

Dmitri's Newsletter 2002

New Year 2002

January 1st 2002

New Year 2002 started without any huge celebrations, fanfares or parades. Irina and I stayed home and celebrated quietly. Perhaps we're getting older or just could not find a babysitter. The saying goes: "As you meet the New Year, the way it'll go". We're here to disprove it. Read on...



Christmas @ my old place



Me with two New Year angels

Tubing Night and Skiing

The year started fast. We had numerous skiing and tubing trips. Irina started skiing and she was doing very well. I'm the worst teacher one may ask for, so she didn't ask, I volunteered! She was tackling "big" hill on her third day. Impressive! Tubing was fun as always. Irina's kids, Artem and Yana, were tubing all by themselves. Brave kids. Plus, guys and gals from Rochester joined us. Good time!



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Dear friends, acquaintances, comrades, and anyone who may read this newsletter, hello and Happy Holidays! It is my pleasure to bring you yet another update on my life in the past year. My ever changing and never complete web site <http://www.geocities.com/minsk73> is a good source of updates during the year; though, it is not up to date as it should be. Enjoy this time of year and have happy, safe and healthy holidays!

NYC

Jan 18th - 20th

Two weeks into the year, we went to NYC for a weekend just for fun and to meet my old friends Artour, Marina, and Yan. The weekend flew by in NYC kinda pace. Gone!



BOSTON

Feb 1st - 3rd

For Alex's birthday, Anastasia, Joe, Irina and I went to Boston. Dad flew from Washington, DC and we had nice weekend together. We went to hear Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and later to Science and Technology museum.



Toronto

Feb 15th

For a Valentine day weekend, Irina took me to Toronto to see "The Lion King". I was upset that I missed an opportunity to see this show in NYC. The show was superb, dinner was delicious, and hotel with a view of all of Toronto made it a perfect combination.



Top these with Irina's beauty and charm... Oh, my, my... (c:



MY BD

March 16th

Then there was my birthday. Yes, it happens to the best of us and only once a year. Irina, my adorable girl, gave me the best party I ever had, or could've dreamed of. My sister, Anastasia, my mama, Irina, and Harry, my good friend and landlord in Rochester, prepared all food. There was Irina's designed dancing contests, and other contests with prizes. For one game that I had to participate in, they covered my eyes and I had to find my girlfriend among other girls. First, by hand. I did! Then, by foot. I did! Oh, how could I have missed her wonderful and petite feet? And the last one, by... You should've been there to know.

Irina organized it all! She is the best! I got the "Best Boyfriend" award. She is saying it is not the "Best Boyfriend of a Year" award, but we'll find out a year later...

PYKU BBEPX!!!

On November 1st, we had an opportunity to see a very popular Russian hit band in Detroit. Vlad, Alena, Irina, Inna, Eduardo, and I drove to Detroit to see our friend Fred and to party!



Wine Tours

As an established tradition, we have to, at least once a year, go to the local wineries. The first time we went camping and wine tasting. The second trip we were a bit more sophisticated and Vlad organized a limo bus. Only a few words to those who missed it: "Too bad for you..."



Jim, Vlad, Ronny, I, the Bird Alena, Larina, Irina

EUROPE

March 21st - 31st

A few days after my BD, Irina and I were flying over the Atlantic. I earned enough miles to get two free tickets. We flew to **Frankfurt** and took a train to **Munich**. There, we were greeted by my German friend, Anja. She was prepared and handed us our itinerary for that evening with historic points and significant facts about places. We made it right in time to watch colorful figures dancing at the city hall clock at MarinenPlatz. Then it started to rain and we headed for a nearby Hofbräuhaus.



An overnight train took us to **Venice**. Venice, so much can be said about you, but better once seen. What a change in weather! Venice greeted us with golden sun, spring warmth, and fresh breeze. This time of year it is not yet crowded by tourists and the air is still clean (nice way to say that it didn't stink). Without delay we took the vaporetto No1 to tour the Grand Canal and to get pictures of this fabulous town. From there we walked to St. Mark's Square, which has a constant carnival atmosphere. St. Mark's Square is one of the lowest parts of the city, and so is always the first to be covered in water when the *acqua alta* (high tide) arrives. We saw remainder of temporary over-water walkways that get built every year. We went to the roof of basilica and spent at least an hour enjoying breathtaking view of a bay, square, sun, people, and life that passed in front.



In the evening, we were granted to hear a performance of string music in an old church. That was an extremely nice way to end a day in such a town. The entire atmosphere set the mood and expectations. Venetian virtuosi did not let us down. The music was so powerful! The level of performance was unspeakably high. I'm not an expert; nevertheless, when the musician made one violin sound like an entire band, and later, the bass sounded as a violin, cello, and bass simultaneously, my hair began to move. WOW! Irina said that Venice was a highlight of this trip. I say, it was only the beginning.

Then, we took a train to **Rome**. A little note about European trains. Trains are everywhere and there is no need whatsoever to rent a car. However, sometimes they could be extremely hot (Munich - Venice) and your neighbors will snore and won't let you open a window for fresh air. Or, they can be extremely cold (Venice - Rome) and AC can't be shut off. We had to wear everything we had. Sometimes, due to strikes and manifestations and other expressions of disagreement with government they just elected, trains may not go anywhere at all, just as we spent two hours in Rome trying to get out of the train station. In the big picture, this is a very minute inconvenience.



The first day in Rome we spent in Vatican. St. Peter Square was preparing for the celebration of Palm Sunday. Sistine Chapel was closed. We spent many hours in Basilica of St. Peter, which got a minor "facelift" for year 2000 jubilation. Enormous! The rest of a day, we spent climbing Castle Sant'Angelo and having coffee at the top with a view of the Roman hills, wandering Piazza Navona, having some roasted chestnuts, ending up at Fontana di Trevi where we bought some shoes for Irina. Best way to end a day for girl.

On Sunday, I finally figured out how to use an Italian payphone and called Lena. It was Palm Sunday. Sistine Chapel was still closed. We ended up seeing Pope, from very, very far. Later we had a dinner at Mauoro's. What a wonderful, down-to-Earth family.



Great people! Dinner was delicious, to say the least. The rest of the day we went to Colosseo, Roman Forum, ruins, and as the temperature dropped close to the freezing point in a late evening we went to Monument Vittorio Emanuele and the Capitol. We were not ready for this cold weather! Irina packed very light, her backpack was lighter and smaller than mine. Can you imagine?! Late night we spent in a bar with Lena's friends.

On Monday, we gave it a third try to get to Sistine Chapel. I piggybacked on a very knowledgeable guide and learned so much more about the "Second Coming" and other Michelangelo's creations. It was amazing!

In the evening, we took a train to **Paris**. This time we took no chances and made reservations. We slept through a 13-hour trip.

Early morning in Paris. Interesting, we were not surprised to see patrol with machine guns on the streets of Paris. Paris was noticeably cleaner and friendlier. Parisians offered help

on numerous occasions. A nice change to globalization and acceptance.

At the train station, we realized that it was Easter weekend and all of the cheap hotels were gone. Lucky, we were approached by a sales guy who offered us a nice hotel with a "big bed" because we are a "nice couple". He repeated: "big bed" and "nice couple" at least forty times before we got to the hotel. Well... It was a "big bed" made of two small beds, but we are still a "nice couple."

One evening, we were tired of going around Paris and its restaurants, so we bought a bottle of wine, some local meat, cheese, and bread. It must had been the best dinner we had in Paris. The French wine must have something in it, or whatever they say about French and their passion for love and life...



By this time we were overwhelmed by the arts and architecture. We were leisurely spending days in Paris, going to major attractions and mainly just enjoying life, good weather, and each other's company.



The last half the day we decided to spend in **Brussels**. It is only a 3 hour ride from Paris. We enjoyed two dinners, slowly sipping on Belgian beer and having third plate of mussels: life is just too good to us.

We were flying back from **Dusseldorf** to **Washington, DC**. In Washington, my dad and Anastasia, who happened to be there at that time, met us at the airport. As we had time kill, they took us to the Mall. It was cherries blossom time, the most amazing time in the center of Washington, a nice "cherry on the top" of this one more fantastic trip.



BELARUS

May 26th - June 7th



Brest, with Tanja and Lesha



Zalivko's, my nephew 4th bd.



Vambrikov's



Galitsky's



Back to reality, but not for long. The next trip was already in the making: we were going to Belarus. Preparations for trips back home always take much time, energy and resources. This time, there were five of us traveling: Irina with kids, myself and my friend Ronny, a world traveler. We flew to Warsaw, Poland where we were met by Irina's mother. However, Irina was not allowed to exit at Poland, as she traveled with an expired Belarusian passport, and she with kids had to catch the next flight to Minsk. Luckily, we were allowed to take her bags. It is difficult to describe an inner condition of Irina's mother, who came from Brest (3 hour drive) to meet her daughter and grandchildren, whom she didn't see for over two years. Irina and kids made it safely to Minsk, from where they took a train to Brest. Brest is located near a Poland border, about 200 miles west of Minsk. In the evening, we had joyful family reunion.

We spent a day (May 28th) in Brest meeting Irina's friends and having a great time. On Wednesday morning, Ronny and I went to Minsk. It was a very short visit. I was in Belarus for only 9 days, which should not be allowed by visa control. It is impossible to visit all relatives and friends in such a short period, and have any meaningful time together. Well, we tried. Irina, her sister Olga and their friend Sveta came to Minsk a day later. I was practically torn apart: days were filled to the brim. Even in such a crazy rush, we found time to go to the Int'l Ballroom Dance competition finals. Those guys and girls do know how to dance! We were sitting in the first row and I was taking notes. Another night, we went to the opera to see Verdi's La Traviata. It was amazing! What a voice! ... and all for \$2.00. Unbelievable.

It would be unusual if our trip didn't have any complications. One lovely evening, Ronny and I were walking on the street admiring beauty of Belarusian girls, as we were approached by two police officers with a really mean looking dog. They asked for identifications. As normal Americans, we presented our driver's licenses. Oops, we are not in the USA. As we didn't have our passports with us, the cops suggested that they'll take Ronny with them while I go home and bring passports. There was no way I'd leave Ronny alone. They took us to a police station where the captain complained that there was too much paperwork to fill out on us. I had to help. The problem was solved with a \$20.00 "fee" paid directly. The system is bribable, it's working.

One evening, all my friends and I met at Rakov Brover. My high school friends organized this evening, and I told everyone else that they can find me there that night. People kept coming and coming. Thank you for gifts, hospitality and everything.

The days flew by fast and we had to leave. On the way back, we spent a day in Brest, where Irina's friends took us to Belovezhska Puscha (the largest Belarusian nat'l park).

It was nice to see relatives, old friends and their families doing well. True friends are greatest treasures. I'm a fortunately rich man.



at Shamovy's, Brest



Sergey, Rimma, I, Yuri



Irina, I, Sveta



Grandparents' grave



Leaving Minsk

Upon arrival back to Buffalo, Anastasia, her friend, Mam, and I took a **little trip to Chicago and Indianapolis** to visit old friends. I just wanted to spend some time with my sister. It was nice to see Irina in Chicago, and Jess and her family in Indi, all in good health and spirit.



Those who know me well know some of the parties we had at my place. On July 12th, we had one that topped them all. Vlad's old friend from Detroit, Fred, came over and DJ'ed for us. We danced our feet off. That was **THE Samovar party (part I)**. The next morning Irina, kids and I went to Olcott's Pirate fest. We camped overnight and looked at the stars through a telescope.



Oh, by the way, I had nothing better to do, so **I bought a house in Rochester**. I closed on the 24th of September. It is a foreclosed property in a pretty nice neighborhood. The house has four bedrooms and it is pretty huge for a single chap. It is a definite upgrade from my "bachelor pad" on Kenmore Avenue. It needed a lot of work. Virtually all rooms must be repaired and repainted. My good friend Vlad, with a helping crew of Dimitri, Ronny, Billy and sometimes yours truly, finished the first floor before I moved in at the end of September. A Huge Thank You. I can't express how grateful I am for your help. Now I'm finishing small project and "beautifying" the house. It keeps me busy.



In Brief

- Hunting. In PA, at Heather's parent's house, I got a nice doe this year. Thanks Ed and MA. Hunting in NY with my old friend Alex was fruitless.
- I'm still working on my MBA and expect to graduate this summer.
- This Halloween I stayed home and gave candy to the neighborhood kids. Over 100 kids showed up!
- Though my company went through a drastic reduction of about 10% of its workforce worldwide, I'm still working with the good people at Heidelberg and NexPress in Rochester.
- I played soccer this season for a Heidelberg team and scored 1 goal. We are the champions! Again. Also, we were playing soccer with my friends every Sunday; though, it is nice to see how we started with 3-on-3 and now play full field. At lunch, I play indoors every Thursday. Soccer is life!
- For a couple of weekends I was driving to Boston to help Alex with his house. Now dad is helping him for a few weeks.
- Dimitri stayed with me for about 3 months. He had to go back to Russia.
- Thanksgiving dinner was at my house, and for the first time, I cooked the bird. Mama was ready with a backup plan, though...
- On *December 1st* Ronny, Olga, Irina and I went to the World Largest Disco. The music was not as good as before, we might rethink going next year...



**Thank you very much for reading my newsletter.
Stay in touch.**

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Now you have no excuses!
Happy Holidays!