

MARIENTAL & LOUIS

DAYS OF YORE

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German Russian Proverb:

A FLY WILL NOT GET
INTO A CLOSED
MOUTH.

Well, I am finally back from our summer travels, visiting children, attending all kinds of family functions. It is good to be home. Now I will be publishing my newsletter again – one of my favorite things to do.

The AHSGR Convention in Oklahoma City was great. Marianne Long did an excellent job of planning the convention. I enjoyed meeting her. My daughter, Theresa Sheaffer, and I did my presentation of “Grandmothers Aprons” On the “Folklore day. It is a fun thing to do and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as we do when presenting. Several years ago, I did this for our family reunion, and had asked my two brothers to be the grandmothers, while my sisters would put the aprons on them. It was such fun. They were all good sports.

The feature story on Allen Salzman’s trip to Russia, continues in this issue.



She welcomed me like an aunt I hadn’t seen in a while. It was she who answered the phone in January of 1991. Galina and Viktor are newly retired, Viktor I was told was the best Mechanical Engineers in the area. And Galina was a Doctor. They were both some of the most genuine and caring people I have ever met. We had a short meal, sausage, tomatoes and cucumbers, tea and Vodka toasts. The reunion dinner I had purchased was later that day. At eleven o’clock, we all convened at the Kusbass Hotel, (The area of the Kemerovo city and Kemerovo Oblisk is called the *Kusbass*, the Altai Mountains are to the south). At the dinner they were all there. The members of Vitor and Galina’s families, and the family of Elveria (Salzmann) Bauer. Viktor’s sister, mother of Rimma (Bauer) Otto, who, from Holland visited us in May of 1999. Indeed, I saw pictures

of Rimma, her husband Cees, their small sons, at my aunt Vera and uncle Lowell’s home in Lakewood where we had dinner one evening. Needless to say, many loose ends were starting to close. There were more vodka toasts of course. When it was my turn, I toasted our elders, our children, and us. Also, the [American Historical Society of](#)

_____ . When the Iron Curtain descended on Eastern Europe, these men and women in the AHSGR kept the faith, so that some day reunions like this would be possible. The dinner was the best I'd ever had. It was a four-course meal that I had wired ahead, sending the money to arrange it. And through Hermann and Boris my interpreter, I did my best to catch up on three generations of family history, and learn of their lives in a post-Communist society. They were so anxious to know who these Salzmans were in America, Canada and Germany. I had scanned many family photos onto a CD and would have a chance to show them using a PC at Hermann's cousins house in a few days. As a side note, mobile phones and personal computers are everywhere. You see 21st century people, stuck in a crumbling ex-Soviet infrastructure. In preparing for this trip, I asked Hermann in one of my e-mails what I could bring from America. Thinking they'd want American consumer goods. But what did they reply, they wanted family photos. That's really all. These people are gold.

The meal lasted for three and a half hours. Then I was taken to a spa/hotel on the other side of the Tom River. On the way we stopped at a stream off the road, in an area of crumbling Datchas. People went here every day to get water they need only boil, to make it drinkable. This "Sanatorium" was once for Communist Party officials. It was a large area, surrounded by an iron fence, with steam near the road, In Moscow as well as here, you dare not drink the water. I purchased bottled water everywhere, or went without. A guard's cabin or Datcha was at the main gate of the Sanatorium. I checked in, went down a dimly lit hallway, and was shown my room. It was a nice enough place, with two small beds, bath, small refrigerator and a TV. This had been another long day. But I wasn't that tired.

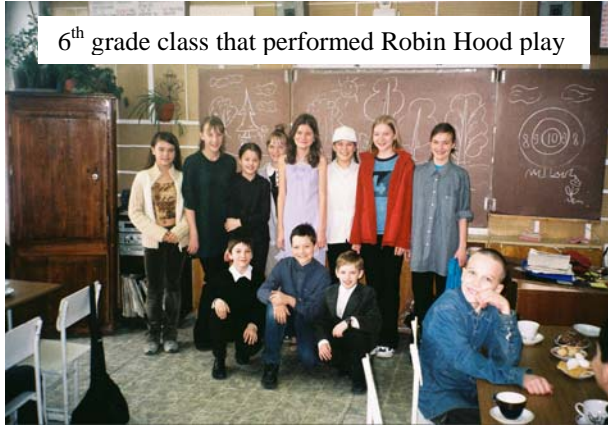


I woke up the next morning, April 5th, and went down to *Zaftrak*, breakfast. A woman served me a breakfast of oatmeal, hash, bread, honey, and tea or instant coffee.

Another woman tried to ask me to fill out when I wanted *Zaftrak*, *Abiet* (lunch) and *Uzjen* (supper). I was asked what "treatments" I required. In Russian I replied that a massage would be great, and I liked to swim. So, every morning, after breakfast, I had a massage, and went for a swim in this pool with huge stained glass windows with some Greek Poseidon motif. On April 5th, my driver uncle Gena, my interpreter Boris, and Viktor Salzman went to register with the local Militia/KGB. Just as American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow had instructed me.

What a beau racy. After my paperwork was processed. Viktor had to pay a fee, at another building, then brought the receipt back to the Militia building/station. I gladly gave Viktor the rubles for the registration fee. It's worth mentioning here that the only time I had any apprehension was when I had to hand over my passport including my immigration form and visa, through a bared window or a slot in a door. But I had made

two copies of everything and had it stored in two separate pieces of luggage. I had another meal at the Salzmann's that evening, and was back to the Sanatorium. It's worth noting that every day, a rather authoritative looking man was always in the lobby of the Sanatorium, watching my every move. Probably KGB or Militsa. Knowing how he watched me, I greeted him, "Zdratvitsha" (greetings). He cracked half a smile and said



nothing

On April 6th I visited of Anton Salzmann's school, a High School. The condition of the structures of the schools was horrible; the worst schools anywhere in the U.S. don't look like this. But the children are so bright, they use every book and teaching aid possible, and the children look so much like American children. If they were speaking American English, you couldn't tell them from our own children. I was

the first American they'd ever seen. I am 6'4", the English teacher pointed up to me and exclaimed to the class "See, students, this is why we built missiles!". Later in the day, I took a picture of some boys skateboarding in the city center of Kemerovo, they could be anywhere in the U.S. Also visited the Natural History Museum with Viktor, Galena and of course my interpreter Boris.

April 7th, snow this morning, looked quite beautiful in the Tiga forest in and around the Sanatorium. Visited Marieanne's school. These beautiful children put on a Robin Hood play for me. It was the most genuine gift I've ever received. They had few props or costumes. Twigs for arrows and with string for bows. Of all for times for the Camcorder battery to be dead! So I took a group shot of them. It was "ochen atlechna", very beautiful.

The children and teenagers asked me questions ranging from what sports I played, to "Do you own a flat or a house?" "How big is your house?" "Do you own a car?" "Do you have a wife and children"? Indeed many Russian women asked me if I was married. They asked me about why the U.S. was in Iraq, I didn't have a simple answer for them. I realized that I had not been given one.

April 8th A trip to the home on “Dynamite” Street where Alexander Salzmann had lived. Later I had a dinner at the Salzmanns’ with the Bauer’s, Elvera (Salzmann) Bauer, her daughter and grandson. The tragedies and survival of their deportation was now told to me. Alexander and Paulina Salzmann had seven children, five died during the famines created by the Bolsheviks and Stalin. My interpreter read a very tragic letter to me. Alexander was attending a shoemaking institute in Leningrad (St Petersburg), he could not be at home when one of his children, a small girl died of malnutrition. The exact was something like *“another precious gift from God has left us, my heart weeps unceasingly. But I must complete my studies here, and use this education to make a better life for us at home”*. Also I was told how The Volga and Black Sea Germans were shipped in frozen cattle cars 5,000 miles across Russia, and having survived the labor camps and the *Trudarmee* (labor army) and camps such as [Kolyma](#) and [Magadan](#). Viktor and Elvera showed me more photos and letters and explained that three of their siblings had been buried in shallow graves along the route of the deportation. Viktor told me that by 1941 Stalin had shipped 1.2 millions Volga-Germans to Siberia. In 1946 after WWII ended, another census was taken. Their population had been decimated to 174,000. Whole family names had been wiped out. Open cattle cars would arrive at the depot with men women and children huddled together, frozen solid. Other slave laborers had the job of hacking out these frozen bodies, cleaning out the cattle cars and sending them back to European Russia for more victims. The Volga and Black Sea Germans were slave labor, until the mid 1950’s, when the Communists would grant them limited rights as a Soviet citizen, if they signed papers and swore oaths denouncing any claim to property or assets of any kind in the German colonies, and would never to attempt to contact family outside the Soviet Union. They told me about the care packages that my grandfather Henry had sent them. Here I was, the place where these packages were sent, over 60 years later, hearing that the packages sent into the abyss of the Soviet Union, were received, albeit sans the contents, except for the writing paper and pens. I learned that my father had written them in 1962. But out of fear, the letter was never opened, and given back to the KGB. In this way, they would insure that they would have a “quiet life”. It was tragic for me to hear that every day of Alexander Salzmann’s life, regardless of the Siberian weather, he had to stand in line to sign-in with the local NKVD, the predecessor to the KGB. Only once did he have permission to travel more than one day’s journey from Kemerovo. Also, he would raise Doves on the roof of his house. He would release the Doves, from the roof sit there, and look to the west. I can guess his thoughts. Hermann told me after our meal that in his entire life, his



father and his aunt Elvera had never spoken of these tragedies. In telling me all this Elvera (Salzmann) Bauer noticed the silver USAF type wings on my Air Force issue jacket. I had left them there from when I had Hermann take an ironic photo of me wearing them on my flight jacket in front of Lenin's tomb in Red Square. (The wings were mine, I received them after my completion of a joint USAF-FAA training program, back when I was "flying for the government"). Touching the silver wings, in German, Elvera said, *perhaps one of my father's doves has returned*". I looked at her and said, "*Meine Taunte Elvera das ist warum, ich habe angekommen*". "My aunt Elvera, that is why I have arrived". (This exchange inspired even more vodka toasts). I gave the wings to 12 year old Anton Salzmann. Now I understood more about why I had to make this journey. I am the type of character, and had the resources to re-establish this international family network, after the most horrible crime of genocide of the last century, committed by Stalin and the NKVD. They thought I was a hero for coming to them. My God, **they're** the one's who survived the slave labor in the coal mines and the gulags. That evening back at the Sanatorium, the usual Russian music videos and news were on the TV. But I was making notes and deep in thought, trying to completely understand what I had learned.

MEMORIES TUCKED AWAY:



I wish that I could remember all of the things that I knew how to do as a young child on the farm. We lived about 17 miles from town, so we had to be self-sufficient. We could not just run uptown and pick up something we needed. Mom would have to plan months ahead in order to have the needed items to keep the pantry stocked, especially during the winter months, including Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I remember that she would make the Christmas fruitcake in February or March, as it would need to age. It was a dark fruitcake, very heavy, but quite delicious. We

girls: Lillian, Twila, Verda, and myself, were usually in school, or helping with the farm chores, when she did her baking, so I didn't learn all of the baking secrets that were passed down from mother to daughter. I think Mom loved to bake bread in her own kitchen and without any distractions. There is a wonderfully good feeling when you have managed to have those beautiful golden brown loaves turn out exactly like you wanted them too. By the time we were old enough, that we should be interested in learning, Mom was buying bread at the store. Although, I remember buttering the tops of biscuits and cinnamon rolls. Our mother was an excellent baker. With our large family, the aroma of freshly baked bread was almost a daily or twice weekly event.

One time, when someone in the family was sick, Mom had to help with the milking, so she had the pancake batter all mixed, and I (not being old enough to milk), had to stand on a chair, and cook a large platter of pancakes. I must have been quite small, but I remember doing this. We had a kerosene stove at the time, and Mom had the burners set already for me.

Another chore that Mom received great satisfaction from was the canning of foods. The cellar shelves were always full of shining glass jars with the luscious foods. Besides vegetables, our desserts were, mulberrys, cherries, watermelon rinds, plums, peaches, pears, and prunes. We had all the jelly and jam's we needed for the winter. We always had a large crock of homemade sauerkraut, a large pile of potatoes (that we had to pick the "eyes" off of every so often).

Of course, we always had cream, butter, cottage cheese (homemade), and milk. When mom and dad butchered in the fall, they always made sausages, bacon, hams, ground beef, head cheese (yuk), brains (yuk), pigs feet (again yuk), and crackles (pork rinds).

The steaks were cut into serving sizes, fried, and put in a large crock, alternating a layer of steak, with lard poured over each layer. In the winter, I would take a skillet, out to the cellar, and dig enough steaks out of the lard to heat for supper. They were always so good.

Mother had to make her own soap after butchering day using lard, lye, and water. The knowledge she had was never ending.

WHISPERS:

Make a Black Russian drink!

Ingredients:

- Kahlúa
- Milk
- Ice Cream
- Crème de Cacao

Mixing Instructions:

Mix everything together and make it work!