

## CHAPTER I – 1991A

### Zdrastvooyt^eh !

To all of our friends and relatives at home and in various places abroad. As much as I would prefer to send completely hand written letters to all, practicality has set in and realizing that there are several interesting experiences and facts regarding our new environment that we wish to share with everyone, I've decided to write a general letter of information and enclose it with our next correspondence to each of you. Besides, my dear and efficient moozh (that's Russian for hubby) has been standing ready to lead me into the realm of the P.C.----so here goes.

Well, as you can see, here we are safe and sound and adjusting with enthusiasm to our new home. We've been here for two months now and have run the gamut of nearly every emotion we know how to express---and then some. All in all, I would say that our days are predictably unpredictable and always interesting if one keeps an open mind. Things never occur as planned or on time and everything is subject to change. The local phone system is unreliable and since most folks don't have a phone anyway, we never know when company may arrive. We are delighted to report that our finished residence is much larger and nicer than we had anticipated. We have nearly every modern appliance that we enjoyed at home in the States, however, as we've discovered from experience, if something doesn't function for one reason or another, one does not simply pick up the phone to call a repairman. It is a great deal more complicated, since most of our belongings were shipped from other countries. The renovation completed in our apartment by the Danes is lovely and unique. The walls are covered with a corrugated paper material that is painted to color preference. The ceilings are unfinished knotty pine panels that I particularly enjoy as they put me in mind of the cottages in northern Michigan. We are also pleased with the results of our own efforts in planning, purchasing and shipping all of our furnishings, equipment, supplies and etc. Careful planning paid off and we are seldom heard to say..." I wish we had remembered".

For those who would like a quick tour of our living quarters...follow me. Our apartments are on the fifth floor of what is actually a hotel of sorts, although it is not really discernible from the many other apartment buildings in the area. There is constant activity and a security doorman. There is also a double elevator which is operative... most of the time. After entering our main door, there is a three room (+ bath ) to the left designated for Leo's offices and a two room (+ kitchen and bath ) area to the right which is the guest quarters and awaits your visit. Straight ahead another main door leads into a large, very bright and colorful hallway which Kyra claims for her playhouse, climbing equipment, car, toys and such. At the end of the hall is a double security door which opens to a glassed in area leading to a fire escape. We keep the outside doors locked but by opening the inside doors, can enjoy the sunshine and extra light through the day. The area to the left in our residence includes a mirrored dining room with a window open to a small kitchen. A smaller window on the opposite side of the kitchen opens to a cozy family room and library where we can enjoy tapes from home, write letters or just relax in matching recliner rockers. There is also a storage/workout room where most of our supplies are kept and we can watch ourselves working off the pounds in another mirrored wall. This area is Leo's favorite as it also houses his very own bathroom—completely uncluttered by feminine articles and, most importantly, always available!!

To the right of the large hallway is a living room where we can also watch videos and view the two available T.V. channels and English cable Super station. Kyra is happy to see Kermit the frog and her Sesame Street friends speaking Russian in specials and we see Russian Disney every Sunday eve. Although we didn't have the cable channel at the time, we were able to witness fairly adequate

coverage of the recent events in Moscow. To continue with our tour, a large laundry room and very large freezer are also located on this side as well as our bedroom and Kyra's room where—if you were to visit—she would probably show off her “big girl” bed, complete with Sesame Street and Little Mermaid bedding and her collection of favorite books. Kyra and I share an appropriately cluttered feminine bath on this side as well. There are a total of three walkout balconies which we will soon have enclosed for safety reasons and will then feel more comfortable using. Blinds cover all of the windows and so far we have not missed the absence of draperies. To glance out of any window at night, one might for a moment imagine themselves in New York or an apartmented area of any American city... but hardly so during the day.

We are located in what is referred to as New Town and certainly appears as such. There is constant construction underway in every direction and this encouraging progress (in three work shifts) is the view that we enjoy from every window. Most of the new buildings are apartments, long spoken for by families now sharing dwellings with other family members and their families. Along with food distribution, housing is one of the largest problems now being addressed in the Soviet Union. We are indeed living like royalty, comparatively speaking.

The twenty-five year young city of Togliatti, itself was constructed on the site of the old Russian town of Stavropol-on-the-Volga. It is located about 600 miles S.E. of Moscow on the Volga River and named for the longtime Italian Communist Party secretary Palmiro Togliatti as an honor to the Italian Fiat company contracted to build the giant automotive plant here. It is the home of a large hydro-electric power station as well as many other factories and industrial organizations, but by far the most important is the Volga Automotive Works (VAZ) which is responsible for the majority of autos (the Lada ) produced in the Soviet Union. The Zhiguli Mountains border on the east and the area is very green, similar in climate to Montreal, Canada and felt by the Russians to be one of the more healthy regions since a constant mild breeze cleanses the area and pollution is more controlled. There are in fact many camping areas for children and “health” camps along the Volga where one can go to reap the benefits of healthy “natural” living. In these areas car travel is restricted and only bicycles allowed. Much of the region is heavily wooded and in terms of landscape, might put one in mind of the foliage in northern Michigan, but the lack of tender loving care (lawn mowers, flowers, shrubs and etc.) can be an unfamiliar and offensive sight until adjusted to. The population is very young, average age being in the low 30s.

The reason that we are here, incidentally, is that VAZ has contracted G.M. to assist them in incorporating fuel injection into the manufacture of the Lada. In 1992 there will be new and stricter laws in Europe governing emission controls and VAZ must adapt. The Russians are also very interested in pollution control and environmental problems. We have learned from experience, as a matter of fact, that if one sits in a standing auto with the motor running it will not be long before a concerned—sometimes irate - citizen taps at the window with a reminder to turn off the engine.

Very low on the list of priorities here appears to be the planning, building and maintenance of the travelways. Construction, uncovered manholes, flooded areas and huge potholes dot the roadways which are unlined and unmarked in most places.

Traffic in what usually designates the center lane appears to flow in both directions---often at the same time. To complicate matters, lighting is very poor at night and hitchhiking is the order of the day (or night) as busses are grossly overcrowded and most Russians don't own cars of their own. Those who do may be found at times playing taxi for a few extra roubles. All of this was brought to our attention one evening as our first house guests, a lovely well dressed young couple we had met on a previous trip and their two young children of 2 and 4 years prepared to leave. Assuming that they had driven or been delivered to our door by family, we were shocked to learn that they had hitched a ride for the ten mile drive from the apartment they shared with her parents and planned to return that

way. It was not uncommon they assured us, but as we drove them home we became painfully aware of yet another of the many day to day obstacles the average Russian faces just to function. There is so much room for improvement here and most, although they seem to show a great deal of patience, are anxious for it.

As to the Russian people, they are very similar to Americans in some respects and very different in others. Most are very well read, aware and intensely interested in the changes taking place in their country...as was apparent in the recent coup attempt. Although most are anxious for positive changes, they need direction and lack the knowledge and incentive it will take. After years of literally being taken care of by the government, they lack the initiative and understanding even though the will is there. They are used to getting by in the manner that they are accustomed to and like most of us, are wary of change when the new is unknown. They are very warm and caring people, very family oriented and children are often the center of attention. I have been showered with gifts of apples, plums, grapes, tomatoes, various sauces, jams and preserves...some complete with instructions. For example, we were warned not to go outside after eating a particularly delicious raspberry jam as it is good for "opening the respiratory tract". Another is a medicinal cure-all which I am sure has-all! It must contain every berry and herb grown here, and tastes it too. We've been busy filling the fore mentioned freezer for the winter, and so I was very pleased when one afternoon I was descended upon by three lovely ladies: two Luda's (short for Ludmilla) and the daughter of one, Tanya. They spent the entire afternoon and evening instructing me in the preparation of pelmeni and the canning of plum compote. Pelmeni, for those who have not had the distinct culinary pleasure, are addictively tasty little Russian dumplings which take literally hours to prepare but worth every minute (according to Mr. K.). They are delicious! They are filled with ground lamb, beef, pork, onions and seasonings, frozen and cooked in broth just before eating. I can promise you that there will be some on the table for you to enjoy during your visit! Compote, for those who are curious, is a drink made by filling large gallon jars 1/3 full of fruit and then adding boiling sweetened water to the top before sealing. After standing for a while it forms a nice juice and one may also eat the fruit.

Also in the interest of filling our freezer, we have made several trips to the market. There are two markets. One is in Old Town and one in New Town. Here, the local farmers are allowed to sell their wares to the local residents at competitive prices. What is left is then bought up by restaurants, schools and etc.

On a weekend when the weather is nice one might well compare the market area to a crowded fair grounds. Rows and rows of stands on the inside and outside of a large building are occupied by merchants of all kinds selling various vegetables, a few fruits, meats and miscellaneous goods. Outside you can also find rows of individuals standing and displaying the items that they have come to sell. There are clothes, a few pairs of shoes (there is a real shortage), cats, dogs, birds, fish and any number of miscellaneous items.

There is hot Shashlik (a shish-ka-bob), local custard and a few other snacks that the locals are wary of since one isn't sure of their preparation. It's a very colorful place where almost anything and almost anyone can be found. Kyra enjoys sitting on Papas shoulders as we walk here. It is safer and of course with Leo's height, they are never out of sight! Most food items are sold by roubles per kilo and each seller has his or her own scale. The buyer must provide a container. Luckily we came prepared with plastic bags and I've joined the others in making a habit of washing, drying and reusing them due to a shortage. (Not a bad idea ecologically, either). Buying meat is an especially interesting experience. One does not purchase a cut\_\_\_it's a chunk. Further preparation - grinding, chopping, trimming and etc. takes place at home. Although it is not the most appetizing method of buying dinner, we've found the meats (and vegetables for that matter) to be exceptionally good.....probably because they are fresh and lack any preservatives. The price is right too, since \$1.00 is now equal to

about 30 roubles, a move made by the government not too long ago to stabilize the market. For the Russian people, however, the buying power of the rouble is decreasing and their wages have not increased to compensate. To us the cost is minimal, but to the average Russian, exorbitant. We are also able to buy milk, cheese, sour cream, bread and various other items from a couple of private restaurants in the area with whom we have made special arrangements. This is especially handy since the average Russian must stand in line daily for most of these items...frequently separately.

In an effort to settle in and create a pattern of normality in our daily lives, we are each pursuing our own interests. Leo spends hours daily in his office devoted to this new venture and keeping the lines of communication open. Kyra and I walk a couple of blocks two mornings a week to a "kindergarten" where she is enrolled. It is a large fenced-in area where a red brick building houses several offices and playrooms. Each has a teacher and nanny and although some classes may have up to 20 or so children, Kyra's class has only 5-10 depending upon the day. There are designated play areas outside for each class (Russians believe in enjoying lots of fresh air) where a covered play area contains a large sand box, wooden car, playhouse, play platform and etc. We enjoy the outdoors even when the weather is much less than ideal. A long walk - parade style - is usually included in the activities. A long nap for Kyra is also usually on the agenda upon returning home on school days! The staff is very proud of the fact that all of the decorations, toys, children furniture, small beds and etc. are hand made (most of it by them) and although it is not state of the art, they have every reason to be proud. The handwork, painting, craftsmanship and unique display design is lovely. We were very pleasantly surprised! Actually, the kindergarten is a day care and most of the kids arrive at 8:00 a.m. and leave at 6:00 p.m. or so. Kyra spends only the A.M. with them which includes lunch. Mom stays as well since language is still somewhat of a barrier, and everyone feels more comfortable that way.

I am still entertaining thoughts of introducing the concept of Nursery Co-op on a small scale somewhere down the road. On the way to and from school we pass many school children walking arm in arm and carrying brief cases and school bags. Common uniform for the girls is long sleeve black full dresses with white cuffs, stockings, pinafores and large net pom pom bows on top of their heads. Many also have a long braid down their back in typical Russian style. They are really cute! The boys wear navy uniforms and jackets with silver buttoned lapels and look very studious. There is a definite stress here on uniformity in keeping with the socialist mentality. Class time, even in the kindergarten, is very structured and children are encouraged to do everything together. Most even seem uncomfortable at times doing something other than what the group is doing. It's amazing to me - given the short attention span of most two year olds - that the teacher is able to accomplish this.

I'm sure that she must be exhausted at the end of each long day!

As I mentioned before, driving in Togliatti - or for that matter anywhere in Russia - is not for the faint-hearted and can be hazardous to the health and so, for this reason as well as convenience, we have a driver who takes care of our transportation to most places. We have an Astro Van which affords us an air of comfortable familiarity (we've owned three previously) but which at the same time draws long stares while driving and big crowds while parked. Young boys of 8 to 12 or so are particularly curious and have lots of questions. Leo also has a small Lada provided for him for work.

Our driver is a very nice gentleman in his sixties who has become our friend as well. His name is Nicolai and he, like most of the folks we've encountered here, seem to go out of their way to see to our happiness. We have particularly fond memories of a beautiful, warm and sunny Sunday a few weeks ago when Nicolai invited us to his "datcha" for the day. The drive was about 1-½ hours and took us to the rolling countryside beside of a part of the winding Volga. The land was given to the village people some time back, it seems, and it was covered with rock, brush and trees. They divided it into small plots, cleared it and built small cottages by hand with whatever materials they could find.

The plots of land are now thick with plum, apple and pear trees and every inch of the rich soil is utilized in the harvest of vegetables of all kinds. Here they spend every weekend (much as we would at a cottage) enjoying nature and working for their harvest. Nicolai's dacha has running water, a kitchen with cooking facilities and two bedrooms and he is very proud of it. He is in the process of finishing an upstairs room. The Volga is about ½ a mile away---via a very winding, sometimes steep and rocky pathway. The view is beautiful and we felt in great shape after completing the climb down and back. We were joined by Nicolai's daughter (who is now teaching in Germany for 6 months), his son-in-law and also his daughter-in-law (his son died suddenly in a hospital two years ago) and her two young children, Nastia (Anastasia)- 11, and Serosa (Sergei)- 2 ½. Needless to say, Kyra was entertained all day and Nastia as it turned out was a great help to me and found it great fun to "trade" words. She would give me a "tomato" ---I would then return a "pahmeedor". Like most Russian children, she is very anxious to learn English and Nicoli tells me that she is practicing some special English songs to sing to me. A highlight of our day at the dacha was a wonderful meal prepared by the entire family. Nicoli cooked his famous shash-lik on an open fire and there were boiled potatoes, fresh vegetables, freshly baked bread and watermelon and cake for dessert.

Later on the way home we passed through a village where old women (often with their cows beside them) were positioned

along the roadside. One could stop and exchange an empty gallon jar for a full one of fresh, still steaming milk. The milk needed to be boiled before drinking, but was quite creamy and good. The next few days were spent in canning and freezing the buckets of plums, apples and etc. that we had helped to pick on that delightful day.

We have made quite a few friends while here. One is a very nice young man named Urey and his wife Marina. When we first met Urey he was alone with his oldest daughter, Nastia- 9, while his wife and youngest daughter, Irena-6, were visiting relatives in Siberia (a five day train ride one way). He and Nastia spent a couple of enjoyable days with us and the entire family joined us for dinner shortly after Marina's return. Kyra thinks the girls are great and fun wishes that they'd come more often. Leo and I, of course, celebrated our mutual birthday on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> and especially missed friends and relatives at home on that day. Urey was very thoughtful and touched both of us by stopping by with roses for me and a book for Leo.

We've also made friends with a young couple who speak English well. Seppo, a good-looking blonde Finn is here working on a building project and Tanya (a Russian) is a very lovely and vibrant gal whose company we enjoy. We recently accompanied them to a private preview (arranged by Tanya) of a new Chinese/ Russian gourmet restaurant and club. It was very unique, a culinary delight and we gave it four stars without hesitation.

The language barrier continues to be a problem for me though less and less so by the day. The week of concentrated "Russian" I had at Inlingua prior to our move provided great building blocks but now the actual construction must take place. I had my first real Russian conversation on the plane from Moscow to Togliatti during our initial move. I was carrying the family cat who was on a leash (the usual mode of travel for pets here) and standing in the aisle while waiting for my seat. A small girl petted the cat and her father asked, "Kak zavoot?" ("what is the name?"). "Koshka zavoot Dimmock" (Smokey), I replied, very pleased with myself! Then, of course, the barrage of questions followed--- Russians are very curious-----and much as I would love to have continued this lively conversation, I was literally at a loss for words. Unfortunately, this scene has been a familiar one and my desire and resolve to become more fluent in the Russian language is given a gentle nudge on a regular daily basis. To assist in this regard, we have enlisted the assistance of a lovely young lady in her twenties who works, attends school and now instructs me in Russian as well three nights a week for two hours each night. We are making great progress!

Our experiences here have been many and varied. One of the most enjoyable was a five-day trip last week by train to Moscow. We left at 6:00p.m. and spent the night on the train in a private sleeper which was quite comfortable. We packed a "picnic" dinner and tea was served. It was relaxing, cozy and warm and the fall color along the way was in peak. Hopefully, it was only the first of many rail adventures that we'll enjoy.

Moscow is BIG!!! A Russian New York City, it seems. We spent the time with some good friends (a prominent Soviet photographer and his wife) who visited us in the States a year or so ago. We did some minor sightseeing and some major shopping for special articles from home and abroad at two foreign joint venture food stores. Stockman is a Finnish firm and The Irish House is, obviously, an Irish/Russian joint venture. It has only been open for a month. Both are expensive - about twice as much as U.S. prices. We understand that there is also a new German firm which is larger and less expensive. We were lucky to find most of the items on our list and Nicolai made the drive to Moscow to carry home most of our purchases, including some precious ice cream and frozen veggies on ice. While we were in Moscow we enjoyed a nice dinner at a very elegant "American Style" restaurant. It is the first of very few privately owned enterprises and somewhat of an experiment since this sort of individual business was not permitted a short time ago. The food was good and the service excellent, though the company was the most fascinating of all. We dined with a young man named Jaime who is a reporter on assignment in Moscow from Brazil's largest newspaper. Needless to say, the stories of his experiences (especially during the coverage of the recent coup attempt) were mind-boggling. His charming young lady friend, Maya (isn't that a lovely name?), was equally interesting. Recently changing her major from astro-physics to biophysics and chemistry, she is completing post grad work on her Doctorate. Both spoke English well and seemed just as curious about us as we were about them.

In terms of economic strides here in Togliatti, there is so much happening that it is nearly impossible to keep track of. A young man we know is trying to organize a market for travel tours, another, a market for selling and exporting Russian art.

Still another, a Russian State Senator who we have become friends with, is in the process of organizing a very large international business seminar here to make companies based in other countries aware of the opportunities and needs here. Everyone wants to get involved in one thing or another and it's exciting to watch!

Well, that brings you up to date on the life and times of the Kalageorgis as of late.

If you've made it all the way to this point (God bless you), I would like to share one more experience briefly. Although there have been daily trials and tribulations, for the most part our stay here has had a positive focus. The one exception was the attempted coup in August, barely two weeks after our arrival. It was indeed a frightening experience although I don't feel that we were at any time in immediate danger. Fear of the unknown can be very powerful and for a short time what would come next was anyone's guess. I can honestly say that our biggest concerns came from knowing that there were many who were worried about our welfare and well-being. Our satellite phone helped a great deal after the dust cleared. Even with all of the concern, I must say that it is exciting to be in the midst of such historic changes. We watched with great pleasure and reassurance (as I'm sure you did, too) while the masses of patriotic Russians gathered in non-violent but defiant protest against the threat to their newly adopted democratic principals ---- and the good guys won!---How thrilling!

In retrospect we'd like to thank you for all of your positive thoughts of concern, both verbal and non. We felt them all and feel very cared about! Keep them coming....letters would be appreciated, also!! Our courier system delivers every Thursday and we promise to answer all letters we receive. Our address is:

Leo and Beverly Kalageorgi  
c/o GMOC - Togliatti, USSR  
G.M. Bldg, Room 3-220  
Detroit, Michigan 48202, USA

Our satellite phone is quite expensive, but we can be reached if necessary at: 011-873-140-2154.

Remember, we are 8-11 hours ahead of U.S. time. The apartment is fairly large so please let it ring at least 12 rings as we may be at the other end.

We will be here with the exception of one week in early November when we are looking forward to our first R&R to Zurich, Switzerland ( probably food for another entire letter ).

We love and miss you all and are anxiously awaiting your letter - or visit!

Big hugs from all of us-

Do svidaniya .....

Love,

Leo, Bev. and Kyra

P.S. As much as we would love to continue bombarding you with photos to ensure that you remember how we look, share some of the sights with you and most of all to show you how big our little girl has become (she now wears her hair on top of her head occasionally and thinks she is most beautiful. We agree!),the problem that we face here is two-fold. First, the sight of a foreign photographer here still arouses a certain amount of suspicious anxiety in some.

Secondly, the only film developing company in town ( there was one, we understand ) ran out of chemicals...a year ago. Obviously others list of priorities differ greatly from that of the Kalageorgis. At any rate, film must be sent to the States for development and then again for copies--- so please be patient. We have high hopes that there will be many improvements here and we will be able to continue enjoying and sharing our favorite hobby—albeit in moderation.

## CHAPTER II - 1991 B

PREE-VYET, dear friends and relatives (Hi!) KAK PA-ZHI-VAI-ETHEY? (How are you?)

We hope that the answer is O-CHEN HOR-AH-SHO! ("Very well" or "good!").

Beginning with a sincere hope that all of you enjoyed a great Holiday Season and sending you our wish for everything wonderful in 1992! Can't believe that it has been only 5 months since my first attempt to tell you a "little" about our life here. So much has happened that it seems a much longer time.

We are delighted to have received so much correspondence—especially at Christmastime. It is wonderful to know that we have so many caring friends and family members who are concerned about our life and well-being, and that there is so much interest in the current Russian state of affairs. Receiving our mail has become a weekly highlight of our life here. We look forward with great anticipation to the arrival of our mail person who makes a special weekly overnight trip by plane from Moscow for the sole purpose of delivering our mail and picking up any we wish to send. On "mail day" we drop whatever we are doing, grab a cup of coffee and read everything aloud to one another. Even the bills! It's amazing how one misses even the little things! We never thought, for example, that we would get teary-eyed while reading the Sunday comic section of the News, but that is exactly what happened when one of our very thoughtful friends sent us a copy. We read and enjoy every letter, message and note—and, of course, photographs are an especially welcome bonus!

As you are probably aware, we are sending this letter from the Russian Republic of the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.) since the U.S.S.R. is now something to be found only in history books. We believe, as many here do, that the recent changes are for the best in the long run, and a positive step toward the goal of a productive Democracy. I won't attempt to describe in any detail the innumerable changes taking place internally. You are surely aware of their magnitude if you glance at any magazine stand, read headlines, listen to the radio or catch any T.V. news broadcast. Suffice to say that the changes are monumental, historic, rapid, continuous and seemingly never-ending. It seems a jig-saw puzzle of immense proportions and complexity that cannot be pieced together quickly enough for the benefit of the people in this region. Met by daily frustration, anger and despair, and rewarded only by the encouragement of occasionally discovering the "missing piece" that appears to fit the right description, they are tediously and methodically constructing a picture that they hope will someday reflect their mental image of the "good life". Though there is much controversy as to how to go about it, all agree that with the pieces in place, the completed picture will be one of a shining Democratic society where business flourishes, everyone is fed, working, healthy and well educated, there are opportunities for all who seek them and peace reigns worldwide. The picture that they envision is a much larger and complicated one than they can imagine, as we Americans are so profoundly aware. Some of the pieces just never seem to fit and parts of the puzzle must be reconstructed continually. We all agree, however, that our vision of the completed work is a dazzling one and worth every ounce of effort. But-----where to begin?? We feel that more than any other factor involved, knowledge of what business is and how to do it is basic and essential to these people, most of whom were raised to believe that doing "business" was not wanted, needed or even, in fact, desirable or respectable. We are therefore enjoying involvement in a number of exciting new programs and propositions to assist the Russians in learning to assist themselves. Leo has been asked to become an "Adviser" on the Mayor's Board for planning "Inter-Volga '92" a Business Seminar to be held here in Togliatti in late May of this year. Its purpose is to encourage foreign interest in this area associated with car dealerships, tourism, chemical industry, road construction, hotels and related issues. I have re-established contact with the Medical Community by meeting with the Chief Physician of the large medical complex here comprised of over 4000 medical

personnel. We will be working on developing exchange programs aimed at introducing western expertise in nursing. The prospect is exciting and has many possibilities. We are also assisting in the proposed development of a Russian/American business school and exchange program which we feel will benefit the entire scene. In addition, we have many other projects that we advise on and attempt to assist with daily. It is not an uncommon occasion for someone to arrive at our door unannounced to ask our opinion of an idea they have or just to talk. We love it--as communication is the reason we are here. Unfortunately, nothing happens quickly in Russia and talking and doing are two very different things. Many ideas, though, have taken form and our hopes are high for the prospect of a flourishing business world in Togliatti. Shortly after writing "Chapter I", we were descended upon by the largest group to visit us to date. We welcomed 25 in all- from various G.M. groups- all concerned with different areas of development in this venture. It was exciting! There is always a lot of preparation when visitors are expected. Flights, tours, meals, hotels, transportation, entertainment and business meetings must be arranged but we are always more than happy to greet English-speaking folks. The bonus is that they come bearing goodies from home that we request or can't get here. There is always a special dinner at the Chinese/Russian Club and also, time permitting, an evening or two of special programs (folk dancing, theatre, etc.). "Popcorn night" at the Kalageorgis is a highlight. We visit, take photos and hear all of the news and gossip from home! During this particular visit, we also took a cruise on the Volga. We were served a nice lunch, viewed and photographed the beautiful scenery and beached for an hour or so to take a leisurely stroll through the greenery and birch trees. Everyone agreed that it was a unique and most enjoyable experience. They are a great bunch of people and we can see why, with people so congenial and hard working involved, this program is bound to be a great success.

After all of this excitement, we were more than ready for our first R. & R. to Switzerland. We took the train to Moscow. We have decided that train travel is the way to go here. It is cozy, relaxing, and warm and gives us time to collect our thoughts, read, play with Kyra and just enjoy each other's company. This particular trip had a new experience in store for us. We had purchased four tickets (for a four sleeper) instead of the two that we usually buy for a two-bed compartment. Our reasoning was that there would be a bed for each of us-(I usually sleep with Kyra)-and an extra for luggage. Although with four beds the area would be more crowded, the extra beds could be folded away during the day. Our Russian friends didn't like our plan. Four bed cars, they said, were less expensive and not considered "first class" - but they did not explain any more than that. Imagine our surprise when, after our departure, the officer in charge brought another passenger to share our car and make use of the extra bed!! Even though we had purchased the extra ticket, he explained, his orders were that all of the beds must be filled. He even brought his formal 'papers' to share with us. Arguing was to no avail and so we finally resigned to the inevitable in the belief that everything is for a reason and we would add this bit of information regarding the Russian system to our growing bank of knowledge. 'Alls well that ends well'- and as it turned out, the embarrassed young man who shared our journey was one of the new breed of promising and enthusiastic young Russian businessmen. He was traveling with his boss- a nice young man from Riga in the Baltics - who speaks some English and is developing his own company. They were on their way home and hadn't seen their families for months. We enjoyed their enthusiasm and company immensely, have kept in contact with them and wish them much success in their ventures!

On to some Rest and Relaxation! We spent one evening in Moscow at the beautiful and new Penta Hotel where we shared wonderful food and conversation with another G.M. employee and his lovely wife. Appointed to a special committee by President Bush, he had spent that week in conferences discussing future business possibilities between Russia and the U.S. He and Leo had worked together at the Hamtramck plant for years so there was a lot to talk about and it was a great evening. The next morning we flew to Zurich where we picked up our rental car at the airport and drove a few

miles to the Hotel Zurich, spent a wonderfully relaxing night in our luxurious room and began, after a hearty breakfast the next morning, on our Swiss adventure.

As we know from prior visits and photos, the scenery in Switzerland is some of the most beautiful anywhere and it was even lovelier wearing its brilliant colors of fall. Our cameras were put to good use! From Zurich we drove northwest to Bienne where we enjoyed a nice visit with Marc and Dori Girard and their family. Leo and Marc shared memories of their G.M.I. days together and then we drove up into the mountains where our hosts introduced us to their favorite view. We photographed the city and surrounding countryside from above - with the outline of the magnificent Alps barely visible in the background. It was breathtaking! Later we dined at a popular nearby restaurant called FLORIDA. The food was wonderful and Kyra was entertained by the many-feathered creatures swimming in the winding waterway surrounding us. 'Palm trees' swayed and it was certainly unique - something that we had never expected to see in Switzerland. The next day we made our way south toward the Alps to Geneve ... stopping along the way for many photos. We fought uncontrollable urges to run out into the lush, green terrain - arms spread wide - while singing "The hills are alive"...ala THE SOUND OF MUSIC! Even Kyra seemed to sense the mood and began singing her favorite nursery rhymes in her car seat. We spent three somewhat rainy days shopping in the city of Genève - mostly the window type. Things were incredibly expensive and we resolved to save most of our shopping list for the States, where, believe it or not, the American dollar can buy more than almost anywhere in Europe (Russia excluded). Lake Genève and its surrounding area were gorgeous and definitely a highlight of our vacation.

We spent a week in Switzerland, gathering photos, memories and some peace of mind but every rose has its thorns, so they say. We had read an article (Oct. 91 READERS DIGEST) about 'Needle Park' in Zurich where a few years ago some well-meaning citizens had opened one of the lovely park areas to those on drugs - supplying food, clean needles and offering emotional and physical assistance and guidance. Needless to say, the area soon grew in size and popularity and the problem is now one of uncontrolled, gigantic proportions. Toward the end of our stay, while strolling from our hotel along a lovely quiet walkway beside a stream to a large and exclusive shopping area and Metro, we wondered out loud just where Needle Park might be located. Seconds later we noticed a few young people gathered across the pond. We watched in stunned amazement while several stuck needles into various parts of their bodies without any regard what-so-ever for anyone watching. It was an eye opening experience and saddened both of us greatly. A second more attentive glance revealed a large pavilion, music and lots of activity. Hopefully the area will be restored to its citizens and tourists soon..and hopefully someday the world will find an effective solution to addressing drugs and drug related problems. Till then we will continue to enjoy occasional R. & R.s to gorgeous Switzerland and recommend it highly, but, like most tourists here, avoid this undesirable area.

Upon returning to Togliatti we were descended upon by two representatives of The FLINT JOURNAL (Flint is Togliatti's Sister City). They spent a week or so here - a good deal of the time with us - and were responsible for a wonderful ten-page special section entitled - T O G L I A T T I - which appeared in the paper on Dec. 29<sup>th</sup>. Carol, a lively, enthusiastic and intense young journalist also does free-lance writing for PEOPLE Magazine. Bruce is a very dedicated and capable photographer with a likable easy-going manner. They are both warm and caring people whose company we felt privileged to enjoy and whose article we felt even more privileged to be a part of! It was creative - yet humanistic and factual. This was their first Russian experience, and we were amused when talking to Carol via phone shortly after her return to Flint. Upon arriving back in the States the first thing she did, she confided to us, was to go to Meijer's and have "a religious experience". We understood completely!!!

During his stay at the only hotel in Old Town, Bruce became very excited when, passing through the lobby one day; he recognized Sebastian Salgado, and a world famous Brazilian photographer who

we later discovered was here working on his fourth book. He also photographs for LIFE, TIME and etc. This book will focus on the 'worker' which explains his appearance here to photograph VAZ employees in action. It was a special thrill for us to meet, have dinner with and photograph him!

Just before the holidays Leo was required to travel for a week on business to Russelsheim, Germany and Kyra and I had our first opportunity to 'fly solo'. The mercury took a sudden dip the next day. Our windows, it seemed, hadn't been properly winterized with weather stripping and the effect of the sometimes strong winds and sub-zero temperatures combined with Russian windows - none of which close completely - became uncomfortable to say the least! (The problem has since been resolved.) We also experienced power outages which affected the use of the space heaters we were as dependent upon as the breezes literally swept through our apartments. Although the heating system here is not affected by such losses of power, it is not nearly enough to combat the cold unless the windows are well sealed. (The term 'central heating' has taken on an entirely new meaning for us. The steam heat is produced at a special plant which is 'central' in Togliatti and delivered via underground pipes. It is also completely controlled at the plant so there is no way to turn it up or down.) One of the blackouts also affected our satellite phone system, so we were without communication for several days. Needless to say, we were very happy to see Papa!! He had some exciting moments, himself, we learned, when upon boarding the plane to Moscow from Germany he found that the rock group THE SCORPIONS was his traveling companions. He was amused to find that they were on their way to present Gorbachev with 100,000 D.M. of assistance....this was the very day that the new "Yeltsin Government" was announced. We agreed that although their intent was good, their timing couldn't have been much worse!

Christmas in Russia is officially only two years old. It has always been a religious holiday, but not openly recognized. Santa (Detmorose) and the Snow Princess (Snegruchka) arrive on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>. and bring fruit, nuts and candy plus occasional presents to the Russian children. It is all very new, but I'm sure that with the impending rise of the economy, it won't take long for commercialization to set in. In the meantime though, since we weren't able to participate in the hustle and bustle of the Holiday Season in the States, we decided to take a slow train to Copenhagen and spend the time with a very good friend and her family.

The train ride to Denmark and back was an experience in itself. We spent the second night with friends in Moscow to break the long four-day ride. There was a dining car of sorts available for a short time (after leaving Moscow and before entering Germany) where we enjoyed our only 'hot meal' in the company of a young comedian from Paris. He was delighted to find some English-speaking fellow travelers since neither he nor his wife spoke Russian and they were having some communication problems. Though he didn't appear to be feeling too humorous when we met, we did enjoy their company and promised to look them up sometime. On the third morning of our trip, we awoke to the sights and sounds of Berlin-an experience that we never thought we'd have. We encountered a situation there, as well, that we hadn't anticipated. It seems that the train tracks in Russia are much narrower than most (an intentional move made long ago for security reasons) and the entire train - car by car - had to be lifted and fitted with wider wheels for continued European travel. Early in the A.M. of the fourth day we awoke abruptly - missing the clickity-clack to which we had become accustomed. Gazing out of our sleeping car window, we were astonished to find that we were passengers on a LARGE ferry boat (train and all) and our question was answered as to how we would cross the body of water separating Denmark from Germany.

We arrived in Copenhagen rail station at 8 A.M. in the pouring rain. I volunteered to stay put and watch the gigantic mound of luggage while Leo - carrying Kyra - set off to find a cart or two. Although I was standing under a shelter of sorts, strong gusts of wind frequently brought the cold drizzle to my temporary haven and I knew that I would soon be drenched! Those of you, who know how concerned

I usually am about my hair, will appreciate my distress. Finally deciding that the large hood on my heavy down coat would serve well as a tent, I reached back and pulled it quickly over my head. Imagine my surprise (and dismay) as I realized too late that the open hood had been filling up with rain water as I waited! So---I arrived in Denmark in the disguise of a drowned rat.....not even recognized at first by our friend Gitte! Leo and Kyra found it rather amusing and I must admit, so did I ... later in the day.

Festivities in Denmark during the Christmas Holiday are similar to those in the United States, so Kyra was able to see a Tree, lights and Santa—who even made a surprise visit to Auntie Gitte's home! Kyra answered the door and it was very exciting for all of us. Of course we taped and photographed.

Christmas Eve was very special. We were invited to the home of Gitte's daughter where we joined her family in dining on roast duck and wonderful side dishes and shared a special traditional dessert in which there was a whole almond hidden. The person lucky enough to find it was rewarded with an extra present and I especially enjoyed the game ... since I won! Later in the evening we gathered around the lovely tree which was ablaze with candles, held hands and sang Danish Christmas carols. We did not understand most of the words, but the feeling of warm hospitality was unmistakable. It was a lovely Christmas which we will always remember! Even though we were unable to be with our immediate family members, we did manage to speak with all of them by telephone on Christmas Day and when it came time to wish Steve and Shanan a Merry Christmas, they surprised us with a verbal present that couldn't have pleased us more. We were informed that we will become Grandparents in August. How EXCITING!! They will make wonderful parents and we are really looking forward to adding this new dimension to our lives!

Our journey back to Russia was even more exciting! Upon arriving at the depot in Copenhagen late at night to begin our trip, we discovered that the Moscow bound car was nowhere to be found. Further investigation revealed that it probably needed repair and would meet us in Berlin. We located an empty passenger car and slept covered by coats on large comfortable seats designed for 6. After spending many anxious hours in Berlin the next morning we were "rescued" by an English speaking gentleman who directed us to still another station where our car would arrive. It took a while to move our luggage a few feet at a time, but after some major confusion and a few hours wait we were allowed to enter a sleeper---this time bound for Moscow! Although we will never know if it was the car for which we held tickets, the remainder of the trip was relaxing and quite comfortable ..... and at a cost of \$12.48 round trip for all three of us combined, it was certainly a bargain!! (The monetary state of affairs of this country is becoming more and more confusing by the day while it attempts to adjust itself. While our train tickets were unbelievably inexpensive, a 4-mile taxi ride in Moscow cost us \$50.00.)

We toasted the New Year en route to Moscow with hot tea provided by the train attendant and reflected upon the exciting year past and the promise of an even more exciting one ahead.

During the period before and after our "European Christmas Vacation" we did our best to make our Russian home reflect the holiday spirit. Our maid, Lydia Maxceemovna, a lovely lady who is in her 40s, surprised us with a small foil tree, cards and some small presents which I know she went to a great deal of trouble to find. (Kyra loves her and calls her BABOOLA. She has two granddaughters just Kyra's age who live close by and love to come to play. She is also our cat and house sitter when we are away and has become like one of the family!) Our Christmas cards were arranged in a large tree shape in the entrance hall and Kyra and I had a great time making Santa cookies which we brought to school. I made my traditional fruitcake --- something new for the Russians and a hit with everyone.

On the home front, I am delighted to report that I am making great strides toward my goal of becoming bilingual. My second teacher, Maria, who teaches English to MBA students and executives confided that she had never had the opportunity to speak with an English speaking person before meeting me .

Nevertheless, she was a very good teacher but, alas, had an extremely busy work schedule. I am more than thrilled with my third teacher, Irena, who works as an interpreter and secretary for an enterprising young entrepreneur who has his office here in our building. She also used to teach and translate at a military school nearby. Her English is very good and she has helped me immensely. I now visit the local market (Rinok) alone with our driver on weekend mornings and make my own purchases.

On Saturdays I spend two or three hours at the Rinok, which also includes what seems like miles of a huge flea market where individuals display on the ground or stand holding the items they wish to sell. Regardless of the weather - usually snow and often below zero - residents slip and slide on the icy ground while making the rounds and looking for bargains. Believe it or not, I enjoy it immensely! Leo stays home with Kyra and I can look to my heart's content—or until my feet freeze. First I make my purchases at the indoor market. I buy cabbages, carrots, potatoes, beets and whatever limited vegetables are available. Fruits are not as abundant during these winter months. I manage to purchase lots of mandarin oranges which are delicious and plentiful but expensive by Russian standards-50 roubles per kilogram. ( The exchange rate is now 120/\$1.) There are also apples, nuts, butter, sour cream, cheese, eggs, grapes, raisins and an array of herbs, spices and homemade preparations. Meat is sometimes as expensive as 140 roubles per kilo (2.5 lbs) but beef and pork appear to be plentiful and very fresh. Chickens are more expensive and not very plump - but lack any chemicals and are quite tasty. I am not allowed to return home, though, without some of Leo's favorite fruit in my bag. You and I recognize them by the name persimmons—but Leo calls them “Ka Ka” (a holdover, he says, from his childhood days in China). Personally, I think that he wants them all to himself and this is his Freudian attempt to discourage my appetite. It doesn't work—my nursing vocabulary and experiences have provided me with valuable fortitude.

Inside the tepee shaped building which is protected but not heated, there are also a multitude of exotic fish, mounds of their wiggling food, many small furry pet creatures and birds of various type, sizes and colors. Outdoors there is an area - my favorite - where owners stand with a variety of heads, tongues and wet noses poking out from under their warm coats. It is only recently that folks here have been allowed to own dogs and cats and it is a novel privilege that they take quite seriously. Most of the breeds are pure and beautiful. Collies, Afghans, German Shepherds, St. Bernards, Pinchers and many others can be seen walking their masters at any time of day. At the outdoor portion of the market I also admire and occasionally buy some of the beautifully knitted and crocheted items available in abundance. The prices are low, since to the Russians “hand-made” does not have the same connotation it does to most westerners. Most of the times they have to settle for these items, even though they would much rather have western machine-made things.

Prices here are rising quickly and the complaints of the people are warranted. Their wages cannot keep up and something will have to “give” soon! The advantage of living in a rural area such as Togliatti is that home grown produce, meats and dairy products are readily available and do not depend upon the receipt of shipments. Moscow, for example, which has many people to feed and depends entirely upon trucking, experiences a much different situation—in winter with bad roads and fewer available products as well as in summer with poorly refrigerated trucks, a shortage of trucking firms and poor organization in general. Most folks here in Togliatti have abundant supplies in storage (a result of very hard work during the warm months at their dachas or summer homes and gardens), but variety is certainly lacking.

The closest thing Togliatti has to a mall is ROOS - a shopping center of sorts. It is a two-story building with many specialized areas. One can find everything the economy has to offer currently. There are clothing departments, cooking supplies, tools, souvenirs and toiletry supplies. Many areas, however, require special government or work coupons in order to purchase, and the whole scene is reminiscent of a large department store in it's last days of a going-out-of-business sale. The sad thing is that the Russians say there used to be goods. The empty shelves are a sign of the stressful changes the country

is going through. It is understandably difficult for these people to keep a positive and enthusiastic attitude!

T.V. here is taking on an almost western face at times. Local stations now “advertise” and the commercials are clever and entertaining. Talk and game shows are big and we always have the option of switching to the Super Channel from England to view a surprisingly current movie. The catch is that they are all dubbed in Russian-----all roles spoken in the same monotone masculine voice. It is frustrating, but amusing at times.....especially during love scenes! Recently a more familiar face and voice appeared when Leo was interviewed by a local station. Although we weren't watching when it was shown, he got rave reviews from our friends!

Soon after I press the last key to complete this letter, we will begin our first home leave. We are jubilant at the thought of seeing friends and family, snow plows, shopping malls and pizza. I'll be bringing a bit of Russia with me in the form of my latest project. I will visit my niece Kendra's class, speak on life in Russia and deliver 25 letters from Russian children of the same age (11 to 12 yrs.). When we return I hope to bring with me 25 answers, thus beginning some new friendships and in a small way helping to establish a base for future communications and positive relations between our countries. Two weeks ago I visited the Russian class here, accompanied by my teacher who interpreted. I answered questions, talked about life in America and took photos. The children were very curious but extremely polite and courteous. When I asked what message they wished to send their American counterparts, they replied in unison, “tell them good luck with their studies!”—a universal students wish, I think. The teacher then said that she wished to send a message, too. She asked me to tell the American people and especially the teachers that “We Russians want you to know that we are very, very happy, after many years of ‘cold’ that there is warmth and understanding between our countries at last. We love Americans very much and think they are wonderful!” With a lump in my throat, I told her that we felt the same about them and that it was, in fact, just the reason that I was there.

These young people are **the future**, and if they can begin now to understand each other ... work together for a friendlier, happier and more peaceful world, they will be miles ahead of their parents and grandparents in paving the way! On that note I will end CHAPTER II with...

**HUGS and BEST WISHES for a WONDERFUL 1992!!!**

### CHAPTER III - 1992

G R E E T I N G S , Do-ro-gee Dre-zee-ya e Road-sven-e-kee (Dear Friends and Relatives)

On the wall in Leo's office these days is a sign which reads, IF YOU THINK CHANGE IS EASY, GO TALK TO A BUTTERFLY!". We both love finding clever words of wisdom and displaying them for all to see - - especially when the subtle meanings apply so aptly to our world. Normally such messages serve out their purpose in a few weeks, to be replaced by new ones caught by our ever-watchful eye. Somehow, we both feel that this particular sign will be around for some time due to it's appropriate nature.

The struggle for change around us is constantly in evidence, and we touch base with it's valor, honesty and courage every day. As we reflect on the events of this past year and make comparisons to what we see today, physical change abounds. The number of nearby apartment buildings we can see from our home has now doubled. There are many more small private stores, the Rinok is bulging at the seams, and there are many new schools, business ventures, organized activities and even more people, it seems. There are also a lot more roubles floating around, since their value has depreciated a great deal and it now takes more to purchase what is available. There are more T.V. programs, more advertisements and more attempts to westernize everywhere. Unfortunately, there is also more confusion and skepticism about how to bring about the needed changes.

Although the white blanketed landscape and nearby powdered forests are lovely, winter is always most difficult for the folks here. With crowded buses, bad roads, hazardous weather conditions and prices that are out of reach for the average citizen, every day is a challenge. Positive changes are coming slower than hoped for, but as in any culture, there are many who forge ahead bravely with strength of purpose and are rewarded with glimpses of the bright world to come.

In the past year we have become more and more aware of the array of talent in this remarkable country. Almost everyone here is well educated and most share a cultured appreciation of the Arts - - many being extremely talented in one or more areas themselves. It is our hope that they will be able to preserve these attributes while racing toward their foremost goal of becoming WESTERNIZED! There is a childlike honesty and naivety of spirit present and we would all do well to maintain or regain it. Often we witness certain insecurity, though, and the typical Russian fear of doing the wrong thing or offending. A classic example was a phone call we received recently. A feminine Russian speaking voice asked to speak with Mr. Kalageorgi. "I'm speaking", Leo replied. The lady quickly muttered an apology for interrupting - - and hung up! To our knowledge she never returned the call!

As 1992 draws to a close, we find ourselves enjoying our busy Russian life and our growing involvement in it's many phases. Kyra has just begun classes at a new private progressive school slightly reminiscent of the Montessori methods introduced a few years ago in the States. She and her classmates of 3-5 years, play, study ballet, piano, music, art, drama and ski in the nearby woods.... all at a 3 year old level. There is an English teacher who works with the children once a day and they are all anxious to practice their new words with Kyra and her mom.

Papa's business world is becoming more active by the day as VAZ and G.M. approach production date for their combined efforts. He also continues to assist, whenever possible, persons who approach him with ideas, questions or requests for his opinion in all areas of development here. In his spare time, he is very active in corresponding with friends, ex-schoolmates and many new acquaintances who have a special interest in our Russian life. He sometimes attends meetings on Tuesday evenings in New Town with a group of Russians who wish to speak and practice English. Their meetings are informal and usually close with guitar playing and singing.

My activities have escalated to the point that I sometimes find myself with no spare time at all. I now teach a class called CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH at a special school of exceptional students chosen to focus their last two years of high school on the world of finance and banking. It is supported by The Avto-Vaz Bank which is now the official bank of Russia. Students live dorm style in the lovely wooded area near the Volga River. One of the prerequisites for attending the prestigious school, aside from extensive testing, is the ability to speak the English language to some degree. Most students speak very well by Russian standards, but most of their English language tapes and books originate from England and they badly need practice in common usage of "American" English - - which includes, of course, a special knowledge of Americans and our lifestyles. Enter Mrs. K.! It's a fun class but lots of work, too. There are two classes of 16 and 17 year old students with eight to each class. I work with the top two classes and there is competitive testing each month within the school to 'stay at the top'-so occasionally faces change. Each class is 1 1/2 hours long. We discuss current topics, learn new words and definitions and write to two sets of pen pals (one an Advanced English Composition class and one a first year college Economics class) in the States. We have open discussions on many subjects, keep diaries, play word games, make presentations and play act, but most of all just practice communicating. Particularly enjoyable for all of us were the first two weeks discussions about American politics which coincided with the recent elections. We learned political terminology, discussed the issues and candidates and voted, Interestingly, the results and ratio were synonymous with those in the U.S.A.!!

I still take two Russian language classes per week and am moving along well in that respect. Meanwhile, many other activities and projects have gotten my attention. I am now the Vice President of a wonderful group which meets weekly in Olde Town for the purpose of speaking English and learning about America as well as actively encouraging participation in many efforts to support friendly relations, understanding and growth between our countries. It is called The Russia/U.S.A. Friendship Society and currently has about 60 or more members.... Russians in all areas of employment here, as well as many students. Teachers, scientists, doctors, mountain climbers, music majors, engineers and students of various universities and vocational schools, they all share a common interest and speak English in varying degrees. Some of our activities and projects include finding pen pals for everyone (anyone interested?), sponsoring programs to celebrate American holidays, starting a young peoples American English speaking theatre group, starting a library of books and magazines in English and much more. Ideas and enthusiasm are abundant and once organized and channeled, I believe that this group will accomplish great things.

Our first contact with The Russia/U.S.A. Friendship Society came via an invitation to attend a program sponsored by them to recognize and celebrate Columbus Day. Unfortunately, we had plans to be out of the country during the time so explained that we could not attend. "You HAVE to attend" came the reply, "you are the only real AMERICANS in Togliatti!". So, to our complete amazement and delight, Columbus Day occurred in this Russian city nearly a week late. 150 people were entertained with speeches, dancing, a fashion show and children of all ages performing American songs. AMERICA! AMERICA! was sung in Russian and English and the effect was deeply moving. Then we all clapped hands and knees to the rhythms of DINAH BLOW YOUR HORN and reminisced to HOME ON THE RANGE. For the remainder of the evening we were entertained with Russian versions of a multitude of 'old American favorites' and then presented with a copy of HIAWATHA in Russian. It was a great evening and only the beginning of our growing respect for this super group of people.

My other activities and interests are many and varied. I am working with two friends to establish a Russian - American grade school which will combine the best of both worlds. Hopefully, the special school will open it's doors in September 1993 and begin with grades 1 - 3, adding a grade each year for the next few years. There is much information to collect and organizational work to be completed. Any comments, ideas or information offered at this point would be considered invaluable! At the same time, I'm also attempting to bring a chapter of Junior Achievement to Togliatti. There is new affiliate in Moscow

and we are hopeful that they will assist.

My pen pal network has multiplied to over 100 now. Most are school children and there is much enthusiasm! I wish you could all have witnessed the delivery of the last 11 letters from a writing class in the States. I arrived at School #9 in Olde Town (a special school which emphasizes the English language ) expecting to visit a small class of English speaking 13 and 14 year olds. Instead, I was ushered into a gymnasium of about 150 students who bombarded me non-stop for an hour and a half with questions about the life of their American peers. Their English was outstanding and their manner, sincerity and interest impressive and touching. Those chosen to receive the letters I'd come to deliver couldn't have been happier, I believe, if they had won a lottery. I took photos, promised to return soon and hope to find many more groups of interested American students of all ages in the meantime.

Lastly, much of my energy has recently been spent on organizing one of my brainstormed ideas into a reality. With the help of some Russian friends, I hope to develop and offer a Student Friendship Cruise up the Volga River next June. The students ranging in age from 14 - 19 would travel north from Togliatti to St. Petersburg --- a trip of 5 or 6 days. They would spend 3 days touring palaces and witnessing the famous WHITE NIGHTS in St. Petersburg before railing to Moscow to view the sights there. Enthusiasm and interest seem great on both sides and I believe that the experiences shared would not soon be forgotten.

Weekly visits to the Rinok continue to be one of my favorite activities and as we increase our knowledge of the people and language here it becomes more interesting and, of course, more fun. I have several 'friends' there now and try to make it a habit to greet each one. Words are limited, but smiles and gestures can go a long way!. The 'perrits' (peppers) lady is one of my favorites! A tiny Korean person who is often difficult to locate in the crowded food market, she always has a cheerful greeting and Leo's favorite hot peppers. Once I shared a few memories of our trip to Korea with her,(via an interpreter), hoping that she would share a few of her own. She laughed and I was quite surprised to learn that she had lived in Russia all of her life and knew little about Korea!

Milk and dairy products can be purchased at the Rinok but one must trust that the seller is honest and has fresh goods to sell. Once I purchased a 3 gallon jar of "village milk" from an old peasant woman standing by herself near a counter. I silently sympathized with her plight, imagining her difficult bus ride to Togliatti in order to sell her few meager items. I even gave her a small present. Upon returning home that morning, I boiled the milk in preparation for bottling it. To my great distress (but ultimate humor), the fresh village milk clumped into a huge gluttonous mass with a texture characteristic of bread dough. Our driver and housekeeper were irate and informed us that it was powdered milk, prepared and sold as the more expensive specialty. We began to understand a little better their concern about buying from someone you don't know.

Since the 'powdered milk' incident, I have made friends with Tatiana Vasilliovna, a lovely lady from the nearby village of Tashla - about 45 minutes away by car. Her husband is the director of the village collective farm there and she drives to Togliatti occasionally to sell mol-lo-co (milk) from her two cows, yt-sa (eggs), sme-tah-na (sour cream), tvor-ok (cottage cheese), fresh sunflower oil (which must be tasted to be believed) and mas-lo (butter). After seeing her many times at the Rinok, we became friends and she invited us to visit her home. We now send our driver, Nicolai, weekly, to purchase her fresh products (sometimes he has to wait while the butter is churned) and often join him to visit with her and her family. Their two sons are 9 and 16 and like most Russians, the entire family is hospitable to the point of making us feel guilty. Kyra loves to run and play in the country atmosphere. The puppy, dog, cat, chicks and calves keep her well occupied and she always has to be coaxed into leaving. But we are only allowed to go after sampling fresh blintzes, pieroshkies or pelmeni and tea, with fresh berries, apples and milk for Kyra.

We've been so pleased with the products we obtain from Tashla that when Nicolai suggested we buy

our meat there as well, we thought it was a great idea. Market meat prices have soared to over 300 roubles a kilo -- almost out of reach for the average Russian worker. With some minor investigation and freezer preparation on our part, Nicolai left early one morning with what turned out to be less than adequate instructions. He returned late that evening with 50 kilos (150 lbs.) of mutton, 60 kilos of beef and an entire pig! He had spent the day helping to secure the meat and delivered it in warm unwrapped CHUNKS of 8-10 kilos each. We were amazed, astounded, shocked, horrified and angry (with ourselves) ---- but still somewhat amused. We should have known that filling individual orders of this nature is just not done yet outside of crude packing companies and it was a big job for all concerned. Consulting my long-term memory for remnants of high school Home Economics cooking class information needed to prepare recognizable portions for freezing, I found my mental cupboard bare. I tended to rely on more recently stored information collected in Anatomy and Physiology Med. classes. The long day finally DID end and even after giving a good portion of the treasured commodity to Nicolai and Baboolas families, our freezer is full. I must confess, though, 'surprise' dinners are common ....but then they fit well into the Kalageorgis adventurous lifestyle!!

Speaking of adventures, we've had more than a few since our last writing. We have enjoyed two R&Rs and an exciting vacation trip this Russian summer. In June Kyra and I decided to succumb to Leo's urging to try a Club Med (Mediterranean). Being a connoisseur of sorts of the Club during his single days, he was 'sold' -- particularly after accidentally booking a family club instead of a 'singles' years ago. Now, after 3 glorious weeks of frolicking in the sun and sand, we are all hooked! In this unsettled, unstructured, unpredictable and constantly changing society wherein we presently reside, we've come to appreciate organization even more and it is indeed the ultimate rest and relaxation for us to enter a private world (if just for a week or two) where the only decisions required of us are whether to enjoy the warm sandy beach or expansive clear, blue swimming pools.. which of the many fun activities to become involved in, and how much of the beautifully prepared, huge, delicious buffet to indulge in 3 times a day. Flight, meals, activities, entertainment and etc. are all offered at one reasonable price with no needed concern for extras--except for independent tours. We always opt to take a couple of these, but that is in keeping with our lust for travel and learning about other cultures. There is a petit Baby Club for Kyra with activities offered throughout the day and evening. Although she prefers to spend the day with Mom and Dad, we do visit the kiddie affairs like crepe parties, special shows and face painting. We found that most of the young children also prefer to do the same, but the older children enjoy the camaraderie of their own age groups, free from the watchful eye of their parents. We are looking forward to this stage, too.

Our first Club trip was to an island called Ibiza off the NE coast of Spain in a cluster of islands called the Majorcas. It is the newest Club Med in Europe and quite modern. The clubs are operated and manned by beautifully fit and tanned students, usually between semesters, who are chosen for their language skills, talent, enthusiasm and congeniality. Most speak at least 2 or 3 languages. Kyras favorites were Cindy (who she called Cinderella), a lovely young Belgian blonde who spoke fluent Spanish, French and English, and Anisa, an equally beautiful and exceptionally friendly American student, whose Austrian parents made sure that she maintained their native language. She had mastered some French as well. There are 2 groups at each Club Med...the G.O.s (gentle organizers) and the G.M.s (gentle members --- that's us!). G.O.s are all very talented and each evening after completing their respective job (desks, food, office, activities, sports and etc.) they ALL participate in nightly stage productions in the " Big Tent". The shows were very professional and always closed with the G.O.s all on stage to lead with the traditional Club Med theme songs. HANDS UP is Kyras favorite and she quickly learned all of the words and gestures. It's a good way to end a full day of activity.

In Ibiza we all did daily exercises, ate well, slept well and , yes, took our vitamins. Leo enjoyed swimming and Kyra thought the kiddie pool was just perfect. It was!. Mom liked the pool exercises and sun, we all enjoyed the beach and Leo and I began archery. We saw all 7 nightly shows and made friends among

the G.O.s. We also enjoyed a 1/2 day jeep tour around the island during which we stopped to photograph the lush rolling terrain and gorgeous bays. Ancient Fort Ibiza was on the agenda as well and the entire experience was wonderful. The only drawback was an occasional language barrier which we turned into an opportunity to bone up on our French and German. We were not home a week before we found ourselves booking a Sept./Oct. trip to Tunisia, Northern Africa at a club called Hammamet for our 3rd R&R.

Hammamet is probably one of the most beautiful clubs scenically and architecturally and this time we allowed ourselves 2 weeks. We are so glad that we did!. Again French and German were spoken but we found that there were more English speaking folks. It continues to amaze us, though, that language seems to be only a minor obstacle in child's play. Kyra made friends from Argentina, Switzerland, France and Germany and only a handful of English words were exchanged. There was no question that they enjoyed each others company or that they were able to make their respective wishes known. It is difficult to guess what Kyra will learn or retain, but we were pleased when she repeated " Guten Morgan" to a young friend and, on the plane home from Ibiza, stated,"Mom, I can 'peak French!----Merci!" The Gulf of Hammamet is located on the NE coast of Africa in Tunisia just south of Nabal. After an hour bus ride from the airport in Tunis, we were greeted by the usual enthusiastic committee of G.O.s who easily accomplished their goal of making us feel like special guests. The club was gorgeous, food great, people friendly, weather humid but accommodating and atmosphere one of relaxation and fun. We soon turned golden in the warm sun, enjoyed beach and pools, and decided to partake of the offered activities to the max. I was 4th in an egg throwing contest, went for a sail in a catamaran on the high seas with 2 G.O.s one day, challenged my muscle power and sense of balance (both need work) on wind surfing, did yoga daily and won a gold medal for archery in the weekly olympics! Leo honed swimming skills recalled from his Shanghai days as a lifeguard and participated in a group race. He was also very entertaining in a foot relay race! (Ask him personally about that one!) We both took daily tennis lessons and I played in a beginner's tournament after only one lesson - - much to everyone else's amusement! We planned to go para-sailing but timing and the weather were not on our side. Kyra's favorite activities included horse and camelback riding along the beach, surf chasing, sandcastle building, clown and cat face painting, swimming and making lots of friends.

During our stay in Tunisia we took 2 tours. One was a horse-drawn carriage ride through the streets of Nabal with stops to witness pottery making, stone carving and the local colorful marketplace. It was very hot and humid so a leisurely walk along the beach on camelback at the end of the tour was welcome -- if a bit uncomfortable for Papa Leo who suffered for a few days due to attempts to balance himself, a running video and his camera while astride! I wished I'd had MY camera to photograph HIM but was just as glad I didn't since it was a full time job to keep Kyra and myself comfortable and steady...especially when the camels laid down and stood up to allow mounting and dismounting. Shopping and bargaining in Nabal was one of my favorite things so I added an extra Friday morning tour to my agenda. The weekly Friday bazaar features pottery, leather, brass, silver and metal goods. Bargaining is in it's most creative and challenging form and it is not a place for the faint of tongue! The goal, of course, is for everyone to feel that they made a 'good deal'. I was amazed at the ability of most of the merchants to switch languages but after learning of the excellent educational system in Tunisia, the pieces fit. A full 40% of taxes goes to the schools and by the time of graduation, most students have been exposed to 5 or 6 languages... a necessity, I'm sure, due to their location and dependence on trade. The country is literate, clean, independent since the 70s and very proud of their accomplishments.

Our 2nd tour was of a more historically informative nature and took us to the ruins of Carthage where Hannibal was defeated by the Romans. The view of the sea was breathtaking and we were allowed to wander among the columns and few remaining structures at our leisure. As is usual on these excursions, we felt a sense of awe and a strange connection with the past as we were more able to visualize the things that history books can only touch upon!

We enjoy the exciting life we are leading these days and often ask one another, "Did you ever think that we'd be doing THIS?" While strolling a far section of the Hammamet grounds we agreed that without question neither of us had imagined in our wildest dreams, warning each other to "watch out for the camel dung!!" (...actually, that's not the exact verbiage). Neither did we expect that my nursing expertise would be applied to caring for a large posterior abrasion incurred by Leo during our 45 min. ride on the precarious backs of the ungainly animals. We also did not expect to utilize our enjoyment of photography in capturing a 'moment in time' during which a cobra snake was wrapped around the necks of Leo and Kyra-----but these are certainly real experiences and makes one wonder what waits around the corner!

Just prior to our Ibiza trip we spent a week in Moscow participating in the 2nd annual International Trade Fair. We were impressed by the multitude of exhibits including General Motors.. and their new Moscow dealership, TRINITY MOTORS. While Papa talked business with interested and curious prospective entrepreneurs, Kyra and I made the rounds and met some interesting folks. Medical supply and equipment companies, computer firms, foodstuffs reps, tool and die companies and condo builders were present, but the most interesting to me was AVON who hopes to CALL on the Russian market in the future. Coke was also there and very popular since they were giving free samples. It was an especially great week since #1 son, Igor, arrived at this time to begin a month-long visit. The following month was a whirlwind of activity as most of our friends were anxious to make his acquaintance and see to his entertainment. Little sis, Kyra, was his biggest fan and spent lots of time getting re-acquainted with her big brother. We even happily noted a hint of sibling rivalry complete with pigtail pulling and teasing! Igor said that he liked Togliatti and hoped to return. We all enjoyed his visit and hope to have the opportunity to introduce other family members and friends to our young Russian town....which celebrated it's 25th anniversary this year.

Speaking of anniversaries, we are very happy to announce that my parents celebrated their 50th in October of this year! We can't wait to congratulate them in person!! To commemorate the event, our youngest son, Steve, and wife Shanan presented them with their first Great-grandchild! (Of course, they made us Grandparents in the process as well!). Little Steven Richard will be 4 months old when we give him a hug for the first time, and we can't think of a better Christmas present!!!

It is my opinion that this Chapter is chock-ful of all of the information that it can comfortably hold, so our Volga River adventure (a chapter in itself), info about the National Geographic Societys film made here in September and lots more news will have to wait till after the holidays.

It's December. Snow is lightly floating down from a hazy sky to settle in a white blanket over our Russian winter-wonderland. We can see it well from our 5th floor view. We've begun packing for our coming trip to the States. We look forward more than we can tell you to sharing this Christmas and the first days of 1993 with family and friends. The children, as always, will be the focus. They seem to emphasize the distance between our precious visits by demonstrating their ability to grow and mature at phenomenal rates. We adults would rather not discuss our "maturity" -- but "growth" is also abundant and we look forward to sharing it with each other at a different level. Mostly, we will enjoy and be grateful for just being together. We wish you and your families the same HAPPINESS!

Till Chapter IV, we send our LOVE, HUGS and BEST WISHES for all that is wonderful in 1993!

**LEO, BEV & KYRA**