

Here is my journal, the trip into Ukraine starts on June 5th if you want to bypass the Krakow part.

Seek what the heart craves,
What dreams reveal.
Find what matters,
Face what lingers,
Embrace what fuels the soul!

And the adventure continues.....

Planes, trains and automobiles.....

May 28 ~~ June 14, 2005

I have written from the heart ~~ a personal journey ~~ and another dream come true!

Toronto, Saturday, May 28th departure at 7:00 p.m. via LOT airlines arrived into Warsaw as 9:30 am. And yes, we were sleepless in Warsaw!!!..... Up for 28 hours solid! The Warsaw airport is under construction to accommodate the heavy volume of traffic. Many parts of the airport was “tired looking” and needed an overhaul. We had to wait 4 hours before we could board our connecting flight into Krakow. It gave Kashunia and me a chance to stretch and kick up our feet a bit.

Sunday, May 29th

Jadwiga, Monde, Jerzy, Wladek, and Grazyna met us at the airport; again, we were presented with beautiful bouquets of flowers for each of us. Temperatures were well into 30's + with high humidity. It was hot! Wladek took us to their apartment in Myslenice. It was going to be our “home base” for the duration of our time in Krakow and also while we were in Ukraine. As there was no telephone in the apartment, Wladek had purchased a telephone card for us and I made a quick call to Gary to let him know we arrived safely. This

family is just darling; they stocked the frig with goodies for us. After a quick supper of kielbassa, cheese, rye bread and freshly picked strawberries, Kashunia and I were in bed at 7:00 pm. We awoke at 8:00 am ~~ even with 13 hours sleep, we still felt like a mac truck had run over us. Oh no!! As I sorted my daily medications, I realized I had forgotten to pack my statins (cholesterol drug). I could picture exactly where they were in Toronto ready to go!! but I neglected to pack them! Well all that worry for nothing..... I spoke to Wladek who again comes to the rescue. He went to see his own doctor and explained the situation; he received a prescription, not quite what I had in Canada as they didn't have that drug in Poland but it would suffice. My stress level came down a few notches, believe me....

May 30th ~~ 35 Celsius

Wladek, Grazyna, Lucy (his niece) took us out for coffee and dessert. Kashunia and I figured some delicious pastry with coffee would hit the spot. Surprise, Wladek takes us to an ice cream shop.....we glanced at each other and grinned. Ice cream sundaes with coffee at 10:00?!! No problem, it was one way to beat the heat!! Lucy was on board to act as an interpreter but that wasn't necessary. Wladek and Grazyna both spoke English very well. I used whatever Polish I could; they found if we spoke slowly, they caught the gist of our conversation.

There is a very large ski resort in Myslenice and Wladek thought it would be a super way to get a scenic view of the town. We took the chair lift right to the end and found the panorama breathtaking. I was a little nervous getting on and off as one has to move very quickly but I managed. I tried to imagine what it would be like in the winter with the skiers and the snow. We walked for a bit; getting to know each other a little more and shared many laughs.

Suddenly Wladek and Grazyna announce it was time for lunch. We barely had time to work off our ice cream breakfast but what did it matter. We lunched outdoors at a quaint restaurant called Parkowa and Grazyna highly recommended the ruskie perogies, and kapusta

soup. I always get compliments on my “jumbo perogies” back home but I found these to be scrumptious.

The temperatures and humidity continued to rise and we felt it was time to return to home base. We had done a lot of walking and our internal clocks still needed some adjusting. A shower was in order and low and behold, I get in and end up shampooing my hair with body lotion. I was wondering why my hair wasn't lathering up.....hmm....jet lag or what?! We laughed at Cioica!

May 31st

We took the bus from Myslenice to Krakow, fare 3.50 zloty each. It's interesting how Kashunia and I remembered the city from our first trip and we got around very well. We stopped in at the Market Square and did a little shopping for family back home. I did buy my Gigdo to complement my Babcia ~~ I will introduce them via pictures.

We found Krakow just as interesting as when we were first there in 2003. Very historic and quaint. The boutiques are reasonably priced and the styles up to date with the influence of Paris, Germany etc. Again, we discovered that our fashions are at least 1-2 years behind. We did go home with some neat fashion ideas and Kashunia has implemented some of them already!

We decided to venture out to the train station and purchase our tickets as we had to notify Anton of our arrival date and time. It was difficult for me to let Jadwiga know we wanted to go there, it just didn't connect with her until I went “choo choo” and then , oh yes, the poisit!! TAK!!

Originally, Pela and Anna were to accompany us on this leg of our travels. Unfortunately, Pela broke her arm and was in a cast and Anna ran into complications with her work schedule (she is a nurse). This was going to be a special occasion for Anna as she had never met her Uncle Anton. I felt badly for her and it wasn't possible to

visit with her to try and help sort her problems as she was 7 hours north of Krakow by car. I phoned and told her that she would be in our hearts and we would bring her up to date on everything upon our return.

The train station was a busy place and was also undergoing a major revamping. A very modern shopping centre was being built right next to it. After numerous enquiries, we finally found the wicket that would look after our needs. We discover our journey will take 14 hours and we will arrive into Ternopil at 2:30 am!! My goodness Anton was picking us up and at such an ungodly hour! We felt badly but there was little choice. We paid \$163.00 zloty each (one way) for a sleeper car ~3 in a car. When I had that ticket in my hand reality set in, this was actually going to happen! It had been my goal for many years to visit Ukraine, to see and touch my roots with hope that perhaps I would learn a little more about my father, Andreas.

Later that evening, we did a quick pizza next door to the internet café. We made a few phone calls and let Anton know of our itinerary. I felt a little unsure that they understood our travel plans correctly ~ I was still speaking half Ukrainian and half Polish with a few English words thrown in. I sent Bohdana an email asking her to phone them on my behalf and re-confirm our dates and times. The phone cards certainly came in handy and are very reasonable. One cannot use coins to make a phone call as we do in Canada. It all works on a "karta elektroniczna tp".

June 1st

Independence Day!!

We shopped and explored more of Myselnice. The rain was constant and temperatures were not more than 15 degrees, if that. It seemed that this was the start of inclement weather that would take us into Ukraine and back into Poland. We lunched at a quaint bakery ~ Kashunia had an egg roll stuffed with kapusta and loved it! I concentrated on the sweet stuff. We discovered the clerk had family in Chicago. She spoke proudly of her daughters and how anxious

she was for mid-summer to arrive as this was the time she was returning to visit her daughter. We found the people very friendly, from boutiques, grocery stores and restaurants.....they were eager to please!

Kashunia cooked dinner at the apartment, chicken, new potatoes and salad. Yummy. And she professed she couldn't cook! We blew the fuse, can't use the stove and washer at the same time. We had a bit of a problem figuring out what to do but we eventually got the power back on thanks to the next door neighbour Marta. By the end of our stay, we knew what to do and what to stay away from!! There were many felines living in the parkette and of course I had to buy some food for them even though they didn't look like they were starving. At the back of the apartment complex was a fully stocked grocery store which came in handy many times.

Oh, oh, Alexandra in trouble again!! The toilet seat is now on the blink! We were coming in one afternoon thinking we could wait until we got to the apartment to use the washroom. Well, being the "water baby" that I am, I should have limited my fluid intake.....too late, we barely got the apartment door open and I ran into the washroom and hit the toilet with a thump. The snap that was already loosened totally came apart. Now we were on a hunt to replace the toilet seat ~~ Jerzy was good enough to take us to a major hardware store and a replacement was bought. There's a picture of me in the hardware store that will give a few chuckles. I felt much better knowing we had a replacement. We didn't install the seat as it took some expertise with the sockets etc. when we departed Myslenice for good, I left the new toilet seat sitting beside the toilet "big happy face drawn on it"!! I think the message was clear in what happened.

June 2nd

Bus to Krakow ~~ we have the morning to ourselves!! We had a wonderful "English" breakfast of bacon and eggs at a unique restaurant at the Marketsquare. The presentation was

different ~~ they bring you the frying pan with the eggs and bacon cooked up, no plates needed.

We made our way to cousin Jadwiga's and had a visit with her and daughter Kasia. We all hopped onto a trolley car to visit Babcia Tekla and Aunt Jozefa at the cemetery. Kashunia and I bought flowers and candles to light; I know they were happy to see their granddaughter and great-granddaughter again and the same for Coicia Jozefa. I told Jadwiga our mothers and grandmother was smiling at us all!

As we were making our way back to the trolley car, we stopped at a beautiful memorial that was newly erected for the late Pope Jan Pawel II. The statue showed Pope Jan Pawel II knelt at his prayer stand, hands folded holding rosary beads. There was a marker indicating how many times Pope Jan Pawel II visited Krakow, 1979, 1983, 1987, 1997, 1999 and 2003. I didn't realize that his Mother and Father were resting here in Krakow and we paid our respects. The monuments were inscribed *Rodzina Wojtylow i Kaczorowskich, Karol Wojtyla 1879 - 1941, Marja, Feliks, Robert and Rudolfina Kaczorowskich*. (Once I receive Kashunia's video tape, I will be able to document the dates for the family members). There was a multitude of flowers and candles at both locations. Pope Jan Pawel II was loved immensely by all. Ironically, the next time we ventured into Krakow, Kashunia and I took photographs of the Rectory where Pope Jan Pawel II would stay each time he visited Krakow. It was from this window that he would pray and bestow his blessings to the many gathered. There were flowers on the window sill and we noticed that it was now part of a tour group's itinerary. Another point of interest regarding Pope Jan Pawel II was the Balice airport in Krakow ~~ the airport is now called Balice ~~ Jan Pawel II airport. A very important part of history, preserved with grace and elegance.

We were expected at Monde's for dinner and I was excited as I hadn't seen Oskar, Oliwier or Oliwia for 2 years and could well imagine how they had grown. What a surprise! Oskar must be a good 6' 2" and looked like an athlete; Oliwier a little taller, still a tad shy and very handsome and Oliwia, well one couldn't help but pick her up

and give her mega hugs and kisses. What a beauty she is!! Tato Adam will be kept busy once she's grown up as she will have many admirers at their door! I laughed as once Oliwia saw my blue nail polish on my toes, she wanted hers done the same. Mommy Monde agreed so Coicia Alexandra eventually gave her a pedicure and manicure. She walked around proud as punch, showing everyone her newly colored fingers and toe nails!

Monde is an excellent cook and we enjoyed the chicken dish she prepared for us. Of course, not long after dinner, other delicacies were presented and yes, we must eat again!!

We took the bus in Krakow centrum to go back to Myselnice ~~ we were a little pompous at our independence, the two Canadians getting around as if we were long time residents of the city.

June 3rd

It was time to visit Pela Tesluk. Olkusz was 1 ½ hours by car and our friend Jerzy was kind enough to drive us. We stopped off at popular bakery and purchased some goodies for our coffee. We also bought 2 long stemmed red roses for Pela ~~ one from each of us. We knew Pela was having a tough time coming to grips with Stanislaw's passing and the fall, break and cast was the last thing she needed. Pela was to travel with us to Ukraine but realized it would be too problematic, especially in another country should she require any medical attention. Pela was so excited to see us and showered Kashunia and me with mega hugs, kisses and tears. Pela is very special to me; as was Stanislaw and I know from the letters I receive from her, there is such an outpouring of love.

We met the rest of Pela's children and grandchildren which we didn't have the opportunity when we first were there in 2003. I noticed a startling resemblance between Mare and his father Stanislaw. He was a younger Stas, very handsome.

Pela shared a lot of the family history, many new tidbits which Jerzy was good enough to translate for us when I was unable to grasp the full extent of the information being shared. Pela said I presented with "*true Tesluk genes*" and many of the family members share the same *physically powerful genes*! Of course my proud grin extended from ear to ear!!

Artek, Pela, Kashunia and I went to visit Stanislaw's resting place. We brought him flowers and lit a candle. I couldn't help but reminisce our first meeting and how dear he became to me. I was told when my first letter arrived and confirmed that we were indeed first cousins, he so looked forward to our visit. And after we departed back to Canada, Pela said he use to sit in his chair and converse with her about the family back in Canada. Every so often I still play the 2 hour video that Kashunia made during our initial visit. His words warm my heart and soul! Stanislaw and I were to travel to Laskivtsi, Ukraine together in the future but the Lord felt it was his time to come home.

June 4th

Myslenice ~~ we were getting closer to departing to Ukraine and decided to do some last minute shopping. In addition to the gifts I brought from Canada, I thought they would enjoy the delicious chocolate from Poland.....the Wawel brand is to die for!! We did our shopping and lunched near Albert's department store. Checked the internet, all was well at home.....Gary wasn't panicking and administering Nikita's medicine with no problem. Gary announced they were experiencing a major heat wave.....wait a minute now, what happened to Poland!! I was wearing a jacket and we had the heater on at night to take the chill out.

June 5th

Adam picked us up at 10:00 am and took us to the train station (poisit). The poisit was not handicap friendly, many stairs to climb and with our heavy luggage presented a challenge. When we

reached the platform we were huffing and puffing. We had 45 minutes before departure and decided to go to the Kantor to exchange some dollars into hryvnia. Closed.....oh well, we'll do in it Ukraine. 35 minutes elapsed and still no idea when our train was arriving. I was getting a little nervous as was Kashunia. We had Jadwiga go and ask the conductor of another train for information and lo and behold that train that was sitting on the tracks next to us for ½ an hour was our train!!! ~~ we had 2 minutes to get on before it departed and **they were not going to wait for us.** Our sleeper was right at the end of the train. Panic set in ~~ you should have seen the three of us go!! I was running and pulling my red suitcase behind me.....people were looking out the windows and probably thinking the “dumb Canadians”!! I reached a point where I couldn't run and pull my suitcase any longer. Kashunia and I traded suitcases as hers was lighter and I continued but not as “leader of the pack”. There is a story to the quote “leader.....” Kashunia announced that if she had to throw herself at the conductor to make him wait for us, she would have done so. Well we made it but barely, just inside the doorway and the train started its engines. All three of us were out of breath, gasping for air!! The conductor helped load our luggage.....the train started to depart and after about 10 minutes he showed us where our sleeper #21 was!! Thank heavens we got on, I hate to think of what the next step would have been had we missed our train! Somehow I doubted there was an alternative for that day!!

Once we settled down and got cozy we decided this was a great way to see the sights and it was going to be a fun trip. We felt very safe, we could lock our sleeper for added security. And we met some interesting people in the sleepers to the left and right of us. They chatted with Jadwiga and she shared our story of connecting with family for the first time and once they heard that, it sparked their interest and they wanted to know more. We shared many laughs and met a lovely young Ukrainian lady, Diane. She spoke English quite well, and was on her way to L'viv. She sat with us the majority of the way. When we reached Przemysl, the border crossing into Ukraine, we had a 2 hour stop-over. The trains stop here to change the gauge of the running gear on the coaches to accommodate the difference

between Poland and Ukraine. Customs officials also do their inspection of passengers, passports, visas to ensure documents are in order.

Diane took Kashunia and me into the little town for cold drinks etc. After the train wheels were changed, we boarded again, traveled for about 5-10 minutes; came to a complete stop and the Ukrainian custom officers came on board. I looked out the window and could see the dogs sniffing under the train to see if there was any contraband. Diane warned us in advance not to claim to be travelling with large sums of money, i.e. over \$1,000.00. They scrutinized our passports and visa's very carefully, identifying each one of us. I failed to fill out one question on their Deklaracja Celna document and was questioned about that. They were very official looking; in green/grey uniforms.....no smiles appeared from their Ukrainian faces!! It was interesting after we passed their inspection, the people travelling in the next sleeper encountered problems. They were interrogated for quite some time and we could hear the commotion. In a way it was exciting, like taken out of the movies but in real life, happening while we were there!! Finally, whatever the problem was got resolved and we were back on track!!

We were surprised that there wasn't a dining car on our train ~~ only tea or coffee was served and if one didn't pack a lunch, well one didn't get supper!! I couldn't help but notice the graffiti in the little towns we passed. In Krakow, too, it seems every second building had the artistic touch of graffiti. I remember chatting with Oskar, Jadwiga's oldest grandson and he confirmed it is widely accepted and no one is punished for ruining public property. I told him in Canada that is against the law and if one is caught spray painting graffiti, they are either fined or must perform a certain amount of work in the community to compensate for damages done. Many teenagers also have the task of cleaning up the mess they created.

June 6th

We arrived into Ternopil (Terebovlia established 1064) at 2:30 am after a 14 hour train ride. We didn't sleep a wink! Of course it was raining and cool!! We were met by Misha and his wife Alina. They had reserved 2 taxis as they were expecting 5 ladies. It worked out well as the luggage we had with us warranted 2 cars. We had a 1 ½ hour taxi ride from Ternopil to Anton's farm in the village.

4:00 am we arrive in the village of Laskivtsi. The roads are in bad condition and very muddy. The cars could not make it to Anton's house so we had a little distance to go by foot from the taxi to the house. I could feel my shoes sinking into the mud. I later learned that it wasn't only mud I was walking through!

My heart ached when I saw Misha carry my heavy suitcase on his back. We received a wonderful welcome and Anton and his wife Slavka and family couldn't have been more hospitable! 4:00 in the morning and we have a feast in front of us, herring, headcheese, kielbasa, cheese, ham, bread, pickles, desserts, and of course, Ukrainian whiskey, wine and vodka. We had many toasts and shared many laughs. Just as I was getting ready to go to bed, Oleh, Misha's son was sitting up in bed looking puzzled and wondered about the Canadians. I grabbed the red Canadian teddy bear and gave it to him. He took it hesitantly but we discovered later in the day, it was proudly displayed with all of his stuffed animals.

We retired for a nap at 6:00 am and awoke at 11:00 am to Daisy (we named her!!) the cow a-mooing, chickens, roosters, baby ducks and geese creating a ruckus. Time for the Canadians to get up! Such is life on the farm!! Of course my bed had to be next to the window which faced their play area!!

As I ventured to use the outdoor bathroom, I found my sandals from last night cleaned of the mud; no trace of mud on any of our shoes!

The family has no running water so bath time was from a large plastic bowl. Every morning Alina would prepare a warm bowl of water for each of us to freshen up. It reminded me of when I was a child and we use to bathe in a huge aluminum tub.....no bathtubs were around then!

Their means of survival are from the cow, chickens, geese, turkeys and the garden that they plant. They make their own sugar, milk, cheese, bread, flour etc. Many times Alina takes her goodies into Ternopil to the bazaar to make some money.

June 7th

We decided to walk into the village and Slavka wanted to show us around. Oleh joined us and he was such a little man. He had his Canada hat on and folded his jacket ever so neatly over his arm and skipped along!

I felt as if I had gone back in time.....I walked the ground my mother worked on and saw the house the family lived in.....of course it was inhabitable. I felt very sad and many emotions ran through me. I tried to visualize Babcia Tekla raising the 6 young children on her own. Grampa Dinta died of a heart attack at a very young age, 33, leaving Tekla with a large family to look after. From the stories my mother told me they all worked hard, whether it be in the garden or the quarry to have food on the table.

As we passed Babica Tekla's house, we noticed a woman working the fields. Slavka knew Maria; we waved and we started walking towards each other. We stopped to chat with Maria Rogatinska who was approximately 85 years of age. She took a look at me and called me by my mother's name. She thought I was my mother, Olga and we both started crying. The same for Jadwiga as she knew her mother too and thought Jozefa and Olga had come back to the village. We taped Maria for 1 hour ~~ she was of sound mind but not body, crippled with osteoarthritis she still tended to her garden for survival. Maria had many stories to share of Babica Tekla and the

family. She remembered them all when she was a young lady. She offered us bread and lard.....that was all she had, nothing else in her cupboard. I discreetly left U.S. dollars on her table when we left.

We met Vladimir Szalapska who knows our first cousin, Robert Tesluk in Paris very well. We extended our best wishes and told him that we would let Robert know that we had indeed met. His wife Anna was in Ternopil for a medical appointment so we did not meet.

Every person that I passed on the village road, I wished them a good day in Ukrainian. Of course they were curious as we walked with family members and Oleh was wearing his new cap that read CANADA!! It seems that they knew ahead of time that we were visiting as they kept asking Slavka when we arrived. It was obvious the neighbours worked the land for their day to day survival. Some were crippled with arthritis, their faces weathered from the hot sun and harsh winters. One could not help but look at their hands that again confirmed hard work. I reflected quickly at our life back home and how grateful I was.

We were so close to the cemetery where our grandfather, Dinta was buried. All of a sudden the skies turned dark and it started pouring. We ran and quickly made our way back to the farm soaked to the skin! I will have Misha take some photos for us of Grandpa Dinta's resting place.

I also learned that **the TESLUK family history goes back to the Rakoczy Franciszek II, era 1676-1735!** I was quite surprised and when time permits, I will certainly research the name.

I was saddened at the stories that Anton and Slavka shared with us and the hardships they encountered. The communists have raped Ukraine of all good and left behind a weak starving nation. The last 25 years of Soviet control just let every facet of life go down the drain. Cities, buildings, roads and utilities are all a shamble. The people struggle on, losing any hope of an improvement in their lives and country. The older generation is not concerned about themselves but

worry about their children and grandchildren. It is their deep faith in their religion that keeps them going. There was Anton out every day taking the cow to pasture to ensure the supply of daily fresh milk; Slavka tending to the garden to ensure a good harvest and milking the cow for their fresh milk. Misha bringing the much needed water supply from the well; helping to clean and feed the livestock area which houses the geese, chickens, and turkey. Misha would also travel into Ternopil to get whatever work he could at the time to bring in some additional dollars. This is not what I was led to believe; I thought that life was a little better for them and with time would improve considerably.

June 8th

Misha rented a van for the day to show us the sights. We spent a little bit of time in Ternopil and surrounding villages. We visited a popular parkette on a large lake in centro Ternopil. Near the parkette was a Dysko Club Maksym (Maximes Disco Club); it was comical to see that they still exist!!

I learned the “Stork” is the guardian of Ukrainian homes! ~~ whereas in Canada it symbolizes the “birth of a newborn”.

The monument erected in 1982 honoring the famous Taras Shevchenko, the Ukrainian Poet and folk hero, era 1814 – 1861 was beautiful and certainly a tourist attraction.

We briefly visited the Nativity of the Christ Church in Ternopil; one could have spent considerable time to capture all the beauty but our time was limited.

Misha suggested we have a Ukrainian pizza lunch ~~ Oleh was excited; this was a real treat for him and one of his favorites. I enjoyed it but I didn't care for ketchup on mine!! The apple doughnuts were to die for!!

We continued our journey to visit one special church that Misha and Alina wanted us to see. The one of great significance with an interesting history was the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Zarvanytsia. Apparently in 2000, there was a pilgrimage of 750,000 people who visited the miraculous icon of the Mother of God of Zarvanytsia. Pictures do not do justice to this work of art! We did the Stations of the Cross and continued to the gazebo that housed the faucets through which the spring waters flows to fill our bottles to bring home with us.

According to legend, in the 13th century the Mother of God appeared to a monk who was fleeing the Mongol invasion that had destroyed Kyiv. On the banks of the Strypa River, he prayed to her for protection. In his sleep he had a vision of the Mother of God with two angels hovering beside her. She smiled and touched the monk with her cloak. As he awoke, he saw a brilliant light beaming near the river. Approaching it he came upon an icon of the Mother of God with Jesus in her arms. Eventually the monk constructed a church and an adjoining monastery. Over the centuries many cases of miraculous healing have been recorded. It is interesting to note that during the Soviet era, Communist Party officials repeatedly tried to cap the wellspring but to no avail. When they covered one fountain, water would burst forth from another.

History documents the Pilgrims, who continued to visit the shrine often would be met by local militia with dogs or barbed wire to dissuade believers from entering. Although the faithful could not avoid the dogs, more often than not barbed wire erected one day would be pitched into the Strypa by the next.

We visited the local market in Ternopil where deals were certainly to be had. You name it and it was there; from food to clothing, shoes, music cassettes etc. Kashunia got a pair of beautiful pink shoes for \$10.00 US....I was envious as they did not cater to size 11's ~~ I imagined it would be a popular size. Weren't all the baba's big boned with big feet?!! Only this baba I think!!

It was upsetting to see woman standing on the sidewalk with baby puppies and kittens to sell! I glanced quickly and turned away as it was pulling on my heart strings!

We spent time meeting Anton's children and their respective husbands and wives along with the grandchildren:

1. Daughter Anna with her beautiful daughter Victoria; Anna is a widow.
2. Son Vladimir and daughter Maria;
3. Son Dmytrol with his son Ivan and daughter Zoriana;
4. Daughter Nadia with son Dmytro and daughter Liuda;
5. Daughter Oksana and their sons Kolia, Bahrat and Tolia.

It was a lot of names to remember in the Holodiuk family!!

We were spoiled with great borscht, chicken soup, mouth watering cabbage rolls, pierohy to name a few. Alina baked very fancy desserts and of course we had to sample them all. We had three meals a day and were expected to eat or they would be offended. Alina's homemade cheese was like a havarti here in Canada. I wasn't shy about going back for more! I enjoyed the homemade bread; it reminded me so much of my mother's when I was a child.

It was nearing our time for departure. We promised each other that we would stay in touch and Alina and Misha took me aside and asked if I would help with their immigration papers to come to Canada. They knew their life in Ukraine was not going to get any better and they wanted to offer their son Oleh a better life, with security and a promising future. I told them upon my return to Canada that I would check into what is required and will advise them.

The goodbyes were difficult; we received Ukrainian cassettes and beautiful Ukrainian napkins, table cloths, pillow cases that were cross stitched by both Slavka and Alina. Alina and Misha presented us with a beautiful framed photo of the Mother Mary and Baby Jesus.

We were touched by their generosity and the tablecloth and pillow cases will be cherished as they were made by family members.

June 9th

We boarded the bus to L'viv where we were going to explore and connect with Ihor who had done some research for me. He works at the Opera House and hoped to have tickets for us. I was excited at the thought of taking in a Ukrainian operetta. I didn't tell Kashunia until we were there as I wanted to surprise her.

The bus was packed; I gather there was no limit to how many people are allowed to travel. I was grateful we bought our tickets in advance as it gave us "reserved seating". Just before we departed, a man came on board and started speaking in Ukrainian his tale of woe, showing us his surgical site on his shoulder and begged for money so he could continue with his medical care. A few moments later, a young woman stands in front of all the passengers and tells about her poverty, children that are hungry. She, too proceeded to lift up her blouse to show us the surgical scar that removed her breast. I was shocked that they would allow this. The bus driver was back on board and didn't interfere in her begging. I felt very sad for these people but something told me not to contribute money as I didn't need to draw attention to the group of 3 ladies traveling together.

It rained all the way into L'viv so we were not able to get a good glimpse of the country side. We arrived at the bus station around 6:00 pm and I proceeded to buy a telephone card and called Iryna who would be giving us the keys to the apartment we rented for 3 days. Well to my surprise I was informed that there was a change in accommodation and I needed to call Lada our travel agent in Kiev! We were wet, cold, and hungry. I just had a terrible feeling about this; we had paid for our accommodation in advance while still in Canada. However, I remembered surfing the internet and looking at Hotel George's website in L'viv. If worse came to worse, we could stay there. Visa would come to the rescue!!

I called Lada and she apologized profusely. She would explain about the apartment later but had arranged for accommodation for us with a family member. I was relieved as it was not just I but also Kashunia and Jadwiga. Marian and Alexandra Hnativ would put us up for the time we needed. She gave me their address and said to take a cab and Marian would meet us in the lobby. A 15 hryvnia cab ride brought us to a large apartment complex. A gentleman came up to the taxi and said "49 Chernova Kalina" and I knew this was Pan Hnativ. It was kind of funny, like a secret agent approaching us for the next step!! He helped us with our luggage and we proceeded to the 7th floor of the building. We met his wife Alexandra and they showed us their home, sleeping and eating areas and low and behold a BATH TUB!!!! There was going to be a race to see who got to use the tub first!! Granted we had sponge baths every day while with Anton and family but we did miss our showers and tub soaks!! We were cautioned to fill all the pots with water in the early morning as the water system is shut off until 6:00 pm. The reason for this was the government could not afford to supply every household with water.

Marian offered to show us around the next day if we wished. They were going to stay with friends in another building and left us a number in case of emergency. We were to call if we had any questions or concerns. They were a delightful couple!

Lada called and explained that Iryna had changed her mind as she wanted her apartment to be rented for a longer timeframe. Lada had sent an email to me advising us of the change but we were no where close to an internet café in Ternopil. The first apartment was supposedly right in Centrum L'viv but the Marian's apartment was quite a distance and not tourist friendly, i.e. walking to everything. It all worked out fine in the end and we did get to know a little more about Marian in the coming days.

Kashunia hit the bath tub!! I was second ~~ it rejuvenated us all!! The rain continued to pour and we weren't going to venture out so we dined on Alina's cheese, home made bread, cucumbers and

tomatoes. A cup of tea later and we were ready for bed. It had been a long day.

The next morning we awoke to continued rain, cool temperatures and windy conditions. How were we going to explore L'viv with this inclement weather? Well, we decided to venture out regardless. We took the local bus which cost us 1 hryvnia to the market area. One couldn't help but notice the beautiful cross stitch towels, shirts and pillow cases. We did price them only to discover they were quite expensive. I got a warm feeling knowing that the towels and pillow cases that we were bringing home was made with love by Alina and Slavka. We did a little bit of shopping and then took a taxi to a large department store. Jadwiga wanted to bring her son-in-law in Krakow a bottle of the very good Ukrainian white whiskey!! The food area of the department store was large; we bought a few things for supper and then decided to find a nice restaurant to have lunch. Jadwiga kept mentioning seeing a McDonalds and even the cab driver suggested it I spoke up immediately; there was no way we traveled this distance to eat in McDonalds!!!! I think Jadwiga was a little disappointed as I think that is one of her vice's but I stood my ground.

We passed an accident site that was very upsetting. The poor woman was hit by a car, obviously not alive, only her face was covered and she just lay there on the grass. Paramedics were on site but slow in transferring her to the hospital.

We were back in Centrum L'viv and walked until we found a quaint "tea room" tucked away in a little side street. It was called "Zatyshno ta smachno v Ameli" ~~ translated it says **"Cosy and Tasty in Ameli"**. We enjoyed a great lunch; Jadwiga had fish, Kashunia chicken and I had veal. Presentation was beautiful and the food delicious. The dining room was elegant and reminded me of Paris ~~ that one would find this in the City of Light! It was most impressive for L'viv!

We discovered in Ukraine they call their cars “machines” that was quite comical! It took us a while to figure that out and when the “terminology” was used, I had to quickly re-focus my thoughts to “a car”!! The majority of the men we saw in Ukraine carried mini purses. I see a bit of that in Toronto but certainly not to the extent as in Ukraine. It seemed that everyone was carrying a “cell phone”!

The liquor is very cheap as are the cigarettes, I believe \$1.00 a pack. Also their gasoline (petro) is very reasonable and cheaper than Poland. Many of the people from Poland cross into the Ukraine to purchase their petro, cigarettes and whiskey. We were told a lot of them smuggle larger quantities than allowed. If they are caught, the customs officials do not confiscate the goods, rather they are turned back to Ukraine and must dispose of the excess; either selling it to someone or smoke the cigarettes and drink the whiskey! Certainly a little different than Canadian customs!!

We were told the people that were fortunate enough to hold jobs had a salary of 50 hryvnia a month!! ~~ One US dollar is equivalent to 5 hryvnia. I don't know how these people survive and feed their families on such a meager salary.

I was unable to do any research due to time constraints, problems with the Archives office in L'viv and the weather. And of course, I didn't connect with my friend Olga's family in Ternopil. It was difficult to leave the village of Laskivtsi, number one, there were no running buses and I knew that Anton and family would have been upset. Even the time that we spent with them, they voiced it was much too short. I had originally set the agenda as Anna, Anton's niece was expected to travel with us and I wanted to give them some private time together. As written in the first part of my journal, unfortunately that did not materialize.

I must comment on the washroom facilities and toilet paper ~~ it was a real culture shock to say the least!! Many were “paid toilets” and one that comes to mind was the one at the bus depot. After payment, one is given a little square paper and a rude awakening waits when

you enter the toilet stall. It's difficult for someone to visualize if they haven't traveled Europe. I did take a photo of what we were faced with and one certainly appreciates the facilities we have at home!

We found Visa was not widely accepted in Ukraine. In Ternopil, I doubt any merchant would have that available. In L'viv it was a little more cosmopolitan and we were able to use it in a few places.

We noticed the women seemed to take a liking to burgundy colors for their hair, some of which we found to be extreme.

People are allowed to drink their beer on the streets, however, liquor could not be consumed in that manner.

Saturday, June 11th

It was time to think of our mode of transportation back to Krakow. On Friday we chatted with Marian who did a little bit of research for us. We found the train and auto bus was problematic in getting us back into Krakow at a decent time. They were all travelling into the early morning hours and we wanted to avoid another 2:30 am arrival as we did in Ternopil. The auto buses did not have washrooms on board so that ruled that out.

Marian offered to drive us back to Krakow.....what a kind gentleman!! We thought about it and decided to take him up on his offer. We pooled our resources, the money that we would have spent on the auto bus or train, along with additional dollars to make it worth his while. We left Saturday at 10:00 am ~~ again it was pouring cats and dogs. We arrived at the border at noon to approximately a 500 car line up. Once you see the photos you will understand why we let Marian take the action he did. It was obvious he traveled between Ukraine and Poland many times and knew some of the strategies that work in getting through customs. He gave \$\$ to the border police and eventually we were able to pass to a certain point. After another 1/2 hour wait, we again paid the officer (very discretely) and he let us pass to an area that brought us closer to

customs. We were told to put our cameras and camcorder away as it may appear that we are photographing a bribery and exchange of \$\$\$\$. Marian went over his story with us ~~ the information he told customs officials and we were to agree should we get questioned. He told the officers that he had been asked to drive us back to Krakow as we were from Canada and had a plane to catch. They gathered all of our passports, again a few more \$\$\$\$. It was another 1/2 hour before we reached entry into Poland. Customs opened the trunk but didn't search our suitcases and never asked what we were bringing back. Whew.... We didn't need further delays even though we complied with all customs protocol. In total, it took us 1 1/2 hours vs a 10 hour wait, thanks to Marian! We were 260 km from Krakow and proceeded along East 40 highway.

After a 4 hour drive through Poland, again rain in many places, we arrived at Monde's home (Jadwiga's daughter). Everyone was happy to see us back and wanted to hear about our trip. Adam of course had a big smile on his face as we each brought him back a bottle of white Ukrainian whiskey!!

We had a celebration that evening and were to bed by midnight. It was a long trip in a very small "machine". Marian mentioned that his car was from Russia.

On Sunday Kashunia and I did a little bit of shopping at one of the biggest shopping centre in Krakow. It was not far from Jadwiga's apartment. The stores ranged from H & M, Pepe Jeans, Top Secret to name a few. We also realized that we needed to get organized again for our trip back to Canada. Where did the time go to!?!?

On Monday, Pela and Jadwiga arrived to spend some time with us. We had a lovely dinner, borscht with boiled eggs in it!! That was a first for me and I'm not sure I like it served like that.

We received lovely gifts from Pela. Crystal bowls and candy dishes and Kashunia a beautiful blue blouse. It was difficult to say goodbye

to Pela but in my heart I knew that Kashunia and I would be back to visit our special cousin!

The flight home was a smooth sailer until we reached Toronto where we circled for over 1 hour due to an electrical storm. Gary was there to greet two tired travelers!!

The memories from this trip will stay with me forever as they tenderly touched my heart and soul. Anton and his family are a very loving family who struggle from day to day to survive. Even with Anton's handicap, (he stepped on a hand grenade at the tender age of 8 and lost his leg), he has such a zest for life and he doesn't let that interfere. And talk about a sense of humor!! He was a darling! As was Slavka!!

When I came home, I was very relieved to get into my comfortable home, my comfort zone and shake off the sadness of Ukraine. I had a desperate need to help my family in Ukraine survive. I didn't waste any time in putting together parcels that were sent to Anton and family through MEEEST.

Unfortunately, I did not learn more about my father Andreas. However, it was pointed out to me that my answers should be found in the archives in Hannover, Germany. The International Tracing Organization confirmed his registration in Hannover in 1946. I need to re-trace a number of steps with hopes that it will open a few doors for me. That is my ultimate desire and goal, to find some answers that will gently close the chapter, thus allowing me to visit his final resting place and pay homage to a wonderful man that I did not get a chance to have in my life. I look at my son Douglas and look at the photograph of Andreas and I can see traces of my Father in my Son's face!

And so the journey continues.....

Alexandra