a 2-day stopover in Paris, France. We arrived on a Friday afternoon and after checking into a hotel on the Left Bank, proceeded to find a restaurant for dinner. The only one we could find on our stroll in the area was named "Le Canard" or the duck in French. We settled in and asked for a menu. Everything was in French (naturally) and after some discussion with the waiter, we discovered that we had a lot of choices as long as they were all – duck! That was all that was served in this restaurant – thus the name. Duh! None of us particularly liked duck but we enjoyed the meal and the humor nevertheless.

The next day we took a bus tour of Paris in an open upper deck of a tour bus and culminated our visit with a short stop at our friends Herve and Brigitte Chevrant's home in St.Cloud at the outskirts of Paris. Sadly, unbeknown to us this would be the last time that we would see Herve as he passed away from a stroke in 2002, just four years later. He was a very good friend and I miss him and his French humor deeply.

I fondly remember him from the GMI days. He had a work assignment at the Columbus, Ohio GM Frigidaire plant and on one of his commutes he noticed a sign that indicated a "US Airforce Museum". Having some time, he decided to check it out and turned off on what he thought was the appropriate highway exit to the museum. Actually he erroneously turn onto a ramp leading to a secure "Strategic Air Command" (SAC) military base. As the Military Policeman at the gate waved to him to stop and identify himself he just waved in reply and drove on. This resulted in some excitement and pursuit by a heavily armed jeep loaded with menacing looking MPs. Herve, being very French and high-spirited, insisted that his consular office be notified so that he can lodge a complaint of harassment. Fortunately all ended well and he was allowed to proceed on his way back to Columbus.



*Deep discussion about the future of France, USA and the world*

At our departure from Paris, we also discovered to we needed an entry visa for Australia! Fortunately this was handled, in a brief formality plus a small fee, on arrival at Sydney, Australia. The resort of Lindeman Island, set on the north east coast of Australia, in the heart of the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef, with a view over the turquoise blue lagoon and sand oasis is really magical. The weather was wonderful and the snorkeling was fantastic.

During one of our snorkeling excursions at the Great Barrier Reef, as I was happily swimming by myself a little away from the group, I felt a sharp nip at my abdomen. I looked around and saw nothing threatening, continuing to float and admire the beautiful reefs, I felt the nip again. After looking more carefully, I saw this little inch long fish glaring at me with a ferocious look in its eyes. On returning to the group, I questioned the guide on the occurrence, he replied – “It was defending its turf, it did not matter how big you are, you were an intruder”.

We also took a weekend trip to Brisbane and visited with our dear friend Hans Conrad who was a most gracious host and introduced us to the beauties and wonders of Australian life, flora and fauna. It was a very nice visit and Hans took us to some fine restaurants and sights. We looked at old photos of my Shanghai friends and reminisced on days gone by.

We left Australia on Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, from Sydney and had a brief stopover at Sri Lanka, then proceeded to Paris, France where after an overnight stay at a hotel near the Orly Airport, proceeded home to Togliatti, via Frankfurt and Samara. Quite a haul with all the time changes and mileage covered!



In Elabuga, there were some major administrative changes. In his last board meeting there, on November 17<sup>th</sup>, our Regional Executive Director announced a new Managing Director for the EGM project, this was a former Materials Director from an “obscure” European parts plant. He was a regular little “rooster” who was going to whip that operation in shape; he started out by hiring his wife as one of the major auxiliary managers in charge of “Traffic”, with full ISP privileges (this was one of his conditions to take this job)

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, we received the sad news of the passing of my last senior blood relative, Aunt Valia, from heart failure. It was good that we managed to visit her last year and that Bev and Kyra had the opportunity of getting acquainted with her. Sadly Valia’s long-time friend, Stanislas, also passed just 6 months later.

On the same day, I sent a “Lotus Note” message to my Mentor at the Truck Product Center, telling her that I was in Elabuga by invitation of the new Managing Director as he wanted to review with me my contributions to the program for determination if my services are needed here in the near future. As mentioned in my earlier report, EGM has requested International Product Center to prepare a case for going 100% NAO Blazers. IPC is working on the master specifications with the GM International Operations group in Detroit. I have not heard from **anyone** at GMTG since October, so am at somewhat of a disadvantage for my meeting with the Managing Director, which is scheduled for Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The next day, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, I received her reply with her recommendation for my discussion to try to explain to him how the program approval process works for the Truck Division –

1. *A proposal is needed from the I PC group, outlining the vehicle content and presenting the business case to be submitted to the GM Truck Planning organization. They will review it and ask for Engineering input, as well as input from the Financial, Manufacturing Engineering and any other involved areas.*
2. *Engineering will review the proposed content, evaluate what engineering work will be required, and submit a budget and any issues that we foresee.*
3. *Planning takes everyone’s input, analyzes the business case and predicted payback and recommends a decision (approve or reject).*
4. *When we have an approved plan, Engineering initiates our EPN (Engineering Project Number) and work in Engineering actually begins.*
5. *Some things that need also to be addressed are future product plans - that is, how many years do we expect to continue this product, are model change updates expected, or is the design to be frozen? This is very important - we make regular changes to our products every year - new interior colors, upgrades to engines and transmissions, new this and that. I f these enhancements are not wanted, we need to budget to maintain a special database for this program so that it does not get the changes*

*Please try to communicate to him on how very important it is that the local unit understands upcoming changes and helps us understand their potential impact on localization and performance in the local environment.*

At the scheduled meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Managing Director courteously heard me out and expressed his gratitude for the information, explanation of the process and the things to look out for. He said that he was counting on our assistance on this program and was looking forward to our assistance to build a marketable Truck product in Russia. He concluded by saying that in this isolated front-line position, timely data provision from the Truck Office is extremely valuable and maintains our



reputation as the “best” automotive manufacturer and a valuable partner in these overseas joint ventures and operations. In his evaluation of my performance, he formally wrote that he felt that “based on my professional background, operational skills and in-depth knowledge of the Russian culture, I was the most suitable GMTG representative for the NAO Blazer program”.



*Santa Leo and Chief Elf Kyra with the children*

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, I was Santa Claus with Kyra as an Elf, on one of Bev’s annual projects of distributing small gifts, that were donated to her by McDonalds through her efforts during our Home Visits, to orphanages and “special children” (handicapped) in Togliatti. I told the children that I was Santa Claus, the American cousin of their Father Frost, who normally wore a blue suit. Kyra was my Chief Assistant Elf and I was accompanied by one of Bev’s students dressed as the “Snow Maiden”.

On December 18<sup>th</sup> we were on our way home for our final Home Leave and review of my future activities in the last year of this assignment.

We arrived at the Hilton Suites where we enjoyed a Christmas party with the relatives as well as have a 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday celebration for Kelley and Kelsey. Following that we drove to Houghton Lake to spend some Christmas cheer with Mom and Dad and their new cat “Zorro”. On December 30<sup>th</sup>, I flew to San Francisco to spend a couple of days with Nina Andreevna and Andre.

The year **1999** started with me being delayed at the San Francisco airport due to the severe snow conditions in Detroit and I returned to Andrei’s apartment for another night. Finally on January 6<sup>th</sup>, I was reunited with my family at the Hilton Suites in Auburn Hills, MI. Next followed a flurry of business meetings at the GM Truck Engineering Center in Pontiac as well as numerous medical, dental, vision and hearing tests for the entire family. I was given extra attention by cardio scans, stress tests and other examinations because of my diagnosed arrhythmia. This also included a cauterization which required a day of hospitalization.

Finally, we got through all of that including a 5-day exposure of Kyra to a Montessori School in the area, and were off on our way back to Togliatti on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, just in time to celebrate Kyra's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday at TRACC.

This was also a somewhat turbulent period as GM Truck and Delphi got into an argument on who was responsible for paying for my expenses on the apartment, car and utilities. It did not help matters much that by then, VAZ realized by how much they were being "ripped off" on the component packages from Delphi (the same ones were being sold in Europe for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the price that VAZ was being charged) and was periodically delinquent in their payments. My unfortunate local replacement was caught in the middle and I did my best to give him support, counseling and assistance in his negotiations.

At the same time, there was a disagreement between the International Operations Office and GM Truck on my involvement in the investigation of possible local suppliers for the new joint venture between VAZ and GM on the assembly of the Opel Ventura in Togliatti. My management at GM Truck was very negative to this, since there was very little in this endeavor that would be of benefit to my current Division and area of responsibility. The only way that I could extend our stay was to get transferred to this new projected joint venture that was being negotiated between the International Programs Group, Opel and VAZ.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, I met the Director of this budding joint venture, he was a native of Malta and a former manager in Opel, currently assigned to lead this project by the International Operations Headquarters in Russelsheim, Germany. Our meeting went well, he was very friendly and receptive to my assistance on the layouts, protocols and observations regarding my knowledge of VAZ and my Industrial Engineering background. We had a short "one-on-one" where I shared with him on my availability and interest to participate in this project. He seemed to be interested but was non-committal, later I found out that he was categorically against my appointment to his team, as he stated in an internal memo – "Kalageorgi is most definitely not the right person for this job". This surprised me for a while until shortly after he was dismissed from GM for "misappropriation of funds", then I understood that the last thing he wanted was an "honest sheriff" in town watching his moves.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, we left for our 5<sup>th</sup> R&R at Club Med in Punta Cana and were away till March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999. On this wonderful sun-filled vacation in the Dominican Republic, we swam with domesticated, playful dolphins. This was a very unique experience for us and we thoroughly enjoyed the interfacing with those friendly mammals. They would gently nudge us with their noses and place their heads up for us to pet them.

We also had our 2<sup>nd</sup> Circus performance, where I drummed up enough courage to impress our daughter and went swinging on the trapeze, swearing to myself silently to NEVER do that again. We practiced water-skiing and rode horseback in surf accompanied by a school of dolphins following us at a short distance. We also celebrated our 13<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary with a wonderful candlelit seafood dinner.

Overall, it was a wonderful vacation and sadly our last GM-sponsored R&R. All in all, this 8-year Russian assignment was by far the best that I had in all of my years with GM.



*"Not-so-Young" Man on the Flying Trapeze – Notice "forced" grin*

We returned to Togliatti close to the Russian Easter celebrations and attended the midnight mass ceremony on April 10<sup>th</sup>, at the newly-built Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Togliatti with our close Russian friends with the traditional Easter dinner at their house afterwards.

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, Bev visited with handicapped veterans of the Afghan and WWII wars and coordinated the donation of several wheelchairs from the "Sister City of Flint" and the "Flint Rotary Club" In the meantime, I was consulting with various GM personnel on the details of our approaching repatriation back to the US, such as locating a reputable US-sourced mover who was knowledgeable with Russian Customs and Export laws. Because of the extended length of our stay abroad, we were authorized by GM to bring into the US – 39,797 lbs! If I was more "financially motivated" (greedy and unscrupulous), we could have made a fortune by bringing in artifacts, antiques and hand-made wooden furniture, but we did not.

In continuation of my Product Engineering responsibilities with GM Truck, after detailed planning with the Moscow ISP staff, I arranged for the travel, on a weekend, of 3 Elabuga/GM local engineers and 3 assembly workers to inspect and repair, if possible, the inventory of over 400 crippled GMB Blazers in Moscow. They arrived in Moscow to find that there were NO ISPs available!

That weekend, our nephew Sammy graduated from High School in the US, and Kyra on May 25<sup>th</sup>, graduated from Grade III at the Russian Public School # 77. We had a small party at home with some of her classmates and close Russian friends

We also had another slew of telephone conversations with my GM management, regarding the pro and cons of buying or leasing a second home in the Rochester, MI area (we already owned a home in Sedona, AZ, which was being rented to others), my net income after taxes to determine our budget in



the US, the purchasing or leasing a 2<sup>nd</sup> car for Bev (I would have a company vehicle for 90 days), career assistance for Bev, tutoring for Kyra, vacation entitlement and relocation allowances .

Finally on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999 we were all off to Detroit for a 4-day “Repatriation Look-See” trip to see housing and schools, as well as the resolution of some of the above mentioned concerns. The visit went well, we located a home quickly, it was in a very nice neighborhood, a walking distance from a good grade school, close to the Main Street of Rochester, with all necessary groceries, product and clothing stores close by. The house was a 1987-built Colonial, 2125 square feet on a large 65 X 167 ft lot. It was beautifully maintained and had 3 bedrooms, 2 ½ baths and a 2-car garage with an automatic opener. There was a modern kitchen with all of the appliances – refrigerator, hooded range, microwave, dishwasher and a garbage disposal. The park-like backyard was professionally landscaped with a sprinkler system, a children’s swing set and an extensive wooden decking. It was located in a quiet cul-de-sac with very nice friendly neighbors. We loved it and put our bid on it on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.



*Our new home at 406 Parkland Court, Rochester Hills, MI*

Our offer was accepted the next day and we put down a deposit on the house. We also visited the Hamlin Grade school, which was only a short walk away, met the Principal, whom we immediately liked, and arranged for Kyra to start in Grade V in September of that year.

After these activities, we went to Houghton Lake to spend the weekend with Mom and Dad after which we returned to the Hilton Suites and visited with Steven and Leanne and their families. In the meantime I was continuing my meetings with the GM management at the Pontiac Truck Engineering Center.

On June 15<sup>th</sup> , we all returned to Togliatti for Bev’s workshops on her last “Camp Russia/America” event and to start disposing some of our furniture and appliances, all of which we donated to friends,



schools and kindergartens. We did not sell a single item although there was a high demand for all “foreign-made” appliances and clothing. Camp Russia/America '99, opened on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, I had to miss the ceremonies since I had to return to Detroit to continuing my meetings with the GM Truck Manufacturing Engineering management.

In the meantime, meetings were also being held at Russelsheim with the new GM/VAZ team, reviewing the new project in Togliatti to assemble VAZ's new NIVAs, the Opel way, with enhanced quality and electronically fuel-injected engines in a new facility near the VAZ factory in Togliatti. We were finally reunited on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, when I returned and just missed the closing days and ceremonies of the camp.

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, we received word from the Home Office which identified our “Air and Surface” shipper and we started some advance packing of “critical” items that would be shipped by air for our initial temporary stay at a hotel prior to settling in our new home. Our initial shipment left Togliatti on July 19<sup>th</sup>.

On July 21<sup>st</sup>, we started a tour of tearful farewells with our Russian friends by spending a few days at each of their “dachas” or summer cottages, with shish-kebabs, mantas (Asian meat pies), fresh fruits and garden vegetables. It was not easy to say “good-bye” since many of them became as close as family to us over the 8 years of our assignment. Russians are very warm, gregarious, friendly people when you get past the initial distrust of strangers. They had a lot of earlier bad experiences with invaders and exploiters from abroad, but once they develop a trust and feeling of kinship, they will go to great lengths in their hospitality to make you feel at home.

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, we were on our way back to the US, this time with two cats, our much travelled US-born “Dimmy” and the Russian orphan “Tasha”. Everyone handled the trip well and arrived happy and contented, but somewhat drowsy, after the long flight including the transfer and overnight stay in Frankfurt, Germany.

## **Inserts**

### **To Chapter XVIII – Our Elabuga Adventure (1997 – 1999)**

- During my commutes between Togliatti and Elabuga and vice versa, I had many views of the Russian and Tartar country life. The Tartar side, I am sad to say, was much more efficient, well-kept and organized than the Russian village life. Tartar huts and small houses were freshly painted with new fences enclosing cleanly swept yards and most fowl and animals under control. The Russian side however had open grain warehouse covered with happily cawing crows, dilapidated unpainted log cabins with collapsed or non-existent fences with poultry, geese, goats and pigs running around freely. This was later explained to me by the Russian fondness for vodka, while the Tartars were Moslems and did not drink alcohol. Additionally, most of the Russian youth has moved to the cities in search of an easier life leaving the farms to the older generation.
- In mid-1999, my former Headmaster from the General Motors Institute, attempted to initiate some GMI courses via Video tapes at the Togliatti Polytechnical Institute. Although the Russian side was interested, this required more “dedicated effort” than I could supply because of my workload. Additionally there were cost involved which neither side had the necessary budget to cover. As a result, after a promising start targeting the returning young army officers who were being demobilized and returning home from East Germany, the program petered out and was abandoned.

## Chapter XIX – Manufacturing Engineering at the Pontiac Center (1999 to 2001)

“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” - African proverb

Based on the then-prevailing GM policy for repatriation of long-term ISP's, we were allotted an 4 week full expenses period to assist us to “acclimatize” ourselves in the US after our long absence. We checked into our “home away from home” at the Hilton Suites, which was very conveniently located just a short drive from the Truck Product Center in Pontiac, our newly purchased home in Rochester Hills and Kyra's Hamlin Elementary School, where she was registered to start on August 24<sup>th</sup> in Grade V.

We celebrated our return with a barbecue at Bev's sister Dawn's home, followed by visits with “our kids”, Leanne and Steven and their families. On July 26<sup>th</sup>, we made our 1<sup>st</sup> major purchase – a 1999 Cadillac DeVille sedan for me and a 3-year lease of a Pontiac Montana Wagon for Bev.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, I reported to the Truck Product Center at Pontiac, to discover that I did not as yet have a “specific” job. My “mentor” resigned under unknown circumstances, my former boss was “otherwise involved” and did not want me. I later found out that he was carrying on an affair with a young Asian-American engineer that worked for him, and did not want my “judgmental” presence near him. Everyone was pleasant but wary of my background, experience and reputation.

Finally, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, I found a manager who was not intimidated by demeanor or reputation. He was a younger man but well experienced in factory floor work as a superintendent in one of the Truck Sheet Metal Stamping plants. He and I spoke the same language, critical of the politics and work ethics of some of our peers and managers, hard and dedicated workers with a low tolerance for BS. We “hit it off” well and working for him was one of my best experienced both in self development as well as in gratifying contribution.

My job title was Assistant Total Manufacturing Integration Engineer (TMIE) and my responsibilities on the ongoing program for the 2004 model Light Duty Isuzu Pickup Truck, that was later named “the Colorado”, were to assist the TMIE on the following –

- Develop Manufacturing Technical Specifications
- Approve the Manufacturing Major Subsystem manufacturability requirements
- Facilitate resolution of significant product/process issues
- Audit Manufacturing and/or Product changes to assess their impact on the program
- Participate in the Program product/process change process to insure a high confidence level regarding cost, timing and risk assessments.
- Lead the Manufacturing Integration Process Development.

In essence this job responsibility meant working with a newly conceived vehicle from its birth on the drawing boards through its final release for assembly in a factory. It included the review of die planning for the stamping of its sheet metal body parts, the assembly of concept and pilot vehicles, facility design and layout of the assembly plant and the ordering of the appropriate tools and equipment for its assembly. As it became obvious, this involved going to many meetings and working with many people both at the Pontiac Product Engineering Center, the Warren Styling Complex and Isuzu Engineering in Fujisawa, Japan. Needless to say – I loved it.

Also on August 9<sup>th</sup>, our new home became available and the 1<sup>st</sup> air shipment of our belongings arrived in 14 big crates. This was a busy period for all of us, I had my new job, Kyra was preparing for her school and Bev was taking care of initiating all of our utilities, including telephone and trash pickup at our new residence. However we still found the time to celebrate Dad's 79<sup>th</sup> birthday at Houghton Lake and meet a dear Russian friend, who arrived for a 5-day visit, at the airport and settle her in our hotel.

On August 16<sup>th</sup>, Bev picked up her newly leased 2000-model Montana Wagon, sparkling white with beige trim, 7-seats and a VHS player for the rear seats. She loved it since she could transport all of the grandkids to "wherever". I returned my ISP vehicle that weekend and picked up my new Cadillac.



*The handing of the keys for my new 2000 Cadillac DeVille Concours*

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, Kyra had her 1<sup>st</sup> day at the Hamlin Elementary School, it was only for ½ a day but she was really excited, loved her teacher and immediately made some good friends with whom she is in contact even today.

Work was progressing very well for me, I was learning new things every day and my new boss was extremely helpful. He was never there peering over my shoulder or checking up on me, but ALWAYS, available at short notice if I needed him for anything. We developed a real warm relationship and he clued me in on who was knowledgeable on the program and who was "dead weight". I enjoyed going with him to important planning and execution meetings and learned a lot from his penetrating questions and responses to various problems and bottlenecks in the manufacturing processes of the program. I particularly enjoyed the monthly "Wall Walks", where our team would walk along the wall that had illustrations of various stages of assembly of the vehicle starting with the sheet metal body shell of the vehicle all the way through its completion in the Body Welding and Framing stage, through Painting, Trim assembly and its "marriage" to the Chassis assembly. It taught me a lot of



what to look out for and the possible difficulties that may arise for the operators in the plant during its assembly and the resultant quality issues.

Our Surface shipment of furniture arrived on August 30<sup>th</sup>, and caused a lot of attention of the neighbors when two 40-foot trailer trucks showed up, followed by a smaller van to deliver our belongings from Togliatti as well as what we had 8 years in storage at a local warehouse.



*Some of the dunnage and cardboard containers from our Surface Shipment from Togliatti*

The unloading went on for two full days, with the neighbors looking in amazement and wondering where all those items were going to in our house which really wasn't that large. The delivery consisted of 402 items and we quickly filled up our basement, living and dining rooms and the garage. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, the transporters assembled all of the disassembled furniture such as desks, tables, dressers, cupboards, etc. It was quite a job and our 4-week full expenses allowance was extended by two additional weeks because of the shipment delay. We finally relocated to our new home on September 5<sup>th</sup> just in time to celebrate our common birthday with a dinner at the "Starbucks Steak House" with the Days and Leanne.

In September, after a brief visit to the Michigan Renaissance Festival, I flew to Washington DC to visit Igor and Elena Andreevna for 3 days where Igor treated me to a fine "Churrasco" (Barbeque) in a Brazilian restaurant, and on the next week I flew to San Francisco for a 3-day visit with Andrei and Nina Andreevna, where I gorged myself with authentic Chinese potstickers. Both boys looked well and were doing fine and we had a good visit.

On October 13<sup>th</sup>, Kyra started Tai-Kwan-do Karate classes 3 days per week and I had to fly to our GM Truck plant in Shreveport, LA to visit the site where our programmed vehicle would be assembled. The visit went well and it was great to get back into the familiar surroundings of a vehicle assembly plant, it brought back a lot of fond memories of my younger days at the GM Fremont Assembly Operation in California.

November started with some, new (for us), home-owner “challenges”. After the preliminary arrangement of our furniture, we hired a well-intentioned, but rather amateurish, young handyman to do some minor renovations at our new home such as some corrections to the access of some electrical outlets and some minor plumbing. We also realized that we had to replace some major appliances such as the range, clothes washer and dryer and lawn mower. These initial months of our return strongly depleted our savings – the deposit and closing costs of the house (although we got a decent percentage on the mortgage interest from GMAD of 6.25%) and some heavy monthly credit card usages before we got accustomed to this “new economy of plenty”.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, I was on my way to my 1<sup>st</sup> trip to the Isuzu Engineering Center in Fujisawa, Japan. This was one of the longest trips that I have ever taken. We flew out of Detroit Metro Airport, at 1:00 pm, on a non-stop 14 hour flight to the Narita Airport in Tokyo, arriving 13 time zones later at 4:25 pm for our 1<sup>st</sup> stop. Next we were on a “fast” train to Yokohama at 6:43 pm, arriving there at 8:23 in the evening, where we checked in the beautiful Yokohama Sheraton Hotel. The next morning, after a nice Japanese/American buffet breakfast, we were off to Fujisawa on another train for a 40 minute ride.

The engineering facilities were very modest and cramped by our US standards, but work was proceeding very industriously. We attended a series of meeting with translators, since none of our team spoke Japanese and the local staff avoided using English for fear of “misunderstandings”. Nevertheless, the meeting went very well and the Japanese were extremely gracious and polite throughout the proceedings. The visit lasted 4 days and I was amused that out of our group of 6 people, I was the only one to eat Japanese food, everyone else insisted on eating Mexican, Italian or hamburgers with fries.

On our second night at the Sheraton, I went alone to a Japanese restaurant on the top floor with a fantastic night view of Yokohama and enjoyed a sushi dinner which cost way over my daily meal allowance but was enjoyable and authentically served by a kimono-clad waitress with all of the gracious courtesy of a well-trained geisha.

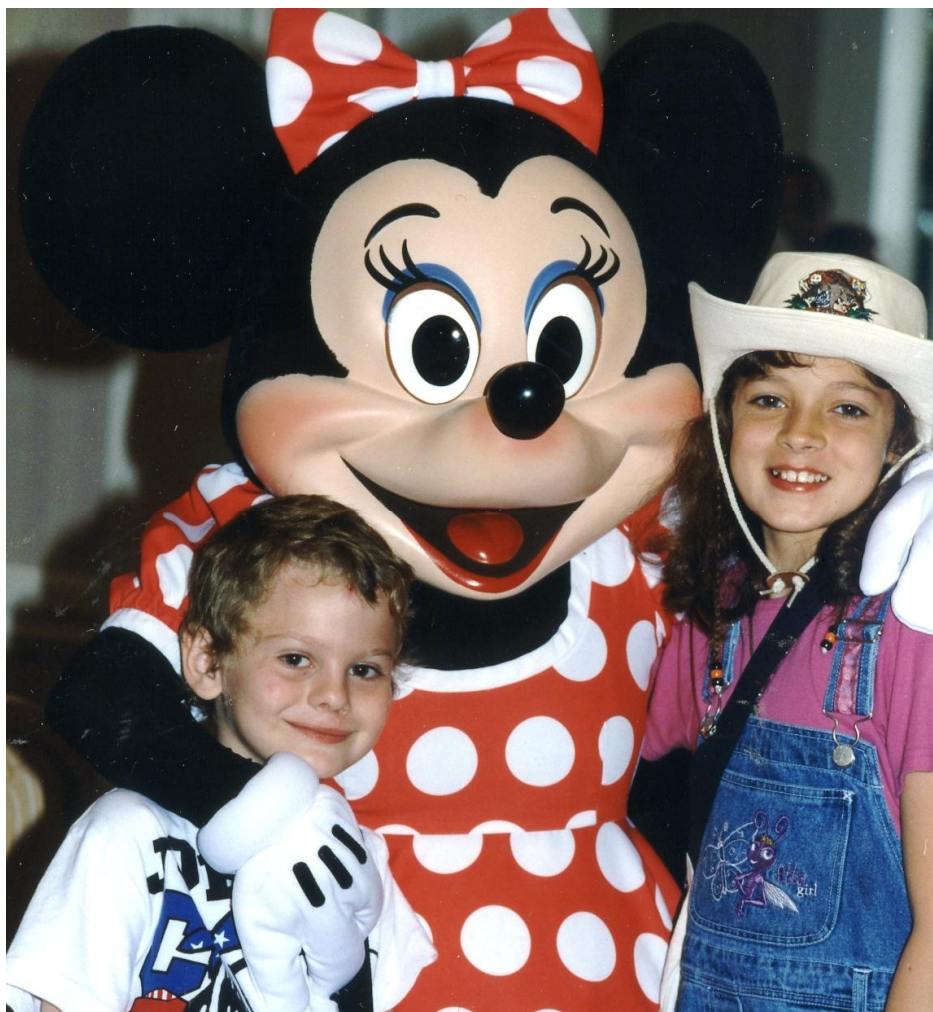




I also greatly exceeded my telephone bill by calling home each night not knowing how to use the GM connection system. But it was worth it to talk to my “girls” from whom I was rarely separated for that long since my “Elabuga” period.

Shortly after my return, on November 18<sup>th</sup>, the three of us took our grandson Steven Richard to Disney World for a 7-day visit. We all had a great time. We stayed at one of the original Walt Disney World Resort hotels, with its South Seas architecture and dense landscaping—gardenias, banana trees, hibiscus, and orchids abound. We would step outside the lobby onto the monorail platform, which provided direct access to Magic Kingdom Park.

We started our visit at the Magic Kingdom theme park, one of 4 Theme Parks in Walt Disney World Resort, which captured the enchantment of fairy tales with exciting entertainment, classic attractions, and beloved Disney Characters. It was designed like a wheel with the hub in front of Cinderella Castle, with pathways that spoke out across the Magic Kingdom theme park and lead to the 7 main sectors. We walked up the colorful Main Street, with its stores, small shows and restaurants enjoying the sights of the various Disney Characters that would appear very frequently and provide photo opportunities. We also spent ample time, saw a lot of shows and took many rides in Adventureland, Fantasyland, Frontierland, Tomorrowland and Liberty Square. We also spread our time between visits to the Animal Kingdom and MGM Studios and thoroughly enjoyed the Fireworks and the night’s Electric Parade.



*SteveR, Minnie and Kyra*

We returned on the Thanksgiving Holiday, so everyone got a rest from our trip before the hectic period of getting ready for Christmas and New Year's Day celebrations.

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, Bev held her first "Cookie Painting" party since our return from our Russian assignment. It went very well with all of the kids competing on the most creative cookie painting and design – there were no clear winners since talent and creativity were in great abundance. I greatly enjoyed eating the "rejects" as the cookies were made of Bev's recipe for shortbread – my favorite.

We celebrated Christmas at home with the extended family that was in the proximity, Igor and Andre were out of state so could not attend. New Year's Eve we celebrated at the Hilton Suites for "old time's sake" and were joined by Anuta, Kyra's Russian tutor from Togliatti and one of Bev's former students at the Bank College. She was currently on an exchange visit in Mt.Morris. Our grandson Steven Richard was "totally smitten" by her and insisted on dancing with her every chance that he got.



*Anuta and StevenR – New Year @ Hilton Suites – 2000*

Over all it was a good "Welcome Home" period for us after our 8-year overseas assignment. However we missed Russia and our friends there very much, and had some difficulties to adjusting to the nature of life here in the US after such a long absence.



The year 2000 started with a 3-day visit with Andre and Nina Andreevna in SFO on January 14<sup>th</sup>. It was a short visit but very full of activity. Started out with a wonderful Korean lunch at our favorite restaurant shortly after our arrival, then a brief visit to the “Znanie” Bookstore where we spent some time with Nina Andreevna. Following that, we met with an old SFO friend of mine, Alla Sokolova and her daughters Macia and Katia with Katia’s little boy. That evening we enjoyed a dinner of Russian “peroshki” at the Sapelkin residence.

The following day we were invited to the “Potsticker” restaurant in Chinatown by Andre and his friend Hughey for a delicious and greatly varied Chinese potsticker and dim sum lunch. That evening we took Andre, Nina Andreevna and Kirril to their favorite Chinese restaurant – the “Golden Dragon” on the other side of Golden Gate Park.

The next day we had brunch with Jennifer, who was one of the Peace Corps volunteers that Bev worked with in Togliatti on the annual Camp America sessions. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, we were back home.



*Andre and me – SFO January 16, 2000*

On my return, on January 18<sup>th</sup>, GM Truck gave me an opportunity to expand my knowledge of the new science of technical drafting, and signed me up for 4 days of a “Unigraphics” classes. Unigraphics (NX) is commonly referred to as a 3D software application. It supports all stages of product development from conceptualization, to design, to analysis, to manufacturing. NX integrates these product lifecycle stages into an end-to-end process using concurrent engineering workflow, design-in-context and product data management tools that apply across all functional areas. It was very interesting, and although I never had an opportunity to apply it directly, it assisted me a lot in understanding the new vehicle design processes.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated Kyra's 11th Birthday Party at Hilton Suites with an overnight slumber party for her girl classmates and friends, as well as a "Magic Show" and fun in the hotel pool.



*"Tweetie" and Kyra at her 11<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party*

The party was a great success with many of her classmates attending. The Hilton Suites reserved a section of their restaurant for us just outside the heated indoor pool entrance and we decorated it with balloons and confetti streamers, the hotel staff provided blue and white table coverings and other decorations. The theme was "Tweetie" and the appropriate paper dishes, bowls and cups were provided by a very thoughtful Mother Bev.

There were a lot of Kyra's classmates that attended and the party started with a great splash and swimming in the heated indoor pool and whirlpool bath. After everyone had a good swim and aquatics, and were all dried out – pizza was served, followed by a "Tweetie" decorated cake with generous portions for all friends and kinfolks. After the meal, the guests were entertained by a magician called "Baffling Bill", whose slogan was "Have Rabbit will Travel". The audience was enthralled by his performance and humor. The evening ended with about a dozen of Kyra's girl classmates staying over for a "slumber party" at one of the suites in the hotel and watching DVD movies till late at night. The next morning after another dip in the pool and breakfast, the party ended with hugs and promises of a repeat performance.



On March 14<sup>th</sup>, we had some traumatic experiences at our new home – I inadvertently left our back porch door opened a crack and our two adventurous cats, Tasha and Dimmy, went for an outing. Tasha came back after a couple of hours of freedom but Dimmy did not. Tasha then decided to go look for her but came back alone after a short while. The girls were in a panic and we distributed posters around the neighborhood. After nearly three entire days of absence, a neighbor finally called and said she had poor hungry Dimmy on her porch a few blocks away. She was getting a little old and lost her way home. We NEVER let out cats out again!

In December of last year, Kyra expressed an interest in taking up karate and we found a Martial Arts Studio (Dojo) in the neighborhood called “Shito-Kan Isshin-Ryu” specializing in Okinawan Karate. The Senseis were a married black belt couple Laura and Rob Chartier. Kyra faithfully attended 3 sessions weekly and on March 19<sup>th</sup>, obtained her official Karate – Kobudo Patch in a Ceremony at the Oakland University gymnasium, making her an official member of the North American Beikoku Shido-kan Association.

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Kyra wowed us all by her performance as the “Tin Girl” in Wizard of Oz at Hart High School. We were not aware till that moment of what a fine singing voice she had until she sang the solo “If I had a heart”. The rendition brought some of the family members to tears of emotion.



*Kyra as the “Tin Girl” in Wizard of Oz performance*

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, I had my 1<sup>st</sup> Video Conference with the Fujisawa team in Japan. A video conference is a set of interactive telecommunication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously. It has also been called 'visual collaboration' and is a type of groupware. Video conferencing differs from videophone calls in that it's designed to serve a conference rather than individuals. Video conferencing uses telecommunications of audio and video to bring people at different sites together for a meeting. This was as simple as a conversation between our two teams in large conference room at each of our different sites. Besides the audio and visual transmission of meeting activities, video conferencing was also used to share documents, drawings, computer-displayed technical information, and whiteboards. It was a great new experience.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we took Leanne and the twins to Club Med at Santa Lucia in the Caribbean.



*The happy travelers in Santa Lucia – April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2001*

We arrived at the Club Med facilities in the early afternoon on Saturday and were met by the usual group welcoming committee of “GOs”, singing and clapping their hands. The area was relatively small but nicely laid out and everyone, especially the twins, enjoyed themselves splashing in the pool and playing on the white sandy beach. Every night there was a show and we all had a great time. The week passed too quickly and we were on our way home before we knew it – then we had a minor “glitch”. Due to bad weather we were re-routed to St.Kitts, in Puerto Rico for an unscheduled stopover of 10 hours till the weather cleared for our return to Detroit.



May started with a couple of “hiccups”, at the start of the month our tenants moved out from our Lee Road property in Sedona after delinquency in their lease payments and some water damage in the lower level. This initiated a temporary drain on our saving by us having to pay for two mortgages. Then on May 4<sup>th</sup>, I had to undergo surgery on my left shoulder due to a severe and painful build up of bursitis. However on a positive side, we had the father of one of Kyra’s classmates do a major renovation of our basement and install the full height wooden cabinets in our bedroom and basement. We brought these cabinets in a disassembled form from our residence in Togliatti and they greatly assisted us to bring our new home in order as well as make it more attractive.

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Kyra went with her Hamilton 5<sup>th</sup> Grade class on an overnight trip to Chicago; Bev also accompanied the trip as one of the parent volunteer chaperones. The group travelled on an “Indian Trails” tour bus and had a great time visiting the Museum of Science and Industry and the Lincoln Park Zoo, enjoying a meal at “The Medieval Times” complete with a “Jousting Show” between knights in armor on horse back. They also visited Shedd Aquarium, the largest indoor *aquarium* in the world, with more than 8000 aquatic animals, and Chicago’s oldest planetarium, the Adler, constructed in 1913. The sphere is 15 feet in diameter with 692 holes drilled through its metal surface.



*Elena Andreevna at her home in Rockville, Maryland*

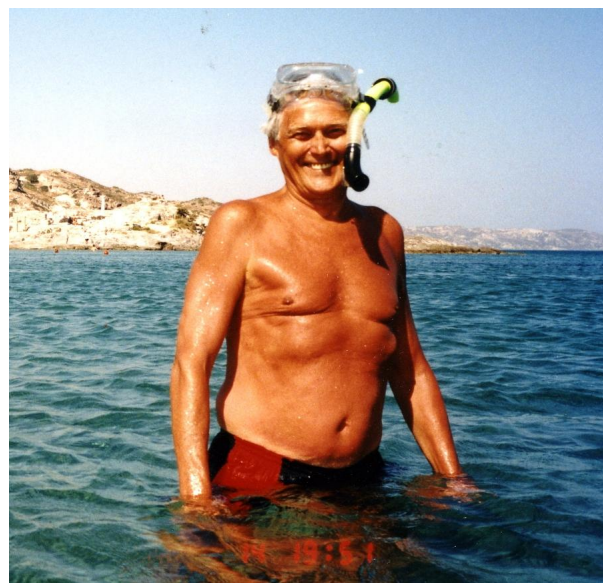


On May 26<sup>th</sup>, I visited Elena Andreevna and Igor at her home in Rockville, sadly it was the last time that I saw Elena Andreevna as she passed away on October 27<sup>th</sup> of that year. The visit went well although Elena Andreevna was a little confused, Igor, as was usual during that period, refused to be photographed but did prepared a sumptuous tasty dinner which I enjoyed greatly.

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, I completed 40 years with General Motors and on June 10<sup>th</sup>, Bev, Kyra and I were off on a 2-week vacation to Europe. This was a very interesting, pleasant and educational trip as we started with a 3-day visit to Rome and did tours of "Classic and Imperial Rome", a visit to Naples and a full guided tour of the excavated ruins of Pompeii. From there we proceeded to Athens where we spent another two wonderful days touring "Classic Athens". After that, we made our 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to Club Med at Kos, Greece, where we spent a wonderful week on the beautiful Mediterranean Sea



*The "trio" at the Persopolis in June, 2000*



*Son of Poseidon at Kos – June, 2000*

We returned home on June 24<sup>th</sup>, just in time for the annual picnic at Al Bzenko's home in Rochester.



*John, Olga and Al Bzenko – June, 2000*



Bev knew Al and his siblings for many years and would visit their aviary – “The Busy Bee”, often when Leanne and Steve were just children. I got to meet him just after our marriage in 1986 and we took 60 lbs of his wonderful honey with us when we moved to Russia – much to the amusement of the Russians, since honey is readily available there and the local “aviaries” pride themselves in having bees with selected flower pollinating to cure all kinds of specific health ailments.

Each summer Al and his siblings would have a picnic on their property for selected friends and long term customers. It was a very pleasant and relaxing afternoon, the people were all very nice and very interested on our “Russian” adventure and Al and his siblings were very gracious hosts. Sadly, Olga and John have since passed away, but we still visit Al as often as we can and always attend his summer picnics.

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, we all departed on our 1st visit back to Russia, where I stayed till the 14<sup>th</sup>, due to a previously scheduled business trip to Fujisawa, while the girls stayed in Russia till July 25<sup>th</sup>. This was a wonderful and somewhat emotional trip as we got reunited with dear friends who we haven’t seen in a year. The “welcoming” committee at the Samara Airport had a surprise for us – a beautiful 4-month German Shepherd pup called “Viarda”. This was a present for us to take home, as I always stated that I would love to have a Shepherd dog as a pet.



*First view of Viarda (Ardie) as a pup – 4 months old*

The name “Viarda” is an old Russian name dating to the Viking period in history and was given to the pup because she was born on March 8<sup>th</sup>, and based on Russian thoroughbred pedigree rules, all dogs born in March had to have their names start with a Russian “V” – why?....I do not know!

We fell in love with her on first sight! Never saw such huge ears on a Shepherd and she was extremely friendly, playful and altogether lovable. Due to the close similarity of her name to “Viagra”, we decided to call her “RD” for Russian Dog or “Ardie” as she became to be known in the US after our return. Our visit started by a series of pleasant outings to our close friends’ dachas on the outskirts of Togliatti. In summer, most of the residents of Russian towns, spend their entire days planting and cultivating vegetables and fruits on their plots of land outside the town in the rich Russian black soil. The “Russian Soul” is very closely associated to the land and it is a very healthy, both physical as well as a spiritual experience. It is also very practical as in this way they stock up the essential food items, such as potatoes, cabbage, and preserved fruits, for the harsh Russian winter. Some also raise chickens and ducks for that purpose. It keeps the family members together and is a very warm heritage where all of the family members can interface and share their joys and woes together.

I also had an opportunity to visit with some of my former work colleagues and bring myself up to date on the VAZ/GM activities and challenges, not that anyone from GM back home would be interested. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, I had to leave and on my return stopover at Frankfurt, had a very pleasant Chinese dinner at the airport terminal with my dear Shanghai friend, Teddy, who drove up from Koln to see me. After a day in the US, I was on the plane again heading to Tokyo/Yokohama/Fujisawa. This was a short but important trip, it only lasted 3 working days but covered a lot of program status reviews of Engineering changes, corrections and program timing revisions. Also this time we had a team member who was Japanese/Brazilian, and the two of us broke away from the group and had all of our dinners at Japanese grills and restaurants. Delicious!

On my return, our handyman friend, James finished the false ceiling in our basement as well as the cabinet installation work and our new home took on a more “livable” appearance. We also equipped ourselves with our first cell phones. Bev and Kyra returned to the US on July 25<sup>th</sup>, just 2 days after my return from Japan and we were all united again and on July 29<sup>th</sup>, Kyra gets her Green Belt



*Kyra receiving her Green Belt (4<sup>th</sup> Kyu) from Seikichi Iha Hanshi – 10<sup>th</sup> Dan Master*



On July 29<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I had dinner at Mountain Jack's with her Elwood High School classmate, Jody and her husband George Comas, along with and Mr. and Mrs. Martin J. Caserio, a retired General Motors vice president and former general manager of GMC Truck & Coach, who, back on the 1972 Cobo Hall Auto Show, prophesized that the 26-foot motor home that was exhibited there, was the representative of GMC's long-term development program for a new chassis and body adaptable to a variety of purposes. It was the first application of the new GMC chassis and body design, and development work was continuing for other potential applications, such as a small bus for metropolitan transit operations, an ambulance and rescue vehicle, a mobile medical clinic, a vehicle for physically-handicapped riders, an airport bus and a display or service van. All of this occurred in the following years.



*Martin J. Caserio and wife – July, 2000*

He listened to my account of the work that I was doing and told me to say “Hi” to the current Manufacturing Director. On impulse, days later as I passed the Director in the hallway at work, I said – “Martin Caserio says Hi”. My boss, who was walking with me made a choking sound, but the Director, after being momentarily startled, smiled and said – “Thanks, how is he doing”. I was always a glutton for attention, and after that moment my bosses looked at me cautiously with some apprehension. This did not bother me for I was never very respectful to authority but I am sure it did not help my career.

August was another busy month for all of us. Kyra was rehearsing for her performance with the “Hamlin Pipers” at the Michigan Annual Renaissance Festival. Dad had his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday which Bev

and Kyra attended at Houghton Lake without me because of work obligations and we put up our Lee Mountain Road, Sedona property for sale due to a 4-month lack of tenants. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Kyra transferred to the Reuther Middle School to start her 6<sup>th</sup> Grade classes. I also sold all of my GM stock and reinvested in others per advice from our broker, also for most of that month, I had to undergo therapy exercises 3 times a week to get my shoulder back into shape.

In September, I made a brief weekend visit to San Francisco to see Andrei and Nina Andreevna and Bev started to take Russian Language classes at Oakland University to retain her knowledge of that language. Ardie, started her “obedience classes” also that month and learned very quickly the basics in 2 languages after only 8 sessions. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, we received a surprise double birthday present from Steve and Shanan – a Train Ride with a “Murder Mystery Dinner”.



*Ready to board the “Star Clipper” for our Murder Mystery Dinner – Sep 9, 2000*

This was an enjoyable 3 hour ride with little or no scenery but a nice candle light dinner and a “Murder Mystery” show in which we all participated and enjoyed. We were very touched by Steve and Shannan’s thoughtfulness.

The following month, on October 12<sup>th</sup>, I also got a pleasant surprise by receiving my first Social Security check with an additional 50% for Kyra since she was still a minor. We put her checks into a College Advantage Fund and this helped a lot in insuring that she would get a college education after completion of her high school.



Later that month, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, over a year since our return from Russia, I was contacted by a management consultant that was hired by GM to review difficulties that are encountered on International Staff Personnel (ISP) assignments during their tenure abroad. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> and only time that GM ever expressed an interest on my 8-year assignment overseas. In my lengthy report, I focused on my last 3 years in Elabuga, Tatarstan. Here is a small extract -

#### Lack of Leadership and Direction -

- No Managing Director on site to serve as a “nucleus” for the I SP Team development. This resulted in -
  - Low priority and major lack of sensitivity to I SP needs and family related circumstances on site. This has resulted in a 100% rejection rate in the recruitment of new I SP’s for this venture.
  - Excessively lengthy and “low value” Staff meeting held with poor agenda preparation and often improper meeting locations necessitating travel at excessive costs. Large part of meeting (over 75%) were spent on up-dates of prior uncompleted commitments.
  - Lack of daily feedback from subordinates and employees resulting in an archaic, autocratic, “Management by Objective” style in management with resulting negative morale effect on ALL of the I SP and local employees.
- Inappropriate applications of locally developed “Procedures”
  - All new hires MUST be interviewed by 3 managerial level employees, however NO ONE really gets their input till after a person is hired..... if even then!
  - Local employees get erroneous, sometimes conflicting messages and examples from the expatriate I SP Team.
- No clear definition of “Roles and Responsibilities” on the executive level. This often results in duplication of effort, costly misuse of funds on the purchase of inappropriate equipment and tensions between key members of the Joint Venture team.
- Miss-usage of Company funds for personal-related activities -
  - Transportation charges for guests and relatives for the wedding reception of an I SP department head.

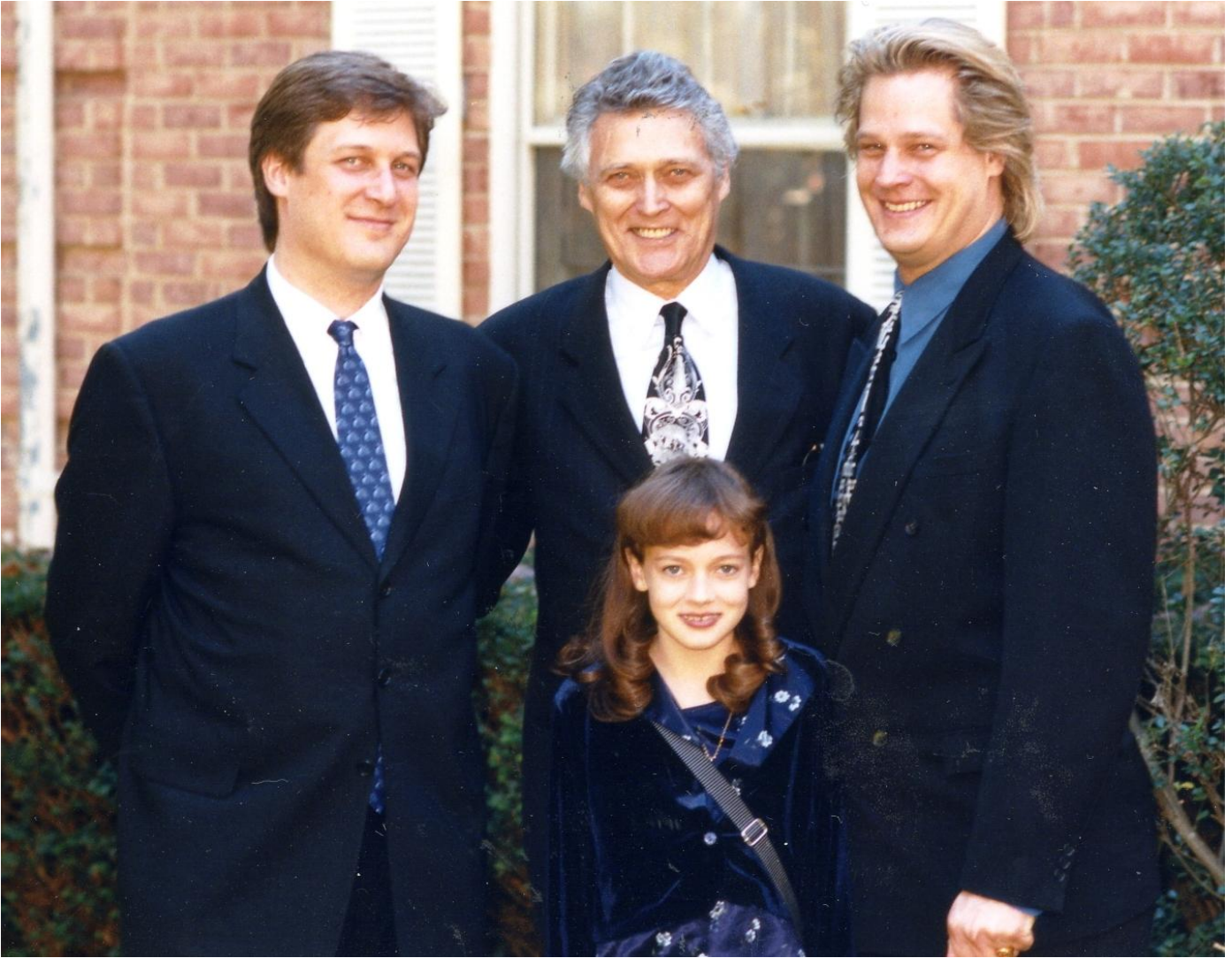
#### Daily Operational Difficulties -

- US/Europe and/or GM Brazil sourced GM procedures are NOT always directly adaptable to the local conditions and some “thoughtful” restructuring and training is required prior to their application.
- Excessive drinking and unbecoming behavior on weekends and on business trips due to the lack of appropriate recreational facilities and or family influence.
- “Jingoistic” remarks and humor by some of the senior I SPs that is offensive to Russian natives. Films such as “Rambo I I”, “Top Gun”, “Hunt for Red October”, accompanied by remarks such as - “Here’s where the Americans beat the Russians”.



The consultants were shocked by my report and included it verbatim in their report to the Executive Committee. I never received any feedback from GM but I am sure this terminated any future overseas assignments for me.

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, we received the sad news that Elena Andreevna Kamkin passed away at the age of 87 years. She was a very warm and charming lady and the older sister of my ex-mother in law, Nina Andreevna Sapelkin. She was also Kyra's godmother and arranged Kyra's Baptism in 1989. We always enjoyed visiting with her and her warm "motherly" hospitality, which remained unchanged even after my divorce from her niece. We immediately flew to Washington DC to attend her funeral and the "wake" at her home.



*Rare picture of me with my 3 "kids" – October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000*

On our return, on November 12<sup>th</sup>, we had a major inundation in the basement of our new home. The sump pump failed and we ended up with 2" of water in the basement. Fortunately most boxes were either plastic or on tables and desk. None the less it was not a pleasant experience and expedited us in getting a back-up pump system.

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, Bev and Kyra took one of Kyra's classmates, Crystal to see the "Lion King" in Toronto. At the same time I visited Nina Andreevna and Andre in SFO where we had a wonderful, but

expensive lobster dinner. Nina Andreevna insisted on sharing the tab, but I lied on the amount and picked up 75% including the tip.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, we were hit by a blizzard which was very with severe snow of 12" in one day. "Ardie" loved it. It was her 1<sup>st</sup> snow and she ran around leaping in the air catching snowballs – a real "Snow Dog".



*Ardy's 1<sup>st</sup> Snow experience*

We ended the year 2000 by checking out the Christmas Mass on Monday at the Orthodox Church – St. Mark on Auburn Road, close to our home then, on the next day, December 26<sup>th</sup>, with a Family Christmas Presents opening at Parkland Court followed by a 2-night visit to Mom and Dad at Houghton Lake. New Year's celebration was at the Hilton Suites.

The year 2001 also went by real quick. Some of the "highlights" were -

**January** - We saw the stage performance of "Les Miserables" on the 6<sup>th</sup>, with one of Kyra's classmates and her parents. We drove there and back in a rented limousine and enjoyed the show tremendously for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time, the music, lyrics and general synopsis is fabulous.

Following that, on the 8<sup>th</sup>, Bev progressed on her Russian classes and started a new semester with Russian II.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, we went to a Pizza Birthday party for Luba, another of Kyra's classmates and met her Russian parents and their guests who have recently immigrated to the US. It was fun chatting with them in Russian and hearing their stories on the trials of fitting into the American culture and way of life. One of the guests shared with me his amazement on how Americans threw out old appliances that broke down. He used to collect them and take them home and after making the necessary repairs, sell them as used but workable items. This got him through his initial days in this country until his English was good enough for him to get hired as a mechanic in one of the bigger firms. He was an Electrical Engineer by profession in Russia.



On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Bev had a "Photo Shoot" at Kyra's Karate Class, taking group pictures of students and instructors performing their "combats" and ceremonies.



*On our way in a limo to see "Les Miserables"*

**February** – I started the month by attending a series of meetings on a newly proposed project entitled the "A-Fun". This was a small (4-seats) sports vehicle, designed on the "Baby Hummer" platform for marketing to the young (18-25yr old), adventurous crowd. It was an opportunity for me to a promotion to the next level. However this did not last long as the project was shot down by the GM Financial Committee as too low on profit.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, finally, after 7 months of double mortgage payments, we were advised that our Sedona property was sold with a small return on our initial investment. To celebrate, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, we took the train to Toronto to see "Mama Mia" with Kyra and Bree, another one of her classmates, for another wonderful show with music from ABBA and highly recommendable, especially for "old" hippies. We stayed at the "Old Colony Inn", lunched at the "Toronto Hard Rock Café", visited the CN Tower and the Science Center. Also spent an entire day shopping at the "Eaton Stores" near our hotel.

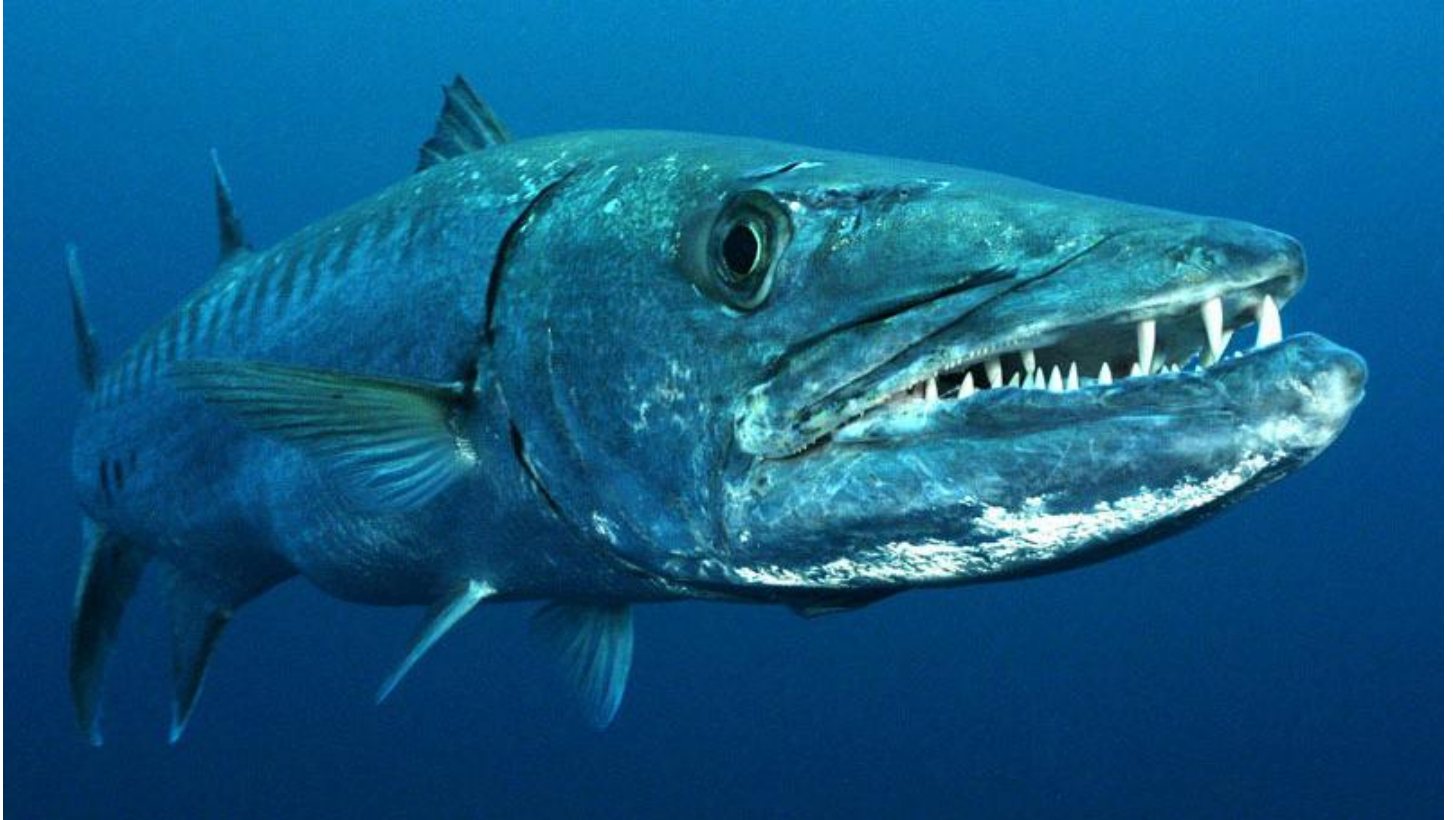
On the 24<sup>th</sup>, after an overnight stay, we celebrated Kyra's 12th Birthday Party at Hilton Suites.

**March** – On the 26<sup>th</sup>, I attended a course entitled - "GM Approach to Quality". This covered all of the major Quality approaches that were advocated for the Automotive Industries by such "Gurus" as Edward W. Deming, Joseph M. Juran, Genichi Taguchi and Philip B. Crosby, to name a few. Each proposed a slightly different version of the same thing – Improvement in Quality of Manufacturing. I was well familiar with all of them and also sadly to the fact that so was GM but the "Financial Quarterly Profit Statement" surpassed any and all expenditures on "Approaches to Quality". It is unfortunate that GM Executive Financial Staff never understood Philip B. Crosby's statement that – "Quality if Free". It does not involve hiring more inspectors to inspect the inspectors – it involves in providing the proper instructions, tools, material and environment to the assembly line worker. Toyota



Motors, which is symbolic for good quality, even though it received some bad press later in 2010, always believed that “there are NO bad workers, only bad managers”.

**April** – On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the three of us spent a week’s vacation in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic during Kyra’s “Spring Break”, where we snorkeled, swam, lazed in the sun and did a general thawing of our bones on the beautiful Caribbean beach. We now had to schedule our vacations with Kyra’s school breaks, plus required to do some budgeting since there was no more GM-paid R & R trips! Ouch! This was our 2<sup>nd</sup> visit to this area, this time with Iberastar instead of Club Med. The snorkeling was fun until I encountered my 1<sup>st</sup> barracuda, eying me from a distance of 10 feet. Fortunately I was a couple of hours ahead of her usual dinner time of ~ 4 pm and after giving me a cold eyed stare it drifted away while I swam furiously to the beach.



*My 1<sup>st</sup> and only glimpse of a barracuda.*

Also on this visit we met two Russian couples on vacation with their kids, who were Kyra’s age. We had a great time chatting in Russian and getting acquainted.

**May** – This month started with a colonoscopy for me, which confirmed my good health in not too pleasant a manner and at month’s end I celebrated my 41-year anniversary with General Motors (nearly 20 years of which were spent on overseas assignments). How time flies when you are having fun!?! Kyra was also given a tour of the GM Pontiac Engineering Center by one of my colleague on a “Father/Daughter” visiting day.

At the end of the month, Leanne, finalizing her divorce, moved out of “Chestnut Hollow” to an apartment in Rochester, not far from our home and hired on at the local post office as a mail carrier.

**June/July** – On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, we paid a visit to our old “stomping grounds” in Russia. The girls went for a month and had a tour of the “Golden Ring” around Moscow, visiting ancient monasteries,

cathedrals and historical sites, some over 1,000 years old. I came later on July 1<sup>st</sup> for 10 days and reminisced with old friends and colleagues in Togliatti. We had a grand time, although the local people still grumble about prices and unemployment – much improvement was noticeable, new construction, cleaner streets, better-dressed people, more smiles and laughter. It's easier to observe such thing after a period of absence.



*Visiting our former driver, Valentin and his lovely family at his home in Togliatti – July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001*

Shortly after our return home on July 11<sup>th</sup>, I paid off the loan on the Cadillac Deville and Bev purchased a brand-new 2001 model Pontiac Montana Extended Van with 7-seats, VHS Screen in the middle row, and all of the luxury trimmings with % interest on the payments. She still has this beautiful all-white with beige moldings vehicle.

Bev then had two 40-year High School reunions, one in Belleville, Michigan on July 14<sup>th</sup>, and the other one in Elwood, Indiana on July 27<sup>th</sup>. She had a great time meeting her former classmates and I enjoyed checking out her old boyfriends!

**August** – We started the month with the foundation being laid for a new 22' by 10', 4-Season Glass Enclosed Patio Room that we purchased at the house entrance to our back yard.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> weekend, Kyra participated again, with the Hamlin Pipers at the Michigan Renaissance Festival as part of a music group formed by her school while Ma & Pa wandered around the festivities chewing on delicious turkey drumsticks and observing the frolics, bawdy buxom wenches and handsome noblemen dressed in their refinery. Leanne, Steve with family also joined the festivities dressed in their period costumes.

Later that month on the 24<sup>th</sup>, I visited #2 son Andre in San Francisco and spent a long weekend seeing old friends in the Bay Area and enjoying the Chinese cuisine and shashlik made by Andre and Grisha (a recent Russian émigré) in the Sapelkin backyard. I returned home on the 27<sup>th</sup>, just in time to receive a phone call from a Russian historian and author who was doing research in St.Petersburg,



tracing the Kalageorgi family tree and roots. It was then that I discovered for the 1<sup>st</sup> time that I am a direct descendant fro Empress Catherine the Great of Russia.

**September** – I was at work when Andre called me from San Francisco and, in a very agitated voice, pleaded with me to go home immediately, as he was fearful for my safety at GM. The events of September 11 were observed on national TV like a blockbuster action movie – the mind just could not comprehend that this was happening in real life! The rest of the month went by in a daze and shock of our vulnerability. Grief for the deceased and lost mounted as the month progressed.



*Second plane hits the Twin Towers – September 11, 2001*

**October** – This was an angry period, where vengeance was on most minds. However life goes on and, after much coaxing on our part, Mom & Dad put their Houghton Lake cottage up for sale and made plans to move closer to us at Oakridge Drive, Rochester Hills, just a short walk from our home. We were getting concerned about their isolation from the rest of the family during the winter, being 250 miles upstate from us due to heavy snowfalls, freezing lakes and their age and Mom's deteriorating health.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, we purchased and installed a hot tub spa for our deck in the back and enjoyed many a starlit night sitting in the soothing massage of the hot swirling waters and jets, especially when the weather got colder.



**November** – Things started to calm down and we were busy in relocating Mom & Dad to their new apartment before the winter set in. Thanksgiving was spent at home with the extended family and this year in particular we understood how much we have to be thankful for!

After a few adjustments our outdoors hot spa was operating beautifully and most evenings we enjoyed sitting in it and watching the stars and/or snowflakes. It was a wonderful experience sitting in 102 degrees whirlpool water jets while the ambient temperature is 10 to 20 degrees.



*Wonderful Hot Spa – winter of 2001*

However, we became a little constricted in our travels due to Kyra's school and our German Shepherd semi-pup at home and greatly reduced our overseas jaunts. At the close of the month Kyra competed and passed her tests for a black stripe on her karate green belt!

**December** – On the recommendation of our wise President George W. Bush we spent the initial days of the month in "Shopping! Shopping! And More Shopping!" for next year's boost in the economy by "Paying! Paying! And More Paying!" However Christmas is always a happy affair, particularly now with 4 grandkids close by!

About this time, I started thinking about retiring from GM since things were coming a little "unglued" at the Pontiac Engineering Center when the Truck Division merged with the Car Division. Many changes in management and much hostility between the two divisions in the jockeying for control and turf!.

I could foresee my "good days" with GM were coming to an end, since all of the senior managers that appreciated and valued my contributions were either retired or dead.

## **Inserts**

### **To Chapter XIX – Return (2000)**

- That spring, I was determined to get back, somewhat, to my former younger physical shape. With that goal, I signed us up at a neighboring Fitness Center. I went there faithfully three times a week in the early hours prior to driving to work. The center was small and I soon got to know most of the members. My favorite was a small bald guy who claimed that as he lost his hair he also lost his name – being known hence forth as “the bald guy”.

## Chapter XX – Manufacturing Engineering at the Warren Center (2002 to 2004)

"The greatest griefs are those we cause ourselves." –Sophocles

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, we saw Part 1 of the Russian version of the 6 part movie - "War and Peace" – at the Oakland University as part of Bev's Russian class. It was long but very well done with much attention to historical content, costumes and events. Later that month we discovered and visited a Russian Grocery Store, purchasing many familiar food items that we loved in Togliatti. That evening we also had a "bonafide" Russian Dinner at "The Fiddler" restaurant complete with borscht and pelemeni.

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, I started my new assignment working for one of my worst managers in the "Global Vehicle Launch" group. This brought to mind the old Chinese proverb – "Be wary of what you ask for – you may get it." As my job was deteriorating due to the re-adjustments that were taking place due to the merging of the Car and Truck divisions, my "good" boss was re-assigned and I was left "boss-less" like a "Ronin" – a "Japanese Masterless Samurai" –



"Quo Vadis" now?



On March 4<sup>th</sup>, in our initial interview, I was told by my new supervisor – “Your prior experience is of NO interest to me, all I want to know is what skills do you possess.” My response was that anything that she needs done I can provide the necessary skills. Good way to start! Thus started my exposure to the worst face of GM insider politics, back-stabbing and “turf” wars. The very name of the group was very misleading. When I applied for the job, “Global” meant to me “Overseas”, it became very obvious from the start that “Global” meant nothing – the management of this group even thought that Togliatti was in the Ukraine and plant start-up was just paper shuffling and fancy figure juggling. It reminded me of our attitudes at the plant when I worked in Fremont of referring to the “Central Office types” that would come down and “help” us with the start-up as “Seagulls – that fly over, crap all over the place and then fly home”. Now I was one of them.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, I got a surprise visit by some VAZ friends, who were attending the SAE Exhibit at Cobo Hall. I drove down to their motel and we had a pleasant dinner at an adjoining steakhouse reminiscing about our work together and our mutual friends. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, we, as a family joined a Fitness Center, where for a while, I religiously went 3 times a week for a 45 minute work out and a swim before driving to work.

In early April, we took the train at Windsor for Toronto and spent a weekend with Kyra’s former tutor, Bev’s former student, Anuta and her husband Sasha. We started out with a wonderful Japanese Hot Plate dinner at a “Behihana” restaurant close to the “Westin Harbor Castle” hotel where we stayed. The next day we had a brief tour of the area where Anuta and Sasha lived, it was a Polish community and reminded me as a cross between Detroit’s “Poletown” where I worked when I was with the Cadillac Assembly plant in Hamtramck and Haight Ashbury in San Francisco during the “Hippie Days”. We had a wonderful Polish lunch and then proceeded to the “Indigo Bookstore” to browse in their wonderful assortment of used books from all over the world. It was great to see them and we left reluctantly, promising to repeat our visit soon.



*Behihana – Toronto on April 5, 2002*

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, we attended the Russian Culture Exhibit @ International Night at Oakland University. We all put on our “Russian” outfits and displayed a large portion of our collection of art craft and souvenirs that we brought with us from Russia. There was a large audience and we enjoyed ourselves in sharing our knowledge of the Russian culture and our experiences there.



*"Russians" at the Oakland University International Night*

At home we had a major "Backyard Re-Landscaping" and Tile work done as well as contracted a total replacement of our kitchen cabinets and counters

At work, things were not running smoothly for me. Some of it was my fault since I was never one to take well to "authority and control", this was also exacerbated by my many years of working away from management and being my own boss. However, it rankled me when my input was constantly curbed at group meetings. My new supervisor provided minimum direction, generally kept very sloppy notes and did not readily share information on her meetings with others. Any work that was presented to her was very thoroughly "nitpicked" for sentence structure and terminology. Limited direction was provided but the end result had to be edited completely in HER format.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, I received my 1st letter from Sergei Nicolaevich Novikov. He was a very prestigious historian and member of the Russian Academy of Science. It also turned out he was a distant relative being also a descendent of Catherine the Great of Russia through one of the daughters of my ancestor Ivan Christophorovich Kalageorgi, Empress Catherine's son-in-law. Professor Novikov was doing research on his family tree with the intention of publishing a book and was looking for details from that period. My son Andre met him personally in Moscow later and provided much valuable details and research information.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, work was initiated on the kitchen cabinet replacements and two new counter tops were put in, greatly enhancing the appearance of our kitchen and patio areas. Our entire house was getting a distinctively better look than when we bought it. We also purchased a new dishwasher, microwave, range and double-door refrigerator. About that time, I also gave my 1<sup>st</sup> presentation on Russia to a graduating class of University of Michigan students who were going on a 2-week visit to Moscow and Togliatti with our old friend Dr. Gregory Allar, whom we met during the "Sister City" programs between Togliatti and Flint.



On June 21<sup>st</sup>, we drove to Chicago to meet Igor and Alla Guileff who arrived from Yekaterinburg, Russia, for a 4-week visit with us. I have known Igor since my early teens and haven't seen him since 1953 – nearly 50 years ago. He was a member of the YMCA in Shanghai, when I was there, and a World-class swimmer, holding many awards, records and silver cups for back-stroke and free-style (crawl) swimming. His stepfather, after WWII, emigrated to the USSR, taking him and his mother with him. Igor was reluctant to go, he always wanted to go to the US, but being a dependant minor, had no say in the decision. It was very interesting for both of us to meet after all these years and compare our experiences in two such diverse periods in our young lives.



*Meeting Alla and Igor Guileff @ O'Hare Airport in Chicago*

We met the Guileffs at the O'Hare Airport in Chicago, where they arrived with a load of children from Chernobyl, who were here on a humanitarian visit arranged by a local charity.



After a brief welcoming session with the hugs, greetings and felicitations we took the weary couple to a Day's Inn near the airport for a well earned rest followed by a light supper in the hotel restaurant.



*Our Travel Itinerary with Igor and Alla – “There and Back Again”*

The next day, Saturday, June 22 was a “free day” which we devoted to a mini-tour of Chicago. We started with a quick look at the skyscrapers in the downtown area and took a leisure stroll through a park to the Shedd Aquarium. The highlight of the aquarium was the huge (3 million gallon - 114,000 hectoliter) oceanarium, which gave an overview of the sea life at the Pacific Northwest coast. The oceanarium contained Beluga whales, sea otters and seals, but the stars here were the Pacific white-sided dolphins. Thanks to the massiveness of the aquarium, the dolphins have quite some room to show off their speed to the spectators. We watched them from the underwater viewing gallery as well as during a scheduled show from the ‘amphitheater’. In the evening we went to a local steakhouse and after the Guileffs’ initial amazement on the portion sizes, from that evening onwards, throughout the entire trip, they split their portions in two for both of them.

The next day we were off “Westward Ho!”, spending the night at Jackson, MN enjoying the rustic scenery en-route. It was very rewarding and educational for us to see the USA through their eyes and notice details that we overlooked before. The next morning we were in Mitchell, SD, the site of the famous “Corn Palace”. The original Corn Palace, was established in 1892 when settlers displayed the fruits of their harvest on the building exterior in order to prove the fertility of South Dakota soil. The exterior decorations are completely stripped down and new murals are created each year. The theme is selected by the Corn Palace Festival Committee and murals are



designed by a local artist. Later that evening, after checking into a “Motel 6” in Rapid City and a refreshing swim in the motel’s outdoor pool we proceeded to the famous mountainside carving of the visages of four great American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial Park.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, we checked out of our motel and revisited Mount Rushmore before driving on to see the “Devil’s Tower” in Wyoming.



*The “Devil’s Tower” in Wyoming*

Devils Tower was the first declared United States National Monument, established in 1906, by President Theodore Roosevelt. It is a monolithic igneous intrusion or volcanic neck located in the Black Hills and rises dramatically 1,267 feet (386 m) above the surrounding terrain. In recent years about 1% of the Monument's 400,000 annual visitors climb Devils Tower, mostly through traditional climbing techniques.

The next day, with an early start, we were on our way to The Yellowstone National Park, stopping for an hour’s lunch break at Cody, WY and stretching our legs before proceeding to the beautiful park. On the way we had a little glitch, we did not realize how high we were in crossing the Rockies till we encountered a patch of snow and discovered that we were over 7,300 feet above sea level. I was getting a little out of breath because of my arrhythmia and poor Alla felt ill due to her high blood pressure. Fortunately we got to a lower level pretty soon and everything worked out as we reached the North East Entrance of the park at Silver Gate by 4 pm.

Yellowstone National Park is America's first national park. It is home to a large variety of wildlife including grizzly bears, wolves, bison, moose and elk. Preserved within Yellowstone National Park are Old Faithful and a collection of the world's most extraordinary geysers and hot springs. We spent an entire gorgeous day touring the park and observing the wildlife, geysers and the colorful hot spring

pools of water. Sadly on our departure we drove through large areas of devastated trees that were burnt during the prior year's forest fires.

We traversed the entire length of the Yellowstone National Park, exiting at the North Entrance at Gardiner. We drove through Butte and Missoula, arriving at Spokane, WA at 5 pm on Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, for a visit with our old Russian friend Leonid Bergoltsev and his lovely wife Nina and their daughter Olga. Leonid was a world-class photojournalist who migrated to the US a few years earlier. He visited us in Sunderland in December of 1989 as described in Chapter XIV, page 184.



*Nina, Leonid and Olga Bergoltsev at their home in Spokane - 2002*

The visit was very pleasant, Nina is a great cook and hostess and Leonid shared with us on some of his joys and woes of his life in his new country of residence.

The next day, June 29<sup>th</sup>, we were off to Eugene, CA via Pendleton and Portland, OR. We had a major “photo shoot” at the Paul Bunyan and Babe, the Blue Ox statue, a 31-foot-tall concrete and metal sculpture of mythical logger Paul Bunyan in the Kenton neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. It was built in 1959 to commemorate the centennial of Oregon's statehood during the Centennial Exposition and International Trade Fair, which was held in that area.

After spending a restful night at the Ramada Inn in Eugene, we visited the Redwoods National Park. Among America's greatest and most famous natural treasures are the tallest trees on earth, the coast redwoods. Redwood National Park is home to many of these trees, the most magnificent on earth. The park lands, which are located along the coast of northern California, roughly between Orick and Crescent City, contain about 40% of the remaining old growth redwood forest, which once flourished along the north central and northern California coast. Redwood National Park itself contains 75,452



acres, including 19,640 acres of old growth forest. Visiting this wonderful park was an exciting and spiritual experience with the giant trees, thousands of years old providing a canopy that deadened all external sounds of civilization. After a tour and photo session we continued along the Pacific shoreline to Eureka, arriving at for a nice Chinese dinner and rest at “Day’s Inn” before proceeding to San Francisco on the next day.



*Andre meets us at San Francisco – July 1, 2002*

We stayed at the “Cathedral Hills” hotel on Van Ness Avenue. Centrally located, the Cathedral Hill Hotel was nestled between Union Square and Japantown. It was just four blocks from the California cable car line, eight blocks from Union Square, six blocks to Civic Center and SF Opera Center, and a 10-minute drive to Fisherman’s Wharf. Ideal for our purposes, there was also a swimming pool on the top level of the hotel where we took a dip and enjoyed some sun.

Our son, Andrei, met us and was our tour guide for the duration of our visit. We did all of the “touristy stuff” – Cable Car Ride, Golden Gate Bridge and Park, Fisherman’s Wharf, Alcatraz (we did not take the tour however due to limited time), Chinatown, the Russian Cathedral (it was closed so we did not



go inside) and ended our tour by visiting the Znanie Book Store, where the Guileffs were amazed at the selection of Russian books and artifacts, as well as enjoyed meeting and chatting with Nina Andreevna.



*Literature analysis at the "Znanie Book Store" – July 2, 2002*

The next day we drove to Pacifica to meet with Sidney and Gabby Shaw, Sidney knew Igor from Shanghai and also haven't seen him in 50 years.



*Locating Old mutual friends*

Gabby prepared a sumptuous Chinese lunch and we spent the afternoon going over old photos, identifying mutual friends and their current locations.

The next day, after a nice breakfast, we were on the scenic highway US 1, on our way south to LA. On route, we encountered a flock of lazy sea lions sprawled on the sandy beaches enjoying the balmy breezes from the Pacific Ocean. The scenic route plus the heavy traffic around Los Angeles, greatly delayed our itinerary. We arrived in Hollywood, CA by 8 pm, and after a frantic search for our motel and a quick “fresh-up”, called our Shanghai childhood friend, Eugene Beloff, who was waiting for us since lunch. This delay caused a little aberration in our visit – the eager hosts and their friends, because of the long wait at a “Russian” dinner table were completely inebriated when we arrived!

Eugene, or Zhenia as we knew him in Shanghai was a ranking professional middleweight boxer in his prime and was a favorite contestant in many matches that were held there in the late ‘40s. He like I emigrated to Brazil shortly after the “Liberation” of Shanghai by the Chinese Red Army and later moved to the USA, where he opened up a gymnasium and fitness center in Hollywood and later started his own personal security firm for protection of various movie actors and professionals. I have not seen him since the OCH reunion in Las Vegas where he was responsible for the overall security of the gathering.



*Eugene, Igor and Ben Vorobieff with me at Eugene's home*

Zhenia got re-married a couple of years prior to a lady that recently emigrated from Russia and they had some of their Russian relatives over for the lunch. They were a very pleasant, amusing group, but were somewhat disappointed on the fact that none of us drank alcohol. We were also very happy to meet another old classmate of mine that was there as a guest. Ben Vorobieff was in my class at the St. Joan of Arc College back in 1947, but sadly he did not recollect and/or recognize either one of us.

We did not stay long, partly out of the “happy atmosphere” and mainly because we had a scheduled lunch for the next day with the “Old China Hands” (OCH) group hosted by Zoya Schelikis and our old Shanghai friend Mario Machado. This caused some “hurt feelings” from our hosts as they were



disappointed on the shortness of our visit which they were eagerly anticipating and preparing for some time.

Our lunch with Zoya, Mario and the OCH group was a Chinese banquet at a local Chinese restaurant. The OCH group includes a lot of old acquaintances from prior gatherings and we were happy to discover that another close old friend was also there – Bobbie Augestad and his wife Janet.



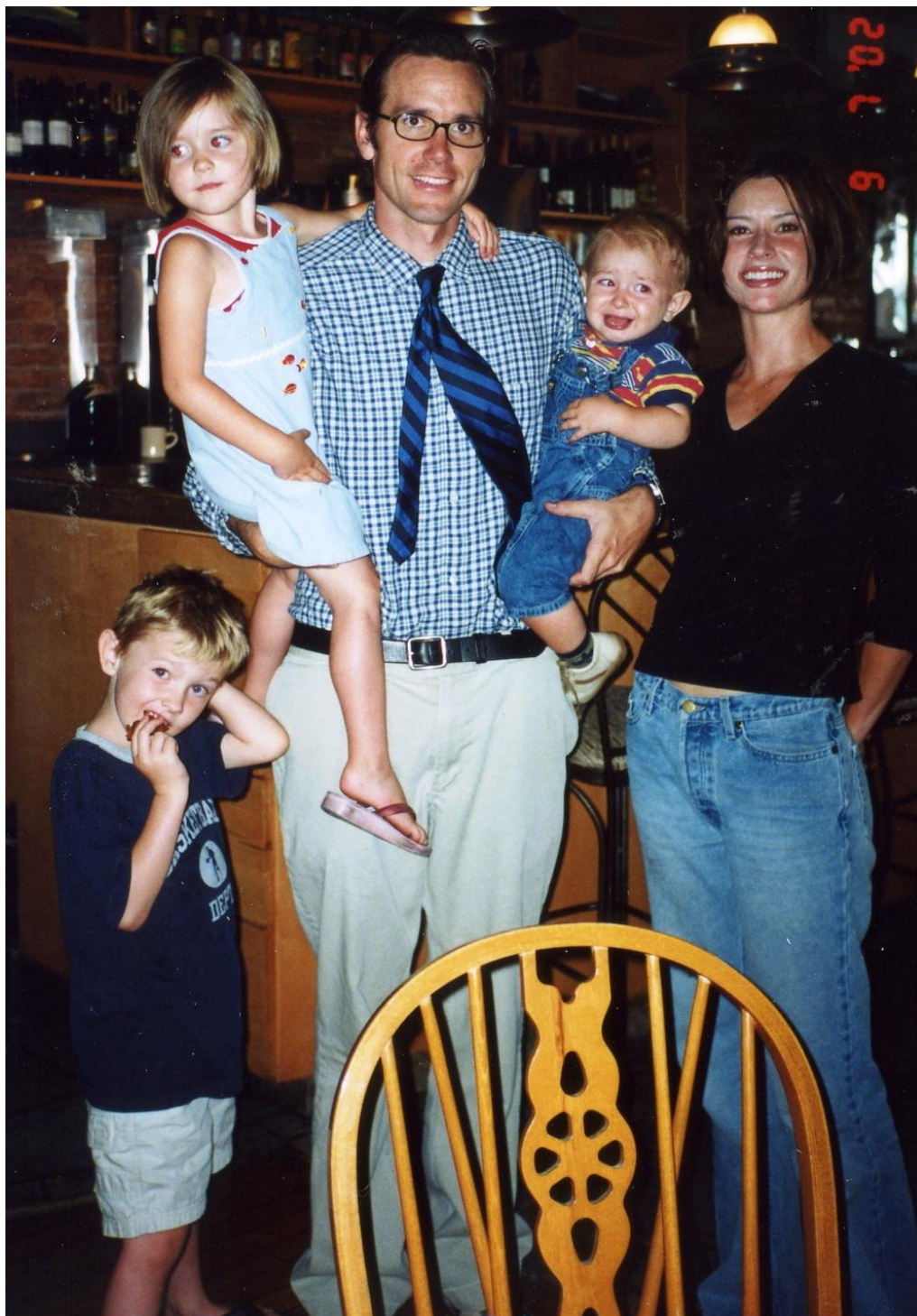
*Mario Machado interviewing Igor Guileff*

The lunch went very well and Igor and Alla were the center of attention, they carried themselves well and answered many questions in regards to their life in Russia and their impressions of their visit to the United States.

Later that evening we visited Zoya at her home and got acquainted with her pets, a dachshund, a large cat and a couple of parakeets. After that we had a small dinner at the “Sizzler” and on the next day we were on our way to the Mohave Desert and beyond. We took a lunch break at Lake Havasu and checked out the “relocated” London Bridge – we were not too impressed, however the resort area was pleasant but somewhat crowded with tourists. We arrived in Flagstaff, AZ by 6 pm and checked in to a pleasant Motel 6 with an outdoor pool on East Butler Avenue.

The next two days we visited with our nephew, Kevin and his wonderful family, his beautiful wife Maureen, and his exceptional kids Isabella, Brendan and Noah. We also took some side trips to visit the glorious panorama of the Grand Canyon and the Red Rocks of Sedona with much photography and wonderment at Mother Nature’s eye-pleasing splendors.

We also had a tour of Kevin's unique art gallery – “The Basement”, featuring old art movies, magazines, posters, paintings, and various antique appliances and furniture. It was always a pleasure to observe and partake in the warm interfacing of this family and we had a great time.



*Brendan, Isabella, Kevin, Noah and Maureen at “Granny’s Closet” for breakfast*

At the conclusion of our visit in Flagstaff on July 9<sup>th</sup>, we all had breakfast at “Granny’s Closet”, a small family cafeteria with home-style cooking. Much to our surprise, one of the consultant professors from Oakland University, whom I met in Pontiac, MI, walked in with his family, they were also vacationing in the area. After a round of introductions and some pleasant chatting, our party took off for Santa



Rosa, NM, where we checked in to a Holiday Inn Express at 6:30 in the evening after a 450 mile scenic drive through parts of the historic “Route 66”, old cowboy watering holes and rustic small towns with their “Old West” flavor.



*Kyra orders a “Western Breakfast”*

The next morning after checking out we stopped over at a friendly “Truck Stop” café for breakfast and were completely flabbergasted by the huge portions. A “Western Breakfast” included 3 eggs, hash browned potatoes, a big chunk of ham, 4 strips of bacon and a 12 ounce steak, with a large freshly squeezed orange juice, thick buttered toast and as much coffee as you can drink! On completion we barely managed to roly-poly ourselves to our van. From Santa Rosa we drove another 571 miles to Claremore, OK, another scenic drive through flat cattle country with little to see, arriving at our next motel stop by 8:30 pm for a quick dip in the motel’s outdoor pool and a much needed restful night’s sleep.

Because of our various “unanticipated” adventures and detours, we had to make a major readjustment of our return itinerary. From Santa Rosa, New Mexico, instead of heading north through the Rockies to Denver, Colorado, we veered east to Oklahoma on Highway 40, arriving at Effington , Missouri by 8 pm after nearly 500 miles of driving with minimal stops. We had a hard time finding lodging at this late hour but managed to find a Motel 6 on the outskirts of Des Moines, Iowa. We were under pressure because I exceeded my estimated timing for the return trip and needed to be back in Michigan to report to work on Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> at the GM Engineering Center. From Des Moines we covered another 500 miles of the balance of our trip for a total of 7,492 miles and 20 days on the road.



We finally arrived home to Rochester Hills at 7 pm on Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup>. Monday, I had to go to work but we still took the Guileffs to visit with our “kids”, Steven and Leanne as well as check out Kyra’s school, Oakland University and Greenfield Village. In the evenings we enjoyed our new hot tub with the Jacuzzi jets and exchanged impressions of our cross country trip. Igor shared with me that he was very impressed on the beautiful artwork on some of our 16-wheeler cross country trucks and trailers, the girth of some of our citizens and the enormously huge portions in our restaurants and diners. He was equally impressed about the state of our highways, the scarcity of “pot holes” and the general hospitality and good nature of Americans. Alla was impressed by the colorful gardens and yard around the individual homes and was determined to start this custom back home after her return to Russia.

On the last evening we took them to our favorite Chinese Restaurant – “Checkmate Stix” for a nice authentic Chinese dinner and on the next day, Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup>, we drove them to Chicago to catch their departing flight at 8:50 pm that evening.



*Farewell*

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, after much encouragements and conversations, Andrei left for Paris to live with his mother. This was for the purpose of getting his life back “on track” and get away from the deteriorating US economy and his “hectic” life style with his “show-biz” friends and acquaintances in the Hollywood area.

The next day, I had a performance review meeting with my supervisor, after I received a 1% raise, the lowest that I have ever gotten in my 40+ years with GM. She indicated that this was partially due to the fact that her interpretation of a decision reached at the close of a meeting held by us with another team, was different from mine. Her manner was somewhat rude and aggressive accusing me of being inattentive at meetings and a major concern to her on my effectiveness. This was a prelude to GM's efforts to purge the enrollment lists of “highly paid” old-timers, so that they could be replaced by younger employees with substantially less benefits and salaries.

On July 29<sup>th</sup>, Kyra departed on her 1<sup>st</sup> flight alone to attend her 1<sup>st</sup> Super Camp in Stanford, California for 10 days. Middle School can be a challenging experience as classes and teachers become more demanding. Students often find themselves struggling to find out who they are, what they're good at and what group of friends they fit in with. At the SuperCamp's Junior Forum middle school summer camps, kids entering grades 6 to 8 discover their individual learning styles and develop skills for dealing with a heavier academic schedule. They also learn how to participate in "real-life" activities that enable them to make responsible choices and win the support, understanding and guidance of teachers and parents. And, of course, they make friendships with students from across the country and the world, discover their talents and strengths and prepare for their transition into high school. The 10- day program was pretty intense and full of activities -

#### **Day 1 – July 29<sup>th</sup>.**

Welcome, arrival, check in, meet your roommate and get settled. Team Leaders facilitated large group games and the energy was high. The afternoon session officially began the journey of learning and discovery. There were introductions of the staff, team-building games, learning activities, a tour of the campus, and dinner with each Camper with his or her new team.

#### **Day 2 – July 30<sup>th</sup>.**

The day began with the introduction to the “8 Keys of Excellence”. This morning was the exploration of the Key “This is It!”, about giving 100% all the time. The Campers learned new techniques that can be used to communicate clearly, resolve conflicts and heal relationships. Also how to be an expert listener, how to memorize facts and take notes at school

#### **Day 3 – July 31<sup>st</sup>.**

This day opened with working on teamwork and trust. The day started with the Key for success – “Speak With Good Purpose”. The Campers learned how to maximize the power of their brains and looked at the power of words. They talked about the intention behind the words and what the real result that was desired from the communication.

#### **Day 4 – August 1<sup>st</sup>.**

This was the day that the Campers participated in the rope course where they were challenged physically, mentally and emotionally. They learned through direct, immediate experience to set a goal, break through barriers, and achieve. They worked together and encouraged each other to success on every event. In the evening, they were given the opportunity to share what they learned about themselves on the course and how they can apply it to their daily lives. The evening closed with

a “Movement Workshop” which was a way for the campers to celebrate their achievements through dance.

#### **Day 5 – August 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

Morning traditions continued, including the Key of “Commitment” and a new memory technique. This was a perfect lead-in to a day of academic rotations including Quantum Study Strategies, Quantum Reading, and Quantum Writing. In the evening, the campers competed in the “X-Game Challenge” and built aircrafts and a paper roller coaster. Lastly, all got to take a look at rejection and peer pressure and how to handle some of the more difficult parts of Junior High.

#### **Day 6 – August 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

The Key of this day was “Integrity”. It was the completion of the last full day of academic rotations, giving the participants many tools to apply to all of their school subjects. They got to review and rehearse their new skills in a crazy fun way, like “Mind Mapping” so that they could take these tools and use them at school and home. The day concluded with individual strength acknowledgments as all received and gave accolades to their teammates and celebrated the camp by a line dance and another X-Game Challenge called the “Handshake Game”.

#### **Day 7 – August 4<sup>th</sup>.**

The Key that was discussed on this day was “Failure Leads to Success” and more work was done on Quantum Academic Strategies, Quantum Reading, and Quantum Writing. This was followed by an X-Game called “Scarf Juggling” which was focused on creativity, from where the campers went to an activity called “Go Ape” which discussed setting goals, overcoming obstacles, asking for assistance, setting a plan and evaluating the process. In the evening, the activity was understanding relationships with different people. The importance of strong relationships, the levels of intimacy, and how to appreciate the relationships in their lives. There was a discussion on intimacy – forms, levels and the appropriateness of different levels of intimacy and how to apply it in real life.

#### **Day 8 – August 5<sup>th</sup>.**

The Key of this day was “Flexibility” and more work was done on Quantum Academic Strategies, Quantum Reading, and Quantum Writing. This was followed by an X-Game called “Titanic Panic” and “House of Cards”. At night the campers explored and expressed their inner selves through Poetry

#### **Day 9 – August 6<sup>th</sup>.**

This day, the campers emphasized the Key of “Ownership”. This was done through stories and real life connections about responsibility. This was followed by the last rotation of Quantum Academic Strategies, Quantum Reading, and Quantum Writing. These rotations shared strategies for becoming a better student in a particular area and ways to win the game of school. Later the kids were put to a test on “Reality Simulation”, this was where they put to work what they have learned to real life scenarios. They also took part in team games that were designed to promote team communication and efficiency, so each child could apply what they learned, make connections with others, and show trust for one another as teammates.

#### **Day 10 – August 7<sup>th</sup>.**

Graduation Day! Now was the time to celebrate the learning and discover the Key of Balance. It was also a day of parting from teammates and other people with whom the participants have connected, and rejoining family and friends with new thoughts and feelings, skills, and experiences to share

We arrived on August 6<sup>th</sup>, for Kyra's Graduation at Stanford in Palo Alto and then visited with Nina and Kirill in San Francisco till August 13<sup>th</sup> . We took this opportunity to visit the San Francisco Zoo



and paid our respects by visiting Semen Ivanovitch's grave in the Serbian cemetery. Kirill treated us to a dinner of a freshly caught salmon. It is unbelievable how much better it tastes than the frozen store bought fish. We also found the time to visit the Academy of Science museum in Golden Gate Park and drive down to have a great Chinese dinner with Sidney and Gabbie Shaw, Jackie and Sylvia Ferras and Alfie and Barbara DaCosta in at the "Golden City" Chinese restaurant in Pacifica.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, shortly after our return home, I had another "entanglement" at work with my dauntless supervisor. In the process of attempting to make our group more understandable to "newcomers", I was in the process of roughing out some slides that would explain in a simplified manner what our goals are and what "measurable" methods are being employed to attain them. Supervisor approached from behind and in an aggressive voice wanted to know what I was doing. Verbally berated me and stated that "an intelligent" way would be to use her "readily available" data and finesse it instead of starting from scratch. She snatched the sheets from my desk, waved them in my face and told me that this is non-value work for GM.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, Leanne gave us a certificate for a complete dinner for two at "Lelli's" for our birthdays. This was a 5-course dinner and we had the best steak "ever!". It was a wonderful dinner with super service, candle lights and a very romantic atmosphere – we enjoyed it tremendously.

At work for a "birthday present" on September 12<sup>th</sup>, my personal work assignment sheet had the following item – "Workshop Follow up, scheduled for completion by 17MAY02 was marked INCOMPLETE - REASSIGNED to M. The actuality was that numerous follow-up were maintained with the group as was shown on internal e-mails. However, my "back-stabbing colleague", M was pursuing a development from which I was isolated but my database was the foundation for his work.

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, I helped Al Bzenko with his bees at one of his aviaries. It was an interesting and innovating experience for me. He decked me out in a complete outfit with heavy gloves and a face net, nevertheless a couple of persistent soldier bees managed to give me a couple of stings right through my heavy cotton socks. It came out that I was pretty resistant to their stings, having more poison than them. Al did most of the work, all I did was move a couple of covers for him however I enjoyed the experience of watching a real professional do his work with precision, affection and dexterity.

The following day, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, Kenny came over to visit with Mom and Dad and we spent some time together at breakfast in our favorite eating place – the "Ram's Horn", where he had the waitresses flustered with his jokes and "straight-faced" kidding. We do not see him too often as at that time he was the personal pilot for Benny Hinn, a televangelist, best known for his regular "Miracle Crusades" – revival meeting/faith healing summits that were usually held in large stadiums in major cities, which are later broadcast worldwide on his television program, *This Is Your Day*. He was constantly flying Benny Hinn's private jet aircraft from country to country.

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, there was a "House warming" party at Steve and Shan'an's new home which they purchase in LaPeer, just a few miles from our neighborhood. The house was large, multi-level with a sauna and stand-up swimming pool in a large back yard with trees and lots of space for the kids to run around. We all had a great time and enjoyed an outdoor barbeque in the rustic fresh air.

October 12<sup>th</sup>, we attended Paul and Clover Aguayo's Wedding. Paul is the son of my dearest friend and "compadre" Lupe, with whom I worked as a Human Resources Adviser at the GM Hamtramck

Assembly plant for some wonderful memorable years. I met Lupe in 1985, approximately 25 years ago. Our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting was not exactly “cordial” since we came from very different backgrounds, I was a no-nonsense; “my-way –or-the –highway” member of management and Lupe was a former UAW Committeeman and an hourly-paid toolmaker.

GM wanted to make the Hamtramck plant a “showpiece” modern plant and initiated a program which called for a Human Resource Advisory 2-man team – 1 from management and 1 from the UAW to break away from the old mutually antagonistic patterns between management and labor.

Over a relatively short time, Lupe and I developed a high level of respect for each other and worked as a perfectly coordinated team to a degree that we became to be known as **THE TWINS**. I am 6’4” tall and Lupe was just over 5’. The reason for the nickname was that we were so in tune with each other that regardless who asked us a question, supervision or worker, they would receive the same answer.



*Pat, Lupe and Nicole their granddaughter*

Lupe taught me a lot of valuable lessons –

1. **INTEGRITY** – never compromise and be consistently honest in dealing with people. He never hesitated in telling anyone, management or UAW, on what the facts were and pointed out where they should reconsider their actions.

2. **ENTHUSIAM** – it was a pleasure to come to work and start the day with Lupe in our commonly shared office and plan the day over our 1<sup>st</sup> cup of coffee together.
3. **PEOPLE SKILLS** – communicate and solicit input from ALL people and draw on their experiences, knowledge and skills to get to the correct solution to a problem.
4. **COMPASSION** - an understanding that all people have basic dignity and should be treated with respect
5. **PATIENCE** – listening to HEAR instead of listening to ANSWER.

I remember with great fondness some of our antics –

**WEEKLY SIGNS IN OUR CORNER OFFICE** – we would write in large letters on a board in our corner office, which was at the entrance to the plant floor, humorous signs such as:

“REORGANIZING IS A WONDERFUL METHOD TO CREATE AN ILLUSION OF PROGRESS WHILE PRODUCING CONFUSION”

“IS YOUR FLY ZIPPED UP BEFORE YOU ENTER A HAZARDOUS AREA”

“GET OUT OF YOUR OFFICE AND SEE WHAT REAL WORKING PEOPLE DO”

**LUPE-ISMS** – he had a lot of wise comments that he would share with me and others:

- There are no mistakes only lessons (how not to do something, constant improvements)
- What you make of life is up to you (you can be as happy or unhappy as you wish)
- Heat travels from a HOT object to a COOLER one, so does anger.

**Lupe was my friend, colleague and brother – I miss him VERY MUCH**

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, we celebrated Mom & Dad’s 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary quietly at their apartment in Harbor chase. It was a simple affair with just the family attending.

On November the 5<sup>th</sup>, Kyra received her Brown Belt at the Shitokan Karate Academy and Bev and I voted in the Presidential Elections for Al Gore. The results are sad history and an accelerated decline of the US as a respected major power in the eyes of the world. Later that month Bev went through an orientation program at the Beaumont Troy Hospital and re-started her work as an RN in the Oncology Department on December 1<sup>st</sup>. In November we also received a very pleasant visit by our nephew Kevin, one of Kenny’s sons, and his wonderful family – Maureen, Brendan, Isabella (Izzie) and Noah. They stayed for a week and we were sorry to see them go back to Maine.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, Andrei flew to join his mother in St.Petersburg, Russia and to work with a Russian Stock trading company. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Dad slipped on the ice as he was going for his mail and fractured a bone in his wrist. Nevertheless the year 2002 ended on a happy note with a family get together, exchange of presents and hugs all around.

The year **2003** started with a series of very heavy snowfalls, nearly 6 to 8 inches for some days in a row. Rochester became very beautiful, especially at night with all the multi-colored outside lighting that decorated many of the homes and reflected from the beautiful white snow drifts and the icicles hanging from the leafless trees or the towering fir trees. Our backyard received many furry visitors – rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, badgers and an occasional deer. Most of the birds flew south but we would have an adventurous feathered visitor like a sparrow, dove or a woodchuck. Unfortunately this



snow also necessitated a lot of shoveling and clearing of our driveway and walkway to the porch as well as salting to enable us to drive out of our garage.



*View of our backyard from our rear window*

The beauty of this winter was somewhat marred by my deteriorating relationship at work with my new management. GM had a fairly decent system in place to monitor and follow progress on new vehicle development from initiation of a specific program to its launch at the designated assembly plants. This plan identified all of the significant deliverables for the Global Vehicle Development Process (GVDP). It had 4 distinct phases and listed the projected start and completion dates for such important occurrences as – Die Planning, Man/Machine Requirements, Assembly Plant Layouts, Styling Freeze, Pilot Models and Assembly Plant Start-ups.

With proper discipline, honesty, and rapid corrections of aberrations and errors, this plan was fully workable. However with the prevailing GM politics and individual struggles for promotions and career enhancements, middle management individuals in lieu of cooperation with each other, looked for ways to customize and re-invent the system with the intent of appearing innovative and unique in the eyes of their management.

This plan required a strict adherence to a “realistically developed” schedule of initiation and completion of clearly designated “milestones”. Serious analyses of road blocks and resolution of them in a timely and efficient manner was needed at each step by a team of knowledgeable and empowered specialists.

#### **Four Phase Global Vehicle Development Process**

<b>PHASE 0</b>	<b>PHASE 1</b>	<b>PHASE 2</b>	<b>PHASE 3</b>
Product Concept is developed from the Voice of the Customer and the Product Business Plan is established.	Product is described in terms of components. Prototypes validated. Manufacturing design completed.	Product is built from production tools	Volume production begins
Product and Process Design is initiated	Mfg Processes, Tools and Equipment Development	Pilot Models (Non Saleable and Saleable) Build – vehicles built with production tooling	System Fill
Initial Product and Process Development starts	Product Development and Validation	Product Post Validation Audit	Acceleration, Continuous Production
Alpha Model Build – vehicles with early design	Beta Model Build – vehicles with production intent	Product Launch	Sell, Service and Market Product
Styling Freeze and Release	Prototype Model Build – vehicles for validation of systems and compliance with specifications	Mfg System Validation	

However, due to the prevailing politics and “turf wars”, middle management devoted their time to “finger pointing” and making their “rivals” look bad instead of dedicating their efforts to solutions.

In February, I was called a “turd” at a meeting by my immediate supervisor because my input, based on years of actual experience, did not coincide with hers, when I recommended some possible solutions to bottlenecks in the programs that we were working on at that time. Over my years with GM, in the various assembly plants, I took a major role in planning and monitoring various new model preparations and start-ups, so my response on being called a “turd” was predictable. This resulted in me being designated to a “Performance Improvement Program” (PIP), which in GM is the initiation of a procedure to be demoted with a reduction in salary. With my long service and excellent performance record over the years, this was unlikely to happen – it was strictly an “intimidation” process that was being used to encourage “older” employees to resign and make room for younger hires with substantially lower salaries, limited benefits and easier to control. A week earlier this happened to two colleagues of mine and they resigned meekly from embarrassment – I refused to be intimidated and hung on.

Later that month, during Kyra’s Spring Break, we took the train to Toronto to visit with our dear friends Sasha and Anuta Bondarenko. It has been a while since we have seen Anuta, who was Kyra’s Russian tutor in Togliatti and one of Bev’s students at the Bank College. This was also the 1<sup>st</sup> time that we met Sasha her husband and dauntless “Anton” their Yorkshire terrier with a great personality. The visit was brief but very pleasant and we took the opportunity to visit the wonderful Toronto Science Center.

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, I gave an hour's presentation to a graduating class of 30 MBA students at the University of Michigan in Flint, MI on our experiences during our 8-year assignment in Russia. They were in route for a 10 day visit to Moscow and Togliatti and later that month from April 19<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>, we took our granddaughter Krystal for a week at Disney World in Orlando, FL. On our return, I misread the date on the tickets and missed our flight home. This resulted in having to spend another night at a hotel in the airport to the annoyance of all concerned.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, I officially completed 42 years with GM; actually it was 43 years of continual employment if we include the time at GMI. Over the years that I spent in the assembly plants, I witnessed a lot of problems that were the direct results of improper engineering in the development of the product. The costs for correction of engineering and design errors rises exponentially as the product nears release since much has to be undone and rework to correct a problem that may have required a relatively simple fix at the early stage.

Quality is imperative for the reputation of a product in the eyes of the paying customer, especially in a highly competitive market such as cars. Toyota learned that a long time ago and kept eroding our market share consistently, but sadly, to many members of our middle management, the main goal was to attain the next level of lower upper management and retire with a fat "golden parachute". Some of the items that I personally witnessed, while working at the Engineering Centre, were –

- Inadequate insulation of the cabin floor panel in a light pickup truck that resulted in temperatures over 120 ° Fahrenheit at the driver's feet during the test drive of the 1st Pilot model. Since all of the dies were already made for the cab sheet metal panels, this resulted in a very expensive re-work to enable the inclusion of a heat shield into a very confined space between the cab floor and the chassis frame.
- Failure of the chassis frame during impact testing. This necessitated the complete revision of the chassis frame from a standard "C" section to a stronger seamless tubular one, resulting in a major overhaul of the entire packaging of the chassis components and attachments.
- The discovery during road tests that the rear wheelhouse covering did not meet the standard requirements of some of the state regulations, thus limiting the sale of this vehicle and requiring an expensive redesign.

All of the above could have been avoided or minimized if proper inter- communication was practiced between the project team members without "finger-pointing" and attention to detailed engineering instead of the time schedule and initial costs.

I was never intimidated by management hierarchy and noticing some of the quality issues on the Cadillac models being designed for release in 2004, that were being ignored by the project teams, I went straight to the top and wrote on May 30<sup>th</sup>, directly to Robert A. Lutz, who was then the General Motors vice chairman of product development. Summary of my comments were -

- ❑ Our objective is to have a high "1<sup>st</sup> time pass rate of Quality Valves" and maximize our production launches within the Quality Glidepath monitoring at the Start of the System Fill at the plants.
- ❑ We must heed the indicators and enhance our discipline to perform corrective action prior to proceeding on this process – that's what "ANDON" (Toyota's system of halting the process until it is permanently fixed) was originally designed for.



- ❑ The regular visits of project engineers to the dealer repair facilities and acceptance by their repairmen of our honest interest in correcting design issues, will go a long way in the early improvement of our quality.
- ❑ This will confirm to the customer that quality is really at the core of our values, get the attention of potential customers who have stopped listening to us and regain some of our eroded market share thus offsetting the additional costs generated by the delays.

To my surprise, I received a reply in less than a week, thanking me for my input and telling me that I would shortly receive a telephone call from Kevin W. Williams, GM North America vice president of quality. Sure enough on June 20<sup>th</sup>, the phone rang at my desk and his secretary asked me if I would have a conversation with him in about 20 minutes. Our ensuing telephone conversation lasted nearly 40 minutes and went very well. I detailed my concerns and offered my recommendations, which were primarily to enforce the use the existing tools available to GM in their audits of quality progress on the models being readied for release to production instead of releasing them with unsolved quality issues passing on their correction to the assembly plants and the customer. He thanked me for my input and very shortly after I noticed a lot more attention being paid on the early solutions to quality issues, however this did not endear me to my immediate management as it made their work more demanding.

About that time, I also started my “Performance Improvement meetings”. The 1<sup>st</sup> was scheduled with a Personnel Department representative and my immediate supervisor at 09:30 on May 6<sup>th</sup>, in the Cadillac Building. My performance deficiencies were listed as follows -

1. Myopic view of workload
2. Not diligent in follow-up with others
3. Not performing at level of responsibility
4. Inadequate quality of work and attention to detail
5. Need to improve skills in use of word processing
6. Lacks professionalism towards others
7. Elevates problems in meetings and presentation

When I asked for some specific instances of the above so that I could take the appropriate action for correction, I was given evasive generalities and vague statements with no substance.

Throughout my entire career with GM, I consistently received superior ratings and steady salary increases. Due to my lengthy assignments overseas, I was bypassed for promotion to the next level, however healthy % increases brought my current salary to well above the mid-range. This was noted by my earlier supervisor when I returned from my Russian assignment. He apologetically told me that he cannot give me a % increase due to my scale but gave me a good merit \$ amount.

In my current job I was grossly underutilized and isolated from anything of significance. My past expertise was totally ignored. Manager was very defensive to any suggestions, perceiving it as criticism of her actions. She consistently interfered in my assigned tasks by meeting and conversing with pertinent parties without sharing this with me in a timely manner.

In July we took two vacation drives down to North Carolina to drop off and pickup Kyra at her “Super Camp” at the Wake Forest University. We had a wonderful time on each trip and were able to visit many friends and see many interesting places. It was a long drive and we took different routes each

time - coming and going. Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive and the Smoky Mountains are fabulous with scenery and abundant wildlife.



*Bob and Katya Lind at their home in Fairfax, VA*

On the way down to drop off Kyra we stopped in Maryland to see Katya, an “English English” teacher from the early days of the Bank College in Russia where Beverly taught “American English” to young Russian College students. Katya studied here at Columbia University on a scholarship and then worked for years for Proctor & Gamble -- here and in Moscow. She was currently living in Fairfax, VA with her husband Bob and their 3-year old daughter, Sasha and was just returning to work after being home with her daughter for 3 years.

After a brief visit to the Luray Caverns, we stopped in Charlottesville, VA to visit with Yuri and Angelina Urbanovich. He is an International Scholar at the University of Virginia, and lectures in the Department of Politics, Human Interaction and the Study of Mind and Human Interaction. We met them years ago at the first Inter-Volga Convention in Togliatti, when he gave a very interesting presentation on different cultural mores, customs and social interactions. They were living at the "Russia House" on the campus with 5 students from Russia who were studying there and lived downstairs in the lower apartment. We toured the campus and later visited Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson. We spent 2 days with them and had some great and interesting conversations about life in general and the current state of the world. It is always rewarding and highly interesting to exchange views and listen to opinions with educated academic level people like Yuri and Angelina. Our conversation took a wide range from Russia's development to global affairs and to my ancestry. Yuri was very interested in my family heritage and encouraged me to register in the “Russian Nobility” membership. I was and still am reluctant to do that since I do not want to get involved in some of their activities which I consider snobbish and elitist. I am respectful to my past and my

ancestry, but life moves on and we should be more concerned about the present and where it leads to in the future.



*Yuri and Angelina Urbanovich*

On the way back from the first trip we returned to Maryland on a faster route to see our oldest son Igor and his friend, Barbara. He had opened a smaller Kamkin Books Store and was working very hard to get it going again. These days one can obtain Russian books and articles easily through the Internet, etc. When the original Kamkin Books was in full swing, they were the "only game in town" and riding quite high. Most of his business is in specialty books and through mail order and the Internet. He had also become a great gourmet cook and we were treated to some wonderful dining!

Traveling back to get Kyra from camp, we were able to meet with Nadya - who also worked with the Bank College in the early days of our assignment in Russia. She went to work with Price-Waterhouse a long time ago and was still with them. Her current client was in Winston-Salem where Kyra's camp was located. Nadya's husband, Igor, arrived only 2 days earlier from Togliatti and we all had dinner at an authentic southern steak & barbecue house. She would be in Togliatti during the time that Bev and Kyra would be in Russia.

After picking up Kyra and attending her Graduation, we traveled to Crossville, Tennessee where we stayed for a night with Beverly's best girlfriend, Dee, from 9th and 10th grade. They both moved away and had not seen each other since then - 46 years! Amazingly they still had the same tastes - etc. Same patio furniture, hot tub, plants, chair pads and more. Dee also had a "strawberry kitchen"! The "girls" stayed up late talking and comparing yearbooks and lives.



Kyra had a wonderful time at camp and wanted to return next year. It is called a “Super Camp”, which is not a camp for “super kids” but for all kids from different social and economic areas... the purpose is to help them increase their learning and life skills. It focuses upon the needs of all students and young people, setting up an environment of trust, achievement and personal growth. It also teaches speed-reading skills, study skills, memory skills and inter-personal skills in dealing with others and situations in life.



*Kyra and the President of the Quantum Learning Network, [Bobbi DePorter](#)*

This was her second year at Super Camp, so she was automatically on the Leadership Team, which gives the kids a taste of leadership and management. She was becoming a young lady and growing

up so quickly. We knew that this camp would help her in dealing with the pressures of beginning High School!

While there we met the creator of this camp, who just happened to be there. She was an amazing woman. Super Camp is held all over the world now. She told us that she has just come back from the Ukraine where one was held and there was also one held in Moscow!

Due to all of the unnecessary aggravation at GM, I was planning to retire later this year and Beverly was working only an average of 2 days per week with a great deal of flexibility in her schedule. We were trying to focus on those things that we enjoy - like getting together with old friends and travel.

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, Beverly and Kyra, with Jennifer, Bev's classmate from her Russian courses at Oakland University, were scheduled to fly to Russia for a visit to Togliatti, and take a cruise down the Volga river to Volgograd (former Stalingrad). They would be traveling for 18 days, while I would be the housekeeper and keep company to our 4-year old Shepherd, Ardie (Russian Dog), Dimi, our 18-year old cat and Tasha, the "cat from hell" which we brought back from Russia – she is really very lovable but gets into all sorts of mischief because she is very lively and gets bored staying indoors.

Prior to their departure, we-all went for dinner at "The Fiddler" - a Russian restaurant. The food was very authentically Russian and we enjoyed borsht, pelmeni, shash-lik and more! It was wonderful, everyone there was Russian and knew us by now. They provided the Russian dancers for the International Night at Oakland University earlier this year which Bev helped organize, and set up a "Russian" cultural display. It was the perfect place to get "in the mood" for Russia!!



*Cruise down the Volga River – Samara to Volgograd*

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, the ladies took a short cruise down the Volga from Samara to Volgograd and on their return to Togliatti, visited our friends at their dachas and homes. The trip was relatively short but was enjoyed by all. Shortly prior to their return, we had a major power outage that darkened our entire



area for over 36 hours. The cause was “grid overload” and caused the usual minor panics of “terrorist attacks” and “National Security” concerns. On the light side, I had the day off since there was no power at the GM Engineering Center and I enjoyed a long weekend of ribs with Mom and Dad when power was restored on Saturday. The ladies returned on August 18<sup>th</sup>, and I took that week off

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, I contacted a lawyer that was recommended by Igor’s lady friend and consulted with her regarding the options of suing GM for “Senior Discrimination”. After a couple of meeting, we decided that due to the inequality of “legal muscle” between GM and I, it would be very hard on my pocket and very time-consuming with limited possibility of success. I obtained the documents for a “Retirement Package”, and got ready for the big step.

On September 14<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I flew to San Francisco to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary of one of my close childhood friends – Sidney and Gabbie Shaw.



*Sidney and Gabbie Shaw 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary – September, 2003*



## Chapter XXI – Retirement and the “Golden Years” (October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 to 2007)

Annoyances are actually opportunities to practice our pro-activity.

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, with 5 days of vacation left, I announced my retirement, effective October 1<sup>st</sup>, handed in my completed Retirement Documents and waved goodbye to my supervisor and Labor Relations monitor and cheerfully walked out of the door.

Throughout my entire career with GM, I consistently received superior ratings and steady salary increases. Due to my lengthy assignments overseas, I was bypassed for promotion to the next level, however healthy annual increases brought my base salary to well above the mid-range. My earlier supervisor noted this when I returned from my Russian assignment. He apologetically told me that he cannot give me a % increase due to my scale but gave me a couple of good merit \$ amounts.

In my current job I was grossly underutilized and isolated from anything of significance. My past expertise was totally ignored. Manager was very defensive to any suggestions, perceiving it as criticism of her actions. Consistently interfered in my assigned tasks by meeting and conversing with pertinent parties without sharing this information with me in a timely manner.

I left with a certain degree of reluctance and regret, but also with some confidence, that there were others within the organization who saw clearly the changes needed to restore G.M. to a stable and productive company with a bright and secure future.

In general, my nearly 44 years with G.M. was a great experience and exposed me to the many facets of a multi-national automotive corporation. I graduated from GMI as an IE and also have a degree in Mechanical Engineering. I was sent by G.M. to the Crosby Quality College Seminar in Orlando, FL, the Deming Quality Seminar in Warren, MI and was a management Human Resources trainer for the “Positive Leadership” and “Quality Network” programs during their initiation. I speak three foreign languages – Russian, Portuguese/Brazilian and French and have a good cultural knowledge of Chinese, since I was born and lived there for 18 years. I have worked in all of the major areas of Engineering and Manufacturing with major exposure to Commercial, Logistics, Financial and Personnel operations during my 20 years of overseas assignments. I worked in Western Europe, Brazil, Iran and Russia, setting up manufacturing operations.

Following an eight-year assignment in Russia, I returned in late 1999 and worked for two years as a Manufacturing Integration Engineer with the G.M. Truck organization on the Isuzu designed GMT355. The work was very interesting, productive and facilitated my “re-entry” to the “domestic” method of automotive product development. Early in 2002 I heard of a new department being formed called “Global Production Launch”. This appeared to be the perfect place for me to become a significant contributor based upon my extended “exposure” to global operations. Unfortunately, I was grossly underutilized and isolated from anything of significance and my vast expertise was never brought into play. After a year of misdirected management and what was obviously an organized priority to reduce head count, I finally gave in to the pressure, realizing that in my current situation, better utilization of my or my other senior colleagues’ expertise, would not occur. Current concern regarding the financial status of our company is certainly understandable, however, encouragements for retirement, even indirect, should be carefully reviewed so that we do not ignore valuable assets and expertise!

Following my retirement from GM, I planned to continue working in the international arena – particularly with the little-understood Russian potential area.

The balance of 2003 was relatively uneventful. Dad had cataract surgery on both eyes with mixed success since one of his eyes had some pretty advanced age related macular degeneration which is a medical condition that usually affects older adults and results in a loss of vision in the center of the visual field (the [macula](#)) because of damage to the [retina](#). I was diagnosed with a similar problem in my right eye some years earlier, however my problem was less severe mainly due to being of a younger age.

In December, I also located two old friends that I have grown up with in Shanghai. One in Rostov-on-the-Don in Russia and the other in Armadale, Australia. It was delightful to resume communications by telephone after over half a century and bring each other up to date. The year ended with the usual family Christmas dinners, cookie painting get-togethers and the opening of presents.

That winter we also had our introduction to “Rudy”. One morning as we were seated for breakfast, we heard a loud thump to our family room window and after looking out onto our porch, we saw a young cardinal laying in the snow. He was escaping a hawk and in a panic flew hard against the glass and knocked himself out. Bev went out, got him and lay him in a covered box inside. Shortly after he recovered and started fluttering in the box getting maximum attention from our cats and RD. When Bev reached into the box to hold him prior to releasing him to the outside, he panicked and released his tail feathers, thus inhibiting his abilities to fly correctly. As a result, we purchased a large cage and he was our “house guest” in the 4-season room (to keep him isolated from our animals) for nearly 2 months. To avoid the freezing temperature, we had to “space heat” the room for a “humongous” high utility bill.



*Rudy – ready for release to “Freedom”*

The 2004 started with an installation of beautiful new wood cabinets, sinks, counter tops and floor tile in our kitchen from January 12<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>. The next day I had a meeting with an entrepreneur called Joe Cool (real name) who was interested in doing business with Russia. After an hour's discussion it became apparent to me that there was very little substance in his proposals, he was on a “fishing

expedition” similar to the many that I experienced in my time in Russia with the new budding Russian “biznessmen”.

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, as Bev was returning home from work in the late hours of a snowy night, she was rear-ended by another vehicle that came over an incline at a fast speed. Fortunately she was unhurt but the van had some major damage to the rear bumper and tailgate. As the van was being repaired, I drove Bev to and from work for a little over a week. She received the van as good as new with a nice paint job and a sparkling new bumper and tailgate.

March 2004 was when Kyra started her “Driver Education” classes and Bev and I prepared us for a new phase of our parenthood. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, Bev had surgery on her left knee which had been bothering her for quite time. March 26<sup>th</sup>, saw us on a 2-day trip to Toronto to visit with Anuta and Sasha.



*Lunch at a pleasant Polish Café with Sasha and Anuta*

As usual this was a very satisfying and pleasant visit with two very wonderful and talented people. We took some walks in the new neighborhood that they moved too and spent “quality time” remembering our life in Togliatti as well as some calm and casual walks in this pleasantly ethnically diverse neighborhood with its many small stores, cafes and restaurants.

On April 10<sup>th</sup> we went for a week’s vacation at Ixtapa, Mexico. This was our 1<sup>st</sup> visit to this area and we enjoyed it thoroughly. The resort was the most popular place for swimming and snorkeling in the area. Ixtapa Island is considered the best place to practice snorkeling and do some other water sports. Ixtapa Island had three different beaches for exploring and swimming. Good shady local restaurant facilities, horse-back rides, dolphin viewing and rustic tours. There was some effort to get us to buy “time-share” property but not too intense or pushy, so we took with humor and grace. We all got gorgeous golden tans and returned refreshed and happy from our vacation. There was a lot of colorful native customs, music and Mexican folkloric dancing.





*Dinner at the Ixtapa resort prior to our return home - 2004*

Shortly after our return, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 15-year old Kyra , after sparring with adults twice her size for a month, decided to quit karate and start training for the Rochester High School Swim Team. To hone up her skills, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, she joined the Lifetime Fitness Swim Team - "The Sting Rays". She was pleased to find out that there were 3 Russian swim instructors, one of them an Olympic Games contestant.



*Lilia Grechin arrives for a 2-month visit with us –June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004*

Lilia Grechin arrived on June 6<sup>th</sup>. She was a 15-year old girl that Kyra met in Togliatti, and who was selected for a “muti-cultural” visit to the USA by the Togliatti Cultural Exchange group. She was a very pleasant young lady, full of youthful curiosity and humor and stayed for two months, meeting Kyra’s friends, meeting all of our extended family that was in the area, touring Kyra’s school and vacationing with us at Disney World and the Northern Peninsula.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, we all attended Al Bzenko’s annual Summer Picnic and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, we all went to Lupe and Pat Aguayo’s 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.



*Lupe and Pat Aguayo at their Golden Anniversary – June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004*



This was a joyous event with all the members of Lupe and Pat's family attending. It was held at their son Paul's new home and the food and environment were excellent. The Aguayo's are a warm and loving family with more than share of tribulations than some. Recently they lost their oldest son-in-law to cancer and their younger daughter was battling a tumor. Lupe was like a brother to me, and although his aneurysm left him nearly speechless, he always understood everything I said and answered by grunts and squeezes to my hand. The girls, Kyra and Lilia, had a grand time sitting and listening to some "uncle-ly" advice from a slightly inebriated but kindly and well-meaning older guest.

June 26<sup>th</sup>, we attended Kyra's 1<sup>st</sup> inter-club swimming meet – her "Stingray" team versus a team from Clarkston and on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Alla Romanova Shuvalova arrived in Flint from Togliatti for a 3-day visit as a delegate for the Sister City group from Togliatti. We first met Alla on our early days in Togliatti when she worked as an English-Russian interpreter for AvtoVAZ and later as she represented the Togliatti City Council in their interfacing with the Peace Corps and other "foreign" delegations.



*Alla Romanova Shuvalova visits us on July 3, 2004*

After Alla left for home, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, we took the girls to Disney World for a week. It was a great experience, the weather was fine and the visit was enjoyed by all. Shortly after our arrival in Orlando, FL, after checking in at the Disney Resort "Coronado Springs", we were off to visit the "Magic Kingdom" for an initial quick tour.





*The young ladies are greeted by Governor John Ratcliffe at the "Magic Kingdom" on Main Street.*

In the following days, we toured the "MGM Studios", "Animal Kingdom", "Typhoon Lagoon" and the Epcot Center. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day we were joined by Steven and Shanon with SteveR and Krystal, who were also over for a short visit. We all had our fill of "Disneymania" and returned tired but happy to our home in Rochester Hills on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

After a brief pause at home, we were off again on the 18<sup>th</sup> to show Lilia the beautiful Michigan Upper Peninsula. Our visit was short but eventful. We stopped over at Macinac Island and had a nice horse driven couch tour with a very knowledgeable native driver/guide. A unique local ordinance prohibits the use of any motor vehicles on the island, so the most common means of travel are foot, bicycle, or horseback.

Mackinac Island is home to the famed Grand Hotel, where the 1980 movie *Somewhere in Time* was filmed, and our guide gave us some personal impressions of the cast. He loved Jane Seymour and said she was a fine courteous lady, polite and friendly to all. He did not think much of Christopher Reeves and said he was rather snobbish and self-centered.

Since the island has a "native" population of only a little over 500 inhabitants, during the summer tourist season they "out-source" a lot of their temporary help and we ran across a lot of young Russians who were over for these jobs as sales attendants in the numerous souvenir and specialty

shops. Lilia was delighted to hear her native tongue spoken so far away from her home. We also visited an amazing “Butterfly Grove”, where a multitude of beautiful, multi-colored butterflies flitted among the flowers and shrubs, alighting on our heads and hands fluttering their wings and showing their beauty at close range.

From Macinac Island we proceeded to St. Ignace for a brief visit with Bev’s Aunt Fran, who was residing in a Senior Home there.



*Visit with Aunt Fran Bitner on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

The visit was pleasant but sad since Aunt Fran was suffering from senior dementia and barely recognized us. This was the last time we saw her as she passed away on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006.



On our return home, we all attended Kyra's Swim Team closing party on July 25<sup>th</sup>, at the Rochester Fitness Center at the outdoor swimming pool and had a "grand time".

We enjoyed Lilia's visit very much. She showed a lot of perceptive wisdom and humor and was a delight to see our country through her eyes. I remember her shock when I told her that I paid income taxes willingly – and asked me "Why! No one that she knew in Russia did" also after her first meeting with Kyra's classmates and friends, I overheard her asking Kyra – "What planet are your friends from?" In early August, Lilia's visit came to an end and prior to her departure for home to Russia, we took her to "The Fiddler"



*Dinner at "The Fiddler" prior to Lilia's departure for home on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004*

"The Fiddler" is a Russian restaurant that serves very authentically prepared Russian and Ukrainian food. We enjoyed "borsh", "pelmeni", "shash-lik" and various tasty Russian "zakooski"! It was wonderful, everyone there is Russian and we chatted with everyone working there. Earlier, in 2002, this restaurant provided for Bev a troupe of Russian Dancers and a wonderful "fiddler" to perform at the "International Festival" at the Oakland University where Bev had set up a "Russian Exhibit".

After Lilia's departure, on August 14<sup>th</sup>, Bev located her 3<sup>rd</sup> aunt, the younger sister of her mother, Aunt Irene and we took Mom and Dad for a brief visit with her in Chelsea, MI. It was a touching reunion



since the elderly sisters have not seen each other for quite a few years. One of Aunt Irene's sons, Bev's cousin David with his wife Tammee, were also there and we had a nice, warm family reunion.



*Aunt Irene with Mom and Dad Qualls @ her home in Chelsea, MI. – August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004*

September was an unusually stressful month – Kyra started Grade 10 at the Rochester High School, had a significant decline in her grades and on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Kyra was admitted to the Crittenton Emergency & Havenwyck for a 5-day stay as a result of severe depression. There were major family attitude adjustments resulting from this teenage related trauma and fortunate for all our family's strong positive internal ties prevailed for a happier and calmer resolution and future.

In October, I decided to investigate the new "Older Persons Commission" center that opened up in Rochester, just a 5-minute drive from our home. I was very impressed with the facility which was a spacious modern 2-level building with a large swimming pool and hot sauna and workout area in the lower level. There was a nice small library and reading room, a cafeteria and lunch area and many large and small meeting rooms. I wandered around till I came to a room with a notice – "Focus on Current Issues". I peeked and saw that the room was empty but a meeting was scheduled to commence in approximately 10 minutes. I decided to wait and check it out.

Just as I settled down, an elderly gentleman walked in, glanced at me and hollered at the top of his voice – "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE". I was a little startled and responded that I came a little early and was waiting for the meeting to start. In reply the gentleman yelled "OK". Later on as we

became friends, I discovered that he was a WWII veteran who was quite deaf and often forgot to wear his hearing aids. He was a very likeable man with very interesting life experiences and as many real war-experienced veterans he was extremely anti-war and our foreign adventure in Iraq.

The “Focus on Current Issues” group was comprised of senior citizens, mostly in their early to mid 80s with a large sprinkling of WWII veterans, academics and professional people. They were mostly widowers and widows who read a lot of serious material and were very current on the national and global events. They met twice a month and I became a regular attendee, eagerly anticipating those gatherings and greatly expanding my personal knowledge.

There were also other groups that met regularly at the OPC and I checked some of them out. Dazzled a gathering of ladies with my knowledge of “mah-jong”, sat in a couple of “Book discussion” sessions, discussing books like “The Kite-Runner” and “Life of Pi” as well as attending a couple of classes on Chinese language and culture and a few interesting lectures given by professors from the Oakland University. Also visited the “Genealogy group”, the “Stamp collectors” and the “Mystery lovers” – interesting but did not hold my attention.



*Retirement “Major” activity*

Retirement was good. Although I made some not-too energetic attempts to do some “consulting” work, after a while I told myself – “Who listens to us anyway?” and devoted myself to reading and semi-leisure activities at home.



In November, we had a couple of visitors – an old GM Overseas friend, who worked with me in Iran, stopped by for 2-day overnight visit at our home. We had a great time reminiscing about our “Iranian Adventure” and remembering the motley crew that we were part of at that challenging assignment. He was over in our vicinity to pick up a new Cadillac from GM and was still working in his retirement as a salesman to Mid-Eastern clients who were interested in purchasing “military-type” vehicles for security. He shared with us one of his “demo” DVDs that depicted an SUV with a mounted 50 caliber machine gun that was concealed in the rear but could be raised through the roof ready for immediate use. The “demo” illustrated the total demolition of another vehicle by rapid machine gun firing. Very impressive!

This visit was followed by Bev’s brother Kenny who came for a 3-day visit shortly after. Again we had a pleasant time reminiscing about family and days gone by. Kenny was still working as a pilot for some big wheel or other and was between flights, stopping by to visit with Mom and Dad.

Our final visitors in November were a half dozen deer that calmly wandered into our backyard to munch on the wild cherries that grew there. It was at dusk and unfortunately we could not get a photograph of our stately visitors who let us observe them from a few feet away.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>. I went down to the East Market in Detroit to assist Al at his “honey” stall. It was a very interesting and pleasant experience observing all the movement, bartering and good humor there between the vendors and clients and each other. The month ended with a purchase of a 54” Plasma flat wall-mounted television. We placed it on the wall over our fireplace in the family room and are enjoying it till today.



*Christmas “Neighborly Get-Together” at Virgil and Loretta’s home*

In December a new couple moved into our “cul-de-sac”, Virgil and Loretta Zanardelli, and on December 10<sup>th</sup>, started a new annual tradition by inviting all the neighbors to an annual Christmas “Get-Together” at their home. We all had a great time since prior to that we barely knew our



neighbors and had little contact beyond a wave and a short greeting like “Hi” or “Hello”. This evolved into a semi annual affair with a neighborly “corn & hotdogs” gathering in mid summer and a Christmas get together in December.

**2005** started with some major health concerns from Andrei resulting in many telephone conversations with him, his mother and grandmother and much worry on our part. He had severely hurt his back during his last visit with us in Russia by reaching for a barbell on my work out bench in our apartment. This caused a slipped disc with some damage to his spinal ligaments which got worse as the years went by.

On January 13<sup>th</sup>, I received a telephone call from Mihail Vassilievich Yablonikov, who is a Russian historian doing research on Catherine II (the Great) of Russia. He indicated that recently discovered documented proof was found on my family’s direct lineage to her as a result of one of my Greek-born ancestor’s marriage to her daughter Elizaveta Grigorievna Temkina. Elizaveta was the result of a “secret Marriage” between the Empress Catherine and Grigory Potemkin. He asked me to search in my family records any data that I may find since he was in the process of writing a book on the Kalageorgi family.

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, we had a severe snowstorm which resulted in a snowfall of 8” in 1 day. Schools were closed and Ardie was ecstatic, not us, as we had to shovel snow for a big part of the day. Winters were getting progressively colder with larger snowfall each year in Michigan and other parts of the world. January 24<sup>th</sup> was officially nominated by some as the “Most Depressing Day” of the year – we did not notice as we were happy to be home warm and cozy with beautiful white snow and blue skies outside.

Later that month, I fly for a brief visit to San Francisco to visit Nina Andreevna and have some Russian food such as “pelmeni”, “kotletti” and “ploff”, also some Chinese “pot-stickers”. The visit was short and pleasant. Nina Andreevna was approaching 94 years of age but still very active and alert, walking 5 blocks to and from her bookstore 6 days a week up and down the sloping San Francisco streets. On my return, we had the exciting experience of assisting Kyra with her driving skills to obtain her initial Driver’s License.

February was a good month with Bev and I celebrating Saint Valentine’s day at the “Shish”, a nice Mid-Eastern restaurant with good “kebab”. Not long after our visit there, the whole string of the “Shish” restaurants were closed by the authorities as it was discovered that they were being operated by a Mid-Eastern crime syndicate to launder money made from drugs, gun-running and prostitution. Oh well! The food was reasonably good and life goes on.....

After an unusually harsh winter with much snow and various health setbacks among the older members of the family, we were ready for a brief vacation in some warmer part of the world. Since two of our nephews lived in Hawaii, we elected to pay them a visit by scheduling a trip for late March. We left Detroit on a Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, and after a brief stopover and plane change in Chicago, we were on our way to Kona, Hawaii.

As we approached the “Big Island”, we looked down and saw nothing but a brown lava flow below us. The airport is built right smack in the middle of an ancient lava flow, it did not look like the lush Hawaii that we expected. It looked more like the surface of the moon. After landing we proceeded to the “Waikoloa Village Hilton” hotel.



*Visit with Kevin, Maureen, Scott, Brandan, Izzy and Noah – 2005*

Hilton Waikoloa Village was a destination in itself. Located on the Kohala Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii, this impressive property was nestled within 62 ocean front acres, offering breathtaking tropical gardens and abundant wildlife. This waterfront resort had air-conditioned trams for transportation and flagstone walkways flanked by Polynesian and Asian artwork for leisure strolls.

We stayed there for 4 nights, doing some snorkeling in the lagoon and touring the black lava beds of this amazing and somewhat dangerous island. Visitors were cautioned by signs not to stroll too far into the lava bed since there were elevated levels of sulphur dioxide gas and ash-laden fumes being emitted from vents within the Halema`uma`u crater. There were also risks of sudden crevices appearing from hollow sections under the cooled lava. We also enjoyed a 2-hour Whale watching tour seeing the majestic humpback whales in the National Marine Sanctuary, located along the Kohala Coast of the Big Island of Hawaii.

We then proceeded to Oahu, where we stayed for 2 nights at the “Outrigger Hotel” in Honolulu. This stunning hotel on Waikiki Beach combined Hawaiian traditions with modern elegance. It embraced the spirit of the sea, from the Hawaiian decor that welcomes you to the warm sands and gentle surf. The hotel was just steps from exciting Waikiki Beach Walk and fashionable Kalakaua Avenue. Kevin with his family and Scott met us for lunch at the hotel and we spent some pleasant hours on the beach catching up on family talk and general socializing.



The next day we did some touring, visiting the USS Arizona memorial to see the sunken battleship below and do some minor shopping near the hotel.

Next we flew to Kauai, arguably the most scenic island in the Hawaiian chain and the sight of movies like – “Lost World”, “Jurassic Park” and “King Kong” to name a few. We stayed at the “Princeville Resort” which was gorgeous with beautiful tropic walkways and a wonderful outdoor multi level swimming pool with adjoining hot tubs and spas.



*At entrance to our “Hawaiian Luau” on Kauai – April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005*

The scenery was gorgeous and we spent a lot of time in the outdoor swimming pool and hot tub admiring the ocean view. We also participated in a “Hawaiian Luau”, complete with a roasted pig, great meal and a wonderful traditional Hawaiian show with graceful hula dancers and fierce energetic warriors.

Everything went well until our departure date on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, when Kyra received a phone call telling her that one of her classmates, Jessie, was killed in an automobile crash on April 1<sup>st</sup>, she was with 3 other kids, joyriding in a isolated area, hitting bumps at high speed on an heavily wooded road to get “airborne” and hit a tree – all were killed instantly. Kyra was heart-broken and took a long time to recover from the shock of losing a close friend and classmate.



On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we were startled to get a sudden snowfall of 6" in one day. The snow did not last long but nevertheless, caused the schools to be shutdown and a general nuisance all around.

In May, after some feeble and half-hearted attempts to do some consulting or teaching in Russia, I investigated a few of the different groups at the Older Persons Commission (OPC). Being retired with a working wife, I felt that I needed some interesting activity to keep me out of trouble and boredom.

First, I visited the "Stamp Collectors Club" only to find out that they were way more dedicated and professional than I would ever be and just be an irritating novice with nothing to share. Next, I joined a group of ladies for a couple of "Mah-Jong" games and was heartily welcomed and asked to return – I enjoyed the time also but never returned due to time conflicts and laziness. Checked out the "Genealogy Workshop", and although it was interesting on what great resources they had, the traces were limited to US immigrants going back through US history, since I am a recent immigrant, my trail did not go beyond the facts that were already known to me.

Finally, I sat in a couple of sessions with a "Book Reading" club and discussed "The Life of Pi" by Yann Martel. This is a tale about the aftermath of the tragic sinking of a ship, with a solitary lifeboat bobbing on the Pacific ocean, inside of which, there is an Indian boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra, a female orangutan and a Bengal tiger, the only survivors of the wreck, it's a tale of faith, hope and fighting for survival. The 2<sup>nd</sup> book was "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini. This book told the story of a young boy from Kabul, who befriends the son of his father's servant. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of Afghanistan's monarchy through the Soviet invasion, the mass exodus of refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the rise of the Taliban regime. Both sessions were enjoyable, however they were followed by a bunch of romantic novels and I lost interest.



*Our beautiful Dimi in a pensive tolerant mood*

June 23<sup>rd</sup>, was a sad day for us – we had to euthanize our oldest cat Dimi. She was over 20 years in age and generally confused and disoriented. We took her to our regular veterinarian and held her in our arms as she received the fatal injection.

On a happier note, we departed on June 26<sup>th</sup> on a 3-week Eurail train trip of Europe taking our niece Kendra as a companion for Kyra. Our 1<sup>st</sup> stop was Frankfurt where we arrived on separate planes at 7:50 am (Bev & I) and 11:50 am (Kyra & Kendra) on the following morning, stretched our legs, dined and established our itinerary before a restful sleep at the Airport Holiday Inn.



*“Jet-Lag” Breakfast in Frankfurt – Bev, Kyra, Kendra and Moi – start of our 3-week Eurail Odyssey*

Next morning early at 7:00 am we had breakfast and took our 1<sup>st</sup> train journey which was to the historical city of Heidelberg, the scene for the wonderful musical “The Student Prince” and site of the famous university founded in 1386 and played a leading part in the era of humanism and reformation and the conflict between Lutheranism and Calvinism in the 15th and 16th centuries. After a short tour of the Heidelberg Castle and a “rustic” lunch we were off at 17:20 to the city of Koln (Cologne) to visit with our dear friends, Teddy and Andrea Heindrichsohn. It is one of the oldest cities in Germany, having been founded in the year 38 BC. The name is derived from that of the Roman settlement and lies on the River Rhine. The city's famous Cologne Cathedral (*Kölner Dom*) is the seat of the Catholic Archbishop of Cologne. Teddy and Andre live in Leverkusen which is a little town on its outskirts.

We stayed 3 nights at a small family hotel called the “Mayhof” and Teddy gave us an interesting guided car tour around the area, visiting small German towns, including Monschau, which is not usually frequented by US tourists, with great old quaint buildings and small shops as well as delicious small restaurants, bakeries and craft shops. We thoroughly enjoyed this visit as well as his wonderful gourmet dinners that he prepared for us as well as a great Japanese dinner that he took us to at a very fancy local Japanese restaurant. His son-in-law, Michael, who was of Russian decent, joined us and we greatly enjoyed the evenings at their home, reminiscing about our old days in Shanghai, looking at old photographs and making general conversation about life, the economy and mutual friends.

On Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, Teddy drove us to the Rail Station to board our overnight train at 23:46 pm to Basel, Switzerland.





*The Kalageorgis with the Heindrichsohns at their home in Leverkusen – July 2005*

We arrived in Basel at 7:00 am the next morning and an hour later we were on the train to Luzern, arriving at that lovely city by 8:04 am. After a few wrong turns and some confusion and “discussions” we finally found a nice small hotel called the “Rothaus”. Lucerne has long been a destination for tourists. One of the city's famous landmarks is the Chapel Bridge (*Kapellbrücke*), a wooden bridge first erected in the 14th century. Part way across the bridge there is an octagonal Water Tower (*Wasserturm*), and inside the bridge are a series of paintings from the 17th century depicting events from Luzern's history. The Bridge with its Tower is the city's most famous landmark.

The next morning we proceeded to Lake Como (no, we did not see George Clooney) and checked in the “Hotel Albavilla”. Lake Como has been a popular retreat for aristocrats and wealthy people since Roman times, and is a very popular tourist attraction, which boasts many artistic and cultural gems. It is famous for its numerous villas and palaces and is widely regarded as being one of the most beautiful lakes in Italy. We spent two entire days there, touring the area, taking the “funicular” up to the village of *Brunate*, 720m above Como, for a beautiful view of the lake and the Alps and taking a cruise on the beautiful “Y” shaped Lake Como.

We regretfully left the picturesque Lake Como at 07:45 am on July 5<sup>th</sup> on the train to Lugano, where we transferred to a bus heading to Tirano where we took the “Bernina Scenic Express” train to St.Moritz. This resulted in a little “surprise” and “incident”! Shortly after locating ourselves in the nice



and comfortable train compartment, we were approached by a polite young conductor who was checking the train tickets. When we produced our Eurail Passes, he shook his head and informed us that they do not include travel on this Express Train route and we will have to purchase the tickets from him. We sighed and checked our local currency resources which proved to be insufficient. We then offered our VISA credit card as US currency was not acceptable here. He shook his head again as he did not have the equipment to swipe our card. By then we were well on our way with no possibility for return to Tirano.

After much arm waving, facial grimaces and scattered words in English, German, French and Italian, we understood that at the next stop there would be a ATM machine where we could possibly get some local currency from our VISA card. The stop was scheduled to be only 5 minutes so we had to be ready. On arrival at the stop, the young conductor was nice enough to accompany me to the station office where there was a brief discussion in German between him and an elderly station clerk. My card was swiped, currency provided and we were back on schedule with the whole load of amused passengers watching our frantic activities through the windows.

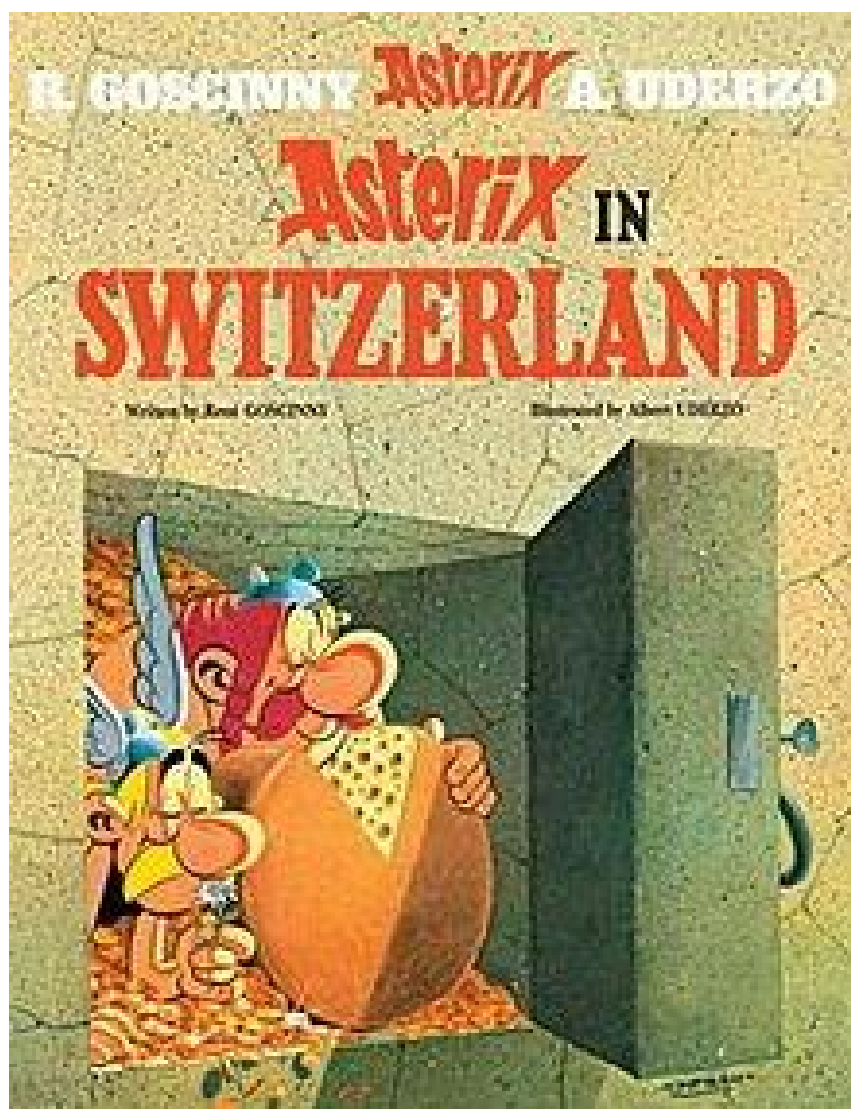


*Scenic view out of our "Bernina Scenic Express" train window*

We arrived at St.Moritz in the evening and after spending the night at "Hotel Hauser", we were on our way the next morning at 09:30 am to Zermatt and Geneva, arriving at Geneva that evening. Situated where the Rhône River exits Lake Geneva, this city has been referred to as the world's most compact metropolis and the "Peace Capital". We stayed 2 nights, strolling along Lake Le Mans, visiting the

various small watch and chocolate shops and doing “tourist” things like snapping pictures and annoying the natives.

This visit reminded me of my favorite *Asterix comic book series*, by [René Goscinny](#) (stories) and [Albert Uderzo](#) (illustrations). I got addicted to this humorous series when I was stationed in Iran and have 42 episodes in English, French and German. These books cover the adventures of two fearless Gauls, Asterix and his portly buddy Obelix during the Roman Empire days but clearly illustrate the amusing ethnic differences between the different Europeans often using references of current news personalities and famous people. The French are portrayed as Gauls, the Germans as Goths, the Spaniards as Illyrians, the Swiss as Helvetians and the Scandinavians as Vikings and Normans



*The sixteenth volume is called “[Asterix in Switzerland \(Helvetia\)](#)”*

Our next stop was Paris, where we made a bad choice of “cheap” hotels. Not only did we have to climb 4 levels of stairs with our luggage, but the girls panicked when they found roaches and a huge spider in their room. We stayed there one night and then relocated to a slightly more acceptable establishment. During our visit we took an Open Bus Tour of Paris and visited the Louvre. All that the 2 young ladies wanted to see was the “Mona Lisa” and they spent the entire visit looking for her.



Our next train ride was to Montpellier, which is in the south of France, not far from the Pyrenees and the Spanish border. We were off to visit my dear friend and classmate from Shanghai – Guy Chaillan and his wonderful family in St. Andre. Guy met us at Montpellier and drove us to his home where his radiant wife Irene, his son Thierry with his wife Christine and his lively grandchildren Roxanne and Cedric met us with open arms.



*A very important gastronomical decision, reviewing the menu.*

Guy kindly arranged an overnight stay for us at a neighbor's home since his was somewhat crowded by his son's visit which included Guy's daughter-in-law and his two lively but adorable young teenage grandchildren.

This too short a visit was very warm and pleasant, Guy and Irene are superb hosts and I spent a lot of time reminiscing with Guy about our "old Shanghai" days, mutual friends and life in general. Their home in St. Andre is very close to the pleasant Mediterranean Sea and we spent two wonderful days strolling by the sea shore, enjoying the warm balmy weather and seeing the beautiful countryside. Guy also proudly showed us a entire field of wind turbines that generate electric power for the entire area with enough to spare for transmission to other parts of southern France.



Guy's son and daughter-in-law as well as his two grandchildren were also wonderful company, they were a little shy with their "limited English", so I had ample opportunity to practice my "broken" French. On Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, we had a wonderful French breakfast at the Chaillan's and then Guy drove us to Montpellier for a small lunch and helped us board the 15:38 train to Paris where we arrived by 21:00. After a brief wait at the rail station we were off to Frankfurt on the 22:38 night train, arriving there by 7:00 am, we then proceeded by taxi to the Holiday Inn Express. After check-in and a brief "freshen up" we were off to a nice Chinese meal at our favorite Chinese restaurant at Frankfurt's Main Airport.

The girls left the next morning for home, while Bev and I stayed for another night in Frankfurt, returning home on the next day, Friday, July 15<sup>th</sup> to pick up our faithful dog RD at her "Doggie Hotel" and finally be all together again at our home where our two cats, Teegan and Tasha were patiently awaiting our return. The following Sunday, Bev and I attended Al's Annual Summer picnic. This was always a happy, pleasant event with some of Al's closest friends.



*Bev and I at Al Bzenko's annual Summer Picnic.*

Later that month, I assisted Al on his farewell appearance at his “Honey Stall” at the Eastern Market in Detroit. It was an interesting experience watching some of the seasoned drivers maneuvering their forklifts and pickup trucks to load and unload crates of fresh produce.

August was a tough month – Andrei had medical problems and got hospitalized during his visit to his mother in Paris. After partial recovery he returned to St. Petersburg still requiring medical attention and care. I suggested that he fly to us in the USA, but he was insisting that I come over for a visit with him in Russia. I attempted to explain to him that I could not provide the necessary medical assistance in Russia but was willing to do it here in Rochester. We had intensive telephone conversations with him and with his mother to no avail. Later that month, on August 27<sup>th</sup>, I flew to San Francisco for a 3-day visit and consultation with his grandmother, Nina Andreevna. As a result, his uncle Kirill elected to fly to St.Petersburg to assess the situation. On his return and after hearing his assessment, I offered Andrei anew to come to Rochester Hills for treatment here, but he again declined.

September saw two new events at our home. We purchased on an installment plan, a 50” High Definition Flat Plasma TV for our family room and initiated a major shelving and wall paneling carpentry renovation in that room, relocating the old shelving to our basement for storage of our numerous books, VCR tapes and photo albums.

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, we had a brief 3-day visit by Sasha Jr. from Yekaterinburg, Russia.



*Visit with Sasha to the Henry Ford Museum*



He is the nephew of my old friend, Igor Guileff, from the Shanghai days who visited us earlier in June of 2002, when we spent 3 weeks on a cross USA tour seeing the sights and visiting old Shanghai friends. (See pages 303 to 313).

We showed him around our Rochester area and spent a day at the Henry Ford Museum at Greenfield Village. This sweeping, single-floor space with its soaring 40-foot ceilings covered nine acres dedicated to showcasing the finest collection of industrial progress ever assembled. The exhibits covered vintage cars, airplanes, locomotives and a large section of American Industrial innovations and inventions.

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, we celebrated Mom & Dad's 63<sup>rd</sup> Wedding Anniversary at Applebee's Family restaurant with all of the family members, that were in town, attending.



*Dad and Mom's 63<sup>rd</sup> Wedding Anniversary – October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005*

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, we had our entire house roof replaced as did half of our entire neighborhood.

The following month on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, I was again a “victim of my clumsiness”. During an attempt of loading some boxes up the ladder to the storage area over our garage, I lost my balance and in the process flayed my hand and gashed it to the bone on the gears of one of our bicycles that were hanging of some hooks on the ceiling of the garage. Bleeding profusely (I was on a high dosage of the blood-thinning medication – Coumadin). Since I was home alone, I wrapped my hand in a towel and drove to the hospital which was, fortunately, only about 2 miles away. While driving, on the way, I felt a little light headed so I held the steering wheel with my knees and tried to call our daughter, who was in school, on her cell phone. She was in class and had her phone turned off as required by the rules.



I guess my Angel was still watching me since I made it to the Emergency entrance and had a doctor take care of my hand nearly immediately. The skin was pulled back off the entire left hand with all of the bones and sinews showing. They patched me up with a dozen or so stitches and told me that I was fortunate that I got there so quickly.

December started with a "Round Robin" of Christmas reunions at our neighborhood initiated by Virgil.



*"Hors d'Oeuvres" at the Cox residence – December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005*

It was a pleasant visiting journey in our "Cul-de-sac", visiting our neighbor's homes ending with dessert at ours.

The year 2005 ended with the usual round of family Christmas parties, kids "cookie painting" and gift openings at our home. Additionally on December 27<sup>th</sup>, Kyra obtained her 1<sup>st</sup> Driver's License.

The year 2006 started out calmly with the usual dreary clearing of snow, shoveling the driveway and miscellaneous winter chores. For entertainment, some evenings, we watched the new season of our favorite TV shows such as "24", "American Idol", "Ghost Whisperer" and "Medium".

Kyra got her 1<sup>st</sup> paying job at "Kentucky Fried Chicken" as a general all-round employee, working 3 afternoons a week on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. This job, plus her savings enabled her to buy a used 2000 year GMC Jimmy in a very decent condition, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, from a Clarkston Jeep dealer. She paid in

full from her savings and used part of her KFC income to pay for her monthly insurance, gas and service requirements (with an occasional minor assist from Mom and Dad).



*Beaming Kyra with her 1<sup>st</sup> Car – 2000 model GMC Jimmy, 4-whl drive & all the trimmings*

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, Bev's oldest aunt, Fran passed away. She was in an assisted living home for the past year as she was suffering from mild senior dementia and would be very forgetful at times. She was a wonderful caring person and will be missed greatly. Later in March on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Kyra's High School was evacuated for a day due to a message written on a restroom mirror threatening a "Columbine Type" incident. The school was thoroughly searched but nothing was found – it was a stupid student prank that caused a lot of anguish on the part of the parents and expenses to the school. The culprit was finally found and expelled.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Bev and I celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary with a quiet dinner at "Cruise & Muir" in Rochester. Later that month, Bev, Kyra and I toured the Oakland University Campus as a pre-view of Kyra's college studies and on March 28<sup>th</sup> through 31<sup>st</sup> Kyra took the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, commonly known as MEAP. This is a standardized test taken by all public school students in Michigan from elementary school to middle/junior high school. Students scoring very well on the high school test earn the Michigan Merit Award, a \$2,500 college scholarship for which Kyra qualified but on her graduation year the state went broke and cancelled those scholarships.

April 2006 was rather calm – on the 7<sup>th</sup>, I sold the balance of my GM stock, Mom and Dad moved to Harbor Chase Assisted Living facilities and on April 14<sup>th</sup>, Kyra left with her school's Spanish language



class group, accompanied by a couple of teachers, on a 9-day trip to Spain, visiting Barcelona, Valencia, Granada, Nerja and a 1-day side trip to Morocco. Although Kyra has been there earlier with us on one of our Club Med R & R trips, this was her 1<sup>st</sup> major overseas journey without us, so there was much excitement and some trepidation on all sides. Kyra arrived home on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the month ended with our daughter-in-law, Shanan's pinning ceremony as an Associate Registered Nurse.

May 2006 also passed relatively uneventfully, however in June we were sad to lose our favorite neighbor, Dorothy, an elderly lady that lived next door to us. She was a very pleasant friendly widowed lady in her late 80s who lived alone and did all of her own chores like mowing her lawn and clearing the snow from her drive way. She had a remission of her cancer and passed away very abruptly. We miss her deeply.



*Lunch with Dorothy on her 88th Birthday at the "Victorian Rose" restaurant in Rochester, MI.*

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, we had another pleasant milestone by making our last monthly payment on Beverly's Pontiac Montana van – now we had ALL of the cars completely paid off!

On July 28<sup>th</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup>, I went with Bev to attend her Elwood High School 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion, where we had as usual a great time catching up with the news with all of her former classmates. On our return, I took Al Bzenko on his last visit to his stall at the Detroit Eastern Market.



This was a very interesting and pleasant experience. I was astounded on the dexterity of some of the drivers and their skills at maneuvering big bulky loads of produce and merchandise between the vans and stalls with fractions of inches of clearance on all sides.



*July 30, 2006 – Al at the Eastern Market*

The whole experience was very interesting, watching the warmth with which Al was met by many of the other vendors and some customers. Watching the different people that were trading, buying or just wandering around was also very entertaining. Many different cultures and ethnic differences and attires. Al's stall was pretty popular and beside customers, many other people stopped by to ask about his health and wish him luck on his retirement. This was his last appearance at the spot that he had for many years.



In late August, we received a surprise visit from our old friends, John and Goldriz Lorentz. As mentioned earlier, in our cross-country trip with the Engelsens, 17 years before in 1989, we stopped over to see them in Portland, Oregon.



*John and Goldriz Lorentz visit us at our home on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006*

It was a great pleasure to see our old friends again after so many years. John was a great mentor for me on my Iranian assignment, opening my eyes to the mistakes that we Americans make through not understanding and respecting cultures that are different from ours.

Their stay was only one day long but we did bring each other slightly to-date. John had taken an extended “sabbatical” from his academic career as a professor of Mid-Eastern Studies at Ohio State University, and was working with his son Nathan on producing a documentary film on the 1937 Ohio River Flood. This was the period when within a week, the Ohio River reached an astounding 74 feet or more than 12 feet over the city of Portsmouth’s floodwall. More than 32,000 people were displaced from their homes and nearly 2/3 of the city was covered by water. The river left behind unimaginable devastation, but the community summoned its strength, and responded with a massive cleanup effort that still resonates with people today.

There was much similarity of what we went through in New Orleans in August of 2005 during the hurricane Katrina!

That summer, I was also somewhat surprised to receive a telephone call from Bratislava, Slovakia. It was the former manager of the hotel where we lived in during our assignment in Togliatti. I was sure that he had close ties with the former KGB and probably was a ranking officer himself. The call itself was very pleasant. He inquired how I was and if I was still working with GM as he had an idea of opening a car dealership in Bratislava. I asked him how he found me and he replied that I gave him our home telephone number before we left Russia. This was impossible since we only purchased our home 3 months after our return to the US. I thanked him for his interest and after a short pleasant “chit chat”, I hung up – haven’t heard from him since – but “the arm of the KGB is very long”.



**St. Joan of Arc and St. Francis Xavier Alumni at the Old China Hand Reunion in Portland, OR September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006**  
**Back Row – Stanley Shaw, Alfredo da Costa, myself, Sidney Shaw, unknown, “Sonny” Machado**  
**Front Row – Eric Mascarenhas, Alex Bernikoff, unknown**

On September 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>, Bev and I attended the “Old China Hands” (OCH) Reunion in Portland OR. To our knowledge it was the last one held by that group as the organizers were getting reduced by their advancing age and the younger elements were not organized or as dedicated.



The gathering went well and gave us an opportunity to see many of our old friends from California, my classmates from Shanghai, and make new friends with some of the “old-timers”. There also was an effort with individual interviews to record experience for the OCH Archive. This Archive was established in the fall of 1996 to preserve and publicize the heritage of the many people from other countries and cultures who have resided and worked in China. The Archive is located in the Special Collections and Archives Department of the University Library at California State University, Northridge.

My friend and schoolmate, Mario Machado, an Emmy-winning broadcaster from Hollywood who sadly was absent due to illness, once explained the unique allure of Shanghai, where he was born. "We lived our lives with great penuche," he said. "Shanghai was magical. We were a proud group of people, a diverse group, bound by a special camaraderie. We had theater, culture, sports, everything. We didn't know we were magical then, but we were."

On October 20<sup>th</sup> 2006, our niece Kendra married Jason Kolb. The wedding and reception was held at the posh Royal Park Hotel in Rochester with a large guest turnout.



*Kendra and Jason Kolb Wedding at Royal Park Hotel on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006*

The wedding ceremony was rather simple but the reception was a glorious affair with “hors d'oeuvres”, dinner and dancing with many toasts and merriment.

October ended with me have a successful cataract surgery in my left eye which brought my vision back to a clear 20/15 (with glasses). It was amazing the difference that it made. Life became even more pleasing and enjoyable!

The rest of 2006 passed quietly with the usual string of family dinners and get-togethers. Great turkey and ham for Thanksgiving, grandkids “cookie-painting” party, the Christmas tree was up and decorated and outdoor lighting was strung up.

The year 2007 started with a happy note by the addition of another animal member to our family. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kyra brought home a tiny “Russian Blue” kitten named Anya. This was a gift to her from one of her friends. With some agitation, discussion and related conversation, we decided to keep her and introduce her to the rest of our animal family members. Things went relatively well, mainly because she was initially terrified and hid under Kyra’s bed most of the time, coming out only when her protective “mama” was at home.



*Anya – a Russian Blue kitten – January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007*

Then things took a bad turn with Aunt Harriet Whichello, Bev’s aunt, passing on January 26<sup>th</sup> at 90 years of age, followed by my loss of a dear old friend, Paul Codsi on February 11<sup>th</sup> from kidney failure and the peaceful passing of Bev’s mom, Elizabeth Qualls on the morning of February 15<sup>th</sup> shortly after her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday.



February was a hard month of sub zero temperatures, various school closing and gloomy weather. But life goes on and on a brighter side, Bev, Kyra and I, flew to Kansas City, KS on February 24<sup>th</sup>, to attend the wedding of one of Bev's Russian students from Togliatti. I was honored to present the traditional "Prayer of the Faithful" in lieu of the bride's father who spoke no English.

Svetlana was one of Bev's students at the Bank College and assisted her at the various Russian/American summer camps as a counselor. She met Steven "Flip" Hutfles at one of the camps when he was a Peace Corps volunteer. They are both very active, pleasant young people and a great match.

The wedding took place in a beautiful church in Kansas City, followed by a great reception party close by with good food, dancing and much good humor. Anuta and Sasha Bondarenko flew in from Canada and we spent an enjoyable much needed relaxing 3 days with our old and dear friends from Russia.



*Svetlana and Steven "Flip" Hutfles Wedding – February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007*



On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Bev retired from professional nursing after a long career with much heart-wrenching experiences in her ecology care of terminal patients. It was a hard choice but I encouraged her to get the time to enjoy our “golden years” and do some travel while we are still fit and able. The grandkids were also growing up and now was the best time to enjoy them before they drift into the crazy world of teenagers.

Our first trip after her retirement was to a combination of sea cruise and Disney World to Florida. This was a package deal from a “Time-Share” developer with the Ramada Plaza Resorts. It included *“4 sun-filled days and 3 balmy nights in exciting South Florida with a sub-compact rental car with unlimited mileage for 7 consecutive days while in Florida. A 3 days and 3 nights of luxurious cruising aboard Carnival’s Fascination Cruise Ship for a round-trip sailing from Miami to Nassau, Bahamas and snorkeling, swimming and sunbathing at the beach on Nassau.”*

Sounded like a great deal. All of the above just to sit for about an hour and hear a sales pitch on some “Time Share” property in Miami. The price was very reasonable so we agreed, and on April 6<sup>th</sup>, at the start of Kyra’s Spring Recess, the four of us including our “surrogate” daughter Mina, who was Kyra’s best friend and classmate, departed for Miami, FL.

Our trip started with some surprises, the first being when we arrived at Fort Lauderdale. We picked up our rental car and drove to our hotel – the Ramada Plaza Resort. On arrival we were told that our room was not ready and we will have to wait in the lobby. The lobby was very small with minimal chairs and we were rather tired from our early flight, but we settled down the best we could. In about an hour I strolled over to the desk and asked the receptionist how much longer we had to wait. He responded that it will be a while and as I started to walk away he whispered – “but for a tip, I can speed things up”. Although I was more than a little shocked by his blatant behavior, I slipped him a 5 dollar bill and got us a room immediately!

The next morning, after a pretty crummy “free” breakfast we marched off to attend the required sales presentation on the “Time-Shares”. First was a motor tour of the area in which the salesperson pointed out some of the homes that belong to various celebrities, we were not overly impressed since none of those celebrities were in sight. Next we visited some pretty neatly laid out condominium apartments and finally we were brought back to a conference room at the Ramada Plaza Resort for a “sales pitch”. We gave the salesperson our polite attention, thanked her and said we would give it some thought.

We were not going to get away so easily! She politely asked us to wait a minute before she could give us our cruise tickets and disappeared. Next to appear was her supervisor who proceeded to repeat her sales pitch, nearly verbatim but with more vigor. Again we smiled and told him we would think about it. Again he asked us to excuse him for a minute and in a short while the manager showed up with the same pitch! By then our patience was worn pretty thin as it was over 2 hours that we had to endure this ordeal. Finally, and a little brusquely, the manager let us go and directed us to where we could pick up our tickets and be on our way to Miami where boarding would start in about an hour.



*Carnival Lines Cruise Ship – “Fascination”*

Our ship was the Cardinal Cruise Liner “Fascination” – 855 feet long with 10 decks, 1,026 staterooms for a passenger capacity of 2,052. Tonnage was 70,000 with many restaurants, spas, pools, sundecks and a fully equipped casino. We were scheduled for a 3-day/3-night cruise to Nassau in the Bahamas and back.

Our next surprise was at boarding the ship at 13:30 hours, to discover, as we received our cabin assignments, that we had to pay up front \$75.00 per cabin for service gratuities to the cabin cleaning staff. Finally, settled in our cabins, we set sail to Nassau at 16:00 hours. We rested a little, did some minor unpacking and went to do some exploring. The ship was huge with many stores, lounges, galleries and other resort facilities. At 18:00 hours we had a meal at one of the cafeterias which was not bad but nothing too special, just like any family fast-food outlet back home. The girls went on to some video/teenager arcade, while Bev and I after watching the sunset, retired to our cabin for a well deserved rest.

We arrived at Nassau at 8:00 in the morning to a beautiful sunny day and after breakfast proceeded ashore to do some snorkeling and lazing on the beach. The snorkeling was a trifle disappointing since it was at a very small area in a somewhat hazardous to descent rocky end of the beach. Although there were attendants to assist us to descend the slippery, wave-washed rocks, it still was not to pleasant to descend. We did not stay long and preferred to lay on the sandy beach for some mild tanning.

By 17:00 pm after some half-hearted souvenir shopping we were back aboard the ship, by-passing any touring of Nassau which only had the interest of casino gamblers and 1<sup>st</sup> time tourists. The trip back to Miami was rather uneventful, the pool area and sundeck were overcrowded with restricted mobility and careful maneuvering around playful children. The keynote of this voyage was a “formal” sit-down dinner requiring some dress-up. The meal was mediocre and on exiting there was a table with envelopes and a box for donations to the maitre d’ whom we haven’t even seen.

Our amusement for the night was the loud dialogue through our cabin wall from the neighboring occupants who were having some angry marital discussions, at one point we got concerned about the safety of the male member but fortunately the argument cooled off into sullen silence, followed shortly by loud snoring.

We docked in Miami at 8:00 am and headed back to Fort Lauderdale for an overnight rest. The next morning we drove on to Orlando through erratic “Floridian” traffic arriving at the Orlando Westgate hotel

at 2:00 pm. The next couple of days we made some quick visits to Disney World and the Universal Studios, returning to Fort Lauderdale on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and flying home to Detroit on April 14<sup>th</sup>, where we enjoyed a wonderful Chinese “Dim Sum” lunch before arriving home.

On arrival home, regardless that I was feeling relatively well but with an occasional shortness of breath and some limitations in walking our shepherd “Ardie”, my cardiologist recommended that I get a “pacer” implant to regulate my arrhythmia. The surgery went well and I was back home on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April with an implanted pacemaker. This did not change my lifestyle except that I was given an International pacemaker patient identification card to be shown at airports which excluded me from going through the electronic scanners and subjected me to a physical “pat-down” at the security gates. I was also cautioned to avoid any kind of an activity that involves intense magnetic fields.

May was rather uneventful; however it gave us some opportunity to marshal our forces for June, which was very active. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, Kyra graduated from the Rochester High School, with the Graduation Ceremony being held at the Meadowbrook Outdoor Theater of the Oakland University.



*Kyra's Graduation from Rochester High School – June 7, 2007*



The ceremony went well and we had a Graduation party at our home on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Kyra was already pre-registered to attend the Oakland Community College for an Associate Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and was eager to start her new collegiate life. The goal was to get the first two years of college done close to home and then transfer to the Michigan State University for her full Bachelor of Arts degree. There were several graduation parties for Kyra's classmates as well as the annual summer corn fest at our neighbor's home in our cul-de-sac. Also that month on the 26<sup>th</sup>, we received our custom car license plates – "MOM K" and "POP K".



*Our "Chariots"*

The next day, on June 27<sup>th</sup>, we were off on a 23-day trip to Russia, spreading our visits over Moscow, Togliatti and Yekaterinburg. We flew on Delta 1547 through Atlanta, GA, arriving in Moscow on the 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am. We were met by Volodya, the middle son of our dear friend Olga Vladimirovna, and escorted to our hotel. This was a small comfortable one, close to the center of Moscow with a Georgian décor and a very hospitable, pleasant staff. That evening we had a nice dinner in an ethnic, Khirgiz restaurant with Volodya and his lovely fiancée Zina.



*Our 1<sup>st</sup> dinner in Moscow with Volodya and Zina*



Next three days were spent by visiting dear old friends and admiring the amazing transformation of Moscow's lifestyle – shops were bulging with products and hi-class goods, restaurants were all busy and full of customers. We attended a "Country Music Show" in a local bar, complete with "cowboy" singers and boot-stomping rhythm. We also had dinner with our old "Moissejev Dance Team" friend Alik and his young wife and paid a visit to an old friend of my uncle George, who spent 10 years with him and my father at a Siberian labor camp, cutting and loading lumber onto rail cars that were on their way to the lumber mills, in the middle of winter at 60 degrees below zero temperatures. This gentleman, Innokenty Nicolaevich was nearly 90 years of age and shared with us some of his experiences in what he called the "Stalin/Beria University".



***A toast to the ladies***



***Reviewing old letters and memories***

It is mind-numbing to visualize what this fragile looking gentle man went through during his 12 years in a Siberian labor camp. The work was outdoors in freezing Siberian winter, there were no gloves, just rags wrapped around their hands and coats with torn seams and flapping holes. Feet were also bound in rags with straw for warmth. He was fortunate when the authorities discovered that he was a pre-med student when in Harbin and assigned him to work in the camp's infirmary. A fair portion of the inmates were common criminals with drug problems. He showed us a bunch of bent spoons and big dulled nails that were swallowed by some of the prisoners so that they could get access to morphine during surgery to remove these items.

He was a very gracious host and had a small cake that he purchased so that we could have a small tea party. He shared with me about his contacts with my uncle George who in later years got gangrene in his legs from this activity, and was in poor health all of his senior years. He did not remember my father or at least chose not to talk about him. This lack of knowledge bothers me till today since father was less than 40 when he died.

We left Innokenti Nikolaevich reluctantly but unfortunately our schedule was very tight. I still remember that wonderful old gentleman, living alone with his cat since his wife passed away a few years earlier. In those days he still faithfully attended a neighbouring polytechnical institute where he

lectures a couple of days a week about Russian Harbin and the beginning of the Chinese Eastern Railroad.

On Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, after a brief meeting with an old Peace Corps friend, Art and his Russian family, we were on the way to the train station where we saw another dear friend, one of Bev's former pupils, Olga, who came to see us off to Samara and Togliatti.



**Bev and Olga at the Rail Station to Samara**



**Art, Larissa and Marianna with us at the hotel**

We arrived in Samara the following day at 10:00 am and were met by our former driver, Valentin and my former secretary Elena with two cars to transport us to Togliatti. We arrived in Togliatti and were welcomed by our former caretaker, Lydia Maksimovna, nicknamed “Baboolya” or Granny by Kyra in childhood, she was kind enough to let her use her apartment in town while she and her husband stayed at their dascha. Bev's best friend, Olga Vladimirovna was also there to greet us. After much hugging and kissing, they all departed so that we could rest from our trip.

The next day was devoted to some shopping in the immediate vicinity of the apartment. We were amazed at the extent of goods and articles that were available at relatively decent prices. I was embarrassed when my new shoes that I bought in Spain fell apart with both soles unglued and flapping at each step. Fortunately we quickly found some well-fashioned, sturdy shoes that were manufactured locally from imported Italian leather at a very good price.

On our return to the apartment, there was a string of visitors from our former life in this wonderful city. Our first outing was with Kyra's friend Lilia's family. Lilia visited with us in the US for a couple of months in June of 2004 but this was the first time that we met her family which consisted of her parents and two pairs of grandparents. Her paternal grandfather was stationed in Iran as an engineer during my assignment there, but I never met him. Her maternal grandfather was a retired Air Force Colonel.

We had a wonderful “Shashlik” dinner at a nice outdoor restaurant and pleasant conversation as well as some dancing later in the evening. The gathering went well, Valerie, Lilia's dad did his outmost to make us feel good and welcomed in gratitude for our hosting of his daughter during her visit to the US. A good time was had by all, dampened only slightly by my “teetotality” thus reducing the flow of champagne and brandy.





*Wonderful "Shashlik" Dinner in Outdoor Restaurant*



*After dinner merriment and dancing*

The next outing was a full day visit to Lydia Maksimovna's dasch on the outskirts of Togliatti. We were met by a welcoming committee of her granddaughters – Nadia, Tania and Katia. They all grew up with Kyra and were of about the same age. Kyra was overjoyed in seeing her childhood friends again and a little embarrassed by her "casual" attire of jeans and floppies in contrast to their dresses and high heels. Regardless of that we all had a great time in the warm, balmy day with no pollution, traffic or noise of the city. Lydia prepared all of our favorite food – pelmeni, manti and of course sashlik.



*The welcoming committee at the Dascha*



*Around the table - again*

It was a very pleasant day and we spent most of it in friendly idle conversation, bringing each other up to date on family affairs and life in general. We were pleased to note that all of the grandchildren were doing well in school and confirmed that we were eager for them to come and visit with us in the future. We took some walks in the vicinity to check and admire the other daschas in the area and were amazed how the standard of living has improved for all. The visit was wonderful and we stayed till well past midnight before returning to Togliatti.



Next was a wonderful “Oriental” dinner at a newly opened “Oriental” restaurant in Togliatti, with tasty Asian cuisine and blond “Geisha” waitresses. Our hosts were Alex (Sasha) Vinogradov and his lovely wife Olga. Sasha used to work for me during my GM assignment in Togliatti and took over my position after my departure. He is a very capable and industrious young man with much knowledge and excellent sense of humor which is indispensable for survival in those uncertain times.



*Dinner at an “Oriental” Restaurant in Togliatti with Alex (Sasha) and Olga Vinogradov.*



*Grinning me with local “Geisha”*

The dinner was wonderful and we greatly enjoyed exchanging information about our lives and activities as well as our thoughts on the future. Sasha left GM not too long after my departure, their loss, and got a much better job back with the Volga Automotive Works (VAZ) as Director and Head of their Purchasing Department. We got to see the Vinogradovs a few more times during our visit as they insisted on taking us out to a few other wonderful restaurants and meals.

Next followed a string of visits from Kyra’s former classmates with a lot of squeals, hugs and general “teenage” jumping around. They brought each other up to date on who was doing what, who was working and who was pursuing a higher education. It was a pleasure to watch them in the excitement of their meeting. After a very short while Kyra’s Russian came back and she was chattering as freely as her native classmates.

We also had many visitors from our past life in Togliatti and it was nice to see that they were generally happy with their lives and progress. Everyone was busy in some activity, all were well dressed and in good humor, many were involved in International Business activities and did quite a bit of travelling abroad to Europe and Central Asia. We also got an opportunity to wander around the neighborhood and were amazed at the abundance of products and articles for sale. We also visited Kyra’s old school “Rostok” and as luck would have it, ran into one of her former teachers. Kyra thoroughly enjoyed strolling through the school’s playground and being amazed how low the “monkey bars” were from the time that

she used them at the age of 5 years! We also visited the area where we had our “luxurious” apartment on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of a 16-storied building that was also a hotel called “Lada”



*Kyra at her old school “Rostok”*



*The Hotel Lada building – our apartment was half of the entire 5<sup>th</sup> floor level*

After our “journey of nostalgia” around our former neighborhood which also expanded greatly with many produce and supply stores, garages and service centers around it, we headed back to our friends and two more “dascha” experiences.

The two daschas were both very pleasant, warm and happy experiences but differed a lot from each other in construction, layout and purpose. The first one belonged to our former driver, Valentin, it was a traditional two level wooden house, built by him during the earlier 80’s with much loving care. It was surrounded by a large vegetable garden with cabbage, potatoes, onions, peas, carrots and various other edible crops planted with loving care and used by the family for nourishment through the harsh Russian winters. There were also many assorted berries and some apple and pear fruit trees on the property. Kyra was amused to find an ample growth of wild marijuana on the other side of his property line which Valentin was totally ignorant of. There was also an exterior outhouse and a fair sized hot-steam sauna in a separate structure.

Our visit was very delightful and we spent the day with Valentin, his wife Zoya and their two daughters, Sveta and Elena and their husbands. We browsed the berry patches and the vegetable gardens, helping ourselves to the delicious fresh products, spent some time dipping into the nearby river and having a lovely meal, prepared by one of the son-in-laws who worked as a chef at the Volga Automotive Works cafeteria. Again our visit was very heart-warming and we stayed till well past nightfall.





*Valentin's dascha on about an acre of farmland*



*Delicious dinner from produce freshly picked from the garden*

The next day we were invited to a different version of dascha. This one was owned and built by Volody who was a senior engineer at the Volga Automotive Works, in the mid 90s and was constructed of brick and mortar. It had elaborate woodwork inside with a lovely carved stairway leading to the upper floors, a modern kitchen and complete indoor plumbing. The garden was relatively small and had flower beds and tiled patio in lieu of vegetable and berry patches. This was more of a summer residence than a traditional dascha.



*Volodya's summer residence (dascha)*



*Sashlik on the patio*

Volodya , his wife Natasha and son Nikita, welcomed us and were joined by Natasha's sister-in-law Valia and her children Anastasia and Serezha, who grew up with Kyra. Natasha is the daughter of our former original driver, Nicolai, who sadly passed away half way through my assignment.

We spent another happy day, enjoying the fresh air, good food and lively conversation. We took a stroll in the area admiring the adjoining "daschas" which were very impressive and well built and viewed the Volga river which was close by with a beautiful view of its sweeping majesty. We stayed again well past midnight chatting about old times and encouraging the young folks to come and visit us in the US.



The next day we returned to tour our old neighborhood and stopped to take a photograph of the monument to “Loyalty” that got international attention some years ago. It was erected near a busy road close to our former apartment and dedicated to a German Shepherd dog.



*Monument to Devotion.*

I remember when during our residency in Togliatti, a young man, as he was crossing that road while walking his dog, was killed by a speeding car. His dog survived the accident and for 3 years the dog would not leave the accident scene and stayed in a small wooded area close by awaiting his master. Kindly passers-by would leave food for the animal. This went on for many years until the dog expired from age. The citizens in the area along with the city administration collected enough funds to erect this monument as a symbol of this faithful animal's devotion to his master.

The rest of our visit in Togliatti was spent with visits from old and dear friends with whom we associated, worked with or just encountered in our many happy occasions here. On Wednesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, we were escorted by some of our closest friends to the Samara airport for our local flight to Yekaterinburg. We arrived early and after some reconnoitering on the process, we were informed that our flight URAL AIR 326 will be delayed by 3 hours due to a severe thunderstorm in the Urals. We finally got on our flight at 20:30 in the evening and discovered that we had to load our luggage ourselves on the plane. Fortunately a husky young co-pilot, noting my age, shouldered both of our heavy suitcases and loaded them for us in a jiffy.

The flight from Samara to Yekaterinburg was, to say the least, somewhat adventurous. We were the only "foreign" passengers, the rest were jolly workmen en route to a construction job in that booming city. They were in the best of spirits aided by a few bottles of vodka that was being passed around and kept proposing to the tolerant stewardess who was trying to keep them in their seats. They kept saying that they were en route to Yekaterinburg not for the work but to find wives as they heard that there were many pretty and single women there.

The weather continued to worsen with severe lightning and thunder in the black sky and we were forced to interrupt our flight and land in Chelyabinsk. We were strictly told not to leave the boarding area but our adventurous and thirsty co-passengers decided to seek replenishment of their liquid supplies and took off in all four directions. We tried to make ourselves comfortable in a couple of hard chairs and settled down for the wait trying to interpret the curt announcements on the public address system which was impossible to understand due to much static and lightning flashes with loud thunder.

Eventually we were requested to re-board our aircraft only to discover that 7 of the jolly passengers were missing. A frantic search was initiated and after 30 minutes it was determined that 6 of them decided to rent two taxi-cabs for ~ US \$250 each and get driven to Yekaterinburg, probably singing all the way. One errant traveler was never found and we left without him. He probably found a warm cozy corner and fell asleep dreaming about the beautiful girls in Yekaterinburg.

The balance of our flight was relatively calm as the rest of our companions were either asleep or passed out, fortunately there was not much of loud snoring and the cabin was well ventilated. We arrived at our destination at 4:00 am, nearly 12 hours later than originally scheduled, only to discover that there was no one at the airport to meet us. Not having a clue which way to go we wandered around the emptied airport looking for a public telephone since none of us brought our cell phones on this trip. Finally I approached a young man who was using his and asked him if I could borrow it for a moment. Dialed Igor's home number and got a sleepy Alla, who informed me that Igor left hours ago to meet us. We looked around but there was no one except the nice young man waiting for his phone. After another anxious 30 minutes, we saw a young lady hurrying by with a cell phone to her ear. Again we asked in



Russian, with a heavily accented American accent, if we could borrow it for a moment. Again we called Alla, who by now was very worried, and told us that Igor has to be there unless he had an accident.



*The reception committee in Yekaterinburg airport*

Shortly after hanging up and returning the phone, we looked up, and there was a very sleepy Igor with his equally sleepy nephew, Sasha, looking around for us. They arrived on schedule the night before and decided to take a short nap in the car!

After much exclamations, greeting, hugging and general agitation we were finally on our way to our hotel in Yekaterinburg. The hotel was a former Georgian Communist Party Center that was converted to a hotel. It was spacious, clean and comfortable but our rooms were on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor with no elevator. Fortunately for us young Sasha is very fit and strong and I ran up the spiral grand stairway with our luggage in each arm. There were no bellhops or hotel help personnel in site. Shortly after that, we let our escorts go and we settled in our rooms for a much needed nap, with promises to meet in the early afternoon for dinner at Igor's home.

By noon we were refreshed enough and ready to see Yekaterinburg, formerly called Sverdlovsk during the Soviet days and famous as the city in the Urals where the Tsar and his family were murdered and where our U2 spy plane with Gary Powers was shot down by a Soviet missile. We were never this far east in Russia and were very curious to see the city, its culture and lifestyle. Igor and Alla lived some distance from the hotel so we took a tram as well as a decent walk to their apartment. This was a little of a burden for Bev with her painful knee and me with my shortness of breath due to my arrhythmia,

resulting in frequent stops on the way. Nevertheless, the visit was warm and wonderful and we stayed till close to midnight before taking a taxi back to the hotel.



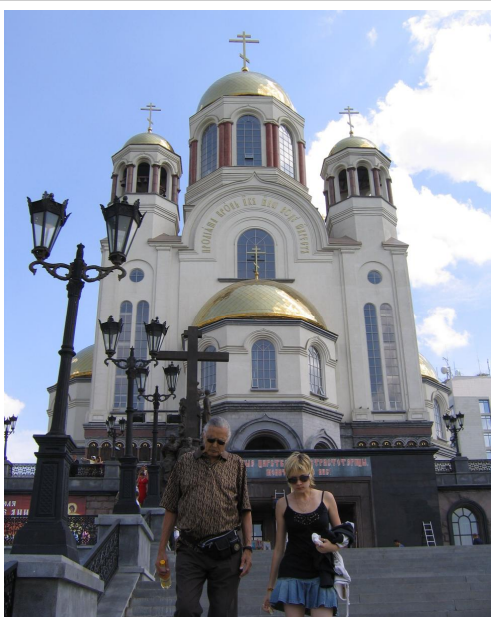
*Old buddies after nearly 60 years – Red caviar & champagne*



*At Vova and Vicka's home – wonderful dinner & conversation*

The next day after having breakfast at the hotel, we were picked up by Igor and he drove us to his home where we had some tea and pastries, picked up Alla, and headed for dinner at Vova & Vicka's home. Vova was also an old Shanghai friend and fellow swimming competitor. His father was a well known swimming coach in the French Club at Shanghai, and participated in many inter-city competitions during his years in China. This was another very pleasant and relaxing day, reminiscing about days gone by and remembering old mutual friends from Shanghai. We again stayed till late.

The next day, we went for a brief tour to visit the church which was built at the site of the Imperial Family's execution.



*Site of the execution of the Tsar & Family*



*The Imperial Family*

Kyra and I did not go inside as there was a service going, but Bev and Igor took a quick peek. There was a wedding in process and we watched as the jubilant groom and bride exited the church with a crowd of friends and relatives and danced on the outside terrace in celebration of the event.





*Meeting with the "Russians from China" group*



*Friendly gathering round the table – Russian style*

As I mentioned earlier, in the first half of the 20th century, sizeable Russian communities lived in a number of Chinese cities, including Harbin, Shanghai and Tientsin. The largest and most diverse of these was the community that grew up around Harbin in north China. Harbin was home to one of the largest Russian diaspora communities in the world, with over 120,000 Russians and other nationalities from the former Tsarist Empire. At the closing of WWII, when the Red Army entered north China to expel the Imperial Japanese Army, many of these Russians migrated willingly or not to the USSR. For many of them, their roots in China became a key aspect of their identity in their new home and many of them experienced severe hardships due to their "suspicious" background.

However after "Perestroika" and the end of the Cold War, they formed a group in Yekaterinburg called "Russians from China" and reached out internally and overseas to locate lost relatives and friends. This group publishes a monthly newsletter which is widely distributed and one of their editions reached me through Igor's help. I was invited as an honored guest to attend one of their monthly meetings, and had a very pleasant time "puffing my cheeks and looking important" although I did not know a soul in that group since none of them were from Shanghai but mainly Harbin and Tientsin.

Igor and I did not stay long as my ladies were expecting us to take a mini tour of Yekaterinburg with Sasha Senior (Sasha Junior's father), and doing some shopping in an area dealing with antiques or as we would describe it a cross between a "Flea Market" and a super "Garage Sale". We drove around the city, amazed at the contrasting views of old Soviet era structures, monuments (including an imposing one of Lenin), churches and ultra modern skyscrapers (some of them over 40 stories tall). There was a beautiful central artificial lake with graceful fountains and sculptures.

Since Yekaterinburg is on the border of Siberia and the Asian continent, there were many Right-Hand Drive vehicles, direct imports from Japan. This made driving rather interesting and at times precarious. Some years back, the powerful mayor of Moscow tried to enforce a ban on this practice but it was futile since there were too many of these cars in use. I guess one can get used to anything after a while and our driver had no problem navigating us around the city. The visit to the "Flea Market" was interesting and I wish we had more time since there was quite an assortment of "nostalgia" items from the old Soviet days as well as some rare antique items hidden in the "junk". The ladies bought some custom jewelry, while I settled from some CD's of old Russian folk songs.





*Bev at the "Flea Market" with her two bodyguards*



*Minor excitement at the US Consulate*

The day ended with some minor excitement. As we were heading home for dinner, Sasha asked me if we wanted to see our (US) Consulate building which was on the way. We agreed and he proceeded to the location. On arrival he stopped the car across the street to allow us a better look. I asked him if it was OK to take a photo and he said "sure, go ahead". As I raised my camera, I saw agitation in the window of the lobby and a young militia man ran out heading for our car. At the same time I saw other militia men in combat camouflage with AK-47s peering out of the lobby windows! As the young militia man approached our car, our driver, Sasha Sr. stepped out and showed him his I.D., the young man was impressed and saluted him, then leaned into our window and asked to see our US passports. After that me nodded at us politely and told us we can move on.

Later I asked Sasha Sr. what that was all about, he smiled and told me he was checking if the security was alert and if the young man did not check us out he would have been without a job to-morrow.



*One of the decorated homes on the route to Pyankovo*



*Sashlik at Igor's Summer home in Pyankovo Village*

The next day was our final day in Yekaterinburg and we drove early in the morning to the village of Pyankovo, approximately 80 kilometers north of the city, where Igor and Alla had their Summer Home or "dascha". They bought an old wooden log house many years ago and spent each summer renewing and repairing it. The results were outstanding and the couple now spend every summer there enjoying nature, growing their own vegetables and fruit and swimming in the nearby river.





*Proud "Dascha" owner and guest*



*Dining room at the "Dascha"*

We had a thoroughly enjoyable and relaxing day with our friends. The sashlik was wonderful and the fresh fruit and vegetables from their garden were delicious. Most Russians are very handy with tools and Igor did a wonderful job repairing and renovating his dascha. There was an old brick and clay store in the corner of the main room and much of the furniture was the original wooden handcrafted items that came with the house or were picked up in the village. There were also many antique farming artifacts and tools from a distant past that he recovered and collected.



*Juicy, tender lamb "Shashlik" cooked by a "master"*



*Beautiful modern highway at Yekaterinburg*

After a very "soul-rewarding" day in Russian nature we were on the road again back to Yekaterinburg. We were thoroughly impressed by the beautiful modern highway and the gorgeous natural woods on both sides of the road.

Early next morning, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 am we were on our way to the airport. This time there were no unexpected problems or delays and our flight to Moscow departed on schedule on a larger aircraft with "normal" luggage handling. We landed, two hours later, at Domodedova Airport in Moscow, and were completely amazing on the layout and cleanliness of this newly reconstructed facility which was a "dump" only 7 short years ago.



Our faithful friend, Olga's son, Volodya, met us at the airport and whisked us off to our hotel, called "Melodiya" and by coincidence it was also run by Georgians. It was a former Georgian Communist Party Center in the days of the U.S.S.R. and built with the usual "broad-budget" manner with elaborate grill and moldings, tall ceilings, nice carpeting and artistic décor.

The all-female staff was very pleasant and well-meaning but totally untrained – we never discovered who left us a message on our phone or what it was about. The rooms were spacious and comfortable, and there was an elevator to help us haul our luggage to our rooms.

We had a pleasant stay and focused on seeing our friends, the first visitor was Sergei Nicolaevich Novikov. He is a Doctor of Philosophy and History at the Moscow University and a long-term relative. He is descended from one of the granddaughters of Catherine the Great, Varvara Ivanovna Kalageorgi (1795-1891). He is currently retired and in the process of publishing a book about our family.



*Studying Ancestors and Family Genealogy*

We had a very pleasant visit and light lunch at the hotel and promised to keep in touch by mail and telephone in future times. Later that evening, Alik Tetrashvili stopped over and drove us off to his father-in-law's home, where he was staying while his new apartment was being completed.



*Little Anastasia demonstrates her dancing talent*



*Russian Dinner at Alik's In-Laws' home*



We had a very tasty Russian dinner, prepared by Olga's mother and were amazed in watching little three-year old Anastasia display her dancing talent while watching her parents performance with the famous Moissejev Dancers.

On the following day, our next social event was a nice lunch with Olga Bookova, one of Bev's former students at the Bank College in Togliatti. Olga was working for a large American firm in Moscow and promised to visit us sometime in the future in the USA. With much reminiscing and updates on friends and former students we had another light meal at the hotel cafeteria.

That afternoon we rejoined Alik, Olga and little Anastasia for a beautiful Moscow River boat ride and a visit to the WWII memorial park, culminating with a sumptuous Dinner at a Georgian Restaurant close to our hotel. The next morning, July 19<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am we were on our way to the airport and back home to the US

On August 30<sup>th</sup>, we had another milestone – our youngest offspring, Kyra started her 1<sup>st</sup> year of college as a Freshman at the Oakland Community College, taking Russian 101, as well as English Composition, Introduction to Philosophy and Drawing, for a total of 13 credits. She loved the collegiate atmosphere and made a lot of new friends as well as meet a few of her classmates from her former schools.

Our joint birthdays, on September 9<sup>th</sup>, were celebrated with a family gathering at our home with cake and discordant singing of "Happy Birthday" with RD joining the chorus.



***September 9, 2007. Happy Birthday to us!!!***

Seeking ways to occupy myself in my retirement, I looked into a “Mystery Lovers” group at the public library. I was warmly welcomed by the members who were exclusively women. However it became quickly apparent that my taste of “mysteries” which was mainly in the hard-boiled private investigator genre was not shared by the group and although I promised to return to their next session – I never did.

Later that month, I went with Bev to her Belleville High School “60s Blast”.

It can be noted that throughout this treatise, I do not dwell into too many specifics or particulars of our children’s lives. This is intentional as I respect their privacy and they can detail their lives in their own biographies if they are so inclined in the future. Needless to say, I love them all equally deeply and tenderly. They all have their own good points, unique characters and lives.

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 I took a 7-day trip to San Francisco to visit with my 96-year old former mother in law. The purpose was 3-fold. First I was concerned about her being alone in that big house with many steep stairs while her son was away on a 30-day trip to Russia. Secondly, family strife always bothered me and I was hoping to facilitate reconciliation between her and my two boys. And thirdly I wanted her to read and interpret some of my grandfather’s letters and documents.

The visit went well and I showed her photos of our recent visit to Russia of which I made a DVD for her. She seemed to be in good health and in her usual sharp-minded, energetic mode, although she did share with me that she now needs more frequent rests between tasks. My reconciliation attempts failed because she would never accept attacks on her son from anyone, even her grandchildren, no matter who is right or wrong. And reading of grandfather’s documents did nothing to expand my previous knowledge of his life and times.

The year 2007, culminated with the traditional family turkey and ham Thanksgiving dinner at our home on November 22<sup>nd</sup> and our neighbor Virgil’s Winter Neighborhood party on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Inserts**

### **To Chapter XXI – The Golden Years**

- Locate my letter to Russians in China – Yekaterinburg club