

Greetings!

Well, 2018 is finally almost over, a year that made 2017 almost seem like the good old days. What I wrote last year remains true: Ukraine is still at war, sanctions are not being imposed fully, the Cheeto in the White House is doing his best to undo Obama's legacy, start trade wars and alienate all of our allies, and deregulation is running amok. And in 2018, each and every day, the corruption at the heart of the Trump regime, and its deep ties to Putin, become more and more evident.

As I grow older, the wisdom of traveling widely and seeing the world while I was young seems prescient. Getting old sucks, and turning sixty was harder than I thought it would be. This summer, a month after my birthday and just before leaving for Ukraine, I got another bout of sciatica; unlike previous episodes, this one did not resolve spontaneously in two to three weeks. It dragged on and on for months....only to be cured (temporarily, it seems) by a URI with such a severe cough that it apparently threw my back into alignment. Which has been followed by one (or possibly two) more URIs. And then, just after Thanksgiving, after I'd invited everyone to my house for a holiday party and cut down a huge spruce¹, I tripped over a dustpan and injured my upper left arm and chest²..... I've avoided major surgery this year, however, and my annual MRI was all clear (no recurrent cancer), so there's that.

This autumn we lost **Belle** to old age (she was almost 14) and lymphoma. Belle was always a very good girl, and loved her Aunt Luba, who brought her stuffed hedgehogs each Christmas and occasionally fed her under the table. Belle was cunning, but not necessarily obedient; the only "trick" Kalyna managed to teach her was to give her paw, which she would do often and in random circumstances. In turn, she taught the rest of us to open the door for her, and to give her treats. She spent her youth running, catching balls and sticks, ripping apart stuffed animals and trying to eliminate the squirrel menace³. As she aged, she took more solace in sneaking people food, chewing on ice cubes and her toys. Her hearing remained sharp until almost the very end; she could hear the refrigerator open from several rooms away, and go running.....or hobbling.....to the kitchen the minute it did. Belle loved being photographed; and would run to pose with any group, and smile for the camera. And she loved being petted; she would station herself near one of us, head near our hand, and wait.....

My mother, **Sonia**, aka Baba, is still living independently. She still drives a bit, in full daylight and good weather, to the store or the doctor's office; a tank of gas lasts her several months. She's avoided cataract surgery so far, but that may be coming up after the holidays; her vision is beginning to suffer. Baba still embroiders, reads (a lot), watches old movies, MSNBC and the weather channel, and works out in the yard in good weather. She yells a lot at the squirrels (who make a mess of her yard with pine cones and chestnuts) and at Donald Trump. Each time I see her the question on her lips is "What is taking Mueller so long?"

Bill, my brother, is still employed at Ford (as I write this). He went back to playing softball after 23 year hiatus, and seems to be enjoying it. Bill spends a lot of time in Harrison (the middle knuckle of Michigan's mitten), at the hunting camp, where he's always fixing things, checking the trail cam, and getting ready for hunting season. He's gotten in lots of fishing and hunting this year, and managed to win a bear permit, after 10 years in the license lottery. It was not a successful hunt, but learned a lot about bear behavior.

Laurie is still at GM, and hoping to keep her job during the latest round of layoffs. She and the girls spent a weekend in Chicago this year, and went to see "Hamilton." It was not the original Broadway cast, but still wonderful, I am told. She and Bill joined their good friends Pam and Jack Plants in an AWESOME trip to the Mighty 5 National Parks in southern Utah.....which Trump and teh GOP haven't sold off yet. They had a great time hiking, and the scenery was spectacular.

Kalyna, my oldest niece, has had a busy and expensive year. She spent the first half of it working full time as a nurse's aide while taking prerequisite classes for PA school. She spent summer at Starbucks writing ten different essays, followed by travel for interviews (California, Chicago, Vegas, Colorado). Her most exciting moment this year was being accepted to her top choice, Northwestern, where she will start in June of 2019. It wasn't all work and no play though; Kalyna skied Colorado, backpacked with friends Nicole and Andrea, flew to Florida to visit her friend Nick, and attended her friend Lauren's wedding in Grand Rapids (the first of her friends to get married).

Nick, my nephew, has been at his current job for a year now. He moved out, and into a house with three friends in fabulous Ferndale. He's not only a vinyl devotee, but invested some of his income into DJ equipment.....and DJ'd a wedding this summer. He's been traveling, too—out to California to visit an old friend, and to Austin and NYC with his new girlfriend, Olivia (who we all like—she makes a mean spinach pie!). And he plans to learn glass blowing in the new year.

¹ I had sworn I would get a small tree this year, but felt great that weekend and got carried away. Interestingly, last year's tree, also huge, refused to die. It started putting gout new growth after Christmas, and the needles stayed put and green. I didn't have the heart to kill it.....so it stayed up until late May. Fuzz helped Baba and me take it down in June!

² Preparing for a big holiday open house and decorating my tree took twice as long, since I was moving at half speed. Nick and Yarko helped me move stuff around, and my mom helped with the tree, but still.....I'm getting too old for this. And I have to eventually move it all back!

³ It's not just the destruction of garage roofs and flower beds—they are going after our power grid. There were about 137 squirrel-induced power outages in 2015, according to Cyber Squirrel's data. That works out to about 1 squirrel attack every three days or so. And, as the site notes, this is probably an undercount. Belle understood!

Fuzz, the youngest, turned 21 this year; she can now drink.....legally. Fuzz is in her final year of nursing at U of M; she spent a lot of time playing Bingo with old people this autumn, as part of her community medicine rotation. She has been working at Harper Hospital, a few shifts a month, after a successful internship there last summer. The highlight of her year, however, has to have been her trip to India with the nursing school. They spent three weeks there in August; she visited the Taj and rode an elephant, but mostly spent time in Indian hospitals. There she nearly passed out at the sight of her first vaginal delivery, and got bitten by a lizard. It was an eventful visit.

Zach, my cousin Helene's son, graduated from high school this year and, as is the custom in the suburbs of Detroit, had a huge graduation party. In contravention of Petrusha tradition, he chose not to go on to college, but enlisted in the Marines. He made it through basic training, graduating just before Thanksgiving. His parents were proud and amazed. **Yarko**, Vera's son, has found his true callings in life: he worked as a firefighter out in Oregon this past fire season, and plans to go back next year. Meanwhile he is learning finish carpentry and enjoying it. **Zhenia**, my Ukrainian godson, has decided that, while he still loves cooking, he does not want to do it as a career. He worked for six months in a warehouse Poland, and earned good money, but has decided that he needs to go back to school and get a desk job like his father's.

Darynka, my goddaughter in Lviv, had a baby in September—a beautiful little girl named Dzvinka. She is healthy and very, very cute. I spent many hours at Mom-to-Mom sales buying her cute clothes in sizes 3 months to 3 years, and shipped them to her; they arrived on St. Nicholas Day! Dzvinka will be the best dressed baby in Lviv!

I spent much time fundraising for UCARE again in 2018. Besides running an online fundraiser, and selling more of my books and pysanka kits, there were the pysanky. We ordered 1000 of them from my friend Vira Manko in Lviv, and I had to inspect, clean and varnish them when they arrived. We sold some, held a pysanka Bingo, turned some into Christmas ornaments, and gave some to our generous donors.

I traveled a bit this year, although less than usual; we had two people out on maternity leave in winter, making it impossible for me to leave then. I did get a chance to explore a bit more of Detroit this year; Jane came down from the UP in February for a visit, and we made a day of the Belle Isle Conservatory, and the toy store and Yemeni food in Hamtramck.

My first trip of 2018 was to the **UP** in late April to early May. There was still a good bit of snow around when I arrived; it was a late spring. My friend Lorri had to go down to Florida unexpectedly to help look after her mother, so I got to spend a lot more time with Rick, her husband. And I had a lot of time to cook⁴ and visit—Brockway Mountain Drive was blocked off by the Keweenaw county road commission (due to snow and ice) until just before I headed back home. Kara was stuck in Wisconsin—she works for their DNR, and fire season had started already. Since she couldn't come to me, I drove to Ashland, with a detour through Neillsville and Marshfield. Kara and I spent a nice evening together, then had breakfast on the shores of icy Lake Superior, and enjoyed the murals⁵ of Ashland before I had to head back.

I taught a class at the Calumet Art Center, and this time around it was full up. There were many pysanka enthusiasts who drove long distances to participate; one was a former Peace Corps volunteer from Ukraine! And I got to visit Joe Kirkish⁶ a few times; I did some Apple tech support for him, talked about old movies, and watched Ernie Kovacs videos. When the road to Brockway Mountain finally opened, I spent a couple of mornings there, and had a really good bird day, one of the best in many years.

I'd enjoyed my quick jaunt to **Wisconsin** so much that I decided to go back in June. I drove through the UP, to see Lorri and the lupines, and was thus there for the Father's Day flood⁷. Luckily, the road to Wisconsin didn't get washed out, so I headed to Gays Mills and to Trish and David in the Driftless⁸ region. They'd acquired a few houses since my last visit (David collects them, it seems⁹), so I had a lovely hilltop house with plumbing to stay in. It rained much of the time I was there, but we had a nice time none-the-less, visiting Viroqua and Soldier's Grove.

⁴ I made my usual stuffed cabbage and borshch and bigos, and added Olivye (Ukrainian potato salad), cheesy potatoes and sliders to my repertoire; Rick approved heartily of the new additions. I filled their freezer and took care packages to many of my friends.

⁵ I've noticed lots of historical murals in towns of the upper Midwest. Ashland had a lot of them and interesting ones, but they are appearing more and more in towns everywhere.

⁶ Joe is a photographer and former Tech professor; he is also an old movie enthusiast, and used to run the Club Indigo series at the Calumet Opera House. He still goes every day to the old folks home to read or show videos to the residents; he himself is 91.

⁷ There was pounding rain all night; like a tropical downpour. Calumet is on a ridge in the middle of the Keweenaw; all we noticed there was some debris in the roadways. Lorri and I went for coffee in town, where someone showed us photos of the damage in Lake Linden: roads washed away. As I drove down to Hancock, there was more and more damage—water on the road, cars washed off into ditches, and roads entirely washed away, with only deep ruts remaining. There was even a lane of US-41 totally gone!

⁸ The Driftless region is a corner of SW Wisconsin that got missed by the glaciers. It has steep, forested ridges, deeply-carved river valleys, and many spring-fed waterfalls and cold-water trout streams.

⁹ He's retired and needs a hobby, so he's been remodeling several buildings he's bought: small farmhouse, milk house, and old log cabin.

From there I drove to De Pere, a small town near Green Bay; Ginger Meyer, an old friend from Calumet, had moved there. We visited, and then it was off to Marshfield, so spend time with Lyn; we had lunch at her favorite coffee shop, and I took her driving in the countryside, where we stopped at the Amish quilt shop and visited the High Ground. The following day it was Neillsville and the farm; the storm had come through here, too, but it had been more wind than rain. There were branches down in their yard, and lots of trees down in the forest. Dan spent the next few weeks cleaning up that mess....and I am sure there is still more work to be done. Ruth took me all round Neillsville; we visited her favorite shops, looked into the old Ukrainian¹⁰ church and other "Ukrainian" sites.

Per family tradition, my family spent the 4th of July in **Harrison**, the middle knuckle of Michigan's mitten. Bill, Laurie and the Babas were there for all six days, the rest of us came and went (not everyone gets the entire week off). It was insufferably hot the entire time, up in the high nineties. The cabin was in the low nineties¹¹. We did not go out much, napped a lot, and there was much snacking, drinking of cold beverages and card playing. The babas and I explored Clare (nice hardware store!) and Gladwin¹², did our usual Amish shopping (potholders, jams and pickled vegetables). The rest went canoeing. We never made it to the woods—too hot!

Later that month I visited Beth in **Grand Rapids** for a late birthday celebration; we visited Meijer Gardens to see the orchids and the Masayuki Koorida sculpture exhibit (lots of geometric shapes, some shiny), and learned not to trust MLive best Mexican restaurant lists. Just don't. Take our word for it.

In August I headed back to **Ukraine**. I managed to raise enough money from friends, family, and generous strangers on Facebook to have a small camp, because summer without UCARE tabir would be unthinkable. It was held the last two weeks of August in Vorokhta; we had twenty kids from the Sumy area (orphans and the children of soldiers) and about ten staff/volunteers, including the indispensable Darynka, my goddaughter. The kids were in kozak Valeriy's very basic tent camp up on Mahora, and the rest of us stayed in relative luxury (hot water and hot meals) in a private home a bit further down the mountain. Both groups enjoyed fantastic views, morning fog, cows with bells and fresh air.

We kept busy; besides learning survival skills, mountaineering and Ukrainian martial arts from the kozaks, the kids also dabbled in ceramics, pysanky, and painting; they learned floristry (and kept the dining hall looking nice), built and flew kites, acquired temporary tattoos, and made bracelets for each other; they rode horses and four wheelers, played cards (it rained a bit), and learned to dance from our own Anya. Dima led them in all sorts of games, to help them get acquainted and build social skills. We had two concerts, to celebrate Independence Day (August 24th) and the close of camp. The kids prepared and performed songs, dances and recitations. There were fires every night with games, conversation and singing.

Despite our limited budget, we arranged several outings for the kids, near and far. We traveled, as a group, across the mountains to Zakarpattia and the salt waters of Sotkivno, where the kids spent hours splashing around in pools. We stopped on the way home in Dilove, the geographical center of Ukraine for photos and souvenirs. The kids visited the resort of Bukovel, riding a long and scenic lift; they climbed Hoverla, Ukraine's highest mountain; and they hiked in to the waterfall Huk. And hey explored the tourist bazaars and rode the rickety chair lift of my old stomping ground in Vorokhta, Baza Avanhard.

While the kids were climbing Hoverla, the staff took a one day retreat to the Kosiv area--we went to the market in the morning, and then to my rizbar friends in Richka in the afternoon, for food, drink and general merriment in the mountain air. Darynka and Inna ended up with gorgeous embroidered shirts because I misheard the prices.....

Not all my time in Ukraine was spent at camp; there was much time for visiting old friends and exploring a few new places. I started out, as always, in Kyiv where it was, as always ridiculously hot outside. After a day acclimating, unpacking and watching cheesy movies with my godson, we went to my uncle Vasyl's house in Zolotonosha to visit my dad's family. We had the usual wonderful feast, with cherry varenyky made with the very last cherries from the tree out front. For a change, we spent the night, and after a huge number of family photos, with Vania in full Spiderman gear, drove that morning to Cherkasy, to my aunt Tanya's flat. The last time I'd been there her grandsons were quite small, and I caught one of them standing on a chair in the kitchen and eating smetana with a big spoon from a 3 liter jar with a look of absolute ecstasy on his little face; that tot is now in medical school. And went to the local museum; while 10 year old Vania learned about mastodons and our prehistoric ancestors, we toured the museum, which we had practically to ourselves. The woman in the ethnographic section was so excited to have interested visitors, that she kept taking down barriers so I could get closer to the exhibits and photograph them. There were many embroideries, folk costumes and even local pottery, but no authentic local pysanky....

In Kyiv itself I did little touring, but did visit with friends, and catch up with family at the dacha. And our "collective" from camp met at the pizzeria across the street from Inna's flat to see each other again and plan for next year.

I also went down to Kryvyi Rih from Kyiv; I explored options for any means of travel (e.g. buses) besides the night train, but could not find any. So it was travel on the night train which was, for some reason, almost fully booked. I could only get upper coupe

¹⁰ Back in the 1950s some Chicago real estate agent made a living selling farms to Ukrainian DPs, my grandparents among them. A lot of them settled in the Neillsville-Grant area; they formed a church and community organizations. The descendants of those people moved away and assimilated; the area is largely Amish now.

¹¹ There was an old portable AC unit which they had set up; it vented out next to the doorwall. Much duct tape was used to put it together until, just before heading home, Laurie found the missing parts. Its efficiency then improved, bring temps into the 80s.

¹² Apparently the babas have been missing Kmart, which has left the Detroit area. I made the mistake of showing them where the Shopko was, and they spent a happy hour+ in there while I sweltered in the car. And they LOVED the Family Dollar!

berths in either direction. Luckily I was traveling light and, as an old woman, got people to switch with me for a lower berth....KR was hot, too, of course (it's August). Tanya and her family were doing well. She was still on maternity leave for Pasha (Paul), who'd grown to be a quite big two year old; Masha (Maria), now 6, was quite the big sister, and ready to start school in the fall. Pasha's main interest is cars: big ones, little ones, and everything in between. I brought him a small selection of toy cars, and that kept him busy. Masha takes after her mother, and is fascinated by handcrafts; I brought her an assortment of art supplies, including a variety of those little rubber bands used to make bracelets, which she immediately took to after looking up instruction videos on YouTube.

Most of our time was spent just hanging out with family, often at the dacha, where it was much cooler. The 9th, though, was a church holiday, the feast of St. Panteleimon, so we dressed up and went to church. It was a new church, run by a charismatic priest from western Ukraine, whose services were in Ukrainian and often included exorcisms and casting out of demons. On this day we had the blessing of water and oil and one demon cast out. Later that day, we went to a nearby waterfall where we watched local boys diving and worked to keep Pasha from joining them.

I spent time before and after camp in **Lviv**, with the usual visits to friends, visits to bookstores, and visits to the shipping company to send books home. As to the cafes--they were as lovely as ever and, due to the hot weather, I became quite the connoisseur of nonalcoholic mojitos. I was there for the first of September, a national holiday, and got to see my kuma's son Maksym start university. Vira took me to a vinkopletennia (garland weaving) in the open air museum in Lviv, where my California friends Askold and Nadia met up with us. Myrosia's family and I took a trip to my mom's village of **Kniazhe** to see her mother Zoya, and broke Volodia's car doing so. Darynka and I traveled to **Chernivtsi** for two days, a lovely city in Bukovyna, but a bit too Russian-speaking for her taste. We wandered the streets, visited museums and the university, photographed many hundreds of pysanky, got to know all the cafes, and stayed with her great-uncle (the artist) and his wife and their many rescue dogs.

In the autumn I drove my mom (85) to **Little Falls** in upstate New York to visit with her best friend Alexandra (88). They had a nice time talking and looking at photos for a week. Halia, her friend's daughter, came to stay, and we organized many small excursions to keep us busy: the heirloom apple orchard, farmers' markets, the goat milk guys shop, the Amish store, the Greek restaurant, a local winery. It was fun, but sad, too, as Tom, Helen's husband, who'd always been our cheerful companion on these trips, had passed away last winter. Buddy, Halia's dog, bonded with me while her new little kitten, Joey, fell in love with my mother and slept with her each night. The parrots just screeched a lot.

We attended several Ukrainian events--the church dinner on Pokrova, and the Ukrainian festival in Utica. At the latter I met a 92 year old pysankarka, their local expert, who was still demonstrating and writing pysanky. Pani Alexandra kept us well fed with all sorts of Ukrainian delicacies, and I made borshch one night.

I made a day trip to **Ithaca**, home to Cornell University and the new home to my friends Chelsea, Patrick and Pacey. They had just moved here from Berkeley, and were living on a farm with the biggest barn in NY while trying to buy a house. Chelsea, Pacey and I did a local tour, hoping for fall colors (which were weird this year because of the very late frost) and visiting waterfalls, Cornell's incredible campus (it's on an island) and the site of Barbara McClintock's laboratory.

.....Along the way, I photographed almost everything, and shared much of it with my Facebook friends and in my FB groups (especially the food). If you are on FB, look me up some time. If not, please stay in touch by other means (e.g. lubapetrusha@gmail.com or even real life).

As always, have a wonderful year in 2019; with luck, we may just avoid serious disaster! I'll begin fundraising for camp again after our holidays, and plan to be back there this summer, with other trips in between--it's been much too long since I've been to London and Australia--I hope to get to a few of those this year....and I may get to Paraguay and Portugal. Hope to see you along the way!

Luba