

Greetings!

There are good years, there are bad years, and then there was 2009. It was a year with some bright spots but one which could, over all, be generally considered an unmitigated disaster. Politically, economically and personally, I've had better.....I look forward to the New Year, as I can only ~~assume~~ hope it can't be worse.

Living in Michigan, the apparent epicenter¹ of the global economic collapse, has been trying. With the highest unemployment rate in the country (20%), my poor state is suffering. Not perhaps, as much as Ukraine, my parents' homeland, and other economically marginal nations, but suffering none the less. My family, luckily, has been mostly spared from this economic tsunami, but I see it among neighbors and patients. So far the economic safety net, sparse as it is, seems to be sustaining most², but one wonders how long that will last. And local industry seems to finally be making a go of it; Ford is having a fairly good year, GM seems poised to pay off its government loans, and Chrysler appears to be surviving its merger with Fiat.



As seems to be happening more and more often, I haven't been able to get this letter out in a timely fashion³. I can offer excuses, some of them pretty valid—Thanksgiving came late, I worked a lot of hours early in December, and my helpers and I have all slowed down⁴—but it is still late. I do want to thank everyone who sent me lovely Christmas/holiday cards; they are quite appreciated, and I am gazing at them even as I write this. I have lots of cards I've bought over the years, ready to be addressed and sent, but it seems wasteful to send them out this late, so I won't.....this year. Perhaps next year you will be reciprocated.

As I've gotten older, my circle of friends has begun to shrink. When I was young, I attended the funerals of distant relatives; now I find myself mourning the deaths of close and cherished friends. This year our family lost its oldest member, as Mrs. Halyna Honcharenko, my cousin Lisa's grandmother (and Uncle Mike's mother-in-law), passed away after a long, chronic illness. She was a lovely, cheerful woman, who survived the horrors of WWII to build a new life in America. "Pra-Baba⁵," as we all called her, loved cooking, watching the Food Network (Emeril!⁶) for hours on end and trying out new and exciting dishes. She once taught a family seminar on torte baking; sadly, I was out of the country at the time, and remain the only Petrusha woman with no torte-baking skills. Baba also loved embroidery, collecting beautiful examples of the ancient Ukrainian art; she loved seeing the new ones I would bring from Ukraine each year. And she loved her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was thrilled when Lisa became pregnant, and her last wish was to see Lisa's daughter baptized, a wish that did come true.

And then there was Tyotyia Lyida, my father's cousin in Zolotonosha. She was the sweetest woman I've ever met—not a bad word to say about anybody, always a hug and a smile, and helpful in the extreme. It was she who had helped us track down my Dad's niece and her family in Kyiv, and to reunite him with his brother. She had taken me to my father's village and shown me where his house had once stood, and to nearby villages to meet distant relatives. She had shown me the monastery where my grandmother had been schooled, and helped me learn of my grandfather's fate. And it was she who always welcomed us into her home with a smile, a hug, and varenyky. I made a point to visit her whenever I came to Ukraine, and she

¹ American epicenter, and yes, I am aware there are countries much worse off. Michigan has been struggling in recent years, with the so-called "Bush Boom" (which was a boom only for the upper .1%) not really affecting us at all, at least not in any positive sense. Michigan's economy has been based on manufacturing for most of its modern history, and modern right wing economic theory doesn't believe in the need to actually make real stuff any more. Why pay a worker a living wage when you can outsource it to China and pay yourself a huge bonus instead?

² A recent article in the NYT writes about people who have no income left at all except food stamps. These are people who've lost their jobs and exhausted all their unemployment benefits. There are 6 million of them.....soon to be joined by many more, I suspect, as the clock ticks away. Because, after all, it is more important to continue Bush's tax cuts to the rich than to help the improvident masses.

³ Of course, if you just consider it a year-end round up, I'm not *that* late.

⁴ Getting ready for the holidays just takes a lot longer than it used to. I once did the outside decorations in a day; now it takes two. Putting up the tree? Once my parents and I did it in two days, now it takes three or four. None of us are as young or limber as we used to be, and it's possible I might have become a perfectionist. I also suspect my tree has many more ornaments on it than it used to..... I've learned to hang the indoor roping much more quickly, but have made up for that by owning many times more nutcrackers and snow globes. And so it goes.

⁵ Pra-Baba is Ukrainian for great-grandmother.

⁶ My cousin Helene notes that she used to get three or four calls a day from her mother and grandmother directing her to go to this or that site and download a particular recipe for them. Helene bought her mother a computer, had it hooked up to the internet, and Aunt Susie is now on line.

always arranged a big, happy family reunion. Breast cancer, uterine cancer, heart disease and a series of strokes all took their toll. She fought each in turn, until she could fight no more. Lyida will be missed.

And I lost two friends (and mentors) this year. John Malone was the residency director of the Hutzel Hospital OB/GYN program when I was a resident, and went on to become a gynecologic oncologist. He recruited me for the program, introduced me to sailing⁷, Graham Greene, his sardonic wit, the east side and the Tom Tom Club. John was a sane and level-headed friend to me throughout my residency and for years after. I miss him greatly.

Laurie Binford was the other. I met him on top of Brockway Mountain some ten years ago, and quickly learned that, below the gruff exterior, there was a shy and sweet man. I enjoyed the hours I spent sitting with him on the mountain, watching the raptors soar during the spring migration, and the hours we spent chatting in bad weather at his "camp," a rustic cottage he had helped his father build on Agate Bay in the 1950s. Laurie was a snowbird himself, wintering in Baton Rouge, and returning to the Keweenaw when the snows receded and the road to his camp was passable. He was retired, a PhD and birder extraordinaire. He taught me to have confidence in my IDs as well as to question them when necessary. I will cherish my signed copy of "Birds of the Keweenaw," his stories of birding in exotic climes, and watching him feed peanuts, specially bought for the purpose, by hand, to the local squirrels. And I will remember him each time I taste the delicacy he introduced me to: the thimbleberry⁸ monks' rum-soaked brownies.

But, despite the sadness this year has engendered, some good has come of it, too. My "favorite" cousin, Lisa, had a baby, her first, this year at the ripe old age of (censored). The child is a healthy, bright little girl, named Victoria Kalina⁹, and is a good baby, without colic or other issues. We haven't had a chance to see much of Vika: Lisa lives in Virginia and hasn't been home to see us very often, and is too much of a Luddite to post photos on line. I took some lovely photos of Vika at Easter, but that was almost 9 months ago.....

My parents are another year older and really beginning to feel their age. My father has recovered from his heart surgery last fall and completed cardiac rehab; still, he is not the frisky 40 (or even 60) year old he wishes to be. He is back to most of his activities, but moving more slowly than in years past, albeit much better than he was prior to the surgery. My mother has been knocked off her stride by back.....and knee.....pain. While she is otherwise healthy, the lack of mobility is a real problem for her. She can't stand for long periods of time, which makes it difficult for her to garden, cook or go for walks. She's seen doctors, had numerous tests, and is going through physical therapy, with little improvement. I'm hoping for the best, but may have to find her a new specialist (for a second opinion) in the new year.

Bill and Laurie are doing well. Bill still has a job at Ford; he works in the division that controls costs, so is an integral part of the recovery effort. Laurie was laid off from her job, and has been doing some temp work for the Troy School District part time. (Note: Laurie wants me to add that she is looking for a part-time job. She has a bachelor's in chemical engineering and a master's—I think—in business. Let me know if you're interested or know of any job openings in the Detroit area.) The kids are thriving. They all went on a lovely family vacation to South Carolina, where they stayed in a house near Hilton Head owned by friends of theirs. apparently there was much golf and touring, despite the hot, muggy weather.

Kalyna, 17, my goddaughter and kindred spirit, is apparently at the obnoxious teenager stage, at least from her parents' perspective. She still talks to me, though, and continues to study hard and do well in high school, where she is a junior. Kalyna plays varsity volleyball and JV¹⁰ soccer, lives in sweat clothes, dotes on Belle, and eschews make-up. I doubt she'll be making the cover of Vogue any time soon, but she's on track for Phi Beta Kappa. Kalyna attended her first alternative music concert this year, at the Fillmore Theatre in Detroit..... She's definitely NOT listening to her parents' (country) music. Kalyna is fascinated by movie-making, and uses her iMac to this end. She is now driving regularly and cautiously; she has gotten rid of the

⁷ Although, I must confess, there was as much an emphasis on drinking as on actually getting out onto the water. One time the motor fell off as we were setting off out onto the water. We recovered it, but it was soaked and wouldn't start. Luckily, there was a bar nearby, and we had a lawyer with an expense account with us.....

⁸ The thimbleberry is a drupe fruit that resembles a gigantic raspberry, and it is indigenous to the Keweenaw peninsula. It makes a delicious jam, but you have to pick lots and lots of them to make even a small jar. Years ago, you could buy the jam relatively inexpensively. When the Monks of the Society of St. John moved in, they began making and selling the jam to support themselves, and soon had pretty much cornered the market. They buy up thimbleberries from the locals, and have driven up the price. Their shop, the Jampot, has expanded and sells other types of jam and baked goods. Their muffins and rum-soaked brownies are to die for, but the brownies should definitely be kept away from open flames.

⁹ Kalina is pronounced "kalyna." Why the unusual spelling? So people would be more likely to pronounce it correctly, according to Lisa. Maybe that's true in Virginia, but most places I suspect she'll end up getting called "ka-LEE-na."

¹⁰ Translating for my non American friends, that would be junior varsity (second tier) football. Which, in America, seems to be a girlie game.

hated un-cool¹¹ Cadillac (Cash for Clunkers), and is driving an only slightly "cooler" Chrysler Minivan. No cute little sports car in her future, I suspect.

Nick, 15, is now a high schooler as well, albeit a lowly freshman. He is full of school spirit, and can be counted on to help build the Homecoming float and participate in school spirit events, no matter how ridiculous¹². A miracle of sorts happened this year—Nick wore a suit.....voluntarily! Nick attended the school's Homecoming dance with a group of friends, and dressed up for the first time since his first communion seven years ago. I was around this time to document the event. He looked quite handsome (and Kalyna quite stunning), and his shirt matched Belle's bandana¹³. Nick is still a sports fanatic, both on and off the field. He played baseball last spring for a local team¹⁴, and plays anything else he can with his friends (and sisters) for fun.

Fuzz, aka Maria, turned 12 this past year, and still dreams of someday changing that "P" on her Pandora bracelet to a "J"¹⁵. She continues her quest for "tween" cool and perfection, dressing the part and having the right idols and lingo. She attended BOTH the Jonas Brothers and Taylor Swift concerts this year. Maria is now in middle school, with the variety of classes and teachers that entails. She is less enthusiastic about school than she was when younger, but is still working on her Holy Grail—the prefect attendance reward¹⁶. She plays soccer and volleyball, reads, and still teaches at Petrusha Elementary School. She has given up the piano, and now sings in her school's choir. And Fuzz has followed in her sister's footsteps with her active involvement in FPS: the both made it to the state competitions this year, but neither went on to the nationals.

Belle, who turned three this year, has had a tough year. The squirrels have, for the most part, figured out that invisible fence thing, and now taunt her actively from just across the property line. Despite this, she has managed to catch (and kill) at least two that we know of, bravely protecting her family from the evil squirrel menace. Belle, like her female relatives, has developed mobility issues. Last summer she began walking with a limp and appeared to be in great pain. Luckily, veterinarian visits ruled out any serious hip issues (for which she might have had to have been put down). She seems to have an activity-related injury, and can no longer run and chase like she did when she was a puppy.....or, at least, not for very long. On the plus side, Santa brought her two new hedgehog toys¹⁷ for Christmas.

I got away from home this year, but didn't stray as much as I normally would. I have been afflicted, over the past few years, with intermittent knee and back pain. The knee pain is secondary to injuries, although the threshold for injury seems to have fallen with advancing age. My first injury was on a mountain in Nicaragua, clambering over a fallen tree; my second involved a forceful encounter with a hose guide; the most recently probably occurred when I was getting out of the Jeep, but I'm not absolutely sure¹⁸. My back has bothered me, on and off, over the years, but in the past year and a half has become fairly constant, exacerbated by prolonged standing and walking. I can make it through a cesarian section, just barely, before the pain becomes intolerable. And pain medication doesn't really help, neither the mild stuff (Tylenol, Motrin and the like) nor the powerful (Vicodin.....). Steroids do the trick, but they're not really a long term solution. And physical therapy has been problematic, as the exercises meant to help my back seem to hurt my knee.

So, while I did travel, I didn't travel that a lot, and didn't get around as much once I got there. I didn't visit any new countries this past year, but did visit a few new cities. And while my travel was mostly (charity) work related, I did have time to explore and have fun.

¹¹ Un-cool to Kalyna. Nick and I thought it was a pretty sweet ride, a maroon colored 1988 Cadillac Seville with a white leather interior and white vinyl top.

¹² If only I had photographed him—it would make great blackmail fodder someday. Imagine a skintight, bright yellow outfit, which included much too tight and short pants.....

¹³ Photos can be seen here http://web.mac.com/lubap/The_Kids/2009/Pages/Homecoming.html

¹⁴ Organized athletics seem to be a private matter until high school, at which point they become available through the school. Little League and other baseball organizations are all private, and can be quite expensive, especially if you are on a "travel" team. Nick is hoping to make the high school baseball team this spring.

¹⁵ Maria Kathleen Jonas.....of course. With only two single Jonas brothers left, this is becoming statistically less probable, unless she goes the homewrecker route.

¹⁶ She has come close. Last year she would have had it, but had to leave school an hour early one day to go to the dentist.

¹⁷ Belle is the destroyer of toys. With the exception of her hedgehog, most of her animal toys—goose, moose, squirrel—have gotten shredded within days. Somehow, her hedgehog has survived, with minor repairs by Baba, for over a year. I was thrilled to find new hedgehogs at the K-Mart this holiday season, and got her new ones. She is incredibly happy.....

¹⁸ It's definitely a sign of old age when you have to think hard to try and recall how you might have injured yourself. Sometimes it's just turning too suddenly, or not setting your foot down correctly. Старість не радість

INDIA: I spent February in India, as I often do, spending the wedding season in Vellore. It's my seventh¹⁹ February in Vellore, and it's come to feel a lot like home.....a hot, dusty, tropical home. I've gotten used to the chaos, the colors, the noise and the ever-present cows. I no longer feel obligated to photograph every monkey I see. And I have an Indian wardrobe of my own, with a rainbow of salwars.

It's always great to see my Indian friends and to catch up on our lives. Domestically, at Jiji and Prasad's house, it was a time of upheaval: Lakshmi, the maid, was found to have been having unapproved (and unchaperoned) visits with her boyfriend while we were all at work (and hiding him in my closet when Prasad came home early one day). Jiji sent her back to the village, to her family, to stay safe until a wedding could be arranged²⁰. There was much crying and drama, but it will all sort itself out in the end.

Avinash's birthday came around once more, and I was put to work decorating the cake²¹--this year I built a huge chocolate cake castle with a drawbridge and turrets. We used pounds of cake and frosting, boxes of cookies, several packets of wafers, candies and ice cream cones, along with a great number of sugar cubes and popsicle sticks. It was a thing of beauty.....until it was attacked (and dismembered) by a pack of voracious teen boys.

We attended a wedding or two—one loses track that time of year. I taught a pysanka class where lots of eggs were decorated with much enthusiasm. I attended a talk given by Binayak Sen's²² wife Ilina on the CMC campus, and relaxed in Jiji's garden, now thriving and filled with plants and pots. We went to the local fair, where we saw the technical exhibits, shops full of all things plastic, firemen with their fire engines, ferris wheels, carousels and bumper cars, and ate the world's biggest pappadams (covered in chili powder). I went to Sushil's house for dinner, and met his wife and boys, and my old friend Mani, from the Big Bungalow, brought his wife and newborn son by to meet me. We went out to dinner in Chinatown, spent a quiet evening at the pool, and had my friend Linn over to dinner. And we all cheered when India (through Slumdog Millionaire) won an Academy Award. In other words, just a normal month in Vellore.

The LCECU was busy, as always. I spent my time, as always, observing, assessing and teaching. I spent many hours in the antenatal clinic reviewing charts, and looking for problem areas. Sara and I designed the chart forms several years ago, and refine them as we go along, getting rid of those sections that are not useful, and adding new bits that we hope might be. Even though February is a light month for births, I got to attend a few and even assist a bit. I reviewed our episiotomy statistics, our and found that our rate has continued to fall, as a result of an initiative we had begun several years ago. Last year I had reviewed transfer statistics (at Sara's suggestion), and found we were transferring out a lot of labor patients²³, more than we had thought we would. There were many reasons, but most fell into two groups: labor dysfunctions²⁴ and non-reassuring fetal heart tones. In the first case, most of the patients delivered normally after being given pitocin at the main hospital. In the second, most were found to have normal heart rate patterns at the main hospital, and went on to have good APGAR scores at birth.

Based on our analysis, we decided that two simple measures would help decrease our transfer rate: oxytocin usage and a better way of assessing the fetal heart rate. Writing oxytocin protocols and teaching them to the nurses was simple enough; but they require the ability to monitor and assess fetal heart rates well, which we couldn't really do. And to do that, we had decided, we needed a fetal heart rate monitor, a fairly expensive

¹⁹ I've been to India eight times altogether, and finally got myself a multiple entry visa. My first trip, to Bombay and Goa, was purely touristic; all the rest have been medicine related, but always with a bit of time for touring, exploring, and bird watching.

²⁰ The boyfriend and Lakshmi both want to marry. The problem is the parents and the dowry. Her parents don't approve of him, as they are Hindu and he's Christian, so her father refuses to pay any dowry or give permission. The BF is willing to marry without a dowry—unusual for India—but also needs his family's permission, and they want a dowry. It's complicated.....

²¹ Last year I created a train with an engine, two cars and a caboose from chocolate cake, frosting, cookies and candies.

²² Dr. Binayak Sen is a pediatrician, public health specialist and national Vice-President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) based in Chhattisgarh state, India. He and his wife trained at CMC, and have many friends there. Sen is the winner of the tenth annual Jonathan Mann Award for Global Health and Human Rights, and the first winner from India and South Asia.

He is noted for extending health care to the poorest people, monitoring the health and nutrition status of the people of Chhattisgarh, and as an activist defending the human rights of tribal and other poor people. In May 2007, he was detained for allegedly violating the provisions of the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act 2005 (CSPSA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. His detention has been declared in breach of international law by Amnesty International. His trial commenced on 30 April 2008; the Supreme Court of India on 25 May 2009 finally granted him bail.

²³ Our labor unit is a low risk one only. We do not perform cesarian sections and do not have facilities to take care of premature or very sick newborns. We triage as best we can during the antenatal clinic, referring the higher risk patients to the main hospital for delivery. We also transfer patients with labor complications or fetal distress during labor.

²⁴ Most of these were either patients with ruptured membranes who weren't in labor, postdates patients needing induction, or patients who'd had an arrest of dilation due to inadequate contractions. All of these situations respond well to oxytocin.

piece of equipment. There had been a group of women, supporters of CMC from Texas, who had visited us last year and had toured our labor unit, which a friend of theirs had sponsored; we impressed upon them the need for a monitor, and they came through. When I arrived this year there was a shiny new monitor waiting for me. I got to know it, and then spent the month teaching the doctors and nurses basic fetal monitoring²⁵. We also reviewed the oxytocin protocols, and had hands on practice with real patients. The nurses loved the oxytocin, once they'd become comfortable with it, and the monitor helped reassure them in questionable situations.

I also spent as much time as I could in the ultrasound room, now that we were certified and could scan again²⁶. Our goal was to make sure each patients had an early first trimester scan²⁷, so we could improve the dating of pregnancies and thus their outcomes.

The best part, though, was spending time with my friends, seeing their children again, sharing meals and conversations. Over the past five years I've gotten to know everyone well; ours is a small hospital, and it is a hospital with a mission, not just a large, faceless institution. We strive to do good, to help our patients, the poorest of the poor, to live better lives. When we have meetings, everyone is involved, from the cleaners to the guards, secretaries, social workers, volunteers, nurses and doctors. It is like being a part of a large, friendly family.

I traveled a bit within India. I took a short trip to **Madanapalli**, in Andhra Pradesh, to see my friend Linn (who lives in Holland, MI). Wen in India she lives in the upstairs of the house where I lived many years ago when I worked with Patty and Samson at the MLL Hospital. I had time to catch up with her, to meet her friends, and to attend church with her the following day. The pastor was having a special "healing" service, and I was asked to give a short talk²⁸. It was a particularly long service, and in Telugu, a language I neither speak nor understand. I visited the Geegh nursery school (no children, though, as it was the weekend) and saw the classrooms where Linn's organization²⁹ teaches tailoring³⁰ and other skills to local women.

I took several trips with my Indian family, Jiji, Prasad, Avinash and Tarun (aka Baby). We drove to **Madras/Chennai**, where Jiji was speaking at a conference³¹. We visited Prasad's parents and, while Jiji was giving her talk, drove out to **Mahabalipuram** (மகாபலிபுரம்). I had been to Mahabalipuram on my first visit to the South, back in 1998. Jane and I had explored the shore temples, photographed the many statues, seen what cashews look like when they're growing, visited the cave temple with its intricate carvings, seen the stonemasons at work, and enjoyed cooling coconut juice³². I had many pleasant memories of that trip.

This trip was different. In the intervening 11 years the place had been built up quite a bit: fancy car parks, paved paths, and organized tourist shopping areas. Everything was fairly clean and well organized. But I had changed a bit, too: since having Grave's disease I've become fairly heat intolerant.....and it was really, really hot out. I clambered around a few of the shore temples, but the main complex with the 5 Rathas was too sunny, so I sat in the nearby shade and let the boys run around and take photos. The cave temple was nicer, cool and dark inside, with lots of interesting carvings; the nearby Arjuna's Penance³³, with its hundreds of figures and many stories, is absolutely remarkable. I didn't climb to the lighthouse, though. The shops

²⁵ I put together several powerpoint presentations, which we watched together and the staff could then review at their leisure. We had quizzes, and several workshops using the monitor, both with and without patients. The materials I had brought from Huron Valley proved invaluable—thanks, guys!

²⁶ We'd had an ultrasound scanner for a couple years, but the local government decided at some point that we were not covered by the CMC license, so we had to shut down our scanning while we got certified ourselves. This being India, it was not a short or painless process.

²⁷ Accurate dates are important for the proper management of pregnancies. When someone goes into early labor, or ruptures membranes, it makes a big difference whether they are 33 or 35 weeks. When someone is becoming preeclamptic, it's nice to know if they're really term or not before delivering them. When the baby is small for dates, is it actually small or just younger than we thought? And when someone is overdue, it's good to know for sure, so as not to risk failed induction and perhaps an unnecessary cesarian due to an unripe cervix.

²⁸ I always fall back on Dr. Paul Farmer in these situations, and discuss the duties Christ gave us: to feed and clothe the poor, care for the sick, and visit prisoners.

²⁹ Mission Partners India: <http://www.mpi-inc.org/>

³⁰ The program teaches tailoring, a valuable skill; graduates get a sewing machine to help them start their own home business. I've bought several sewing machines for the program. Read more here: <http://www.mpi-inc.org/id25.html>

³¹ The terrorist attacks in Bombay the previous November had all the upscale hotels in India on alert. When we drove to the five star hotel where Jiji's conference was being held, we had our car thoroughly inspect, sort of: men with long mirrors examined the underside of our car for explosives. But that was it—no further inspection.

³² I had also, on my own, tripped, torn my dress, found a tailor shop, had my dress mended, and examined silk paintings while waiting for my dress to be mended. This time I wore a nice, loose salwar and sensible sandals.

³³ Aruja's Pennance is a large, monolithic bas relief dating back to the 7th century. It is also sometimes referred to as the Descent of the Ganga (Ganges), because there is not full agreement as to which stories exactly the carvings represent.

were fun, too—I found myself a drum, and carved elephants and lovely cloth lanterns for gifts. Best of all, I did not require tailoring services.

We did a bit of wandering around Madras itself. We visited Tarun's favorite place—Landmark department store at the Spencer Plaza mall³⁴. Jiji needed to buy wedding gifts, and Landmark was the place for it, with a huge selection (for South India) of housewares, CDs, DVDs and books. Finding things was relatively easy; the lines for checking out were very long; and getting the items wrapped took forever. The three staff involved in wrapping were meticulous but not speedy, although we did end up with an interesting package that included hand-made custom handles.

We also drove up to Mysore, stopping in Bangalore on the way. We spent a lot of time stopped, as a matter of fact. While the number of privately owned vehicles in India is increasing exponentially, the space for them on the roads is not. Large, intercity highways are being built, and are a relative joy³⁵ to drive on. But they are still the exception, and city bypasses do not yet exist. City roads often appear to be merely large parking lots, with inactive construction zones, fly-overs, detours, and poor signposting.

We spent the night in Bangalore, the tech center of India, staying with Prasad's newlywed cousin and her husband. They have a flat in an apartment complex that feels like it has been lifted whole from Florida, and set down, behind gates and guard posts, in the heart of modern high tech Bangalore. There were tennis courts, a children's' playground, and lots of parking spaces. The flat was gorgeous, spacious and comfortable, with all the mod cons. I felt I was in a different country.....

After braving the Bangalore morning rush hour, we were off to the once great city of Mysore. Although it was a mere 140 kilometers away, it was a different world. Gone were the malls and glitzy shops, and all the huge modern construction. It is a city of palaces and forts and temples, a place of history and memories. We spent much time here being tourists.

Until 1947, when it was incorporated into Karnataka state in the modern nation of India, Mysore was the capital of the Kingdom of Mysore. We toured the Raja's palace³⁶, with its beautiful art work, various treasures, lovely gardens and huge spaces, and the boys rode an elephant. We visited the Krishnarajasagar Dam³⁷, shopped for silks³⁸ and souvenirs, and visited the palace grounds at night, to see it lit up with thousands and thousands of light bulbs³⁹. We drove up towards the temple to a scenic overlook, and saw the city and palace from high above.

We also spent a day in nearby Srirangapatana, a city built on islands in the Cauveri river. In the morning we visited the Ranganathittu bird sanctuary, where we walked along the landscaped pathways and then hired a boat to take us around to the many small islets⁴⁰ covered with small trees and big nests full of birds: cormorants, darters, white ibis, spoon billed storks, open billed storks, painted storks, white necked storks, egrets, herons.

Then we headed to the town itself—not much to look at now, but in the late 1700s it was the de facto capital of Mysore kingdom, during the time of the Anglo-Mysore wars. Avinash had just studied the Anglo-Mysore wars in school, and was able to educate me on that subject. Hyder Ali, originally a military commander to the

³⁴ The mall itself is a maze, with countless small corridors on several levels. We found a shop that sold pirated all-zone DVDs among the gifts and sportswear shops, and bought a copy of *Slumdog Millionaire*. I'm not sure I could ever retrace my steps.....

³⁵ They're not quite like the limited access highways we have in the west. Pedestrians tend to dart across, and there is no minimum speed limit. While cows are rare, many vehicles that do not travel much faster can often be found on these roads...

³⁶ The architectural style of the palace is commonly described as Indo-Saracenic, and blends together Hindu, Muslim, Rajput, and Gothic styles of architecture. It is a three-storied stone structure, with marble domes and a 145 ft five-storied tower. The palace is surrounded by a large, lush garden.

³⁷ Our trip to the dam had been meant to merely be a scouting expedition. Adjoining the dam are the Brindivan gardens, with their terraces, topiary and musical fountains. They are renowned for the light and water show put on there at night. The road across the dam, the previous way to the gardens, had been closed to traffic, as had all roads across all dams in India, due to potential terrorist threats. The new road was still under construction, unfinished for the most part, and a very difficult drive. We did not return in the evening, but we did admire the dam for a while.

³⁸ Different towns and different regions produce very different silks. Tamil silks are amongst the most luxurious and well known, especially those from Kanchipuram and Madurai. Mysore silks are a bit lighter, with different patterning. I bought a bunch of scarves, as I always do, and particularly liked their silk/pashmina blends, perfect for winter wear back home.

³⁹ The palace was completed in 1912, and electricity and electric lights were still quite a novelty then. Bare bulbs were often decorative features, as is evidenced by the popularity of "illuminations" in England and the decor of Shute's bar in Calumet.

⁴⁰ The islets came into being when a dam across the Cauveri river was built in the 1700s. The ornithologist Dr. Salim Ali observed that the isles formed an important nesting ground for birds, and persuaded the Wodeyar kings of Mysore to declare the area a wildlife sanctuary in 1940.

rajas, had usurped power and become the ruler of Mysore. He and his son and successor, Tipu Sultan, resisted the British colonialization of India, and had beaten them in the first two Anglo-Mysore wars. The third was a draw. During the fourth war the British, knowing they could not beat Tipu Sultan on the field of battle, instead went with treachery. They bought off one of Tipu's commanders, Mir Sadiq, who, at height of the battle, sent the army to collect wages. He also, according to legend, unlocked a gate to allow the British to enter Tipu's fort. Tipu was killed, and his army defeated, all because of treachery.

We had a chance to visit these historic sites. Some are beautiful and well maintained, like the summer palace of Tipu Sultan, with its walls and ceiling painted with depictions of Hyder Ali's victories in the first war, and the Gumbaz, the beautiful tomb and mosque Tipu Ali built to honor his illustrious father. Others have fallen into disrepair, like the old city fort. The city has grown up around it, and sections of the walls were destroyed to accommodate construction of roads. The government has begun to spruce the fort up, rebuilding and restoring walls and gates, and placing a monument to mark the place where Tipu Sultan died.

Lastly, we followed a few signs and found ourselves visiting the Sangama, or confluence of two branches of the Cauveri River, a busy spot on a weekend morning. There were vendors selling all sorts of snacks and gewgaws, including sugar cane juice, fresh coconut water and chips. There was a small temple on a platform just above the river where people were making offerings, and a set of broken steps leading down to the water. Pilgrims dressed in white were making their ablutions. And off to the side were coracle⁴¹ rides for the slightly adventurous. No monkeys, though.

And then we drove back to Vellore⁴². Once again we braved the Bangalore traffic, stopping only to visit with Prasad's uncle and cousins, and to do a bit of shopping in the Bangalore malls. After all that bustle and busyness, it was nice to get back to sweet, sleepy, dusty Vellore.....

NIAGARA FALLS: While I was in Vellore, Prasad received word that his paper had been accepted and he would be speaking at a conference in the US. As both he and Jiji have siblings here, they decided it would be a good time for a big family trip. We floated various schemes of where and how we might get together, but, in the end, I came down to Niagara Falls. Prasad had visited there as a child, and wanted his children to see it. So Jiji, her sister and their families set out from Connecticut on a big road trip which would take in New England, and then swing through Niagara on the way to Washington DC. I met them there in early May.

We had a lovely time, seeing all the sites one can from the American side. I drove there through Canada, a fairly quick drive.....once you get through customs⁴³. And I found myself amazed at how much the town on the Canadian side had grown. I remember visiting there with my parents on childhood trips to upstate New York, and more recently on the way back home from cousin Kathy's wedding. The observation tower, the botanical gardens, walkways along the river, the falls themselves—all pleasant memories.

In the intervening years, though, the Canadian skyline had changed, and not for the better. The park along the river had remained, but small family hotels and shops had given way to huge casinos and high rise hotels with revolving restaurants. The best view of the fall had always been from the Canadian side, as you could see both sets of falls, side-by-side, at once. But now it was more true than ever, because, from the Canadian side, you couldn't see the Canadian side⁴⁴.

The Falls have been a tourist destination since the 1700s, but were almost lost to industrial uses: hydropower and other commercial development. They were once privately owned, and tourists had to pay for even a

⁴¹ **Indian coracles** are commonly found on the rivers Cauveri and Tungabhadra in Southern India. They are primitive, light, bowl-shaped boats with a frame of woven grasses, reeds, or saplings covered with hides, and have been in existence since prehistoric times. Although these boats were originally designed for general transport, they have recently been used mostly for giving tourists rides.

⁴² Interestingly, after the fall of Srirangapatnam in 1799 and the death of Tipu Sultan, his family, including his sons, daughters, wife and mother (who was the wife of Hyder Ali), were detained in Vellore fort.

⁴³ When I was a kid, the American-Canadian border was a minor nuisance at most. We crossed it all the time, as my parents had friends in Canada. When I was in school, I used to go over to Windsor for the Chinese restaurants and bakeries, or for concerts. But things have changed. I have a passport, so that's not the issue, but the lines can get very long and the questions intense. March I drove to Toronto to see an exhibit of Trypillian artifacts at the Royal Ontario Museum. Getting into Canada was easy; they didn't find it particularly odd that I'd got to Toronto for the day. Coming back was another matter. I was questioned at length, and had my car pulled aside and inspected. They let me back in, but not quickly or easily.

⁴⁴ According to Wikipedia: "Commercial interests have prevailed on the land surrounding the state park, however, with the recent construction of several tall buildings (most of them hotels) on the Canadian side. The result is a remarkable alteration and urbanization of the landscape. It has also caused the airflow over the Falls to change direction. The result is that the viewing areas on the Canadian side are now often obscured by a layer of mist."

glimpse. Preservationist efforts in the past two centuries saved the Falls for future generations⁴⁵, and parks were developed on both sides of the borders. In Canada, where I had visited before, there were bands of walkways and green along the river. In the USA, where I hadn't, there was a large state park complex which incorporated the entirety of Goat Island, all of the American and part of Horseshoe Falls.

The American town of Niagara Falls was very different from its Canadian counterpart. There were some hotels, yes, and a big casino, but otherwise it all seemed a bit run down and past its prime, without all the boom and bustle evident across the river. Mind you, I was there on a weekday in the off season, but still... The state park was nice. It was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, he of Central Park and Belle Isle fame. There were footpaths and bridges and landscaping and overlooks. When I first got down to the falls, the wind was blowing towards me, and I needed an umbrella to get near enough to get a good look. When I returned later, after meeting up with my friends, the wind had changed, the sun come out, and there was a Japanese camera crew filming a movie⁴⁶.

Oddly, few of my fellow tourists seemed to be native born Americans. I heard every language imaginable down by the falls. I felt like an outlier, but Niagara Falls is one of the places that many foreign visitors want to see when they visit the States. We were all taking and posing for pictures, and enjoying ourselves.

From the American side you can only see one of the falls at a time, and at an angle, although you can get quite close to the edge. To see them better, we decided to ride the Maid of the Mist⁴⁷. It was one of those things I'd always been a bit leery of. It wasn't so much the roaring waters, huge rocks or the water spray that fazed me, but the smelly raincoats. The disgustingly smelly raincoats. I had heard about them at length from my cousins, and feared them. Thanks to modern technology, my fears were for naught. The shared raincoats were no more. Instead, we were each given a disposable raincoat with MotM logos on it. We put them on, boarded the boat, and rode to the Falls.

And the Falls are so much more impressive when viewed up close, when the roar is almost unbearably loud, the winds whips at you, and the water drenches you. It was sunny, the views spectacular, and I took occasional photos with the camera I had to keep hidden under my coat to keep it dry. We all had a wonderful, invigorating time.

And there's not that much more to do in Niagara Falls, at least in the off season, unless you are a casino maven. We all went out to dinner together, along with cousins of Prasad's who had come down from Toronto. And Jiji and I sat around late and caught up. In the morning, we said our goodbyes and drove off our separate ways.

The UP: No year would be complete without a trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I first went up to the Keweenaw back in 1981, as a medical student, and have been back almost every year since. I travel in May not just to witness the raptor migration⁴⁸, but to avoid black flies and tourists, both summertime irritations. By May most of the snow has melted, there's usually little ice left on the lakes, and the seasonal roads are passable. Many—but not all—of the shops and restaurants in Copper Harbor have opened, albeit with limited hours.

I stayed with my friends Mark and Lieschen at the Klemp mansion, and visited with everyone else. The weather was pleasant, but the winds were from the wrong direction⁴⁹. Although I drove to the top of Brockway Mountain many times, I only had one reasonably decent bird day. I had missed the birding festival this year—for the best, it turns out, as the weather was abominable—but got to see many of my birder friends. I got to spend an evening working on pysanky with Maddy and Mary. We talked as much as we worked, and

⁴⁵ When watching Ken Burns' series on the National Parks, I recall hearing that the national park system was, in part, a response to the commercialization that had occurred in Niagara, one of the natural wonders of the world. The national parks were made big to protect other such wonders, and to preserve their pristine natural environs.

⁴⁶ They had cordoned off their area, and set out sentries to keep people from wandering into the camera's range. They were filming a man and woman throwing ashes from an urn into the river, right at the edge of the falls. It took numerous takes, as the ashes didn't fall correctly, or there weren't enough ashes falling, or the wind blew them back up.

⁴⁷ I don't often impress my niece Fuzz, who is a cool totally with-it Jonas-loving tween, but hearing that I'd been on the Maid of the Mist made an impression. It's one of those things she'd really wanted to do, but hadn't been able to, when she'd visited the Falls. Similarly, I always envied my cousins because, when we were kids, they'd been on the MoM and I hadn't....smelly raincoats of no smelly raincoats!

⁴⁸ When the winds and weather are right, it's easy to see hundreds of hawks, eagles and falcons flying over Brockway Mountain on their way.....well, we're not sure exactly where they're going, Canada perhaps, but they fly over the observation point on the top of the mountain. It is one of the best places in the country to view the spring raptor migration—the birds are close up, and sometimes even below you, flying in the canyon. Plus, the vistas are incomparable: Lake Superior, the mountains of the Keweenaw, Lakes Bailey, Medora and Fanny Hooe, and Copper Harbor.

⁴⁹ The consensus appears to be that southeasterly winds are the best, but southerlies or southwesterlies will do in a pinch. Northerlies, on the other hand, mean that nothing will be flying.

Maddy showed me the eggs she had made the previous year. She is incredibly talented, and her work original and beautifully crafted.

I drank many cups of tea with my friend Laurie at her log house in the woods. We talked eggs, quilts, politics, kids (hers), and just about any other topic we could think of. We had a walk out in the woods, where I saw the cairn they'd built this past year over the grave of Ginger, one of my dog friends. It was preternaturally quiet there without her eager, friendly barking.

I was happy I had time to spend with Laurie in his camp. I had really missed him last year—he'd had a bout of appendicitis, and had not come up until quite late in the season. I love his camp: father had built it, with Laurie's help, back in the 1950s, and he'd been spending summers there, on Agate Bay, ever since. It was a truly rustic structure, a big room with built-in beds, bookshelves and cupboards, and a tiny kitchen, and big screen windows all around. The refrigerator was outside, with a chain around it (to keep out the bears). I had a feeling of being one with nature in this place.

Laurie was a reluctant story-teller, but we would compare notes about our journeys to exotic places, and the interesting birds (and people) we'd come across. Laurie would tell me about his summers in the Copper Country: the squirrels who came to his door, the bears who would wander through his camp, the neighbors who irritated him. And he would tell me about good birds and rarities that had been seen in the past year, and grumble that he'd have to update his book and checklist.....again. I will miss him.

UKRAINE: My summer isn't complete without a visit to Ukraine. I stayed home a few summers ago (choosing to go on a fall route instead) and was absolutely miserable. Michigan summers can be muggy and hot, too hot to enjoy the outdoors and with no recourse but to hide indoors. That summer had been one of those.

This year I escaped a cold and gray summer. It never got hot—a blessing to those of us who don't tolerate heat well—but warm would have been nice. I was not enticed to go into, or even near, the lake, and weeds and powdery mildew thrived in my garden, but not much else did. Instead I wandered around Ukraine, with lots of sunshine, a few heat waves, and almost no rain.

I spent the first few days traveling and getting organized. Flying into any city but Kyiv is just too much of a PITA⁵⁰ to be worth it. Instead, I visited with my family there, spending a night and then taking the overnight "express" to Lviv. In Lviv I shopped (items for camp), bought CDs⁵¹ and books, visited museums, and saw a few friends. But mostly I sorted through the things I had brought, and the bags of stuff I keep in Ukraine⁵², to pull out and organize what I would need for camp. With my friend Vira Manko's help, I bought pysanka books and styluses for camp, and with Myrosia's, was able to locate everything else I needed.

I had planned to travel to camp by train, but could not find a convenient one—all arrived at the nearest train station, in Volovets, at odd hours of day or night. So my kum and kuma⁵³ drove me, this time in beautiful sunny weather, down the main western highway, and then on smaller roads that wound through the gorgeous mountainous countryside of Zakarpattya (Transcarpathia). It was all familiar this time around, the beautiful mountain vistas and quaint villages.

Kolochava hadn't changed much in the year I'd been gone, and the damage from the previous year's floods wasn't obviously visible. We'd had horrible weather last year: torrential rains, frequent (and loud) thunder and lightning. We'd had to cancel the tent camp, and everyone suffered coughs, colds and runny noses. Since illegal logging in Zakarpattya had not been as rampant as other regions, the flooding in our area had been minimal. Other regions suffered dearly for their deforestation, with the Prut⁵⁴ rising to record levels and causing massive flooding and damage on the other side of the mountains.

⁵⁰ Pain in the..... Kyiv has a nice, modern airports, and major airlines fly into it. Lviv has a quaint little airport serviced by minor airlines who excel at losing luggage and have no real concept of customer service (I'm looking at you, LOT!). And flying these regional airlines mean additional stops/ flights, which only gives them even more opportunities to misplace bags and try to find new surcharges.

⁵¹ The music proved to be a huge blessing. Our DJ hadn't brought much music to speak of with him, so my Ukrainian music CDs ended up providing a soundtrack for camp.....and being copied over and over again by our volunteers. By the end of camp we had all become huge fans of Annychka, a Lemko singer, and I had acquired mp3 versions of the newest Shakira single and new Priyateli Ditey song.

⁵² I have about three large suitcases full of stuff stored at various relative's houses: medical supplies, office supplies, educational materials, pysanka supplies, books, small appliances, clothes, toiletries and such. It makes it easier to travel over there—less baggage to lug—and leaves more room for gifts.

⁵³ My cousin Myrosia and her husband Ruslan. I am the godmother of their daughter, so we are "kumy."

⁵⁴ The Prut river runs through the eastern Carpathian regions, including the village where I used to attend summer camps—Vorohta. Illegal logging in the national parks has been going on for years, both large and small scale. When we drove through Chernivtsi last year, you could see flood debris in the tops of trees, and damaged homes everywhere.

This year, camp was a few weeks later, and the weather favored us most days with sunshine and warmth. We had split our camp in two: not only did we utilize the Biobasa, but we were lucky enough to have the use of the national forest rest home across the road⁵⁵. The latter location was smaller, with fewer amenities, but in a lovely location on the river. The two groups would get together at least once a day, usually at our base, as we had hot water and a hall large enough to hold everyone.

Not all of my friends were able to make it this year, but many did, including most of the Kyiv office staff, and my scholarship student, Tanya, who was bonchuzhna (camp commander) this year. I got to spend a lot of time with her, and got to know her much better. I met many more of our UCARE students⁵⁶, as well as a few new volunteers, including two senior medical students who took over most of the doctoring for me. Two of my friends from the States, Askold and Nadia Haywas, came to camp as well, and had a marvelous time.

The days were full, both for us and our campers⁵⁷. After morning exercises and breakfast, there were lots of activities. Some days we stayed on the basa and made handcrafts⁵⁸, and other days there were excursions⁵⁹. Askold helped prepare the kids for their mountain climbing adventures with an orienteering class. During free moments, there were all sorts of games, spontaneous and organized, with an emphasis on "futbol" (aka soccer) and volleyball. And we had festivals, performances, and almost nightly discos.

The village of Kolochava is well known among the Czechs because it was here that Ivan Olbracht, a famous Czech writer, lived, wrote many of his works, and is buried. Olbracht's best loved work is a long poem about the highwayman Nicholas Shuhay, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Each summer hundreds of Czech tourists make their way here to visit his grave, climb mountains, and drink beer. Kolochava now hosts an annual Czech festival, with performances by Czech and Ukrainian artists, and lots of beer. This year our children took part, singing and dancing, and demonstrating various facets of Ukrainian culture, including ancient and traditional songs and dances, and break dancing.

We also had many of our own celebrations. There was an evening when the various internaty introduced themselves to the others, with poetry, songs, dance, and product placement, and another when the six groups of campers presented their flags, slogans and talents. There was a grand masquerade ball with original hand-made costumes, attended by Marilyn Monroe, Verka Serdushka and the wife of the president of the USA⁶⁰. We had an evening of traditional music and dance, and a trip town to see the circus⁶¹ that was passing through. We celebrated the day of the journalist: all the groups created wall newspapers, and then presented them to the collective.

⁵⁵ Well, it was a bit more complicated than across the road. First you had to go down the mountain, cross the road, cross the rickety footbridge across the river, and then walk through fields and forest on a dirt track, and across another small bridge.... It was easy enough in daylight, but quite the adventure (and not in a good way) at night.

⁵⁶ UCARE and Priyateli Ditey have a program to help sponsor college students called "Stipendiat." Students who have left the orphanages and gone on to further education are matched with sponsors who provide a stipend to help them pay their expenses so they can go to school. While the government generally provides free tuition to these orphan-scholars, it provides little help in the way of living expenses (rent and food), help with books and course fees, clothing or shoe allowances, or medical and dental bills.

⁵⁷ We had some 70 children aged 12 to 17 from seven different orphanages. Some had come in previous years, but others were first-timers. And all were from southern and eastern Ukraine. Three of the orphanages were from Sumy oblast, as that is where our major sponsor, Kraft Foods of Ukraine, is located.

⁵⁸ The kids loved creating things with their own hands. While they might nod off in or skip out of more didactic classes, they just loved crafts. This year they had a chance to learn basketry, straw crafts, painting, pysankarstvo, napkin folding (as part of a culinary arts class), floral design, and beadwork. They also had a chance to make motanky (traditional Ukrainian rag dolls), learn hairdressing and to paint plaster molds.

⁵⁹ Kolochava, even though it is a village at the end of the road, has quite a few tourist attractions. There is a wealth of museums: several old churches, the Czech and Soviet schools, and an open air museum. The latter contains reconstructed village buildings full of antique artifacts. One can see how people lived, attended school, worked and worshiped in an earlier era. There is an old train, too, that has been restored, and a railroad track around the museum on which it will eventually run. Visits to this museum are particularly popular because there are horses to be ridden, apples and berries to be picked, and a small mechanized cart on which groups can ride the rails.

There were also excursions within the region. All of the campers got to visit Synevir Lake, beautifully situated in the mountains at 1000 m above sea level. It is surrounded by forest and walking paths, and is one of the 7 natural wonders of Ukraine. And the whole group spent a day traveling to Uzhorod and Mukachevo to visit ancient castles and forts.

⁶⁰ And these were all our male college student volunteers. Cross-dressing is an old and popular form of entertainment in Ukraine—there is nothing funnier. There were several younger boys wearing dresses (and high heels) as well. Note that the wife of the president of the USA was a conceptual character, and not a representation of Mrs. Obama.

⁶¹ I don't normally like circuses, but enjoyed this small one. There were only about four staff, all of whom played multiple roles, including selling tickets at the door and snacks and souvenirs at intermission. The show was fun, with acrobatics, snake charming, hula hoop spinning, contortions, magic and, of course, a clown. There was a bird act, and a trained bear, who'd had his fur trimmed quite short because of the summer heat. Several of the kids were convinced the bear wasn't real, but just an actor in disguise. Only few of the children had money for snacks or toys, so we bought a lots of popcorn and shared with the entire group.

Our boys trained and played soccer against the locals. And we had an Olympiad, complete with Greek gods in togas and a variety of competitions. Our campers cleaned up along the river, removing many bags of litter, and had a big campfire at the forest base, complete with singing and roasting of sausages on sticks. There was swimming in the river on hot afternoons, and trips across the footbridge to the natural spring to collect mineral water. And on evenings not otherwise occupied with other activities we would have discos: music playing in the courtyard, while a girls and a few boys would dance, while the younger ones kicked a ball around or sat on our low stone wall and chatted. And then, when the evening ended, we would all gather in a circle, sing a song, and wish each other goodnight.

One of the highlights of camp, though, was the mountain hikes. Most of our kids had never seen a mountain before, much less climbed one. There were many short hikes through the forests, and an all day hike up Krasna Hora (Beautiful Mountain), which involved blueberry picking, lots of photography, and blueberry fights. And a group of older kids and student volunteers were allowed to climb Strymba, a much more difficult climb up a higher mountain (1719 m). The climb up was strenuous; once there, they rested, had lunch, and spent some time with the shepherd's who were camped in the highlands for the summer. They showed our students how to make cheese from sheep's milk, and allowed them all to taste some. Many enjoyed it; other fed it surreptitiously to the sheepdogs.

My maysternya (master class) was an adventure of a different sort. I was teaching the making of pysanky. After last year's problems getting supplies, I had brought beeswax with me to Ukraine, as it is apparently a seasonal item here. With Vira Manko's help, I purchased pysachky (styluses), books and sets of design sheets in Lviv. Despite searching high and low throughout the village and in neighboring towns, no white eggs could be located anywhere. We contemplated bringing a few cases from Kyiv, but decided to make do with brown ones instead.

After telling my students a bit about the ancient symbolism of pysanky⁶², I demonstrated the use of the beeswax and pysachok, and, using a few eggs I had in various stages of completion, showed them dye sequences and wax removal. Because our eggs were brown, we couldn't use a large spectrum of colors, so I chose to have them use only two: red and black. This made understanding the process simpler, and completing the pysanky faster.

The kids, student volunteers and adults caught on quickly, and spent hours with me in the dining hall enthusiastically working on their pysanky, both during their scheduled sessions and in their free time. Some used my demonstration drawings as design sources; others let their imaginations run free. And some stuck to simple designs and large signatures. But all created works of beauty, and had fun doing so.

I emptied all the pysanky, and coated them using Vira Manko's secret Ukrainian pysanka finish: Vaseline. Sending the eggs home was a challenge; we had no egg cartons, and little packing material. I asked Maryna where we could buy some baskets, and she suggested the "nearby" village of Iza, and arranged for Vasya to drive me in her van. Askold and Nadia joined me, along with Ivan, a volunteer who was teaching basket weaving at camp. While the village was, technically, nearby, there was a range of mountains between it and us, so we had to drive the long way around—about 2 hours, with stops for shopping and errands along the way. Vasya's GPS unit tended to get confused in the mountains, and kept suggesting, in insistent Russian, that we turn off onto dirt tracks or into mountainsides. We ignored it, and, after a lovely mountain trek, arrived.

Iza had long specialized in weaving and selling baskets. Until recently, it had been villagers selling their own work along the roadside, but the entrepreneurial spirit had taken hold and now there were numerous roadside shops that sold not only local wares, but all sorts of imported Chinese souvenirs. Ivan was quite helpful: he showed us how to judge the quality of the weaving, and pointed out the cheap glued work on the imports. I found seven large picnic-type baskets (the type that can be closed up) for the internaty⁶³, woven purses for a few of my volunteers, and some nice baskets for myself⁶⁴. Nadia was attracted to the wonderful furniture woven from willow branches, but decided it would be simpler....and cheaper.....to have Ivan come visit her and make the stuff on site than to buy it and try to ship it home to California.

Our time at camp came swiftly to an end. I had budgeted only 2 weeks for camp, but this year the camp had

⁶² Pysanky have pre-Christian roots, and most of the symbols are completely pagan. While some have been adapted to Christianity—crosses, triangles, fish, grapes—most retain their original pagan meanings. I discussed with them the most ancient of these: the berehynia motifs, the serpent/water motifs, agricultural motifs, and the sun/sky motifs.

⁶³ I packed one basket for each internat/orphanage. I included a set of dyes, and one copy of each of Vira Manko's Folk Pysanka book and a set of pysanka plates. I had Tetyana, who taught the pysanka class after I left, divide the styluses and wax between the internaty, and pack their eggs away. And I met with the teachers from the internaty before I left, and gave them instructions on how to find the proper instruments, dyes and books in Ukraine.

⁶⁴ I love baskets and ceramics. Unfortunately, neither is easy to transport home, so my relatives in Ukraine have acquired large collections of both. I use them when in country, and then give them away. This year I did manage to bring one tiny basket home with me.....

been unexpectedly extended to three weeks⁶⁵. So I had to leave early, before it ended (as did Askold and Nadia). It had seemed an easy thing to do when I was making plans at home; in reality, it proved difficult leaving all my new....and old...friends behind. When my family came to pick me up, I was happy to see them, but quite depressed on the drive away from Kolochava. I thought of everything I would be missing: the celebration of Kupalo⁶⁶, several more excursions, an Ivasyuk festival⁶⁷, discos, VIP visits, the final closing concert, and the kids.

Strilkivtsi: After camp I was driven straight to Strilkivtsi in Ternopil oblast, where we visited with my cousin's in-laws. There were three tiny white kittens to admire, good Ukrainian home cooking to enjoy, and news to catch up on. Her proud grandmother showed me pysanky my goddaughter, Daryna, had made. And, for the first time in weeks, I had a comfortable bed to sleep on, and no loud morning whistle to wake me.

Chernivtsi: The next day we drove to Chernivtsi, to spend a day with my cousin's husband's uncle, Ivan Balan, a noted artist and collector. Not only did he have a fine collection of his own beautiful paintings, but he also had huge collections of all sort of folk crafts and antiques: irons, keys, plates, ceramic whistles, postcards, topirski,⁶⁸ and lots and lots of books. Hidden away from view, he had told me last year, was a huge collection of traditional pysanky—some 1000 per his estimate. And he had offered to show them to me when I came back.....and so I had.

His pysanky were stored away in big boxes and weren't labelled in any way, but Ivan knew them all, and knew where they had come from. The vast majority were from a single village in northern Bukovyna⁶⁹, and he had collected them over the years since the 1970s. Others were from nearby towns or Hutsul pysanky, and there was a fairly large collection of malyovanky (painted eggs), as well as some beautiful old beaded eggs⁷⁰. Ivan allowed me to photograph his pysanky and share them with others because his main concern is preserving the traditional designs for posterity. He wants to ensure that the patterns will not die out, but will be re-created by future generations. Ivan had tried various methods of preserving the eggs themselves, with varied success: he discovered that filling the with wax was problematic⁷¹, as was not emptying them at all⁷². He had finally come up with a technique of cutting the eggs open with a very sharp knife⁷³, cleaning out the contents, and then glueing them back together and varnishing them. This seemed to be working, and most of his eggs had been preserved this way.

While there weren't actually 1000 of them, there were a lot. We began photographing in the late morning, up in his attic studio. I set up a small photo studio, using a small table, chair, easel, white cloth drape and my gorillapod. Myrosia would set up the egg, I would photograph it in several positions, and then she would replace it with another. As I was shooting, Ivan would tell us what he knew about each individual pysanka,

⁶⁵ Maryna had hoped to have two separate camps but, with the economy in tatters, had not been able to raise enough money. Instead, at the last minute, she extended the camp to three weeks. This was great for the kids, but wreaked havoc with my travel plans, as I had already made several commitments to be elsewhere.

⁶⁶ Kupalo, often referred to as Ivana Kupala, since it falls on the feast of St. Ivan, is one of the more pagan Ukrainian traditional celebrations. Girls make floral wreaths, vinky, which they wear on their heads. They then place lighted candles on these wreaths, and drop them in a river or pond. The young men chase after them, hoping to catch the one of the girl they fancy. And there are straw figures burned in effigy, bonfires, and people leaping over bonfires.

⁶⁷ Volodymyr Ivasyuk is Ukraine's most beloved songwriter. He trained as a doctor, but his true passion was always music. Among his best known works are "Chervona Ruta," which every Ukrainian can—and will—sing at the drop of a hat, and "Vodohray," which was also the name of our camp. Ivasyuk wrote and performed his music during the Soviet era, and was mysteriously hanged in a forest near Lviv in 1979 (by, according to general belief, the Soviet authorities). Ivasyuk is buried in Lychakivsky cemetery in Lviv, along with other prominent Ukrainians, and there are always masses of fresh flowers on his grave. In 2009 he was made a "Hero of Ukraine" by President Yushchenko. The 2009 camp was dedicated in his honor, his songs were sung and a concert was planned.

⁶⁸ Ceremonial Hutsul wooden-handled axes

⁶⁹ The village was called Roztoky, and he had been a frequent visitor because his kuma (mother of his godchild) had lived there.

⁷⁰ Beaded "pysanky," while now sold and created throughout Ukraine, were once indigenous only to Bukovyna. Real eggs would be coated with beeswax, and then beads meticulously pressed into the beeswax to create intricate designs, often mirroring those of real pysanky. These eggs were never very common; they were produced almost exclusively by cloistered nuns. Beaded eggs of this sort are common in Rumania, and this technique was probably imported from there when Bukovyna was under Rumanian hegemony.

⁷¹ Filling the eggs with wax had seemed like a good idea, but two problems arose. First of all, the scent of beeswax attracted mice, who would come and nibble away at the eggs to reach the wax. Second, the wax would expand in hot weather and cause the eggs to crack.

⁷² He tried to empty the eggs in a timely fashion, before the contents grew too foul; in a few cases he hadn't been able to, and the eggs leaked, faded and "froze" in odd positions (due to the location of the dried up egg contents).

⁷³ On the pysanky the cracks were barely visible on most eggs. On the malyovanky they were quite obvious and often distracting. This is similar to the technique used by the Museum of the Pysanka to preserve their pysanky.

and Myrosia noted it all down in a notebook. The light was a mix of natural and electric, and it kept changing, so I had to keep adjusting the white balance and resetting the aperture and shutter speed.

In the end we photographed 459 different eggs with a total of almost 2000 exposures. It was hard work, but over fairly quickly. It took much more time, later, to edit all those photos, and I am still sorting them for placement on my web site.

Kolomyia: Since we spent so much time photographing, we didn't get to see much of Chernivtsi, but we made up for this at our next stop, Kolomyia. I have been to Kolomyia, and its museums, many times, but Myrosia hadn't. We started out at the Museum of Hutsul and Pokuttya Folk Arts. Although I'd been there many times, I'd never had a chance to view the exhibits at a leisurely pace⁷⁴. Myrosia and I soon realized we didn't know much of what we were looking at, so we hired a guide, who gave us a truly in depth tour of the museum, pointing out odd items and tools, and explaining their functions. She also pointed out the symbolic nature of the decoration (all Ukrainian homes and housewares are intricately decorated). There were berehynia and solar motifs everywhere, from the beams of a house and the ceremonial leather jackets. I learned about Hutsul walking sticks⁷⁵, wedding costumes, men's purses and butter presses. It was all quite fascinating. In the temporary exhibitions hall was an exhibit of embroidery from the nearby Borshchiv region; some was traditional, and some a bit more modern, but it was all quite stunning.

Across the street was the relatively newer Museum of the Pysanka. It is, not surprisingly, one of my favorite stops on any visit to Ukraine. I have visited, almost annually, since the museum moved to this location in the fall of 2000. The museum is impossible to miss—it is shaped like a huge pysanka. There are several exhibition halls, and they were much better organized and utilized than on my previous visits⁷⁶. There wasn't much new to look at, but there are just so many eggs in the museum that you can't really take them all in during one....or ten.....visits.

That evening, after my mushroom connection had found me⁷⁷, I finally got to meet my pen pal, Oleh Kirashchuk. We'd met on line, through our web sites, and discovered we have mutual friends. He and his wife invited Myrosia and me over to visit, fed us dinner, introduced us to their children, and then we talked late into the night. Oleh is a brilliant pysankar, and creates some of the most incredible pysanky I have ever seen. We got to see some of his works, his workroom, and various videos that he's filmed (including a Hutsul wedding) or starred in (a TV interview about the Gucci pysanky). And we talked about ethnography and traditions, subjects that fascinate all of us.

Kosiv: The following day my Hutsul friends picked us up and drove us to their house in Richka, but first we stopped in Kosiv. I'd been to the market there several times, but had never had a chance to see much of the town. We tried to visit the new museum at the Folk Arts College, but apparently the staff were all on summer vacation and had closed it. We tried the city museum, and had better luck—it was open, but there were no tours and not much in the way of explanation. Pan Mykola came with us, and explained many of the items there, as, in the villages, they were still in use or had been until quite recently. Included in the exhibit were many works by students and graduates of the Folk Arts College, but I couldn't find any by my friend, Vitalik. And we visited our Pan Mykola's shop, and some others in the center, where I found nice handcrafts and purses⁷⁸.

Richka: Traveling to Pan Mykola's house in Richka had always been an adventure, as the road to it was so horrible. The road to the village itself was not too bad, except in a few spots where the flood last year had washed some of it away. But their house was on the other side of the mountain, and used to be reachable only by driving across the river and then along a WWII vintage tank track. It was alternately rocky, muddy and

⁷⁴ All of my other visits to Kolomyia had been with groups of other people. I visited once, in Soviet times, with a tour group. Other times were post-Independence, when all the Lenin-inspired artwork had been removed. In either case, my time was limited, and consisted of fairly quick jaunts through the museum.

⁷⁵ They are a necessary part of the traditional costume, and both men and women carried them, although they were of different styles.

⁷⁶ The museum is a branch of the bigger Folk Art museum across the street. Its special exhibitions are put together by the general staff, and often have absolutely nothing to do with pysanky. The new director has made changes, including more topical exhibits, and more of the exhibition space being used to display pysanky. She has also moved the large wall displays, with their strings of traditional pysanky, out of the lobby, where they were hard to see, to one of the 2nd story galleries.

⁷⁷ Slavik, a friend of mine from Vorohta, is a doctor, chauffeur and mushroom hunter. I've been buying his mushrooms for years, as they are the best I've been able to find. Since I no longer go to Vorohta annually to attend camp, he came to me. This year had been a poor one for mushrooms, and last year not much better, per Slavik. We were able to catchup on gossip, and admire his car—which was NOT a Lada.

⁷⁸ Maria has a purse fetish. Being a good aunt, I try to buy her purses wherever I go. I hadn't had much luck to until now, as Zakarpattya is not rife with handcraft emporia nor, for that matter, much in the way of handcrafts. I found some artsy leather handbags, in gorgeous bright colors, which she loved.

steep. And quite scary—you never quite believed the old Kamaz⁷⁹ would make it up the inclines. But since last year they'd built themselves a new road the short way around the mountain, and could now drive in and out relatively easily. It was not a road I would take an ordinary car on, but you no longer needed a virtual tank. It was still muddy and rocky and steep, just less so, but much shorter!

Myrosia and I spent the better part of two days with my Hutsul family. Although I'd seen Pan Mykola and his Vasyl in Kyiv and at the market, it had been several years since we'd been to the house. It was great to see all of them. We wandered around, admiring the improvements, including a retaining wall and fountain complex that lit up at night, and then had a wonderful meal of shashlyky, accompanied by conversation about the older grandson's upcoming wedding. It was to be a Hutsul wedding, meaning showy and expensive, and perhaps involving horses. Neighbors stopped by, including one who made cheese horses⁸⁰ and sold to restaurants. Much vodka was drunk, including, sadly, by me (since Myrosia wouldn't do her part). By 9 p.m. I was quite out of it, and left to take a short nap, from which I awoke the following morning.

The next morning, Saturday, we had planned to go with Pan Mykola and Vasyl to the Kosiv market, but decided against it, and not just because it would have meant getting up at 0430. This was the weekend of the Sorochynsky Market, the huge annual folk crafts and trade market in Poltava, and most artisans in the region were planning to be there, not in Kosiv. We had planned to take the morning train to Lviv, but the morning train no longer ran, and the buses were very slow and uncomfortable. So instead we spent another day in the fresh mountain air, getting sunburnt under a blazing sun, and then drove to Kolomyia in the early evening, where we caught our train and slept all the slow way to Lviv.

Lviv: Once back in Lviv, I was kept busy, visiting Kniazhe, my mother's village, where I spent time with my goddaughter, Daryna, and her brother Maksym. My aunt Zoya, a retired math teacher, was keeping them for the summer, and they were helping in the garden and with the livestock. We wandered around the village a bit, trampled through the garden, took lots of photos, and talked and talked. I had brought Daryna a pair of electric styluses,⁸¹ and taught her how to use them.

I visited my cousins in **Sokal**, where I was fed gossip and pelmeny, and visited **Zhovkva**, with its magnificently frescoed church⁸², and the monastery in **Krekhiv**.

Myrosia and I wandered around the markets, the museums and the bookstores in Lviv city center, and, as always, bought lots of books and enjoyed the cafes. We finally got to visit the new art galleries of the National Museum at the Potocky Palace: familiar old paintings in a newly restored setting. We had less luck with the city museum: the Trypillian artifacts that we had seen there several years ago were gone, moved to Kyiv (or so we were told).

Kyiv: I ended my trip back where I had started, in Kyiv. It was mostly time spent with friends and family. I traveled back the same day that my campers were returning home, and had a chance to meet up with Tanya in Kyiv, on her layover between trains. She came to my kuma's house, where we had time to reminisce, and Tanya told me about what had happened at camp after I'd left. What she had been most impressed by was how the kids had opened up to her and the other volunteers, even those deemed "incorrigible" by some of the staff. It had been a big, happy family at the end, and everyone cried when it ended. And then Tanya and I cried as she left to catch her train to Dnipropetrovsk.

⁷⁹ Soviet era truck which can go just about anywhere.

⁸⁰ Cheese sculptures are a traditional Hutsul handcraft. They are decorative, but often eaten when fresh. Cheese sculptures are sometimes dried, painted, and used as toys. Common figures include deer, horses, rams and birds. <http://www.sadyba.org.ua/section-10.html> ч іф фреск

⁸¹ Daryna has been writing pysanky for several years, and has gotten quite good. She is like I used to be, and gives them all away as quickly as she makes them. Her grandmothers have baskets of them, which I photographed. (I still give mine away, I just photograph them first.)

⁸² I am lucky to have gotten to know Otets (Father) Sebastian through Andriy. He is a Studite monk, and his life's work has been preserving Ukrainian religious art. He saves works (icons, statues, crosses) that might have otherwise been thrown out by small (and large) parishes for being old and not shiny enough. Parishioners and priests seem to prefer modern fittings for their churches, including lots of gilt and twinkle lights, and are apt to throw the old stuff out or paint it over.

In fact, many priests prefer nice new concrete churches to those old drafty wooden ones. This is thought to perhaps explain the recent rash of church fires in western Ukraine.

Sebastian and his monks rescue and restore such art, and try to protect that which is left in place (frescoes and wall paintings). It is a hard and thankless job. Thanks to him, I've been able to visit lots of beautiful small churches and see some amazing things. Last year he took me to a small wooden church on the outskirts of Lviv whose interior is covered with 17th century paintings. Gorgeous!

This year I had a guided tour of the cathedral in Zhovkva, with its early 20th century frescoes. They were beautiful, an odd mix of Byzantine and Art Nouveau, and included many patriotic and historical references.

I took my annual trip to **Zoltonosha**, a three plus hours' drive⁸³ south of Kyiv. Inka and Dima came with me, but it was not the happy gathering of years past. Tyotyia Lyida was gone, and my Uncle Vasyl, her brother, was understandably depressed—they had lived together all their lives, and now he was alone. Many of my relatives came to visit, but those from Rivne hadn't been able to make it. It was a bittersweet occasion, as we drank to Lyida's memory, reminisced about her, and then went to visit her grave⁸⁴.

Inna and I went shopping, both to Petrivka⁸⁵ and Andriyivskiy Uzyizd⁸⁶, and then spent a relaxing day at Toma's dacha, enjoying Ukrainian barbecue, the fresh air, each other's company, and the pleasant summer weather.

Andriy, my buddy from tabirs (summer camps) and routes past, and fellow "meloman⁸⁷," came to visit me as well. He impressed Inna with his unique fashion sense. His lovely yellow leather sneakers came with a story, and it had to do with impressing a girl. Andriy was still working as a DJ, but had gotten a better job, more talk and less music. He was still living in a room in a friend's flat, as housing in Kyiv is difficult to find.

Ruslan and I had a bit of an adventure. He took me to a new park/museum in Kyiv, Mamayeva Sloboda. It is a skansen, or open-air ethnographic museum, built on the former lands of St. Michael's golden-domed monastery, near the source of the river Lybid. It includes a replica of an 18th century Kozak village: a market square surrounded by houses with traditional wicker fences, shops, and other buildings. On a nearby hill stand a church and several windmills.

The nice thing about this skansen is that the objects in the houses and other buildings are not museum pieces, but replicas, and visitors are allowed to look at, touch, and photograph them. We wandered inside of the houses and shops, both rich and poor. Craftsmen of all sorts demonstrated their crafts. Near the lily covered pond a kobzar sang and played. The kozaky had set up camp, and were cooking a huge pot of corn mush. And Oleh Skrypka was there, organizing the day's activities.

Ruslan and I had managed to come not on any ordinary day, but on Ukrainian Flag Day. In honor of the holiday, the world's biggest Ukrainian flag would be unfurled. First though, there was a horse show, with kozaks (including a girl kozak) riding and performing incredible stunts on horseback⁸⁸. They did not sit in the saddle, they stood on horseback and rode. They hung off of saddles to grab rings off the ground, and displayed fancy sword and lance work. The show ended with kozaks forming a human pyramid while riding.

The big event, though was the flag. As it was unfurled, it seemed to me to be more a huge blue and gold ribbon—very long, but quite narrow. Hundreds of people held it aloft by the edges, and carried it through the town, and sang the national anthem. Then the flag was folded up again, by the kozaks, and my foray into the 18th century ended.

⁸³ I used to be able to afford to hire a driver for a day to take us there, but it has gotten prohibitively expensive the last few years. There is now a reasonable system of local transport, small minibuses that travel point to point, with few stops. They are comfortable, dependable and fairly quick. Still, they are not as convenient as having your own car, with stops for bargains along the road, and Inka playing her music loudly for all to enjoy.

⁸⁴ Her grave is in a cemetery in the nearby village of Bohoslavka, where Vasyl rode, daily, on his bicycle, 14 kilometers round trip. He and Lyida had family property there, where he grew potatoes and other crops. The cemetery was unlike any I had ever seen—every single occupant had the same last name. It was a family graveyard, but quite large one, filled with simple crosses and many generations of Kobetses.

⁸⁵ Lonely Planet has this to say about Petrivka: "Locals call it the 'book market' but you can get a vast array of junk here. It's also Kyiv's main receptacle of DVDs, CDs and software of questionable legitimacy." I go there to find music, as it has just about the best selection in the country.

⁸⁶ Andriyivskiy Uzyizd is an old cobblestone road that leads from the upper part of Kyiv to the old waterfront section. Kyiv is built mostly up in the hills, and the hillsides in this area are green, forested parklands. The Uzyizd is becoming more upscale with the passage of time, with nicer restaurants and art galleries. Along the road are numerous kiosk selling all sorts of handicrafts and souvenirs. At the top are mostly T-shirts, matrioshky and tourist gewgaws; at the bottom are mostly Chinese and Indian trinkets and Soviet antiques. In-between are booths with traditional crafts, and a side road lined with paintings, most of over-the-sofa quality. There was a time when the booths were run by independent artisans and peddlers, but many, especially the more touristy ones, seem to stock the same goods and be part of a chain.

This year there was some sort of construction going on, the crafts kiosks were much fewer, and half of the road was fenced off.

⁸⁷ Music enthusiast/collector. Andriy works as a DJ in Kyiv, and has access to lots of music. It is something we bonded over on our Crimean route.

⁸⁸ It was amazing stunt riding and, apparently, this troupe has performed for Queen Elizabeth numerous times. While riding horses around an oval, they performed "sabre fighting, whip exercises, fancy riding, and forming a big pyramid on horseback."

That was pretty much it for my travels this year. I went up to Grand Rapids to visit Beth for a weekend, and we went to the Festival of the Arts. And, a few days after I got back from Ukraine, I went up to Harrison with the family, to the hunting camp. I don't remember much except a couple forays to town, including to the flea market (the kids' favorite) and to the drugstore. I had picked up a virus on the flight home, and spent my time sleeping and blowing my nose.

I had hoped to travel to Mauritania in 2009, but then that country experienced a revolution and my friend Laura had to leave. I'll probably never get there now, but other destinations await, and I suspect 2010 will be a bit busier. I'm heading to Australia in February, to see my friends after a much too long absence. May will find me in the Copper Country, and the summer in Ukraine. Autumn is still up in the air, although Christobel is going to be in Bhutan, organizing a breast cancer management scheme, and has invited me to come visit. It sounds marvelous.

And then there is the big Petrusha family reunion, at a site yet to be determined, in June. And I really hope to get to Traverse City, Grand Rapids, and maybe Cleveland this year.....

Here's hoping we can meet again in the coming year! Until then, a bit of Robert Frost:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.