

Greetings!

As is usually the case, I had planned to write this letter much sooner, but reality intervened. Out of the blue, a revolution reared up in Ukraine¹, and I've been following it with admiration and trepidation. I have family and friends on the Maidan in Kyiv, and on the various Madians throughout Ukraine. It's not often that such popular revolutions occur, fueled by popular rage at inequality, and government abuse and corruption. I have been following the revolution on Facebook and the internet, and have tried to provide what little support I can from a distance, moral and financial.

Things have been quieter here on the home front. It's been a weird year, wet and cool and full of spiders². Summer consisted of about two weeks of hot and sunny weather in late July. The constant rains turned my yard into a jungle, and my few fruit trees into a bountiful orchard. Last year, early warm weather and a late frost meant there was no fruit to speak of; this year trees that had never borne more than a few wormy apples were overlaid with fruit. I made many jars of apple butter, and there were enough sour cherries to make them worth picking for the first time since I'd planted that tree. There were lots of sweet cherries, too, but the chipmunks have developed a taste for them and beat me to them. The pears were so abundant that most were left³ for the squirrels, who will be happy and fat all winter, as the number of acorns my oaks produced made it impossible to walk barefoot in late summer.

My family has been doing well this year, too, for the most part. My parents are still living in their house on Forsyth Street, which has now been officially promoted to an Avenue. They maintain the gardens and clean up under their numerous spruces with a bit of help from Slava, their Ukrainian cleaning lady⁴. My mom battles the local wildlife, rabbits and deer, in order to have a vegetable garden, but seems to be losing most of the battles. She did manage to produce some tomatoes this year, so all is not lost.

My father, at age 87, and living with cancer⁵, has gotten much more feeble in the past year, and has begun to shrink. I now tower over him, and his clothes are getting baggy; I bought him new (medium) shirts for Christmas. He no longer drives, and is often too weak and tired to go out. But he still has energy for family, and perks right up when his children or grandchildren visit. And he came with us to, and enjoyed, both Thanksgiving and Christmas with the extended Petrusha clan.

My mother, who is quite a bit younger and healthier, had a pretty good year. Her new knee is working quite well, so she is more mobile; once she gets the other one done, she'll be up and about like no one's business! She still goes to church regularly, including all the big holidays, and she works on her embroidery in the cold months, and the garden in the warm ones. Life is quieter now that the oldest two grandchildren are away at college, but we still have old movie night on Sundays, and get together with the grandkids for birthdays.

Bill and Laurie are both working long hours, supporting their offspring in college. They have a mixed marriage—Ford and GM—but seem to be handling it well. Bill is still involved in his sports, especially hunting and fishing. This year he trained for and ran in the Detroit Free Press Marathon. He ran a half marathon, and didn't have the best time, but he finished and lived to tell about it. The two of them took a lovely Caribbean cruise together over Easter break.....well, lovely for them. It was Nick's senior trip cruise, and they volunteered to be chaperones.

Kalyna, my oldest niece and goddaughter, is still at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where she is a junior, hoping to decide on a major any day now, and perhaps even a career⁶. Her favorite class ever is organic chemistry, not something I've ever heard any

¹ Ukrainians will put up with a lot, but they won't tolerate their children being beaten up. What began as a small protest of Yanukovich's about face on the EU turned into massive anti-government protests, because he sent in the police to beat the students. It has become an existential struggle for Ukraine's future.

² It seems that the wet weather produces bumper crops of all sorts of insects, which then fuels an increase in the spider population. I have never before seen so many of them in or on my house. Normally I will leave them be, but this year I found myself sweeping the front of the house to get rid of them and their debris-filled webs. There are limits to my tolerance of any creepy-crawlies, even beneficent ones.

³ Once Paul Suriano gets his home distillery going, we intend use my pears to produce pear brandy. They are numerous and attractive, but hard and not very tasty. Perhaps in 2014.

⁴ Slava has been cleaning for my brother for many years, and has begun helping my parents. She started helping when my mom had her knee replaced, and has continued working for them. Since my mom keeps the house so clean that there's not much for Slava to do, they find other projects, including washing windows and raking up spruce cones.

⁵ Bronchoalveolar carcinoma. It is a lung cancer, but not the type you get from smoking. His is quite slow-growing, and has been fairly stable for several years. But his cough has been getting worse, and his energy levels and appetite are decreasing. He was unable to tolerate chemotherapy when first diagnosed, so we have been avoiding it. The disease is very slowly progressive, but it has been taking its toll.

⁶ She appears to be torn between education and medicine. Nick got her an MCAT preparation guide for Christmas, but she still doesn't know if she plans to take that medical college admission test. Either way, she has finally declared a major in biology, or so I think.....

say before⁷. She is also wearing a lot of black, although that is probably unrelated. Kalyna is living in half of a house with three anti-social girls she met through church. All that quiet time gives her plenty of opportunities to study, and she is doing well in school. Next year she will be rooming with the niece of my best friend from high school⁸, so should have a friendlier time of it. Kalyna spent the summer taking classes and working two jobs, as well as doing some yard work for me. She is one serious girl.

Nick graduated from high school this year, and had a great graduation party and pleasant “last⁹ summer.” Nick was accepted at Michigan State University; he expressed an interest in entomology¹⁰ while applying, and got a lovely welcome letter from the School of Agriculture. Nick played roommate roulette, and was matched with an older student who is quite serious about his studies. Nick, too, has become serious about studying; like his aunt, he floated through high school without much real effort. College has come as a stark reality check, and he has had to buckle down and learn how to learn. But he loves East Lansing, and loves college life, even if his bike did get stolen. And he’s developed a taste for coffee¹¹, and has a favorite brew at Starbucks.



(Above: Kalyna, Nick and maria at Nick’s graduation ceremony)

Fuzz (aka Maria) remains in high school. She was sophomore class president last year, and is thinking of running again for her senior year. She continues to be active in Leadership¹² and school activities, and in sports. Fuzz loves tennis, but had grown to greatly

⁷ Except perhaps me. I loved organic, and got a degree in chemistry. Her mom is a chemical engineer. In our family, at least, the chemistry gene seems to be passed through the female line.

⁸ Rachel Sonogo, the niece of my high school friend John Sonogo. John’s brother Mike and my brother both moved to the Avondale school district, and then had children at about the same time. They—the kids—have become friends. Odd, perhaps, or maybe our personalities and friendships are written in our genes.

⁹ Nick understands that he’ll have to work his summers during college if he wants to have any discretionary income while in school. He also realized this would be the last chance he would have to spend a lot of time with his high school peeps. So he did, while working half days at a local pool.

¹⁰ Nick loves watching CSI, as does half of the young population of the US. I suspect most of these would-be forensic scientists will eventually settle on other professions.

¹¹ He was previously a cocoa drinker. His sister, Kalyna, still is. That makes it a bit easier to shop for her at the holidays, as there are a lot of nice gourmet flavored cocoas out there.

¹² This is actually a class at Avondale High School, one which both Nick and Kalyna took, and one in which they have all excelled. I am not sure what they actually do there, besides organizing all the school activities, but I should note that Kalyna is quite good at bossing people around. This may, however, just be a talent she was born with.

dislike volleyball¹³, after riding the bench for the entire season. She didn't quit, though, but heartily thanked the team that defeated them in finals, knocked them out of competition and ended her volleyball career forever. And then there is FPS¹⁴, aka competition for nerds; her team did not fare well this year, but she plans on going to the internationals this year—Iowa or bust! Fuzz has been quite the traveler; she went to Nashville with a friend and her family over spring break, and to West Virginia in the summer to the big Petrusha family reunion. One trip she didn't get to make was to the national grocery bagging olympics¹⁵ in Las Vegas: she competed in her Kroger¹⁶ store's qualifying round, but only bagged the silver medal. She is planning on coming to Ukraine with me next summer, to volunteer at our UCARE camp. Small consolation, but still.....

Belle, pictured on the right, is getting to be an old lady, having passed up her mother and now approaching my age (in dog years). She had a moderately eventful year—no major surgeries, but she did have a close encounter with a black and white squirrel. At least that is what she thought it was; rather than running from her, like ordinary squirrels do, it sprayed her. The skunky odor remained, despite frequent baths, for more than a month. She also exhibited her knowledge of convergent evolution by finding a small stuffed echidna to play with (i.e. tear to shreds) when her hedgehogs had bitten the dust. She was thrilled to have Kalyna back with her this summer, but then saddened when both she and Nick left in the fall. But a milestone was reached—Belle was allowed to visit Baba inside Baba's house¹⁷!!! There was no major damage, so Belle may actually be invited back.

Sadly, I lost an old friend this year. I met Rick Baron when I first spent time in the Keweenaw back in 1981; I stayed with his parents during my Family Practice rotation. His father, Dr. Baron, taught me medicine, and Rick taught me Copper Country ways. Rick was a raconteur, one of the best storytellers I've ever met. He told me stories of his youth, of his family, of his log house building days. I danced at his and Mary's wedding, watched their kids grow, and enjoyed spending time with them all. This summer I shared his joy at his daughter Maddy's wedding.....and then grieved at his sudden, unexpected death ten weeks later.

I've been doing OK. I didn't contract any weird, medical rounds worthy diseases this year, to my relief, but had another bout of sciatica. This time I couldn't sit for more than 15 minutes at a time, which made driving problematic. Lumbar support (in the form of a small football) helped, and the condition slowly abated¹⁸. And I had to deal with the sequelae of global warming. Even though we had lots of snow last winter, the on and off warm temperatures meant it would melt and flood my sidewalk¹⁹, and then freeze again. Clearing and salting had only a short term effect, and I had frequent large patches of ice where my sidewalk should be. I learned to walk around them, through the snow on the adjacent lawn in order to avoid slipping and falling. Until the day I accidentally discovered a hitherto unknown patch of ice underneath the snow.....that was



¹³ It was varsity volleyball. I have gotten the same feedback from many teens—they loved playing sports in school until they got to varsity, and then they hated it. It's the coaches who make things miserable for the non-stars.

¹⁴ Future Problem Solvers. Kalyna, my cousin Lisa and Fuzz have all competed in this intellectual sport. It "engages students in creative problem solving," and involves writing booklets and acting out skits, among other activities. Or so I understand. You can read more about it here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Future_Problem_Solving_Program_International

¹⁵ It's a real thing, the annual National Grocery Association Best Bagger Championship. Unlike the actual Olympics, there is little risk of injury or disfigurement, no worries about performance enhancing drugs, and no Putin.

Although Fuzz has been complimented often on her bagging skills, she came in second in her store's competition. While that is great for a rookie, it wasn't quite good enough to go on to the state competition or the nationals. There's always next year....

¹⁶ Fuzz began working at the local Kroger store over the summer, and has stayed on, working Sundays, through the school year. She is a grocery bagger, and a good one, and actually enjoys her job, as she is quite the people person.

¹⁷ My father and his brothers shared a dislike of any dogs, or any other pets, being allowed into a house. None of the cousins had pets when we were kids; all of us were allergic to cats, and dogs were not allowed. My mom tells me she had a dog for a short time before I was born. She loved it, but my dad didn't, and arranged to give it away to family friends.

Most of the cousins, but none of the older generation, now have dogs as pets. And all of those are indoor dogs. I suspect Belle got to visit Baba because my dad has gotten too old and feeble to raise a fuss any more.

¹⁸ Very slowly. Oddly, the more severe case of sciatica I had last year, which wouldn't allow me to stand up straight, cleared up fairly quickly; this version lingered on, and still bothers me a bit sometimes. Like right now.....ouch.

¹⁹ I blame the chipmunks; all their digging in the area has caused the sidewalk to sink in a few spots. I'd love to get it replaced, but it's hard to get a cement guy to come out for such a small job. They make promises, but never call back..... Maybe this summer.

February, and my knee didn't get better until some time in September (after I'd stopped doing my physical therapy). I still get a bit of a limp when I'm tired, and take the stairs slowly one at a time. I did discover, though, that if you have gray hair and a cane, the flight attendants will invite you to board first²⁰. You don't even have to ask.

And I have been spending a lot of time with older people. When I was younger, I gave no thought to mortality. Young people don't. But now, as I've grown more ancient, I realize how fragile life is, and how suddenly people can be taken away from us. I visit my parents every Sunday, and we watch old movies together. I stop in to see Mrs. Jo²¹ as often as I can, and I've visited other older friends in my travels.

The biggest news of my personal 2013, though, would be my museum exhibit. Well, OUR exhibit. The Ukrainian American Archives & Museum of Detroit (UAAMD) was invited by the Detroit Historical Museum to organize an exhibit about the Ukrainian Diaspora in Detroit. Chrystyna Nykorak, the UAAMD director, decided that, first and foremost, she wanted the exhibit to include a lot of pysanky, an absolutely overwhelming number of pysanky. She turned to me and my friend Arnie Klein to help with that part of it. We did.

I wrote the pysanky materials for the guide and museum, including an explanation of the symbolism of Ukrainian pysanky. Arnie drew the symbols for us, I found examples from my collection of pysanky photos, and it was all put into a large wall poster²². Arnie and I lent the museum hundreds of eggs; there were also contributions from Roman Seniuk who writes modern diasporan pysanky, and Greg Mykolenko, who let us exhibit his mother's collection of Hutsul pysanky written by the folk artist Eudokia Kushnirchiuk.

(Right: a view of the exhibition hall. Pysanky from Kyiv, Kursk, Cherkasy and the south are displayed in frontmost case.)

Arnie did the painstaking work of setting up the displays—I was in India when we finally got access to the exhibition hall in the museum—which ended up including 1300 pysanky²³,



²⁰ Taking a cane traveling with me was not just for show. I found I needed it in the airports, where I often had to cover long distances in a short time. In March I had hoped to be able to get a ride on one of those carts that you always see buzzing around, rushing passengers from one gate to another. Alas, despite the promises of the airline agent, Frankfurt airport did not have them available, at least in the terminals I had to travel to and from. I could see why; there was lots of construction blocking things, and lots of stairs. The train that ran between terminals was nice, once you could get to it. Luckily, I had a long enough layover that I could limp my way around in a timely fashion. (And yes, I was offered a wheelchair, but I didn't feel my condition warranted it.....until halfway to the gate, when I regretted having turned it down).

Although my knee was much better by summer, I took a cane to Ukraine.....and didn't regret it.

²¹ My high school chemistry teacher and one of my role models. She is one of those people of whom I can say that she changed my life. From her I learned to drink tea, love chemistry and Scandinavian furniture, and realize what a large and wonderful world existed beyond the limits of suburban Troy. She has shared with me, over the years, her liberal politics and her love of music, learning, travel and theater.

²² The same material was later included in the museum's Spring 2013 Newsletter ("Special Pysanky Edition"). This edition became the most popular and best-selling ever published by the UAAMD.

²³ Arnie had to purchase 300 additional egg stands, as the UAAMD had acquired only 1000 for the exhibit. We used all the display case space we were allotted to show as many eggs as possible, and to showcase the huge variety of designs of Ukrainian pysanky.

One problem we did have is that, with the short amount of time available for set up, we were unable to do proper labeling of the pysanky within the cases. All the other artifacts in the exhibit had labels, but the exhibition curator didn't feel the pysanky needed them. I disagreed—while the pysanky were all lovely, I felt it was important to point out the regional differences and the authors. Labeling each individual egg would be problematic, but it would have been fairly easy to place a label on (or next to) each display case giving a general idea of what each contained. To this end, I wrote up an exhibit guide for the pysanky when I returned home, posted it on line for downloads, and we provided printed copies in the exhibition hall itself.

traditional and diasporan²⁴, many²⁵ of them mine. I missed the opening gala—my mother attended in my stead—but visited many times and guided several friends around the exhibit during the April, May and June.

All in all, I didn't get away as much as I would have liked to this year. My mobility was limited, and my timing was off. I delayed traveling in the winter because of my sciatica (I was worried about being able to sit through long flights) and the museum exhibit, only to injure my knee on the ice in February and make things even worse. And then camp was quite late this year, pushing my Ukraine trip into September and making a long autumn get-away problematic. Unintended consequences.....

INDIA

My first trip of the year was back to the Indian Subcontinent, to the LCECU in Vellore (Tamil Nadu state). March was not a very good time to go, for two reasons: 1) the weather is usually unbearably hot then, as that is the start of summer²⁶ and 2) Avinash was spending the month studying for and taking his college entrance exams²⁷. Luckily for me, it turned out to be a fairly cool March in Vellore (some days got into the 90s, true, but the evenings were still relatively cool), and Avinash was pretty laid back about the exams, as was his mother, Jiji. Prasad, on the other hand, was quite worried about them, and took several weeks off to stay at home and tutor his son.

I spent most of my time, as always, at the LCECU²⁸. This year my mission was to update our Labour Ward protocols and review them with our staff, as well as to teach a fetal monitoring course²⁹. Dr. Ruby, a staff doctor at the LCECU who is trained in OB/GYN and has taken on the Labour Ward as her responsibility, was of invaluable assistance. We discussed what issues had arisen, and how she had been modifying procedures, and worked together to fix problems and update the protocols. I then gave twice weekly talks³⁰ to the nursing staff, as we reviewed obstetric practices, the proper filling out of chart forms, and our updated protocols. This kept me quite busy.

One of the changes that Ruby, Jiji and I felt the LCECU should make was to add vacuum assisted delivery to their procedures. I visited CHAD³¹ in Bagayam, where Dr. Daisy showed me their foot-powered apparatus. It was nice, but no one could remember where it had come from. Ruby and I then visited CMCH, the main hospital, where Jiji demonstrated their electric-powered version. It was easy to use, and that was the one Ruby decided upon³².

²⁴ Traditional pysanky are those made with folk designs that have been passed down over the generations. Diasporan pysanky are those created in the Diaspora, by emigrant Ukrainians, which utilize traditional symbols and motifs, but are original designs. The latter tend to be more complex, but not necessarily more interesting.

²⁵ My guess is that about 70% (or more) of the eggs on display were my work. I never actually counted, but did photograph the exhibit extensively.

²⁶ Although not as hot as April and May, which are unbearable. There's a reason the British used to escape to the hill stations during those months, and why birth rates go down dramatically in those months—temperatures up to 45C (113F)!

²⁷ Actually, these were the higher secondary exams (HSE), which are taken after completion of the 12th grade. All students who wish to go on to further education need to take them, and there are a large number of them on different subjects. Many private universities and colleges have their own entrance exams, which are taken some time after these.

²⁸ Low Cost Effective Care Unit, also known as the Ida Scudder Ward. It is a division of CMC (Christian Medical College) whose mission is provide low cost, effective care to the poor people of Vellore. We are on a separate campus from the main hospital, next to the Eye Hospital. Care is provided at no to low cost to our enrolled patients; we are subsidized by the Main Hospital, which also takes referrals of our patients for complex care which we can't provide.

²⁹ We've had a lot of turnover in nursing staff, and much more use of our fetal monitor, so the staff wanted an update/review of fetal monitoring. NICHD had done a major overhaul of EFM terminology since my last presentation in 2009, standardizing it and getting rid of those terms and adjectives which had been shown to have no clinical significance. I had to first learn all this material myself, and then created a Powerpoint which I presented not just to the LCECU, but also to the OB department at the main hospital. They asked for copies:)

And then, nine months later, in December, my hospital required me to take an on-line course on the very same updated NICHD terminology. I passed it easily, once I was able to log on (5 tries using 3 browsers on 2 computers creating 3 IDs and 30 minutes wasted talking to tech support). Anyone complaining about the Obamacare roll-out has never had to deal with GE: signing up for that was a piece of cake in comparison.

³⁰ When I asked Sushila, the nurse in charge of the Labour Ward, what talks she would like, she gave me a list of thirty subjects. SUushila loves talks. We combined topics and pared the list down quite a bit.

³¹ Community Health and Development, also a division of CMC, in the village of Bagayam. While the Danes have built CHAD a beautiful new outpatient care building, their mission remains similar to that of the LCECU: providing good basic medical care to a poor population in a relatively low tech manner.

³² It has since arrived, been in-serviced, and is in use.

I attended our weekly antenatal clinics, which Ruby has gotten running quite efficiently, as well as the weekly Outreach Clinics. Even though we try to make the LCECU as accessible as possible to our served population, it is still difficult for many patients to get to the clinic. They have to miss a day of work, which many cannot afford, as well as pay for transport. To better serve these people, once a week the clinic goes off site³³, to a local church or temple³⁴. The sites are set up by local volunteers, who help get people there and seen. I enjoy these clinics—it is amazing how much medicine can get done in such rudimentary settings, and it allows us to see how are patients really live, and what their challenges are. Sushil was great about taking me around to visit with patients in their homes, telling me their stories and how he's worked to help them obtain good health care. One of his patients, a bangle seller, fitted me³⁵ with glass bangles; she did such a good job that it was days before I could figure out how to get them off. Another one gave me hot chili mango to try.

I had several chances to teach pysankarstvo³⁶ while I was in Vellore. We wrote pysanka at Jiji's house, of course; she and the kids enjoy it very much, as do Avinash's friends. We had several pysanka parties, including one for Avi and his teen-aged friends (as I recall, cake and chips were included), and one for family and a few friends. We even got Ammu, the young maid, to try writing. She loves handcrafts and drawing, and she did a lovely job of it.



³³ This is how Ida Scudder first ran her medical operations. She would run clinics wherever possible, whether at the side of the road or any building that was volunteered. Even once she had a working hospital, she would still provide this sort of outreach.

³⁴ I'm quite used to churches; even so, the ones in India are interesting. The ones in Vellore, at least the ones we visited, tend to be simple, with little iconography, but with fans and occasional other ornaments: tinsel garland, posters with religious sayings, and Jesus pictures. Bigger city churches, especially Catholic and CSI, are another matter.

Temples I find fascinating, as they are quite foreign to me. Two of the volunteers showed me around their temple—it was built into a hill, and the boulders formed a natural boundary. There were many statues, adorned with flower garlands and clothes, and several small shrines. There were several holy trees, male and female, and dressed for modesty. The main temple was adorned with sculptures and fairy lights.

Most interesting to me was the large termite mound that had been colored with red and saffron pigments, adorned with flowers, and surrounded with holy statues. Termite mound worship is pretty common in south India, and per the IUCN, "The sacred anthill is often identified with a village goddess who is considered to have been born of the anthill and to be one with the anthill. Anthill worship takes the form of ritual clock-wise circumambulation and the giving of offerings, especially bananas, eggs, rice and milk; animal sacrifice also occurs, with the blood being poured down the ventilation shafts of the mound. The mounds are also often garlanded with flowers."



³⁵ She grabbed my hand and squeezed it in hers to figure out what size I was. Bangles are an integral part of the Indian costume for all women, no matter their caste or religion. Glass bangles are the cheapest, and are worn by most of our patients. They break easily, though; when you walk in India, you can see the remains of these bangles, shiny colored slivers of glass, in the detritus of the streets.

³⁶ I brought supplies with me, including some of my own waxes, and several booklets with patterns. I spent a lot of time preparing eggs for all my classes; in the past we worked with full eggs, but I've switched to emptied eggs so that my students' pysanky will be long-lasting keepsakes instead of smelly messes.

This year, the rehab staff³⁷ asked if I could teach the pysankarstvo at the Rehabilitation Institute, to the staff and patients. I was thrilled to do so. As always, I gave a short presentation, including showing the Slavko Nowytsky film; I had a Hindi translator³⁸. And then we got very busy. One of the American students took my camera and photographed, as I was too busy helping my students write and dye their eggs. The staff took to it easily, as did the patients, despite their many handicaps. We adjusted the tables for them, placed trays on their wheelchairs, whatever it took to accommodate them. One man worked from a prone position, on his stomach. Another shared sweets with us afterwards, as today was his day of discharge. He was finally going home, with the pysanka as a souvenir of his stay.



It was not all medicine and pysanky, though. There were entertainments. One evening we had a lovely pot luck at the LCECU, with all the doctors bringing a dish to pass; I brought some of Jiji's famous cake, and it was quite the hit. Another afternoon I attended the OG5 picnic, an outdoor cook-out at our house. I went, with Sara³⁹ and the LCECU staff to a local Old Town school, where we were honored guests for their "School Education" day⁴⁰. I also got to visit Sara at her new (temporary) home; she is spending her retirement going through her old things, and building a new house⁴¹. And there were parties—birthdays, weddings—to attend in the evenings. And I had a chance to see Dr. Padmini again, my old department head for my OG3 days⁴².

One weekend, Tarun and I went with Sushil, his friends and family for a pleasant drive through the Palamathi Hills. The winding

³⁷ I've taught pysankarstvo many times before, and the rehab staff has always been the most interested and participated avidly in my classes. The LCECU people had me demonstrate egg preparation (emptying and rinsing) for them after the classes. They really want to continue writing the pysanky. I sent them more dyes and wax through Sushil when he came to a conference in the US later that spring.

I also sent them a selection of traditional styluses/pysachky, so that they could manufacture their own. The Delrin style pysachky I favor for classes are indestructible, but difficult to replicate without machining capabilities; the traditional ones burn up and fall apart much more easily, but could be replicated quite simply with readily available materials: sticks, wire and sheets of brass or copper.

I have been trying to, as much as possible, find sources of supplies locally, as sending dyes, wax, etc. from the US is not really tenable over the long term. The dyes used in the areas (South India) for dyeing silks should be good for dyeing eggs, as they are acid/aniline dyes. There is a lot of honey used in Indian sweets, so they are going to try and find beeswax locally. One thing I should add is that the eggs we get in Vellore are the best I've ever used—they dye beautifully, and have nice thick shells.

³⁸ CMC is a major medical center that attracts patients from throughout India. In the South, many different languages are spoken, so most people learn English (in school) as a common tongue. In the North, Hindi is spoken throughout, and most know it.

³⁹ Sara Bhattacharji, good friend and former head of the LCECU. She and her husband, the former head of CMC, have recently retired, and are adjusting to that life. Despite their "exalted" positions, both are very simple, kind and generous people. It was Sara who initially persuaded me to come work at the LCECU, and she has contributed greatly to my philosophy and approach to life. I am a much better person for having known her.

⁴⁰ Part of the LCECU's community outreach is teaching health to children in the local schools. It starts with simple hygiene, including hand washing, and includes knowledge about life skills, accident prevention, and the importance of education. This day there were eighth graders from several schools, including an all girls Muslim school, taking part. They sang songs, danced, put on skits, gave speeches and had various competitions (with prizes). There was, of course, a tea break, with small cups of hot, sweet, milky tea for everyone. It was quite long, but lots of fun.

⁴¹ It is in Vellore, and eco-friendly, built out of rammed earth bricks. When I was there, the bricks had just been produced and were drying, and a foundation, including a large underground reservoir for rain water, laid. I've been watching the house take shape on line,—it now has walls and windows—and hope it might be finished when I go back in 2015. Sara occasionally blogs about the house here: <http://ahouseisahouseforme.wordpress.com/>

⁴² Dr. Padmini, my first "Ma'am," had retired to Kerala. She had come back to CMC for medical treatment, and Jiji, Patty and I, her old staff, went to visit her. It was lovely to see her after all these years, and to relive the old days.

road took us through verdant landscapes, and we ended up at Pravaham Community College. It was a lovely campus, with lots of flowers, a nice chapel, and pleasant living and eating quarters. We had a lovely picnic there; the girls who attend have their lives changed as they and their families escape abject poverty⁴³.

(Right: Sushil and his mother at Pravaham.)

And I didn't spend all of my time in Vellore. Back in 1999, when I expressed an interest in visiting a mission hospital, Ma'am had sent me to her old student, Patty, in Madanapalli (Andhra Pradesh) at the Mary Lyle Lott hospital. Patty and her husband, Samson, were running the hospital and had revitalized it. I had a wonderful time with them and their children⁴⁴, and returned for a longer visit in 2000. Sadly, due to church and hospital politics, they left soon thereafter, and went to work in Africa. I had heard they were back in India, working in Guntur, their home town. Patty happened to be visiting Vellore when I arrived, and invited me to come visit. I went.

I took the train up, and spent a several days there. Patty was running a new hospital, the Ruth Sigmon Memorial Hospital; it was a small one, but she was building it up. I saw patients with her there, and got to meet all the staff. She advertised that a consultant from America was there, and we had quite a crowd.

I was quite busy while I was there. Besides long days at the hospital, I had time to renew my acquaintance with Patty's children⁴⁵. Soumya remembered me, the Barbies I had brought and the borsch I had cooked for them back in 2000. I cooked a batch for them, and taught Soumya the recipe. The entire family enjoyed it, although the version we made in Andhra was a good bit spicier than I usually make. They tell me they have cooked it several times since my visit.



I lent Priyansha my camera during y visit; she loves photography, and, once she'd mastered the basics, started photographing away. She took lots of nice photos for me, and some interesting ones.....and quite a few of the ever-photogenic Hannah, like the one on the left.

We went to church; the service was in Telugu, and I was introduced, but didn't have to give a speech, and didn't understand the service at all. David and I amused ourselves by watching the squirrels running up, down and through the walls of the church. I also attended a prayer meeting with Patty--by accident. We stopped to see an auntie, and the meeting was in progress: Patty had been invited, but forgotten. Rather than admit this, we stayed.....

It was a short trip, and next time I will have to stay longer. Perhaps one of the more interesting parts of my trip to Guntur was the train ride back. My friends had gotten me a berth in the 2nd class AC sleeping car, and gotten me settled. This included a number of switches of places which got me into the bottom bunk

⁴³ Pravaham means an "ever flowing stream". It was initiated by the Rt. Rev. Ananda Rao Samuel, former Moderator and Bishop of the Church of South India, in 1993, with a vision of a community of Peace and Justice. It offers many programs in education, health, and Christian spirituality for the surrounding marginalized and rural and poor communities, many of whom are Dalits.

Pravaham offers tutoring to grade school students in nearby villages, and has set up model schools. It also has a resident program to train young women (school drop-outs) as health aides; they receive the clinical part of their training at CMC. Because there are few good medical facilities in the area it also organizes medical "camps," where doctors from other areas come in to provide care at an open clinic.

⁴⁴ When I had first visited, there were two children, cute little girls named Soumya and Priyansha, for whom I brought Barbie dolls. They were soon joined by a baby brother.

⁴⁵ There were now two young ladies--Soumya had graduated from university and was working as an engineer. Priyansha had just graduated high school and taking exams, like Avinash. Like him, she was hoping to study medicine at CMC, her parents' alma mater. David, who'd been a baby the last time I'd seen him, had grown into a nice young man who loved cricket, superheroes and computers.

And Hannah, the newest baby, and reason for her parents' return to India, was cute and bright and became my newest friend; bringing her a wonderful baby doll certainly didn't hurt our relationship.

in the corridor. Across from me were three Muslim couples; the women were in full hijab and stayed covered, except for one young woman, who was pregnant and couldn't breathe well with her face covered. She and I talked for hours, satisfying our curiosity about each other's cultures. She told me their background: the three couples were converts from Hinduism, and one of the young men came from a wealthy family that was involved in charitable work. They were on holiday, a delayed honeymoon for her, and then heading back to the Gulf, where the young men worked. Even the train ride was a party for them, with endless snacks (which they shared with me) and conversation.

I was to get off the train in Katpadi, late at night. I stayed awake, so as not to miss the stop. As we approached I grabbed my bags, went to the doors to disembark.....but they didn't open, and before I knew it the train had started up again. The attendant arrived at this point, and told me I had missed my stop; apparently it was my duty, as a passenger, to open the big heavy train doors myself⁴⁶, something that would get you arrested on most western trains. I was stuck until the next stop, Jolarpet, 50 miles away; the attendant made sure I got off there. I had called Prasad, to ask him to inform the taxi driver that was picking me up that I wouldn't be there. Prasad did so, and also called the station master to complain; when I arrived in Jolarpet I was escorted to the Station Master's office⁴⁷, apologized to, and invited to wait there, in relative comfort, for the arrival of my taxi. It did arrive, much later, and I had a lovely (albeit much more expensive) drive home through the early South Indian morning.

My last days in India were spent in Madras, aka Chennai. I was flying out on Monday⁴⁸, and that weekend⁴⁹ was Ammachi's big birthday bash. Prasad's mother, Cochery, was turning 70, and having a big party for herself and her friends at her church. When she'd visited us in Vellore a week earlier, she had showed me a movie⁵⁰ she was trying to edit so she could show it at the bash. I offered to help, and then spent many hours learning how to use iMovie⁵¹ and doing the editing for her.

The celebration itself was quite nice. There was a reception and buffet, and then speeches, salutations and group photos. I got to play AV nerd, presenting not only "my" movie, but a Powerpoint presentation Ammachi had put together, with photos of her, Sonny and the family going back to early childhood. Both were big hits.

And then, later that night, I flew home.....



⁴⁶ My friends tell me that, since I was in second class, it was actually that attendant's duty to get me up and open the doors. He had a list of all the passengers, and where they would depart, and had simply screwed up, as sometimes happens. Indians do not count on the attendants, but simply open the doors and get off as needed. Lesson learned.

⁴⁷ Not as luxurious as it sounds, but I did have a chair to sit on instead of the bench outdoors. For some reason, there were at least five calendars, and not much else, on the walls.

⁴⁸ April 1st, some time after midnight. All major international flights seem to leave Chennai in the wee hours of the morning. On the plus side, you don't have to deal with Chennai traffic on the way to the airport. On the minus side, serious sleep deprivation by the end of the trip.

⁴⁹ We drove in Saturday, and spent that afternoon and Sunday morning shopping. There isn't much to buy in Vellore in the way of souvenirs, or much else, so we hit Cane and Bamboo (Indian handcrafts, often from NGOs) and Sri Kumaran (fine silks, scarves). We also went to Jiji's favorite store, Kalpa Druma, for home furnishings, and to several malls, looking for clothes for Avinash. Chennai is a South Indian shopping mecca.

Vellore sometimes has "expositions" with goods from other areas. There was one across the street from Harish Food Zone, and I bought several lovely embroidered shawls and handbags there. I also brought back lots of tea, soap and spice packets from Harish. I had two suitcases to fill; I did my best.

⁵⁰ The previous year had been her husband Sonny's 75th birthday, and they'd had a big party for him at a hotel in Chennai. All his sons had come, with their families, including those now living in the USA. Many other friends and family had been there, too. Avinash had given a lovely speech, and the grandchildren had sung a song. All of this had been captured on a two hour video, which also included several long, boring speeches. Cochery wanted it edited down to about 10 minutes, so those who had missed the gathering last time could enjoy the highlights. We got it down to 12.

⁵¹ iMovie is fairly easy to use, but there is a learning curve, and importing video takes time..... I did acquire some valuable skills in the process, though.

Da UP

I took two trips to the Upper Peninsula this year. The first was my usual late spring jaunt; the second was a wedding weekend in the summer. Although I didn't get up to the Copper Country until late May, there were still signs of winter everywhere. Spring had been late in coming, and wasn't a very warm one, so there was still ice on many lakes, including Medora. Piles of dirty snow could still be found in shady places. There were no leaves on the trees, and only a very few spring blooms (hepatica, trout lilies and spring beauties). Then again, there were no black flies yet, always a good thing.

I stayed with Rick and Lorri, in their little log house in the woods, where I cooked, drank lots of tea, and enjoyed their company. I spent a night with Jane and Chuck Miller in their house on semi-frozen Lake Medora. We built a fire, watched the raptors over the icy lake, and drank lots of wine. And I visited with Mark Klemp in his big sandstone copper baron house.

I spent lots of time in the Copper Harbor area, particularly up on Brockway Mountain. There were several nice days, and I saw a variety of raptors. There were also cold, rainy days on which I didn't bother to go up, and days with strong northerly winds. I had company up on the mountain; besides Calvin Brennan, the official counter this year, there were lots of visitors from far off areas. Brockway is becoming better known, and gets lots of visitors now⁵². Although I missed all the birding festival activities in town this year, I did have time to visit with Laurel and Hannah Rooks.

When I was up last year, I helped Lorri with her weaving classes at the Calumet Art Center. This year I taught a pysanka class. It was small, only about a dozen students, but all were enthusiastic⁵³ and they wrote some lovely pysanky. Ed Gray, who runs the center, invited me back for next year, when he plans to have bigger—and more—classes. We also had a pysanka get-together at the Baron house, with Mary, Maddy⁵⁴, and Maddy's friends taking part. There was much chatter⁵⁵, but many pysanky got written, too.



The high point of the spring trip was Maddy's wedding shower, not because I love showers (I don't), but because of the company. Jan and Lieschen Klemp (left) came, along with Maddy's other female friends and family. It was great to see everyone, chat, drink wine, enjoy the potluck, and watch Maddy open presents. The shower was held in the Baron garage, which Rick and Henry were remodeling to be a hall with a bar, perfect for showers....and weddings. The walls had been paneled in lovely light wood, and Rick had created an opening between the garage and mud room, which was now a nice bar. Kara had spent much time thinking about flowers, and had come up with lovely arrangements of periwinkle and carnations in jelly glasses. They were lovely.

I returned to the UP in July, making the 1100 mile⁵⁶ round trip to attend

⁵² I've been coming up for the spring raptor migration since 1998. There were days back then when I was the only one up on the mountain. I made many friends up on there on mountain; watching raptors consists of much sitting and watching. Conversation passes the time nicely, and it's good to have birder friends to help with identification, or to point out birds I might have missed.

Now, on the weekends, there are often large groups of people and lots of spotting scopes set up. It's not quite Whitefish Point yet, but it's not just me and Laurie and Mike any more, the two of them chain-smoking and glaring at intruders.....

⁵³ Karena, one of my students, has been a fan of pysanky and Ukrainian culture since living in Minneapolis, across the street from a Ukrainian church. She collected several books on Sorbian eggs when she visited Germany, and bought a few of their Easter eggs, too. Karena was kind enough to share all that with me, and to show me around her gardens, which were gorgeous, and which have replaced her entire yard on Florida Street in Laurium.

⁵⁴ Mary and Maddy Baron are two of my oldest, and best, students. I taught the Baron/Oikarinen kids one spring, many years ago. Mary watched us at work, and asked if she could try. She did, and was a natural. She has been writing beautiful pysanky ever since.

⁵⁵ Many people who write about pysanka traditions tell of how the women of the family would gather and, in a quiet, prayerful, mystical fashion, write pysanky. I imagine it quite differently: working together, chatting, catching up on news. Sort of like when I write pysanky with friends or family.

⁵⁶ Due to a bout of sciatica this past winter and spring, I had tried to break up long drives as much as possible. On the drive home in May, I had discovered all the motels in Munising closed or full (it was graduation weekend), and learned that there wasn't much in the way of accommodation between there and Newberry. This time I planned ahead, and booked a room in St. Ignace, only to get stuck on the other side of the bridge. I called the owner, and he left the door unlocked for me; I finally got there and into bed about 2 in the morning.



Maddy's wedding. The drive up was remarkable only for my getting stuck on the south side of the Mackinac bridge for several hours due to high winds which had knocked over a semi truck and nearly thrown it off the bridge. Had I gotten to the bridge just 10 minutes sooner, I would have made it across—or perhaps been tossed in the the Straits.

The weather was otherwise gorgeous—warm and sunny. I'd have preferred overcast, since I was helping photograph the event. Maddy and Jessey were having a do-it-yourself wedding, and I was doing my part. The ceremony was lovely, in the French Catholic church in Lake Linden.

Afterwards I got to join the wedding party and official photographer—all of whom were less than half my age—frolicking and posing down on Sedar Bay and in the nearby woods.

(Left: Maddy and Jessey looking for agates.)

The reception was at her family home—Rick and Henry had gotten the garage done, and it doubled as the bar and dance hall. There were tents and tables set up outside for guests,



and a DJ friend provided the entertainment. Maddy and her friends had picked flowers the day before at Jessey's grandmother's farm, and arranged them nicely into bouquets.

It was great to see almost all the Barons, including several I hadn't seen in decades⁵⁷. We talked, drank⁵⁸, took photos, admired the young couple, reminisced about our youth, and had a lovely time.

UKRAINE (Part I): Summer Camp

I try to go to Ukraine every summer, and this year was no different. I had no reason to stay home; with the exception of about 10 days in July, the summer had been rainy and cool. I never drove my convertible, and did not have to water my outdoor plants⁵⁹. Still,

⁵⁷ Dr. and Mrs. Baron (right) have become snowbirds, and our visits rarely overlap. I'd last seen them in the fall of 2003, when I was driving out west and they had tarried in the Copper Country.

I'd last seen Evy when I had driven with her sister Annette, my then roommate, to Lansing to see her in the hospital after the birth of her first son.

Joe, my contemporaneous Baron, came, too; I'd last seen him at the wedding of Rick and Mary, the bride's parents!

It was surprising how little any of us had really changed. Older, slower, but with our quirks and personalities largely intact.



⁵⁸ One of the relatives had brought home made wine, of various types of fruit, which I greatly enjoyed. I'd developed a taste for homemade fruit wines when spending time among the hippies of western Wisconsin a few years ago. As a matter of fact, I think I have a bottle in the basement fridge.....

⁵⁹ Actually, several indoor plants that I set outside for the summer drowned in their cachepots. My house plants usually thrive on the porch or out on the patio, but this year they simply rotted. The hanging begonias, on the other hand, were well drained and grew like weeds.

camp was quite late this year⁶⁰, the last two weeks of summer. This proved to be a godsend, since a) it meant I could attend Maddy's wedding, b) we avoided most of the rain that plagued last year's camp and c) I was there for mushroom season⁶¹.

As always, I flew in to Kyiv on KLM via Amsterdam a several days before the start of camp. For the first time in recent memory, Kyiv was not a hot, sweltering hellhole on my arrival. The following day I took the so-called fast train⁶² to Lviv, where I was met at the station by my goddaughter, Darynka (right). We schlepped my large bags home, and then Darynka and I spent several days together, shopping and hanging out. Her mother was on holiday, traveling in Eastern Ukraine with Darynka's brother Maksym. She took her responsibilities seriously, preparing meals and going everywhere with me. We spent a lot of time in cafes, but also shopped for camp (copies of her mothers' books⁶³ and pysanka books and supplies), and visited my friends, including Vira Manko⁶⁴, whom she knew, and Andriy Homyk⁶⁵, whom she'd not met before but really liked.

Ruslan, Darynka's father, drove me to camp. He was accompanied by his wife and small son⁶⁶; the former navigated, and the latter napped a lot. Camp was in a new location this year, on the Dnister River, in the Grand Canyon of Ukraine⁶⁷. Any other year, it would have been a simple matter to drive to the regional center of Horodenka, and from there to the village of Semakivtsi, and then five kilometers through the forest to our camp on the Dnister River. But this was not any year.

The previous winter had been a horrible one, and then the entire country had been shut down by a freak snow storm in late March. Due to the weather, and to shoddy



⁶⁰ It was a matter of Priyateli Ditey getting the funding squared away before committing to run a camp. Both UCARE and Kraft dallied in making their commitments, and so we ended up at a different facility from last year, and had to take their only open spot, the last two weeks before school began.

This proved to be a blessing, as the new facility was much nicer and much more isolated than the one we'd used the past two years. The isolation was a nuisance for us, the staff, but it was great for the kids, as they were truly out in the country, far from the nearest town or village and other worldly distractions.

⁶¹ I don't pick mushrooms, as I do not know them well and fear being poisoned, but have a friend who does. Slavyk lives in Vorohta, where he works as a doctor in a sanatorium. Mushrooms are his life, though; during mushroom season he spends hours each day in his mushrooming spots in the Carpathian mountains. He picks only the finest "white" porcini mushrooms, and then slices them finely and dries them on every available surface in his apartment. The last few years I have been there too early in the season to buy mushrooms from him, or anyone else. My supply had been running low.....and I am Ukrainian. To us, dried mushrooms are not a luxury, but a staple of life.

⁶² There are true express trains in Ukraine, which run at high speeds on new tracks. This is not one of them; it is merely a new Korean train which doesn't stop very often. It is faster than the trains that stop at every station, but still takes 5 hours to travel 300 miles. You could drive the distance more quickly. The residents of Lviv refer to it as the "Kyiv tram."

Unlike the old trains with their quiet compartments (well, unless you end up with screaming toddlers), it is one long open car with screaming TV monitors at each end. And, for some reason, the train was sold out, with all the seats taken. Not luxurious travel, but I had brought my headphones this time, and managed to ignore it all.

⁶³ Myrosia, aka Dara Korniy, has become a bestselling author in Ukraine, and her books are quite popular with older teens. They range from romances to modern adaptations of Ukrainian mythology. They are also hard to find; we hit every bookstore in central Lviv looking for them, and bought any we could find. Myrosia had tried to order them from the publisher for me, but had no luck, as it was summer, and everyone there seemed to be on vacation whenever she called.

⁶⁴ Well known pysankarka and author, and good friend of mine, who also happens to be a neighbor of Myrosia and Darynka's.

⁶⁵ Andriy is a dermatologist that I met through our mutual work at camp back in the late 90s. He is quite funny and charming, loves to organize dinner parties, and has a gorgeous apartment in central Lviv full of antiques. He also has many interesting friends, among them an inordinately large number of priests and monks.

⁶⁶ His parents live in Ternopil oblast, not very far from Horodenka. I had first seen the beauty of the Dnister canyon on drives to their house in the 90s. Ruslan figured that, if he had to drive all that way, they may as well spend a few days with his family.

⁶⁷ Not as grand as our American Grand Canyon, but impressive none the less. It was voted one of the seven natural wonders of Ukraine a few years ago. The entire canyon is about 150 miles long, but the area we were in was the most dramatic part of it. The canyon is approached from either direction across fairly flat plains, which suddenly give way to a deep gorge.



construction⁶⁸, the roads had become a mess throughout the country. Most were full of potholes, many were near impassable. When my American cousins, who had visited Ukraine in May, complained about the roads, I put it down to cultural differences. But it was all true, and horrible; the roads were worse than the Ethiopian ones I'd traveled on in Land Rovers.

We avoided the worst of it⁶⁹ by traveling on secondary roads, and by detouring through Ternopil oblast, which was a bit out of our way, but just across the river from camp. This allowed us to cross the Grand Canyon via a modern bridge high above the river, and to enjoy its panoramic vistas. We located the camp with minimal difficulty; through the village, down a long, winding road to the river, over a small bridge and then along a wet, rutted road.....just when we thought we must have taken a wrong turn, we were inside a lovely, well-maintained facility with paved roads. It was the "Perlyna

Prydnistrovya⁷⁰," my home for the next two weeks.

I found my friends⁷¹ fairly quickly—they had been there a few days, and already knew that there was very limited cell phone coverage⁷² (as well as no TV or radio reception, no internet), and had been keeping an eye out for me. Young men were dispatched to take my bags and boxes to my room, and I was taken to the office for tea and company. The children⁷³ had arrived earlier that

⁶⁸ Construction, and particularly road construction, is a rich source of graft in Ukraine. Despite the money spent on them, many major roads are simply strips of asphalt thrown down on a poorly prepared roadbed. And once built, they are rarely maintained as well as they should be.

This spring the good roads became a bit rougher, and bad roads fell apart. It was estimated that 90% of the roads in Ukraine needed work. Those that had been built for the Euro 2012 were still in fairly good condition (they had been built properly, if expensively), and those in places like Volyn, which were less corrupt, were decent and quickly repaired. But other areas were horrible, Lviv and Ivano Frankivsk oblasts being among the worst. And I had to travel from one to the other!

⁶⁹ I turns out that the absolute worst road in Ukraine was the one from Horodenka to Kolomyia, the oblast center. Although only 50 kilometers away, it was an almost 2 hour drive in 1st and 2nd gear. And there were no viable detours; all the other routes were much longer, and not much better.

Borya, our driver, kept muttering "4%!!!" The minister in charge of the roads had recently come out and proclaimed that 96% of the roads had been repaired and only 4% remained to be fixed. "How is it that we are always traveling on that 4%?" Borya wanted to know.

⁷⁰ The "Pearl of the Dnister." The Dnister river runs through western Ukraine and then through Moldova (where it separates the breakaway territory of Transnistria), finally discharging into the Black Sea on Ukrainian territory again. The Dnister forms the boundary between Prykarpattia (the eastern Carpathian lowlands) and Podillya (the beginning of the Ukrainian steppe), and the corresponding oblasts of Ivano Frankivsk and Ternopil. It is in this region that the river runs deep and wide, and has formed the gorge referred to as the "Grand Canyon" of Ukraine.

⁷¹ My cohorts at camp, the adults who run it, are a mixed bunch. In the early years of camp, almost all of the volunteers were North Americans, and the camp participants Ukrainians; this year I was the only American. A few have been volunteering as long as I have, since the late 90s. Others have been involved for a shorter time, but became involved through volunteer work with Priyateli Ditey, our sister organization in Kyiv. A few of the more recent volunteers have come to us through our partnership with Kraft Foods of Ukraine. And there are one or two teachers who accompany each group of orphans.

A significant number of the volunteers are orphans themselves; some attended camps as kids, and later volunteered as adults. Others are or were participants in our scholarship program, and volunteer at camp to give back to the organization and to help other orphans.

We have all become quite good friends over the years. My camp friends are have become like a family to me, and I look forward to seeing them every year, especially my "sister" Maryna.

⁷² The coverage varied by carrier. Mine allowed me to call from in front of the windows on the second story of the residency building, or down by the river. There was no signal in the offices, the auditorium building, the cafeteria, the car park where we had arrived.....or my bedroom.

⁷³ We had about forty kids, aged 12-17, from three locations: Lyubystok, a small orphanage near Kyiv, Lutuhine, a larger orphanage in the Luhansk oblast In Ukraine's far east, and Trostyanets, a group of orphans from foster homes in Sumy region. The latter group was sponsored by Kraft Foods of Ukraine, as the town of Trostyanets is the site of one of their major factories.

morning, and they were still getting settled in, too. I was oriented to the camp, and learned the most amazing thing—there was hot water available (via individual boilers in each room) 24/7. This was unheard of luxury!

The “baza⁷⁴” was quite nice, spacious and green, and right on the river. It was, however, full of stairs. There were stairs up to the dormitory building, down to the office building, up to the offices or cafeteria, down to the plaza on the river, and then down to the river itself⁷⁵. Normally, I would not have minded this but, with a bad knee (torn meniscus), it was a challenge. I had to use my cane most of the time, and plan my movements out well in advance. But it was well worth it; this camp was far from any village or town, out in nature, as summer camps should be.

Our schedule varied from day to day, depending on the weather, and availability of staff and supplies. It took me a few days to get my pysanka classes up and running: I had to find a place to hold them (open area on the second floor), round up necessary furniture (tables and chairs), make and hang instructional posters, cover the furniture with plastic sheeting, mix up the dyes, and get the eggs⁷⁶. And there was the matter of showing my instructional film and giving a talk before the classes could start.



Once we got going, we really went. Considering we had only about forty kids and twenty support staff, it is pretty impressive that we managed to write almost 300 pysanky in the course of less than two weeks. Everyone came to me at least once, including the adults, and some of the kids spent much of their free time with me.

⁷⁴ Sports base, a facility somewhere between a camp and a hotel. Many of these were built in the Soviet era throughout Ukraine. The accommodations were fairly spartan—simple rooms with little furniture, and most had communal bath and toilet facilities and little to no hot water. There were cafeterias for dining, and auditoriums for performances and entertainments (movies, etc.). Sports facilities were generally included, usually soccer fields, and for some reason, there were gazebos.

Most of these facilities fell into disrepair after the fall of the Soviet Union. Many have been privatized, and modernized to various degrees. Our facility had bathrooms en suite, and the new owner had fitted them out with individual modern boilers, which meant hot water on demand. He also kept the rest of the campus very well maintained and repaired.

⁷⁵ There was originally just a rough path down to the river. Our boys spent half a day building a nice set of stairs down to the river, for all to use. We celebrated their feat by having a ribbon cutting ceremony, and spraying them all with champagne; they were too young to drink it.

⁷⁶ The eggs are usually the biggest challenge. I’ve learned to bring dyes and wax from home, and have sources for the styluses, books, and other materials. But eggs can be problematic. In the first years we wrote pysanky at camp, we had to work with brown eggs, as those were the only ones we could find. That limited the color spectrum our kids could work with, but they still had a good time and wrote lovely pysanky.

One year, when we were in Zakarpattya, the Kyiv staff brought white eggs in the van all the way from Kyiv. Our two years in Kosiv we bought white eggs and emptied them there. Sometimes the eggs were quite good, other times they were bumpy and cracked. Last year Olha Kirashchuk prepared eggs for us, so we could get off to a quick start, as eggs can take 3 days to prepare (washing, emptying, drying and sealing). While it is possible to work with full eggs, and I often do so in the US, I have found that with younger, inexperienced students, empty eggs are better—less breakage, less mess, and the pysanky are easier to transport home.

Olha had prepared eggs for us this year, too; all I had to do was travel the 50 kilometers to Kolomyia to pick them up. As it turned out, this was the worst 50 kilometers of road in Ukraine. We drove the entire distance in 1st or second gear, and spent a good bit of time driving on the shoulder rather than on the rutted road itself. What should have been a 30 minute drive, at most, took us an hour and a half. And then we had to return.....

Olha told me she had had difficulty finding nice eggs (smooth, not cracked) in Kolomyia, and had gone through many dozens to get us the 150 or so she had prepared. These soon ran out, and I had to look locally for eggs. There was an egg producing factory farm in our region which supplied white eggs to local grocery stores. Borya picked up about ten dozen for me there. When I went to empty them, the ones on top weren’t too bad, but those in the bottom of the box were almost all cracked, and were given to the kitchen ladies. The problem was with the packaging—the eggs were placed on a paper tray and saran wrapped in place. When these packs were stacked, the ones on top crushed the ones on the bottom.

I went with Borya on the next egg run, and we bought out the store. We then carefully packed the eggs in the car, in multiple cardboard boxes, without stacking. Once we got them home, these eggs had almost no cracks, and we were able to use more than 80% of them for pysanky. With the previous lot, it had been less than 40%.

There were lots of other things to keep them busy: over the course of camp, we had classes in origami, kite making, pottery, floristry, Ukrainian (kozak) martial arts, painting, bracelet-weaving, poster making, grain art, photography, dance, land art⁷⁷, sports, mask-making, and business⁷⁸. We improved our environment; besides creating floral arrangements at the tables and posters for the walls, and building a safe stairway to the river, we had several ecological actions, collecting litter from the river bank⁷⁹ and the campus of the baza.

We celebrated several holidays during the course of camp. Besides birthdays, we celebrated Spas⁸⁰ (The Feast of the Transfiguration) and Ukrainian Independence Day. For Spas, we prepared huge trays of fruit and flowers, and a local priest came to our small shrine, next to the river, to bless them for us. The ceremony was not very interesting to the campers, short though it was⁸¹, but the gorging on fruit afterwards was much to everyone's satisfaction.



We celebrated Independence Day with the kozaks. In the morning, there was a flag-raising and singing of the national anthem; our camp banner was presented, and proclamations read. We then marched as a group, all in new bright yellow camp t-shirts, through the woods to a marker on our campus. It was a memorial to 2500 victims of the Nazis, Jewish Ukrainians, killed on December 4, 1941. The victims were of all ages, children and adults, from the Horodenka area. They had been buried here in a mass grave. We lay a garland of wheat and berries, and paid our respects.

After an authentic Ukrainian lunch which included borsch, the kozaks put on a show for us, demonstrating their martial arts prowess⁸², and then allowed the kids to participate in kozak games. In the evening, after the unveiling of the new stairs to the river, we all gathered there. The kite-flying contest was held and then, when it

⁷⁷ I'd never heard of this before coming to camp, but it is a big thing in parts of Europe. Per Wikipedia, Land art is an art movement in which landscape and the work of art are inextricably linked. It is also an art form that is created in nature, using natural materials such as soil, rock (bed rock, boulders, stones), organic media (logs, branches, leaves), and water with introduced materials such as concrete, metal, asphalt, or mineral pigments. Sculptures are not placed in the landscape, rather, the landscape is the means of their creation.

Our kids created many such sculptures in the woods around camp, and had fun doing so.

⁷⁸ My friend Ruslan Masnenky, a businessman in Kyiv, came up for a weekend and organized a brief workshop for the kids. An orphan himself, he began as a kid at our camps back in the 90s, went on to university, and now lived and worked in Kyiv. Ruslan had helped teach a business seminar at camps when he was younger: the kids had created small businesses (pizza delivery, laundry service, coffee and tea service, music piracy, etc.) and tried to make money. He had helped out at our Crimean camp in 2006. This was his first time back in camp since, and he enjoyed himself so much he promised to come back next summer and organize a proper course.

⁷⁹ In doing so, the kids created a safe, clean beach that they later used for swimming.

⁸⁰ Celebrated on August 19th, Spas is an ancient eastern Slavic harvest festival. In Ukraine, people bring baskets of fruit to church to be blessed. Tradition has it that you shouldn't eat any apples before Spas, and this holiday is sometimes referred to as "Apple Spas." Nights in Ukraine become much cooler after August 19th, and it is said that after Spas, one can expect frost. Ukraine is northerly, and, for many people, Spas marks the end of summer. A common saying is "Прийшов Спас — пішло літо від нас." (Spas has arrived, and summer has gone away from us.)

There are three Spas holidays celebrated, but this is the major one. The first, "Honey" or "Poppy" Spas" is celebrated on August 14, and "Nut Spas" on August 29.

⁸¹ Ukrainian religious ceremonies are not known for their brevity. Any time one clocks in at under two hours, we consider ourselves lucky.

⁸² I've known the kozaks for many years, having worked with them at camps since 1998. They practice discipline and patriotism, and teach these to our kids. They also put on a great show with feats of strength, self defense, as well as walking on glass and beds of nails.

had gotten dark, the bonfire lit, songs sung, and kulesh⁸³ cooked and served.

Our camp was on the banks of the Dnister river, and we took full advantage of it. When it was warm enough, we would go down to the river and swim. We flew our kites by the river, played games by the river, and would go down to the shore in the evenings and enjoy the sight of the moon reflected in it. But the highpoint of our river-based activities was the Splav, a rafting trip down the river.



The first Splav was by the older kids and staff. They were taken upriver by microbus, loaded onto big rafts, and floated down the river back to our camp. Except it was a very hot and sunny day, and the wind was against them. They had to work hard to make progress, and many were sunburned in the process. Once they reached our camp, they had to wade through deep, cold water to shore. Most were totally exhausted by the end of the trip. But the scenery was beautiful, the experience exciting, and they loved it, and would do it again.

The second Splav was by the younger kids and the rest of the staff. The smallest ones, sick ones, and crippled ones (myself included) didn't go. They didn't fare well with the weather—it rained buckets the entire

time. Despite rain ponchos and hats, they all got thoroughly soaked to the skin. The currents and work were less, but they still had to wade through now much deeper and colder water to get to shore. Most were totally exhausted and freezing cold by the end of the trip. But the scenery was beautiful, the experience exciting, and they loved it, and would do it again.

Besides seeing the landscape along the river, our campers got to visit some nearby attractions. We took a bus trip to Kamyanets Podilskyi, an ancient town with a fortress on an island in the middle of the Smotrych River. The bus ride was fairly horrible (the roads again), but the city itself was exciting. We toured the castle, with its dungeons, high walls, turrets and attractions⁸⁴. And then we went into the town, and were shown around by one of our own, Nadia Kravchenko⁸⁵. We wandered the old cobbled streets of town, and visited churches⁸⁶, museums, squares and the souvenir market.

As in previous years, everyone visited Kolomyia, where we enjoyed the baroque ambience of the town, and visited the Hutsul and Pysanka museums. As in previous years, my students wrote



⁸³ kulesh is a porridge made of millet groats. The kozaks cooked it on the beach, in a kettle over a fire. The recipe revealed to me their secret ingredient for tasty kulesh—mayonnaise. And it was tasty—of course, anything cooked outdoors over a fire is by definition tasty.

⁸⁴ I have visited this castle many times over the years, beginning in the late Soviet era. While the authorities have done a good job of fixing it up over the years, I much preferred visiting it before rampant consumerism took over. When I first visited, it was a castle with a small museum; you could walk along the walls, and explore the building within. There wasn't a lot to see, but you had a feel for the castle.

Now it is all about separating the rubles from their hryvni. All the buildings within the castle have been turned into souvenir shops selling magnets, mugs and snacks, or into restaurants. You can have your photo taken with an owl on your shoulder. There is a (paid) archery range, and dungeons full of tortured mannequins. But there is very little actual history.

⁸⁵ Nadia, who has severe scoliosis, grew up in the orphanage in Tsyurupinsk, and came to our camps when she was young. She became one of our stipendiat students, and went to school in Kamyanets Podilskyi, where she studied bookkeeping. Nadia is also a talented artist; she paints beautifully, and came to camp to share her skills with our kids.

⁸⁶ One of the churches, a beautiful old catholic one, was a favorite place of Inna Talyants, one of our Kyiv staff. She lived for some time in KP, and loved coming to the church where, in Soviet times, she could listen to organ concerts and meditate.

pysanky for the museum, and then presented⁸⁷ them to the staff during our visit. My friend Oleh Kirashchuk came, as always, to meet us, and to help us navigate his town⁸⁸. The drive there was horrible⁸⁹; even worse was the road to the local waterfall. This was undertaken in small vehicles, a small group at a time. The kids had a chance to clamber over and though the waterfall, and to explore the nearby ruins⁹⁰.

Our group this year was not as musical⁹¹ as in years past. We had only a limited number of concerts (opening and closing) and presentations of talent. Instead, we found other entertainments for our evenings. We had several fires, small and large, with group singing and games. We had a masquerade, where everyone presented their masks and costumes, and the best were chosen by a jury. We had several movie nights⁹². Most other nights there was a disco at the hall; when the kozaks came to visit they arranged a kozak disco, with all Ukrainian music and games.

We had competitions to keep us busy, too. As always, there was a camp Olympics; besides football (soccer) and volleyball, medals were awarded in table tennis, checkers, and arm wrestling. The prizes were presented by the Olympic goddesses (two elegant, one Vitalik) at an evening ceremony.

The biggest competition, at least to the kids, was the photography contest. I had brought cameras⁹³ to camp, and we had given one to each group. They took photos throughout camp, and then chose their best work. These photos were printed out, and an exhibition



⁸⁷ Last year Vitalik and he kids had crated a lovely ceramic basket to present the pysanky. The year before the florists had made a lovely nest. This year, in keeping with the name of our venue, the Pearl of the Dnister, we presented the pysanky in a large papier-mâché clam.

⁸⁸ In past years, he has helped arrange tours, helped us order pizza, and found a park for us to picnic in. This year the poor guy spent his time trying to help a few angry teachers find souvenirs; they had been denied the opportunity to shop at the Kosiv bazaar, due to time and transport constraints, and they wanted cheap souvenirs and they wanted them NOW!

⁸⁹ And this was not just my opinion. A friend of mine from Vorohta (near Yaremche) came to see me while I was at camp. Slavyk is also my supplier of mushrooms, but I'd been unable to buy any from him for several years because I had been there too early in the season. Mushrooms require a lot of rain, then a dry period for them to grow, be picked and be dried. I kept showing up in July, during the rains.

This time Slavyk had mushrooms, and he brought them to me. We sat and talked, caught up on the Vorohta gossip (I'd spent ten summers in Vorohta in the early years of our camp, and had friends there). He dreaded the drive home, but dreaded even more having to make that drive in the dark. Even he, a local, was impressed by how bad the road was.

⁹⁰ The rains finally came at the end of camp, making the overnight trek we'd planned for the older kids unsafe and untenable. The trip to the waterfall was in consolation. I didn't go because space in the minibuses was limited, and I come from the land of waterfalls. Also, my knee was in no condition to clamber over muddy trails or on slippery rocks.

⁹¹ In 2012 we attracted a large number of talented kids, singers and dancers. We had all sorts of competitions, including karaoke and Mr. and Miss Karpatski Zori. We did have dancers this year. Anya, one of the students from Trostyanets, taught modern dance and helped organize a group dance performance. Several of the younger guys got together to teach break dancing, and then performed in the closing concert.

⁹² The strangest of these movie nights was when we showed «Той, хто пройшов крізь вогонь» (Firecrosser), an award-winning art film. It was the story of a Ukrainian boy who became a Soviet fighter pilot, and then a Nazi prisoner of war and a prisoner in the Soviet Gulag, and how he ended up as the chief of a Canadian Iroquois tribe. Unfortunately the AV guy didn't bother setting the language properly, so it ended up being shown in Ukrainian, then Russian, and finally English (as the plot progressed). No one in the theater could understand enough of it to figure out what was going on.

⁹³ I had collected used digital cameras from friends, tested them, bought batteries, charges and memory cards. In addition, Lexie Oleksienko, who organizes an annual gold tournament in the Detroit area to raise funds for UCARE, asked that a portion of the tournament proceeds go to buying cameras. We bought three nice, basic Canons.

I took five cameras with me to camp; the four survivors were given to the best student photographers.



mounted. The judges then selected winning photos in each announced category, and the photographers were given small prizes. Based on these photos, the four best photographers⁹⁴ were chosen, and were given the surviving cameras⁹⁵, to their great delight.

All good things must come to an end, and our camp did. The kids packed, I photographed them for their portraits, and we had our concluding concert. There were songs, dances, and skits. Diplomas were presented to all the participants. And then goodbyes were said, and we drove the kids to the railway station, where we all stood together, laughing and crying, promising we would keep in touch, as we waited for the train that finally came and took them all away.

UKRAINE (Part II): Friends, Family and Pysanky

Unlike in previous years, I didn't have to hibernate for a few days after camp and heal from whatever illness I had picked up there. Because I stayed so healthy? Perish the thought. It is because I'd been deathly ill *during* camp with a horrible upper respiratory bug that grounded me for a few days and required a call to the US for help with management⁹⁶. Due to my illness, I had to miss out on the big Hutsul party I'd been invited to⁹⁷. I didn't miss seeing the rizbar and his family; they tracked me down in Kolomyia, and we all celebrated together at Oleh's house⁹⁸.

Oleh had given me the name and phone number of a friend of his in Horodenka, the nearest town to camp, 15 kilometers away. Pan Volodymyr was an amateur ethnographer, and, according to Oleh, had a collection of local traditional pysanky. I had tried to arrange a meeting with him during camp, but it had come to naught; neither of us had a car, and then I got sick and quite busy. I convinced Ruslan to detour through Horodenka on the way

home, and Pan Volodymyr graciously invited us into his home. He had a nice collection of local artifacts, a friendly puppy, and home

⁹⁴ The categories chosen for the competition were not very good for actually choosing the best photographers. In the end, I looked at the totality of each photographer's work, and assigned winners that way.

⁹⁵ The oldest group had a somewhat lackadaisical attitude towards their camera, and it drowned during the first rafting expedition. They also had a not very rigorous approach to rules, and so got disqualified from the photography exhibition and competition. They were supposed to submit photos and identify the photographer for each. They failed to do so properly, and in one case attributed the photo to one of the subjects of said photo.

⁹⁶ I called Beth, but serendipitously got her husband, Dave, a respiratory doc, instead. He advised me to continue what I was doing—antibiotics and inhalers—and add steroids. I did, and was able to walk, nay, gallop up and down the stairs without a cane for several days! It was lovely.

⁹⁷ Pan Mykola and his wife were celebrating their 50th anniversary, and had planned a big celebration in their home up on the mountain. When our camp was in Kosiv visiting had been no problem, as their village of Richka was only a 15 minute drive away. This year, it was another matter. Not only was I not well (I had difficulty remaining in an upright position for any length of time), but the roads were absolutely horrible. Additionally, it was Independence Day, which meant the drunk divers would be out in force. Maryna strongly counseled against going, and I ended up taking her advice.

⁹⁸ After our group's visit to the museums, they headed home, and Vitalik and I went with Oleh to his house, which is right in the center of town. It is an old house in an orchard and next to a river which he has been restoring. We walked through the town center, in the rain, stopping at a few shops on the way. Vitalik needed to have some photos of himself printed as gifts for the kids; he is a minor celebrity in Ukraine, having been on "Ukraine's Got Talent," and is especially well known in the Ivano Frankivsk region.

Pan Mykola, his son Vasyi, and granddaughter Alla found us, brought food and drink left from the party (salo and horilka), and we celebrated together. They also showed me the beautiful birdhouse they had built for my cousin Lisa, and we determined that it was too much large to fit safely into my suitcase. I was not disappointed.

(Right: Lisa's bird house)



made dandelion wine. We talked and sampled the wine, and he allowed me to photograph his pysanky⁹⁹. And then he gave us directions to Lviv, which took us home on nice, smooth local roads. (Right: Horodenka pysanka)



Once back in Lviv, Darynka and I stayed busy. It was now September, and Myrosia had to work, and Maksym had school¹⁰⁰. Darynka had convinced my doctor friend to write her an excuse, and she instead hung out and traveled with me. We spent a couple of days wandering around Lviv¹⁰¹, going to cafes, restaurants¹⁰², museums, markets and galleries¹⁰³, and Darynka helped me find nice gifts for my family back home. And we spent time with my friends¹⁰⁴.

Myrosia's old schoolmate Serhiy was kind enough to drive us to Kniazhe, our ancestral Volynian village, and back. We spent a day with Zoya, Darynka's grandmother (and my mother's first cousin). I had hoped to wander around the village, perhaps to the church and cemetery, but the weather was cold and wet and miserable. So we stayed inside, talking, eating and napping, and looking at photos. In past years I would have had neighbors to visit with, but just about everyone I'd known had died or moved away. Zoya had a new puppy, a little guy who helped keep us company. And I collected recipes from her; she showed me, in her summer kitchen, how to make an oseledets pid shuboyu¹⁰⁵, and how to create various local liqueurs.

(Left: Zoya Korniy and her granddaughter, Darynka Zamoyska)

On the way home we stopped in Sokal to visit with more of my mom's relatives. We had lunch, but it wasn't the same with Aunt

⁹⁹ I try and photograph as many collections of pysanky as I can, as do friends of mine. We are trying to preserve the old regional patterns, before modernity sweeps them away. Eggs are fragile things, and preserving their images is the safest way to preserve their information.

Pan Volodymyr had collected his pysanky back eighties, when Oleh was traveling to villages in the area, finding the local pysankarky, and committing the designs and names of their pysanky to paper. Some of Volodymyr's eggs were broken, other cracked and leaking, but the designs were intact. As well as the old patterns, he had a collection of Oleh's early work, and a few Kosmach designs.

I've shared the photos with many pysankary and fold art enthusiasts, and posted them on Facebook (Traditional Pysanky Group) and to my Google Drive. And I have begun to write his designs.

¹⁰⁰ September 1st is the official first day of school in Ukraine, no matter what day of the week it falls upon. This year it fell on a Sunday. Students and their parents were still expected to show up to school, with the children dressed in embroidered shirts, for opening festivities. The turn out was spotty this year.

The statues in the Ploshcha Rynok (Market Square) in central Lviv did their part. Neptune, Diana, Amphitrite and Adonis all donned lovely embroidered shirts and cloaks. (See photo on next page.)

¹⁰¹ One pleasant way to occupy time on a Saturday in central Lviv is to count the bridal parties. All brides come, with their attendants, to the town center to have photos taken. The brides all have beautiful white gowns—Ukraine is a center for European bridal gown production; labor there is cheap and the seamstresses experienced.

¹⁰² I think we hit all the interesting places Darynka had wanted to go but as a poor student, couldn't afford. And McDonalds: Darynka has an admitted weakness for cheeseburgers, milk shakes and McNuggets. I don't mind indulging her, since she only eats there once a year, when I visit.

¹⁰³ We found a cute little gallery off an alley of the Ploshcha Rynok called "Щось цікаве" (Something Interesting). It was an artists' collective, with exhibits of paintings and drawings outdoors, on the walls, as well as all sorts of handcrafted items indoors, and obscure Jethro Tull tunes on the CD player. I bought lovely handbags for the girls, and some other odd items. It is an interesting place.

¹⁰⁴ Although not as much as I'd have liked. We are all getting old, and just not as healthy as we once were. Vira had a horrible attack of cholecystitis, and had had her gallbladder removed just prior to my arrival. (I had urged her to do so when I had talked to her in early August.) We were supposed to travel to Lutsk together, but she wasn't up to it. We still spent a lot of time just visiting, drinking tea and eating whatever recipes she was trying out for her next cookbook.

Andriy came down with a bug similar to mine, and was barely functional the week I was there. He had planned exciting outings, as he always does, but it was all he could do to be upright. He still arranged a couple of nice, quiet dinners. Maybe next year....

¹⁰⁵ Literally "Herring in a fur coat," it is a favorite Ukrainian New Year's dish. Herring is layered with boiled grated potatoes, carrots and beets, and held together with mayonnaise. Some versions include grated hard boiled eggs and chopped onions. The outer layer is always of beets. The dish is served by slicing it like a torte.



Nadia, my mom's cousin, who'd passed away last winter. She had always been fun; last year she had sung songs and recited poems for me, and remembered her big trip to America many years ago. As we lunched with Sonya, Poly and Mariyka, we drank to her memory, and remembered her sunny disposition. (Left: Poly and Mariyka Chernyavsky. Right: Neptune in the Ploshcha Rynok)

We had to rush back to Lviv, though, as we had a concert to attend that evening. Andriy had gotten us all tickets for a big memorial¹⁰⁶ concert for Andrey Sheptytsky, and had said we would be sitting in the front row of the magnificent Lviv Opera House among the priests. As it was, Vira, Darynka and I ended up in the third row with an ailing Andriy and his other friends. The show was quite nice—it was narrated by a well-known actor, with songs by a number of Lviv choirs (mens', women's and children's).

Darynka and I next visited Lutsk—the regional museum there had a large collection of pysanky¹⁰⁷ which they were willing to let me see¹⁰⁸.

Unfortunately, after discussing it with



the staff, I learned that only a small number of these were traditional Volynian eggs; most had been created in recent years during their annual pysanka competition. Still, they were quite willing to have us come, look at and photograph the pysanky from their vaults.

So we set off, by bus, to Lutsk. By car, it is about a two hour drive. By bus, it took much longer. It was almost an hour's drive across town to the bus terminal; then there was a wait for the bus; then a four hour plus ride on the bus. And it was a horrible bumpy ride.....until we crossed the oblast border into Volyn. Suddenly the roads became much better and the ride much smoother.

The ladies were waiting for us at the ethnographic museum. We were taken to the offices, and then questioned as to our reasons for wanting to photograph the pysanky, and asked what we would do with the photos. Once I had answered the questions to their satisfaction, and shared with them some of my previous work (the photographs of the Ivan Balan collection of Bukovynian pysanky), we were taken not so dusty vault, but to the main exhibition upstairs¹⁰⁹, a light, airy space, where everything was waiting for us.

¹⁰⁶ I cannot recall the reason for the concert, and a perusal of Sheptytsky's biography does not give me any reason for a September celebration, nor explain why 2013 would be of particular significance. I think it had something to do with his founding of the national museum in Lviv, and his collection of religious and historical artifacts. This would make sense as our friend, Otets Stepan, a Studite monk involved with the museum, was the organizer.

¹⁰⁷ Vira Manko had heard about this collection, and I had tried to access it last year, but the person with the keys to the vault had been away on summer holiday on the one day I could make it to Lutsk. Vira and I had planned to go there together this summer, but her recovery from surgery took longer than anticipated, so she remained in Lviv. Darynka ended up being a very able assistant, whose help proved invaluable.

¹⁰⁸ This is fairly unusual, at least in Ukraine. Until very recently, most museum directors and curators were very possessive, behaving as though the artifacts in their collections were their private objects, rather than the patrimony of the nation. The Ethnographic museum in Lviv has had the same few dozen pysanky on display as far back as anyone can remember; meanwhile, they have several thousand in their vaults which they will not let anyone see. No one outside the museum staff knows what condition they are in, or if they have been photographed for posterity. Eggs are not very durable objects; they crack and crumble, and colors fade.

There are signs that things may be changing; as the old Soviet era staff retire, the younger ones taking their places seem more amenable to sharing their collections with the outside world.

¹⁰⁹ It seemed odd to me that we would be working in an exhibition hall; I assumed that we would be in the vaults or some office or other back room. But during the several hours we were working, no one came through. Not a single visitor.

This is something I have noted in Ukraine—no one seems to visit museums. When I've gone through them, there are rarely ever any other visitors. One of the jobs of the docents is to turn the lights on and off as visitors enter and leave rooms. The only time this hasn't been true is while visiting some of the bigger museums in Kyiv or Lviv during summer; even then the museums were not crowded, there was no line to get tickets, and many of the other visitors were fellow tourists.

The two museum ladies who helped us passed me the pysanky and read their “metadata¹¹⁰” from the catalog cards, while I photographed and Darynka recorded the info. We also chatted, and I discovered that one of them was from our village and a distant relative of mine; my aunt had called her mother and let her know I was coming. After we’d photographed the pysanky, they showed us around their gorgeous exhibit of Volynian costumes and embroideries¹¹¹, and gave me a copy of the exhibit catalog.



¹¹⁰ Provenance, including the village or region of origin, when the pysanka was added to the collection, who collected it, if the pysanka has a name/title, and who the pysankar(ka) is. Not all the eggs had all this information; a few had none.

Most of these older, more traditional designs were Volynian, but a certain percentage were more typical of the Kholm (Chełm) region. Many Ukrainians from the far western Ukrainian regions that became part of Poland after WWII, including Kholm, were resettled into Volyn in the late 40s. It was Soviet-sanctioned ethnic cleansing.

¹¹¹ I learned quite a bit from the exhibit. Unlike modern Ukrainian embroidery, older, more traditional embroidery was usually NOT cross-stitch. Volynian embroidery incorporated a lot of floral designs and utilized “hład” (гладь), a type of damask or satin embroidery.

The red and black roses that are so popular throughout northwestern Ukraine, including Volyn, are a recent innovation. Apparently there was a French soap that was popular in Ukraine during the 19th century, and it came wrapped in paper with red and black roses on it. Ukrainian women adapted these patterns to embroidery.

This is similar to what happened to pysanky in Sokal. In the early 20th century floral painting became all the rage among young women in the area. Some of them adapted those designs to pysanky, and thus we ended up Sokal floral pysanky:



We spent the next night and day exploring Lutsk, which is a beautiful city, and avoiding crazy people¹¹². It is small, compared to many oblast centers, and easily walkable. In the evening we wandered from our hotel on the river to the pedestrian center and found a nice restaurant. Not much else was open on a week night. The



next day we began our explorations with the Lutsk Zamok, also known as Lutsk High Castle¹¹³. Unlike the castle in Kamyanets Podilskyi, this one was not a commercialized circus. It had been carefully reconstructed, and archeological work was still going on in the church, which was mostly underground¹¹⁴. The buildings on site were used, for the most part, to house museums: an art gallery (closed due to restoration), a bell museum (in one of the towers) and a book/printing museum. There was a small souvenir shop in the first story of the book museum (former arsenal), but half of it was an ethnographic display, and the shop sold mostly post cards and books. And, like most museums, the castle was empty of any other people except workmen; Darynka and I had it to ourselves¹¹⁵.



We walked into town and through history¹¹⁶, past churches and monasteries and ancient homes. In the old center, in

Theater Square, we admired the Holy Trinity orthodox cathedral and its gardens, and the statue of Lesia Ukrainka¹¹⁷. Darynka posed for photos beneath the statue, just as her mother had the year before.

¹¹² There was an odd pair staying at our hotel, the Svityaz, an old Soviet era tower on the Styr river. They were mother and son, and seemed to have a shared psychosis—the government was out to get them, and other people from their old apartment building, many of whom it had already killed because they were asking for reparations after they had been displaced from their homes. Or something like that. They told us that there were frequent murders at our hotel in furtherance of the government’s plans, and the only person who could save them was the president of the American division of the Soyuz Ukrayinok (a Ukrainian women’s organization).

They had, for some reason, gotten it into their heads that I could put them in contact with that woman and save them. They followed me to my room, and pestered Darynka and me until we escaped inside and locked the door. The woman wanted to come later and talk more with us, but we told her we were very tired and turning in early. Apparently they did show up long after midnight, and kept knocking on our door. I was sound asleep, but Darynka heard them. She also heard someone from a nearby room yelling at them to be quiet and go away.

Before I had realized how crazy they were (and I’m only giving a brief overview here), I had given them my business card with my e-mail and phone number. I am safe though, as they do not trust phones or the internet, as they know that they can be followed if they do.

¹¹³ It is also known as Lubart’s castle, and was built mostly in the 1340s. The castle began its life as the fortified seat of Lubart, the last ruler of united Galicia-Volhynia.

It is the most prominent landmark of Lutsk, and as such appears on the 200 hryvnia bill. This is only appropriate, as Lesia Ukrainka, writer and poet, and a Volyn native, is pictured on the front of the note.



¹¹⁴ The level of the ground rises with time, with the accumulation of dirt, dust and debris. That is why archeologists excavate downward.

¹¹⁵ My only disappointment with the castle is its environs. While the castle has been preserved beautifully within, the city market has been allowed to grow right up to it. If you climb the towers and look out over the landscape, you see not a great view of the city, but the shantytown that is the market.

¹¹⁶ It’s really kind of cool how the city grew outward from the old castle in the bend of the river. As you walk away from it, you walk forward in time, from the medieval fort, past baroque churches and houses, through the 19th century shops of Lesia Ukrainka street, ending up in the post-WWII Soviet center.

¹¹⁷ Lesia Ukrainka, born Larisa Kosach-Kvitka, was one of Ukraine’s best-known poets and writers and the foremost woman writer in Ukrainian literature. She also was a political, civil, and female activist. Lesia was born in Volyn, and lived for a time in Lutsk. Due to ill health (TB?), she spent much of her adult living abroad, in warm, dry climates, and pining for her native land.

From the square we continued along Lesia Ukrainka street, a lovely pedestrian way lined with shops, parks¹¹⁸, statues and cafes, to the new, modern center of the city. The university was there, and a broad avenue with big shops...and more cafes. Lutsk, like Lviv¹¹⁹ has a cafe culture¹²⁰. There are outdoor cafes located throughout town, and most were still open for business in September. Lutsk does not quite have the weather of Lviv—it is further north and a bit chillier—but instead it has blankets. Piles of them, in every cafe. Just take one, wrap yourself in it, and enjoy your coffee al fresco.

All good things must end, and my mandry (wanderings) around western Ukraine soon did. I returned to sunny Lviv, where I enjoyed the lovely autumn weather and visited with ailing friends. Darynka and I spent some time in the Vernisage, the open air handicraft and souvenir market¹²¹ near the Opera House (pictured right, with brides). And then, before I knew it, I was back on the “Kyiv Tram,” heading back to the capital.

Kyiv for me is friends, family and food. It is a huge city, and lacks the human



¹¹⁸ It really is a nice walk. There are several very small parks, with non-grandiose statues. In one of the little parks, someone had decided to put colorful, knitted stockings (trunk-warmers?) onto the trunks of all of the trees. These were not random stocking, but custom knitted ones. It was quite odd, and funny, but sweet.

The local people paid the stockings no mind, and didn't seem to particularly notice them. They walked by, sometimes stopping to sit on the benches and enjoy a sunny autumn afternoon.

(Left: a view of a few of the trees; in the background, and grandmother with grandchild in a baby buggy.)

¹¹⁹ Lutsk, Darynka and I decided, was a bit like a small, more intimate, Lviv. It was a civilized place, and having weathered a similar history, was also visually similar. The buildings tend to be Austrian in style, and there is not much Russian influence, except in the newest parts of town. There are few tall buildings of any sort, many small parks, statues, monuments, and bookstores.....and cafes.

¹²⁰ Lviv is renowned for its cafes (kaviarni), with their coffee and cakes. There is no culture of takeaway coffee in cardboard cups. Lviv even lacks the mobile coffee bars (an espresso machine mounted in the back of a very small van) that are ubiquitous in other Ukrainian cities. Coffee is taken seriously here.

The cafes have comfortable seating, sometimes on the street, sometimes indoors. Usually there are tables and chairs, but recently sofas have made an appearance. Coffee and pastry are savored over good conversation, not scarfed down.

Lutsk is not Lviv—coffee vans exist there, although they are few, and the cafes are not quite as ubiquitous. But the sentiment is the same: coffee is a pleasure, to be savored in good company, not a drug to be quickly ingested.

(Right: Darynka enjoying a fancy coffee drink in a cafe on Lutsk's high street, Voli (Freedom) Avenue. She is wearing a blanket to keep warm, courtesy of the cafe.)



¹²¹ No one is certain why this market has survived. The powers that be would love to shut it down and develop the valuable property into something more “useful,” but it hasn't happened.

The Vernisage started out as a true artists' market, with artists selling their works, and others selling art supplies. There were also artisans selling embroideries, woodwork and beadwork, along with kiosks with antiques. Over the years this has changed, and become much more commercialized. The few paintings that remain tend to be of the “sofa painting” variety. A few antique vendors remain, and you can still find limited art supplies. There are still handicrafts available, but few artisans selling them—it has become almost all middle men who buy elsewhere and sell here.

What is worst is the proliferation of “souvenirs” that aren't Ukrainian. Most are made in China, and the quality is poor. Some, at least, try to copy Ukrainian designs, but many now are just the sort of schlocky stuff you can buy anywhere: cheap bangles and earrings, magnets and mugs. There might be a local decal, but often not even that.

scale of Lviv...or Lutsk. It is fun to walk along Khreshchatyk, and the Maidan¹²², and down Andriyivskyi Uzviz¹²³ to Podil¹²⁴ and the Dnipro River¹²⁵. But it is fun in a touristic way; Kyiv itself is big and magnificent, but not home. I guess I'm a Lvivian at heart.

My time in Kyiv was fragmented, punctuated by excursions elsewhere. While in Kyiv, I got to try yet another version of the "shuba¹²⁶", a magnificent one created by my kuma Inna, and other family favorites. I went to the Priyateli Ditey office twice, once to pick up Tanya's wedding video¹²⁷, which Maryna had finally located, and a second time to leave disks of the camp photos¹²⁸ and to see my friend Andriy (pictured in the photo on the right), a Priyateli Ditey alumnus who works in the area. Andriy, as always, had an interesting haircut.

Zhenya and I¹²⁹ also went to central Kyiv, to catch a glimpse of it—I don't feel I've been to Ukraine until I've been to the Maidan—and to



¹²² The Maidan, aka Independence Square, is the heart of Kyiv. As with all of Kyiv, it is becoming less inviting to those who are not rich. There used to be lots of kiosks with books, music and patriotic materials; the city has chased most of them off, and those that remain sell more kitsch than they used to. A huge upscale mall has been built underground. Privatization continues apace.

The Maidan is a different place right now, as it is the heart of the current revolution. It has become occupied by protestors, with a tent city and frequent huge rallies. I'd love to be there now.

¹²³ The Uzviz, or descent, begins at St. Andrew's church in the heights of Kyiv, and twists and turns along cobbled streets down to Podil and the Dnipro River.

¹²⁴ Podil is one of the oldest neighborhoods of Kyiv, and the birthplace of the city's trade, commerce and industry. It is located on the shore of the Dnipro, down below modern central Kyiv.

¹²⁵ The mighty Dnipro river runs from Ukraine's northern border down to the Black Sea, and divides the country in half, into Left and Right bank. It runs through the middle of Kyiv. The old city is on the hills of the right bank, while the new city of huge concrete apartment blocks is on the lower left bank.

¹²⁶ Oseledets pid shuboyu. Inna's was taller, with grated cooked eggs and carrots as well as the usual ingredients (beets, onions, potatoes). it was also beautifully decorated with lines of mayonnaise.



¹²⁷ Tanya, my Ukrainian daughter, was married in 2010. Since her wedding was during camp, and no one from the organization could make it, we decided to hold another wedding for her in Kolochava. It was a traditional wedding, with all the bells and whistles, and with our kids and staff standing with Tanya as her family. (Tanya is one of our orphans.) Maryna hired someone to record the wedding, and then the video went missing.....in the office. Tanya had been asking me about it for a couple of years, and I began nagging Maryna, and it finally reappeared.

¹²⁸ Over 11,600 of them, plus movies. My task, when I finally finish this letter, will be to finally edit them, tossing out the worst, organize them, and burn the lot to disks. Then I need to send them to all my friends from camp, and to the office. With luck, I'll be done BEFORE next year's camp!

¹²⁹ Zhenya=Yevhen (Eugene), my godson. I rarely get to wander around Ukrainian cities alone. I am generally assigned someone to take me around. It used to be my cousins who would wander around with me, but now it is my godchildren who are my keepers. I find it funny—I've traveled half the world by myself, but am not trusted to get from Point A to Point B in Ukraine without supervision. Well, it is nice to have company....



shop. Zhenya loves to shop¹³⁰. And, of course, there was a visit to Borshchyhivka¹³¹, to my cousin Toma's house, for a night with family: Tamara and Vova, Natalka and Erik, and not-so-little-any-more Liza (pronounced Lyee-za). We ate and talked and looked at photos, and then took even more photos, as always. And we drank to our family, to those present, those far away, and those no longer with us.

(Right: Natalka, Toma, Vova and Inna; Below, left: Zhenya and his cousin Liza)



I spend a lot of time on trains when I'm in Ukraine, as it is the easiest way to get around. Unfortunately, most of the trains are not very fast. The one to Kryvyi Rih is one of the slower ones, so the options are to either spend an entire day on the train, or an entire night, traveling each way. I chose the latter option. I got lucky; on the way

down, I had only two other occupants in my compartment—one slept while the other discussed her trip to Italy (for a wedding¹³²) for over an hour on her cell phone. I learned every detail of how beautiful Italy is, how nice the Italians were, and how much they love our Ukrainian wedding traditions (which seem to have consisted, in this case, of bringing vodka). On the way back I was alone.



I spent two days in Kryvyi Rih with Tanya, my Ukrainian daughter, and her family, including her 2.5 year old daughter Masha. Masha had grown quite a bit since I had seen her last year, and was now potty trained. Initially she was a bit shy, but soon warmed up to me, perhaps remembering our visit last summer. Before I knew it, we were playing with her stuffed animals and she was showing me around the flat.

(Left: Masha sharing a sand pie. She is a generous child.)

¹³⁰ It's been fun watching him grow. Like my nephew Nick, he's gone from an ordinary kid to a well-dressed young man. Nick has become quite the fashion plate, and loves to dress up formally. He was the only person, except my Dad, wearing a tie at our Petrusha family Christmas dinner.

Zhenya is even more particular. His shoes and pants have to be totally fashionable. And clean. Immaculately clean. As is he. His mom tells me he showers frequently, and won't wear clothes with even the smallest stain until they've been laundered. His father calls him a "sacrifice to fashion" (aka fashion victim).

¹³¹ Borshchyhivka got that name, I am told, because it was once a market garden region to Kyiv. All the ingredients of borshch grew here: beets, cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes, peppers. In Soviet times, it was built up with huge, impersonal and quite ugly concrete apartment blocks, the typical Soviet edge city. It was the antithesis of the American suburbs.

Oddly, that has changed.....a bit. While central Kyiv is still preferred over left bank or outlying Kyiv, Borshchyhivka has begun to experience American-style suburban development. Gated communities with posh family homes have begun to spring up. Only the fairly wealthy can afford to live here, in big houses with gardens and lawns, instead of overcrowded flats, of course.

My cousin Toma (Tamara) lives in one of these old Soviet blocks. The flats were all privatized after Independence, and most owners have fixed them up quite nicely. But the common areas are poorly maintained, there are junkies and crime in the neighborhood, and, while there is public transportation, it is a very long ride to central Kyiv.

¹³² Many younger Ukrainians go abroad for work, many of them to Italy, Spain and Greece. Not all of them return.

It was mid-week, but Tanya had taken a few days off. We visited the nursery school where she works¹³³, and she showed me around the campus. I met many of the little students, Masha's classmates. Masha came with us; she loves playing in the sand box, digging and piling and forming the sand. But she is quite willing to share her sand pies.

We also went to Masha's favorite place, the local playground, where Masha played on every single bit of equipment, including the swings, teeter-totter, merry-go-round and horses, as well as in the sandbox, which was oddly empty of sand. Her favorite part of the playground is the large play structure with its stairs, walkways and slides (right). It was hard dragging her away from this paradise and back home. We spent the evening watching Tanya and Oleh's wedding videos, which I had brought from Kyiv.



We all spent an afternoon at Tanya's mother-in-law's selo (village), at her old family home. It was a half hour's drive from Kryvyi Rih, a typical village house in an orchard with a huge garden in the large plot of land behind it.

Unlike most village houses, this one abutted a river; the land sloped down, gradually, to the river's edge. There, among the rushes, was a small dock and boat. It was an idyllic spot¹³⁴. We ate a meal in the garden, al fresco, and then headed home as it began to grow dark. And then I was back on board a train, headed once again to Kyiv.....and Zolotonosha.

(Left: Oleh, Masha and Tanya with the river below them)

I no longer have any family left in my dad's selo/village. His immediate family was dekurkulized¹³⁵ in the Stalin Era from the village of Antypivka; my aunt Lida once showed me where his house used to stand. It is long gone, and the two hectares the family owned

¹³³ Tanya is fortunate to work at a nursery school which is, quite literally, next door, one building over from hers. Her mother-in-law is a teacher there, too, and helped her get the job. Her daughter is a student there, in her grandmother's class. It is a government pre-school, so the pay is not very good, but Tanya is doing the work she loves.

There is a large playground around the school, and each teacher is responsible for her section of it--planting flowers, maintaining them, painting murals, keeping up the equipment. The parents help out; one father loves to make "art" out of old tires and 2 liter bottles, others have other talents. But they all pitch in to keep the playground cheerful and clean.

Right: Masha playing in a large white tire swan.



¹³⁴ Seemingly idyllic, I was told. The area around Kryvyi Rih is very polluted, due to the heavy industry: mining and steel production. There were no pollution controls during the Soviet era, and not many now. Life expectancy is shorter here (and in the Donbas region) than in the rest of Ukraine, and that is pretty short already. Even though the little house on the river seems like a wonderful spot, the air, soil and water are full of invisible poisons.

¹³⁵ Also known, in Russian, as dekulakization, this was the Soviet campaign of political repressions, including arrests, deportations, and executions of millions of the better-off peasants and their families beginning in 1929. The richer peasants were labeled kurkuls/kulaks and considered class enemies.

My father's father had been a carpenter, owned about four acres of land; he had sometimes hired people to help him with the farming. This made him a kurkul; in 1929 the Soviets took away his land and farm animals, and threw him in jail for three years. In 1932 they threw his family out of their home in middle of winter; they lived with local relatives for a while, and then settled in the town of Zolotonosha. In 1937 they arrested my grandfather once more, and he was never seen again. There had been rumors that he and other arrestees were sent to Siberia; in the post-Soviet Era records were unsealed, and it was learned that they had been taken to the nearby city of Cherkasy and executed there.

belong to others now. There used to be a few old aunts in neighboring villages, but they've all died, and his other relatives moved to bigger cities many decades ago and never looked back.

I do have some family left in Zolotonosha, the regional center where my father had lived with his family during the Holodomor¹³⁶



and in pre-WWII times. It is an old city, dating back to at least the 16th century, and is located in Left Bank Ukraine, near the Dnipro river. Although now a part of Cherkasy oblast, it is ethnographically part of the Poltava region, just as my father's home village of Antypivka is. During Soviet times there were factories here where even kurkuls could obtain employment. In more recent times, Zolotonosha was known for its production of Stolichnaya vodka; my aunt Lida worked in the plant, and used to give me huge bottles of it¹³⁷.

Three of my father's cousins had ended up in Zolotonosha, the children of his maternal aunt. One,

my Uncle Vasyl, lives there still, in the same house my father remembers. Vasyl told me that my dad helped put in the windows (which have since been replaced), and my Uncle Mike, whom he remembers as Misha, a rachitic child, would come along and play.

(Photo above: Serhiy, Uncle Vasyl, Valia, Inna, Tanya and Dima. Little Ivas' is in front, embraced by his mother. Uncle Vasyl hates having his photo taken, and usually scowls for them.)

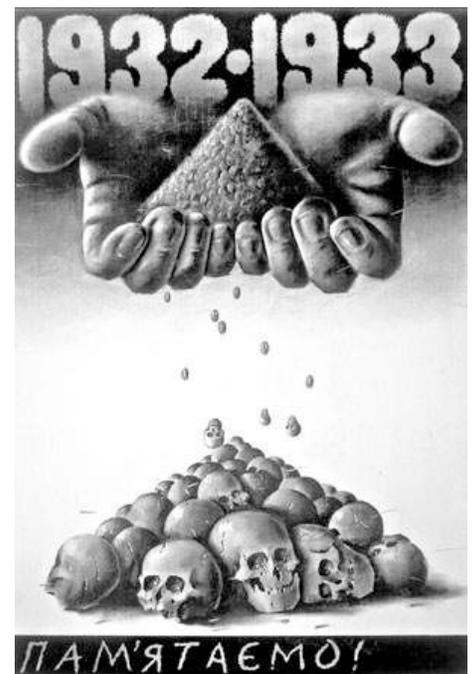
¹³⁶ The **Holodomor** (Ukrainian: Голодомор, "*Extermination by hunger*") was a man-made famine in the Ukrainian SSR in 1932 and 1933. During the famine millions of citizens of Ukrainian SSR, the majority of whom were Ukrainians, died of starvation in a peacetime catastrophe unprecedented in the history of Ukraine. Since 2006, the Holodomor has been recognized by Ukraine and several other countries as a genocide of the Ukrainian people.

Early estimates of the death toll by scholars and government officials varied greatly; anywhere from 1.8 to 12 million ethnic Ukrainians were said to have perished as a result of the famine. Recent research has since narrowed the estimates to between 2.4 and 7.5 million. The exact number of deaths is hard to determine, due to a lack of records, but the number increases significantly when the deaths inside heavily Ukrainian-populated Kuban are included. According to the decision of Kyiv Appellation Court, the demographic losses due to the famine amounted to 10 million, with 3.9 million famine deaths, and a 6.1 million birth deficit.

During the Holodomor, the greatest number of deaths occurred in the villages; people residing in the cities had more access to food. This was a feature, not a bug—the purpose of the Holodomor was to starve the rural population into the acceptance of collectivization. Soviet functionaries removed all the grain, even seed grain set aside for future crops from the villages. Villagers were stuck in their villages, and were not allowed to travel to cities or to other parts of the Soviet Union.

The Holodomor is directly responsible for many of the political and linguistic divisions now causing problems in Ukraine. The areas which had huge population die-offs, in Eastern Ukraine and the Donbas, were resettled by the Soviets with ethnic Russians (who hadn't been affected by the "famine".)

¹³⁷ In the early post-Soviet era, many factories were short of money, and would either not pay workers for years at a time, or pay them in goods. This may have been why she always gave me these big bottles of vodka.



It is Uncle Vasyl we come to visit. I come every year, with some of my Kyiv relatives, and others meet us there for a family reunion. This year I was late, coming not in summer, but in mid-September, so fewer¹³⁸ of our group could make it. We still had a good time, despite the rain. Tyotyia Tanya and her daughter-in-law¹³⁹, Valia, prepared a wonderful meal¹⁴⁰, and we talked, drank and looked at photos, and reminisced. It was too rainy outside to make a trip to Bohuslavka, to Vasyl's plot in the family village, and gather potatoes, and to visit Tyotyia Lida's grave in the family cemetery there. But we did drink to her, and to all our absent family members. And then we drove back to Kyiv and, early the next morning, I flew home.

UP NORTH

In October, I felt a strong need to see some fall colors, and to visit some old friends, so I made a quick jaunt Up North¹⁴¹. Summer had been quite wet and cool, and autumn came very late. Things stayed green well into October, so I loaded up the Escape and took to the road. I drove to Grand Rapids, where I had lunch with Jan Klemp, and we visited the Blandford Nature Center. It is just a sort jaunt from her house, and has trails through the forest and past enclosures with rehabilitated raptors and owls. While we had a nice time, there were no fall colors here, either. I drove further north, to the pinkie of Michigan's mitten. There, just south of Traverse City, I hiked out to the the High Rollaways (photo right), where a viewing area looks out over an oxbow in the Manistee River. When the fall colors are at their peak, is a gorgeous sight. Normally I would have stayed and enjoyed the view, soaking in the serenity of a warm autumn afternoon. However, as a large group of small, noisy children were sharing the overlook with me, serenity was nowhere in evidence.



I continued up to Arbutus Lake, to my friends Gary and Mary Anne Hansen. I hadn't seen them in several years, as they seemed to be

¹³⁸ Coming to Zoltonosha from Zaporizhia or Donetsk is not a simple weekend trip. Travel within Ukraine is slow and tedious. Lesia and Serhiy come from Zaporizhia with their sons every summer to visit Tyotyia Tanya in Cherkasy, and to spend time with Uncle Vasyl in Zolotonosha. But it was already September, time to go back to work and school.

My cousin Olya tries to come once a year to see her sister Tamara in Kyiv, and usually times it so she can see me, too. But this year she had come in May to see my Uncle Mike and his family, who were visiting Ukraine as a group, and couldn't get away a second time. Similarly, our cousins from Rivne oblast used to come regularly, but Valia is having problems with back pain, and can't travel much. Her two young sons, who usually come, were in school.

¹³⁹ Serhiy, Tanya's son, had finally tied the knot officially. Inna has been nagging her cousin about this for many, many years, so she was quite pleased. He brought the wedding photos to share with us. They had a traditional civil ceremony in Cherkasy, with all their family present....including their son, Ivas', who is six, and who tells me he enjoyed the wedding very much.

¹⁴⁰ Valia is a really great cook, and creates absolutely delicious Ukrainian dishes. Inna dreams all year of the cherry varenyky (right), but the savory ones were wonderful, too. Both types were large and puffy, in left bank style, and steamed, not boiled. There was chicken, pork and fish, as well as a liver torte; lots of potatoes, tomatoes both fresh and pickled, zucchini and eggplant, and mushrooms. There were apples, pears and plums, fresh from the garden. And then there were her nalysnyky—crepes with sweet cheese and poppy seeds (left).



There was much to drink, too, from wonderful home-made compotes to samohonka (Ukrainian moonshine), as well as a bit of store bought stuff. And we had a rainy afternoon to enjoy it all, and to toast all of our friends and family, both present and absent. Na zodrovyia!



¹⁴¹ In Michigan, Up North is universally understood to mean those parts of Michigan north of the more industrial (and populated) areas of Grand Rapids–Lansing–Detroit–Saginaw. It is where Michiganders go for weekends away or summer vacations. It is those places in Michigan that out-of-staters come to see. Michigan's two peninsulas have as long a coastline as the entire eastern seaboard, and the glaciers left a terrain dotted with rivers, streams, ponds and lakes. You are never more than two miles away from a lake or stream in Michigan. For me, right now, it is about 100 feet.



traveling even more than me, and not just fishing trips to Alaska. We sat down by the lake until it got dark, cold and rainy, and then went to a redneck bar for cheeseburgers and beer. A perfect Michigan evening.

(Left: Mary Anne and Gary Hansen)

The following day I did a bit of sightseeing in the Leelenau peninsula, hiking out to the lighthouse, buying heirloom apples, visiting a cidery¹⁴², and searching out scenic bays and coves. After lunch in Fishtown, I bought smoked fish for my parents, and then I headed back inland and, eventually, home.

NEW YORK & CONNECTICUT

When I had visited my friend and fellow pysankarka Tanya Osadca (below, right) last year, I had fallen in love with her pysanka cabinets. They were antique glass-fronted embroidery floss cabinets which had been adapted, with paper dividers, to accommodate a

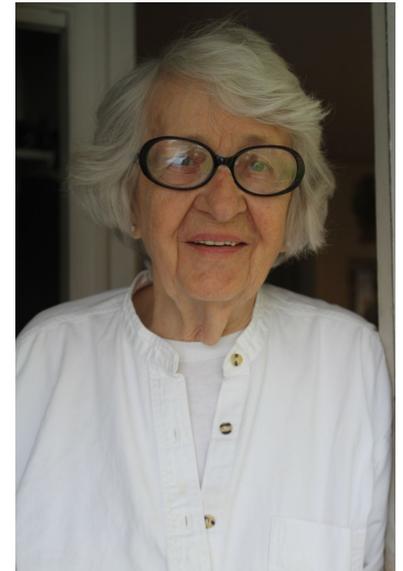
large number of pysanky. I had tried to find some for myself, but had no luck. When, in 2013, Tanya decided to retire from active pysankarstvo, and offered to sell me the cabinets, I jumped at the chance to own them. We considered many ways of getting them from her to me but, in the end, I realized I would have to drive to Connecticut. And, in late October, I did.



The weather was nice, and there were still bits of colorful foliage here and there along the route. I took the short way going out, through Canada, and stopped overnight in Little Falls, where I spent the night with my mom's childhood friend¹⁴³, Pani Krywka. It was Sunday, and she had visitors from Syracuse, Zoryana, a relative of ours and immigrant from Ukraine, and her daughter Vera¹⁴⁴ (left). I hadn't met them before, so we got to know each other.

The next day I left, bright and early, for Connecticut, driving through pleasant hills and several larger cities. When I had left that morning, my car had been working normally; when I arrived, my cargo lift gate refused to open. This was a problem, because I had driven 700 miles to pick up and load furniture. Neither the local mechanic nor the Ford dealership could help us in a timely fashion. Luckily, by moving the seats all the way forward, and loosening the door, we were able to load all three cabinets into the vehicle, through the rear passenger door, albeit with difficulty. They fit perfectly; my measurements had been right. We then had a lovely evening together, talking about life, family and pysanky.

The next day I returned to Little Falls: Pani Krywka



¹⁴² Cider, the alcoholic kind, not apple juice, is becoming much more popular in the USA. Unfortunately, it is becoming popular in the hipster kind of way, rather than the relatively inexpensive and available everywhere kind of way you have in other English speaking countries. In England or Australia, I love a half of dry cider in the pub/hotel.

This cidery was nice, but the only options it offered were drinking on site, which is great if you're not driving (which you have to in order to get to it way far out in the country) or buying a bottle. But they only have huge bottles, wine sized for the expensive stuff, and really big jugs for the regular stuff. Fine for a party, but not for individual consumption. So I had a sample and drove on.

¹⁴³ Pani Krywka, Alexandra to her friends, and my mother know each other from their village in Ukraine. Alexandra was a bit older than my mom, but a relative of sorts. They grew up together, both in Ukraine, and in the labor and DP camps in Germany. They only separated when they came to the US, but have stayed in close touch for their 54 years here.

¹⁴⁴ Vera is a sweet girl and budding pysankarka. She showed me some of her work, and I showed her mine. I also gave her a copy of Vira Manko's book to inspire her.



and I ran errands, visited cemeteries¹⁴⁵, shopped for Halloween candy and German raisin bread, and went to the Co-op and the Amish¹⁴⁶ shop (pickles, baskets, aprons and a bonnet for Fuzz). She fed me well, and we chatted for hours, about our families and their travails. And the next day I drove home, through miserable weather, and through the US. I had always wondered what the American route would look like; my mother had assured me it was scenic. She was wrong.

And when I got home, the liftgate opened. Once. But it worked just long enough to get the cabinets out, and that's all that mattered. Getting them into the car through a narrow door was bad enough.....getting them out again would have been horrible!

I've been home since that quick jaunt out east. I've been working, writing pysanky (mostly the designs I collected this summer in Lutsk), and finally got my collection of some 1800+ pysanky¹⁴⁷ put away into my new cabinets¹⁴⁸. You'd think I'd have had plenty of time to write this letter.....and you'd be wrong. And I still have some 11,600 photos from camp to sort through, edit, burn to disk and mail to my fellow camp participants. And a Christmas tree to take down. It will be a busy winter.



My plans for the new year are still in flux. I will have surgery on my right hand—DeQuervain's tenosynovitis—in February. I plan to go Chicago, to see Jamie, in the early spring, back to the UP in May, and to Ukraine this summer (God and Yanukovych willing). And, with luck, Australia in the autumn, New York in June, and Grand Rapids whenever (perhaps for ArtPrize).

It will be a busy year. I wish for you, and for all of us, peace, joy and happiness in 2014. Keep in touch!

¹⁴⁵ My Petrusha grandmother is buried in a Russian orthodox monastery cemetery near Herkimer, just down the road from Little Falls. My Uncle Mike had come out earlier this year to clean the grave, change the wreath, and have the monks perform a short prayer service at the grave. A tool-and-die man, Uncle Mike had created a metal apparatus that not only keeps a wreath on the tombstone, but makes it impossible to remove. This frustrates the monks, who don't allow wreaths. I merely paid my respects.

We also paid our respects to other Ukrainians in the cemetery; many of them had no families, and had left their fortunes to the Russian church on their death, assuming their graves would be well taken care of. They weren't; the cheap wooden crosses were falling apart, and weeds grew in profusion. The Russian monks had found better use for that money.

We also visited the Ukrainian cemetery in town, where Pani Krywka's husband Mykola is buried. There used to be a large Ukrainian community in the Little Falls area, back after WWII, when the factories were open and working. Now the factories have closed, the old folks are dying out, and the young folks have moved on.

¹⁴⁶ There is a large Amish community in the Little Falls area, and both the Co-op and Amish shop sell their baskets. I love them; they are simple, handcrafted, and unadorned except for bands of colored wood. Helen Krywka had introduced me to them several years ago, and I've got quite a collection now, including those I bought at the farmers' market in Viroqua, Wisconsin.

¹⁴⁷ I still do not know how many pysanky I have. There are two baskets of purchased Ukrainian pysanky in my music room, as well as an china cabinet full of eggs, including pysanky, that I've collected in my travels around the world. Most of mine are now in the new cabinets.

The larger cabinet can hold up to 960 pysanky, while the two smaller ones can hold up to 720 each (right). Some of my pysanky were written on extra large eggs, and those require a bit of extra space, so I lose a compartment here and there. Still, there aren't many empty spaces left in any of the cabinets.....

The cabinets are beautiful; each drawer is glass-fronted, and there are wooden dividers in place. They are delightful to look at.

¹⁴⁸ I had to create new paper dividers for one of the cabinets, from 16 inch lengths of watercolor paper. Unfortunately, my paper cutter only handles up to 15 inch long paper. So I spent a lot of time at Kinkos....I plan to bring them cookies the next time I visit. Once I had the cabinets ready, I had to make small labels for all the eggs, so they would fit into the compartments under the pysanky and keep them organized.

Shown here are pysanky from the Cherkasy region; each drawer can hold 60 of these pysanky.

