Russians Experience America "Daemen-Style"

by Michael Schroeder

A group of Russian students received a working knowledge of American culture, customs, and language from a group of Buffalo teachers, which included two members of the Daemen College family. Daemen College professor, Dr. Richard Sokolowski, led the teachers including Daemen College education student Michael Schroeder. The group, named River Cities Sister Cities Program and consisted of clergy, civil servants, retirees, and homemakers, as well as teachers and students. The group left Buffalo in late June and returned in late July after stops in Moscow, Tver, and St Petersburg.

The students were divided into six groups depending on their proficiency with the English language. The instructors were separated into groups of two, and were assigned a different set of students each day. The daily change allowed the students and teachers the opportunity to get to know everyone involved, and maintain a high level of interaction.

After five days of extensive sightseeing in Moscow, the group traveled two hours to the city of Tver to begin their teaching workshops. The teachers covered topics like government, religion, education, travel, finance and family in a normal classroom environment. Each mornings lesson was enhanced by a video presentation on the same subject matter, providing a visual segment that rounded out each lesson.

In the afternoons, each teacher was responsible for preparing a unique workshop that centered on a subject that he or she was very familiar with. Workshops were conducted in dance, music, sports, cities around the globe, American first ladies, and personal safety, to name just a few. Students were also treated to a Christmas in July celebration, which featured traditional Christmas songs, presents, a Christmas tree, and a visit from St. Nicholas, red suit and all.

Following a formal graduation ceremony, the group departed for St. Petersburg. On the sightseeing agenda in the former Leningrad, was the palace of Catherine the Great, the world-famous Hermitage Art Museum, and the Summer Palace of Peter the Great. The sights in St. Petersburg and Moscow were equally dazzling, but while St. Petersburg projected a definite Western influence, Moscow still looked like an Eastern-bloc city.

Just what can a trip like this offer to a college student? For one, it can offer a unique insight into an unfamiliar culture. The group was able to see average living conditions, medical facilities, textile factories, governmental offices, and churches in the midst of reconstruction that until recently were state owned.

Secondly, you can start lasting friendships with the people you meet. Most people that the group encountered on the trip, especially in the city of Tver, were genuinely warm and friendly. Families that had very limited resources were more than willing to provide food and hospitality, even though they had trouble providing for themselves.

Finally, you can grow in knowledge and as an individual. By visiting a country that is struggling with the process of a historic change, you come to appreciate the democracy that we live in. But more importantly, by meeting people that ask nothing more of you than to offer them hope and friendship, your appreciation for life changes forever.

THEMEN

A Clothing Drive for the victims of war-torn Bosnia is being organized by the Community Service Office. Donations of old/new eyeglasses to benefit the needy people in third world countries are now being collected by the Community Service Office. Please donate either new or used clothing to support this effort.

A Bike-A-Thon is scheduled for Saturday, October 16 in front of Wick Center. Come on out, have some fun, and get some exercise while you help raise funds for a worthy cause.

For more information on these programs please contact the Community Service Office located in Canavan Hall.
Sincerity in Mourning

by Courtney Reed

This is the second person I've known to have died at a very young age. What is there to say, really. The night is warm, but very isolated; empty. How do others react to the news? How are people affected by it? You could know a person for a 1000 years and the reaction would be the same; empty. The news leaves me empty, shaky, unable to even cry.

No one knows how to mourn for the dead. This inability to mourn affects people in very strange ways. I would like to gather with those who knew him, but there are certain people that I wish not to share my grief with. The people who really need support now are his family, but not knowing them I feel that my contact would be an empty gesture. There are very few people I would like to share my grief with.

The other night I was thinking about how I should apologize to him for my self-described "bitchy" behavior, but I chose another to apologize to. I have no regrets; just emptiness right now; not even sad; just empty; no sleep empty. I think about him and the people who knew him, and how some of them felt about him, and how they will react to this, and wonder how sincere it will be. Sincerity, sincerity...in mourning. Were these people sincere when he was alive?

I am empty because there is a space in my life that wasn't there before; because a story, a human story has just run its course and has ended. Just as if the story was supposed to end; empty...alone. This is the way our lives must end. We cannot regret the way his story or anyone else's story ends, just maintain the memory somehow, the whole memory, the whole story, because that is a part of our lives; the memory.

This is no time for insincerity, but a time to figure out how to mourn. How do you understand the process of life and death in your life? How do you see it and accept it in your own life? How does one feel and sympathize with other people's pain? Does a false sense of security grip you when you don't feel anything, but feel obligated to react somehow, or do you feel alone and empty, because that is what the situation demands?

He is no longer with us. The night is hot. Rain is falling right now. This will be among the memories I have of him. I am in this self-imposed exile, because I do not want to hear the questions and accusations that accompany this type of event; the false sincerity that comes with this type of event, because people have forgotten how to mourn. It is a solitary practice that requires reflection. It is a public event that requires not words, but tears; physical reactions to what has happened, but no words. Words come when the fear, the emptiness, and the loneliness have finally past. Not that this signals some kind of return to normalcy, but it signals a return to the land of the living.

When death occurs we are with the dead. We walk in their realm of emptiness and loneliness, but we do not and cannot fear, because we are visitors for now, and we know death because it is a part of our lives, our nature, our being. We live with death everyday, so we cannot fear it, but must recognize the feelings it brings, and respect it. Respect for death is more important than respect for the dead, because if one did not respect someone while they were alive, then respect in death is an empty gesture, a false platitudinous insincerity.

We are a collection of our memories, both good and bad. We are a collection of our hopes and fears, our needs and desires. Without this, we are nothing, so we must understand life and death in relation to our lives. I will miss him, but I will remember him. I will think about him when the moment warrants it, and I will miss him.

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Compare These Job Interviews!

Job Interview With College Graduate Who Has Had CO-OP Experience

Interviewer: Why don’t we start by having you tell me about your experience.

Student: As you know, I am a Business/Marketing major. In my junior year, I had a CO-OP position at National Fuel in the Marketing Services Department. One of my responsibilities was to develop a market survey for commercial customers to determine whether we were meeting their needs regarding customer service satisfaction. I entered this information into the commercial database and prepared a report of graphs and tables illustrating the results. Ultimately the report was distributed at one of the regular staff meetings of all the company Vice Presidents.

Interviewer: That sounds like very relevant experience for the position we are currently trying to fill. Do you have any other experience?

Student: Yes. I did a second CO-OP during the first semester of my senior year. It was in the International Marketing Department at ICL, a dental equipment manufacturer. I assisted their research team in a project designed to establish basic guidelines for marketing equipment to new European and Asian markets. I learned a great deal about international trade regulations, which was the subject of my CO-OP project.

Interviewer: You have a very comprehensive resume, combining a solid academic background with experience that indicates your ability to apply the knowledge to the world of work.

Job Interview With College Graduate Who Has NOT Had CO-OP Experience

Interviewer: Why don’t we start by having you tell me about your experience.

Student: I worked at Burger King part-time while I was attending college.

Interviewer: Do you have any experience that is directly related to the position for which you have applied?

Student: No.
The title has nothing significant to do with the story. It's a taut title on everything else in Corn Cob. (The last time I came back from Corn Cob I brought back a container with three peaches and blue string.) This story is an actual event that took place this summer, in the back woods of New York State. This is where water comes from springs or wells. There is no cable, and there aren't any malls for hours, and even snow plows are afraid to drive in the winter.

"Dawna watched the lifeless body as she drove past it..."

Dawna was a black dog lying on the side of the "highway". That's what we call a road with two actual lanes and yellow lines separating them. It was obviously road kill. Dawna watched the lifeless body as she drove past it, headed for her postal job.

Her neighbors had called on an almost daily basis to let Dawna know Ninja was at their home. She always took a vehicle to pick Ninja up, since the neighbors got tired of delivering Ninja to her owner. (You must understand "neighbors" live miles apart.) Now, in Corn Cob, no one would think something bad would happen to Ninja since the "highways" are so far away. Our roads fit one and a half cars on them, not two whole cars, but seldom do two cars pass each other.

Someone had called Dawna and told her Ninja was dead. Then her children and schoolmates passed Ninja school in the bus. Dawna's husband and brother for an explanation. Her brother simply said, "He kicked her in the chest, and I blew in her mouth." Dawna looked at the dog's tags and they read "Ninja."

Dawna explained to her young children the consequences of "highways" and the meaning of life and death. She left them with blood shot eyes and sobbing to go to her night job as an RN at the hospital.

A week later, as Dawna was tending to an elderly lady at work, the lady quietly spoke; "I heard you buried my dog last night." Dawna was surprised, since this lady was a stranger. "No, no; my dog Ninja died." Dawna explained. The lady described the dog along the side of the road and it matched that of Ninja's.

"What'd you do with Ninja?"

were the first words out of Dawna's mouth when she got home. Her husband asked her what she meant and she relayed the incident at the hospital. He told her Ninja was buried up the hill. "No, really, what bank did you throw her over?!" replied Dawna.

They prepared a mock grave and lead the lady to it, so she could say her last farewells. The lady had tears in her eyes and flowers for the grave.

After the commotion, a black dog came trotting along in the woods. Again, Dawna's jaw dropped. The lady did not seem startled. Dawna turned to her husband and brother for an explanation. Her brother simply said, "He kicked her in the chest, and I blew in her mouth." Dawna looked at the dog's tags and they read "Ninja."
What In The World Is Going On?
by Patrick Mweheire

I don't know about everyone else, but I have miserably failed to fathom what is going on in the world today. Everything is in anarchy. Wars and crime seem to spring from every corner. Children are dying of starvation, while AIDS claim the lives of the rest. What the hell is going on? Somebody, help!

Environment - Human activity is altering the earth's surface and changing the atmosphere on such a scale that human beings have now become competitors with the natural forces. Look at the damage the Mississippi caused, or the devastation hurricane Andrew caused in Florida. It's now rumored that North Carolina is next on the list. Looks like nature is pretty pissed off.

"Looks like nature is pretty pissed off."

Military - We have entered an era where vast expenditures on military armaments are counterproductive in terms of national security. For example, both the U.S. and Russia now have a common interest in becoming weaker militarily. I am sure this has the ancient leaders of the Roman empire turning in their graves.

Government - Few governments anywhere in the world, whether democratic or totalitarian, are working well. No educational system on the whole is producing people equipped to cope with the complexities of the 21st century.

Religion is no longer sacred. Organized religion of every stripe is in crisis and people are now seeking solace in all sorts of unconventional beliefs and therapies.

Computers - Trillions of calculations per second, a speed which divorces time from any human comprehension. We solve problems now in seconds which in bygone years would have taken armies of people working their entire lifetimes to solve. Carnegie Mellon University predicts that within twenty years, robots will possess the same awareness of their existence as human beings, have as much intelligence or more, and exercise our kind of common sense. Isn't that a scary thought?

Emotional upset is another aspect of the changing context. In the past two decades the number of psychiatrists, psychologists and clinical workers has doubled. Can we assume that our ancestors were never depressed or emotionally upset by the idea of having to hunt for food everyday?

What does all this mean? Probably, that we do not have the faintest idea of who we are or what we are doing! Basically, we have a culture that tells us that there is nothing beyond material acquisition, sensual pleasure, or technical wizardry. This very culture contradicts itself, because we have more military hardware but feel less secure. We have more sophisticated technology, but are increasingly unclear on what our human purposes are. We have greater wealth and more leisure, but it's not producing more happiness and contentment. We have better communication systems, but do we have a better sense of community as a result?

What should we do? Quite frankly, I haven't the slightest idea; except that we must see things in a new perspective. We must see the globe as a whole, one human community with a common destiny. For none of the major issues we face can be resolved within a national context; not the environment, not racism, not third world debt, not drugs or even AIDS.

"Where are you from with such a nice accent?" "Haiti", I reply. At the naming of my origin, his expression turns from near to distant. "I'm sorry," he says, "I have an appointment to keep." I ask him if something's wrong because he looks so startled. "Oh," he mumbles, "if you're Haitian, you must know Voodoo."

I am intrigued to the point that my appetite is reduced to a cup of water. I feel as if I have been labelled a Voodoo witch, and in my room are dolls and pins and zombies that I can use to harm the next person who talks to me. I feel like the stereotype of my Haitian brothers and sisters in the movie The Serpent and the Rainbow, or like the walking dead in the cult classic Night of the Living Dead. What does it matter that I have lived in Haiti for a lifetime but have never experienced anything remotely related to Voodoo?

This is not to say that Voodoo does not exist. Drugs exist in the United States, but the vast majority of citizens are clean.

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Pins and Needles and Zombies by Linda Montas

It's 1:00, and time for lunch. Usually the cafeteria is crowded by now, but I am lucky to find a good seat; one by the window. A guy approaches my table and asks if he can sit down. We look out the window at the trees that are on the edge of turning red. We eat, and we talk. "I like your accent," he says, "I like the compliment, and so I keep talking."