

The ARNIC Observer

The English-Speaking Union of the United States (ESUUS)

Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)

Winter 2015

Volume 3, Issue 3

“When everything seems
to be going against you,
remember that the airplane
takes off against the wind,
not with it.”
— Henry Ford

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Iced Land

BY ANGELA SOKOLOVA (RUSSIA)



A baby seal on the Bering Sea shore

Photo from Angela's archives

I ADORE THE EXTRAORDINARY NATURE OF CHUKOTKA, its boundless snow, open spaces, endless sky, Polar light, a short summer with incredible quantities of mushrooms, berries and fish. I love the ocean with huge ice floes and polar bears — the "Lords of the Arctic" — peacefully rocking on them. Such natural, unspoiled and beautiful places are rare around the world.

There are no roads to there. There are no railways to this cold and splendid land. The sole means of reaching the picturesque bays and fjords of the Chukchi peninsula is by airplane. The Bering Strait separates this land from Alaska, which is located in the eleventh time zone, where the sun rises all day long and time begins.

This is a land of permafrost, countless snowstorms, and unending frozen desert. Russians come to this land between the Arctic and Pacific Oceans for work. They live there 10-30 years, then they go back to the continent. They earn three times as much as they could in central Russia.

The vast hilly landscape is covered in moss, tiny birch trees and grass. The summer is very short, only July and August, with white nights of seemingly eternal sunlight. The winter is long, with the temperature dropping to 40

to 45 degrees below zero Celsius, crystalline with the Polar lights. The land itself is very rich in natural minerals: gold ore, loose gold, oil, natural gas, tin, antimony, tungsten, mercury, uranium, coal and even marble.

Animals, birds and fishes included in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation and therefore endangered inhabit Chukotka. Vrangal Island is the maternity hospital of the polar bears, and the largest rookery of walruses and exotic birds, that nest on hills in tiers of wings, in the world. Hunting polar bears, musk ox, walruses and other species in this nature preserve is prohibited.

Native tribes like the Chukchi, Eskimo and Evenk also populate the frozen tundra. Chukotka people are hospitable and open to newcomers. Inhabitants of Chukotka live in accordance with the Law of the Arctic — whoever you are, even a stranger, you will be helped and supported. Reindeer breeding and hunting and fishing sea animals underpin the economy. You can find overcoats and boots hand made from deer hide and seal fur. Bone carving is also popular. The bones and the tusks of mammoth sea walruses are very valuable.

The Chukots are cheerful, fun-loving folk. Every summer they hold the Beringian Festival where master craftsmen display their wares and folk from all over Chukotka compete in national sports. Rivers, creeks and frozen bays accommodate winter sports such as snowmobiling, and Alpine or crosscountry skiing. Arctic games, uncommon in other parts of Russia, include running with a stick, lasso throwing, races atop reindeer and dogs, Eskimo and triple national jumps. Ice fishing on the sea or on the lake is a national pastime.

I love the place of my birth for its uniqueness, traditions, ceremonies, holidays and events. All of this is part of me. This native land occupies an irreplaceable place in my life. Courageous, kind and sympathetic people live there, capable of coming to the rescue in minutes, of geologists, scientists, miners, aviators, fisherman, and hunters, to name only a few types of homesteaders and visitors, from all stations and walks of life.



Photo from Angela's archives

The reporter bottle-feeding a baby walrus

Cold Winter? Hot Theater!

BY GYUNHYEONG KIM (KOREA)

HI EVERYBODY WHO LIVES IN NYC, this beautiful city especially in winter. I hope that's the case because this is my first winter here. I can imagine the city covered with snow, all white, maybe icicles at the end of eaves, ice skating or snowball fighting in Central Park or skiing upstate. It is all wonderful to imagine.

In this season, there is a way to avoid the cold — go inside. Which inside? Inside Broadway.

People must know what "Broadway" means. It is a broad avenue running southeast to northwest in Manhattan. However, when it comes to the theater, "Broadway" has a different meaning. By general definition, it refers to the theatrical performances presented in the 40 professional theaters with 500 or more seats located in the Broadway Theater District and Lincoln Center in Manhattan. We call relatively small theaters which are outside the area off-Broadway, and off-off-Broadway describes small theaters where the performances usually try to be "experimental." Yes, Broadway means theater, and for many theatergoers it especially means musical theater.

First, the new ones, the newest of which might be *Fun Home* (12) [The number locates the theater on the accompanying map], which won five Tony awards this year and "is an emotional roller-coaster ride, a grippingly heartwarming story mixed with...smart and joyful musical numbers..." according to *The Huffington Post*. And we have *Hamilton* (33), which debuted this summer and won the 2015 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical. There are also *An American in Paris* (31), *Kinky Boots* (1) written by pop icon Cindy Lauper, and *Tuck Everlasting* (9) based

on Natalie Babbitt's children's novel about immortality

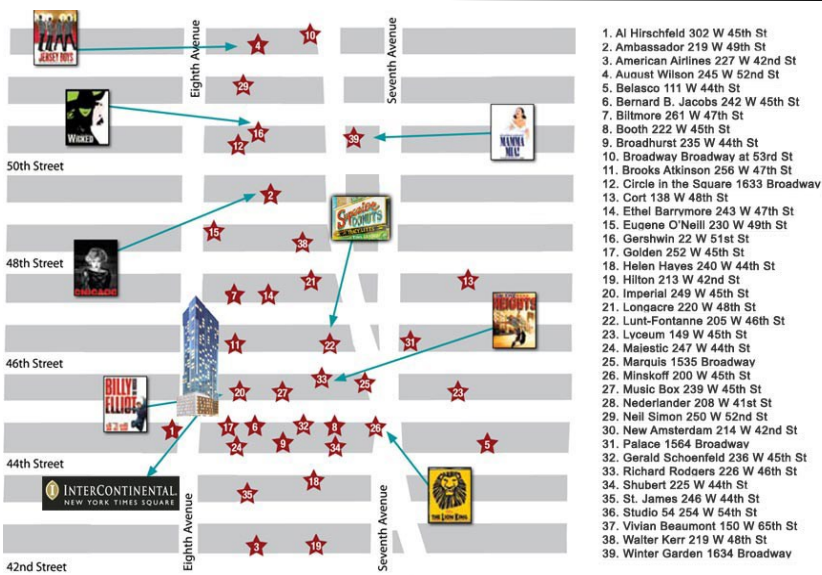
How about the perennial favorites? *The Phantom of the Opera* (24) and *Les Miserables* (20), two of the most famous musicals in the world, created in 1986 and 1980 respectively, still appeal to audiences with their intriguing stories and dramatic music; they are, in a word, the best. We also have *Fiddler on the Roof* (10) dating from 1964 and the riveting *Chicago* (2) created in 1975.

Other choices stimulate our childhood dreams such as *Lion King* (26), *Matilda* (34), *Aladdin* (30) and *Wicked* (16). Astonishingly, three of these four originated from Walt Disney Studio animations. Viva Walt Disney!

Besides these, we have *The Book of Mormon* (15), a Tony and Grammy Award winner in 2011, *The Color Purple* (6), *Jersey Boys* (4) — a story about the 70s teen idol group the Four Seasons, *On Your Feet!* (25), *School of Rock* (39), and *Something Rotten!* (35).

Genres range from comedy and tragedy to fairy tale and blockbuster, meaning there's something for everyone. As you can see, there are many new musicals. Unfortunately, what disappoints me at times is the fact that the new musicals are not really all that new; almost every new musical is based on a famous novel or movie or other work of art. It is true that these re-imagined shows can be quite good, but I prefer to see original new shows newly created and produced.

Many people go to the 200-odd theatres in New York City to keep warm and heat up their minds and spirits every night. In an interview with an actor in *Lion King*, the redoubtable Oprah Winfrey pronounced that "The Broadway show is life changing." Really? To what extent? Check it out yourself by immersing yourself deeply in one of NYC's theaters.



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Editorial

Immigration Is a Hot Potato Issue

EVERYONE is concerned about immigration, both legal and illegal. It’s about conflict and exclusion and has become a political football.

Fear of strangers, a kind of ingrained xenophobia, permeates their concerns. One presidential hopeful has characterized a large group of undocumented immigrants as terrorists, murderers, rapists, and thieves who should be deported. The *Washington Post* reports nearly fifty percent of Republican-leaning registered voters agree with this.

Other concerns about immigrants are that they take jobs away from real Americans and burden the economy by gaming the system and taking advantage of social welfare programs. Granted, some illegal immigrants are willing to work for lower wages and their employers do not pay social security or provide health insurance for them. The overriding fear is that this results in lowering the wages and decreasing the number of jobs available to less well-paid legal citizens. Overlooked is the fact that the 11.4 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. collectively paid \$11.84 billion in state and local taxes in 2012, the last year such data was available.

Also, immigration opponents claim they threaten to transform American society for the worse due to the supposed facts that they are poorly educated, have too many kids, and refuse to assimilate themselves into the existing cultural fabric. Plus, they dress funny, eat strange foods that smell, they’re lazy and always drunk, take drugs, and don’t bathe often enough. On top of that, they come from unknown places—dark holes—nobody cares about, and they speak languages nobody understands. These stereotypes are reminiscent of nativist views about Catholics, Jews, and immigrants from southern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.

An old saying goes “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” While a few individuals may fit the stereotype, the vast majority of immigrants are a diverse lot who bravely left their native country to build a new and better life. These people do not come here to fail.

According to the Census Bureau, 33 percent of newcomers are engineers, 27 percent are mathematicians, statisticians, and computer scientists, and 24 percent are physical scientists. Twenty-five percent of medical doctors and 40 percent of nurses in the U.S. are foreign born or foreign educated. An estimated 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies like Google, Yahoo! and eBay have been started by immigrants or their children. In fact, immigrants are now twice as likely as native-born Americans to start a new business, says a recent issue of *Esquire*. These businesses create market value and jobs, employing people on the local level, who live, work, and spend money in their local communities thereby boosting the economy.

No other country in the world has this diversity of races, languages, and cultures. America is called the great melting pot because we bring together all sorts of people from around the world. Diversity brings new ideas, new perspectives, and different customs, diverse strengths and skills that invigorate the culture. Immigrants give America a stronger presence on the global stage and promote a positive image of our great country.

Since its founding, America has attracted ambitious and hard-working generations of people that laid the railroads, built our cities, pioneered new industries, and launched our information age. It would be a national shame to exclude people from our country on misguided notions about fewer opportunities for all citizens, personal habits, and simplistic judgements. Unwarranted misconceptions about immigrants have no place in shaping our immigration policy.

We are on the Web:
www.esu-arnic.org
<http://newimmigrantinthecity.wordpress.com>
www.facebook.com/ESU.ARNIC
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The City Changes in Wintertime

BY MAMADOU SALIMOU BAH (GUINEA)

NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCES multiple variations of weather in spring, summer, fall and winter. After fall comes the coldest season of the year with temperatures as low as 0°F mixed, at times, with harsh winds and blowing snow.

Several things change in the City. Nowadays, technology such as TV, the Internet and apps on phones help people be prepared. All around the city, the scene is amazing; people walk fast with hands in pockets. Hats are a must, as are scarves, down jackets and boots, especially when slush is present. The views at Times Square, Grand Central 42nd Street, across Lenox and Lexington Avenues are stunning with the mix of light and shadow and people of different colors in their winter outfits.

Snowfall varies from year to year averaging 11.6 inches in January, which also averages the coldest at 27°F. Major blizzards which dump ten inches or more in one day are rare.

Retailers like Century 21, Dr. Jay, Macy’s, Gap, the Loft and others increase their sales. Steaming soup, for example, Matzo Ball at Russ & Daughter, Occidental Red Corn Pozole at Cosme, Ash Reshteh at Taste of Persia, and Hot Borscht at B&H Dairy provide sustenance.

Taxi drivers benefit in winter for many reasons: one being the greater number of visitors to the city during the Christmas holidays means increased ridership. Most city dwellers avoid driving when hazardous ice forms. During the severest storms, schools close their doors and businesses shut down for one or two days.

Alternatively, there are lots of places to ice skate — Central Park, Prospect Park — and people enjoy watching ice hockey in the parks, in stadiums, or on TV. There are also ice sculptures and ice boating. The white backdrop of snow cloaks everything making trees, sidewalks,



Union Square after a snowstorm

Photo by Mamadou

pavement, backyards, windows everywhere utterly enchanting. But it requires walkers to be prudent because the ground is slippery.

Safety measures also dictate keeping your home warm and it is rare to find people constantly out and about as in other seasons. Also, winter days are short and the nights are longer, which impacts people’s moods. Even construction workers may suspend their labors in the coldest months of January and February.

Wintertime in New York City is a beautiful time. It changes almost all appearances including what we wear and the look of the environment; it is a fashionable time and augurs splendid views of the city. Because weather conditions are unpredictable, it is imperative to be prepared to avoid injuries or accidents when snow and ice create perilous conditions. It is enjoyable to visit New York City in winter — there are great places for entertainment and to experience the magnificence of living in one of the world’s greatest cities.

The Benefits of Religion

BY KOKOU DOTCHE KOUMESSI (TOGO)

ALL OVER THE WORLD, religion occupies a special place in our societies. We make choices based on our spiritual beliefs. We attend healing services, pray in church, mosque or synagogue, practice yoga, and contemplate the sun or moon, among many other practices.

Our faith has a direct impact on our way of life. In many ways, it unites communities and helps build lives of virtue. In addition, congregation members connect with similar souls all over the world and learn how to behave, pray together, and overcome difficulties in life. It also helps them to love one another.

As a result, people, especially youth, avoid things that can destroy their life such as alcohol, drugs, and sexual abuse. Even though people fight against each other, when it comes to worship, they forget the battle and shake hands.

Pope Francis, for example, visited Washington DC, New York and Philadelphia this year and everyone joined together to greet him. It wasn’t only Roman Catholics who welcomed the Pope, but all Americans and their neighbors from all over the world.

Judaism teaches that there is one God, incorporeal and eternal, who wants all people to do what is just and merciful and learn how to pray — as many as three times daily (morning, afternoon and after sunset) from some accounts. They also learn that Judaism is the first and oldest of the three great monotheistic faiths.

The most sacred place in Islam is the Ka’ba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. A mosque built by Abraham according to Muslim tradition, Ka’ba is constructed around a black stone where the Prophet Muhammad designated Mecca as the holy city of Islam and the direction (qibla) in which all Muslims should offer their prayers. In addition to prayer, a pilgrimage to Mecca is required of every Muslim who can afford to, as one of the five pillars of the faith. Every year, about four million believers from all over the world gather for the major pilgrimage, or hajj, during the

month of dhu’l-hijja.

In my country, in 1990, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Voodoo priests organized our National Sovereign Conference, which was designed to fulfill two goals: First, to address the demand for political liberalization by being inclusive and highly visible, especially to the international community; and Second, to achieve gradual managed transition, often with the incumbent leadership. It opened up the previous one-party system by bringing together different operatives to address Togo’s political problems, formulating new constitutional rules, and establishing electoral time-tables. Religion helped the nation to achieve peaceful alterations in power as a mechanism for political transition to democracy and helped elect Joseph K. Kofigoh as our first Prime Minister.

In other lands in Africa, Voodoo is a practical religion, which plays an important role in the family and community. Ancestors, for instance, are believed to be a part of the world of the spirits, rooting its participants in their own history and traditions. The priest, through divine intervention, offers help such as healing through the use of herbs or medicines or through faith itself. Voodoo teaches a respect for the natural world resulting in harmony and peace.

In conclusion, religion helps believers accept one another and share what they have with others in need. What would the world be without religion?



Church of St. Thomas More

Photo by Kokou

Kaliady, St. Nick & Dzed Moroz

BY VOLHA TALATYNIK (BELARUS)

CHRISTMAS. Perhaps it's the most favorite holiday in the Christian world, especially for kids. They begin to write new wish-lists and Christmas cards the day after December 25. You'd think it's too early. But Belarusian kids don't think so. They are the lucky ones. They get the chance to find presents under the Christmas tree three times each winter holiday from St. Nicolas on December 25, to Dzed Moroz, who is a Slavic fictional character similar to that of Father Christmas. The literal translation is "Old Man Frost," often translated as "Grandfather Frost." Dzed Moroz brings presents to children and often delivers them in person on New Year's Eve. More presents come from St. Nicolas again on January 7.

How is this possible? A mix of traditions (Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and atheist) exist in Belarus. All three days are official holidays. When they move abroad, Belarusians maintain their traditions, and the community in New York is the best example of this. So Belarusian kids in New York are lucky, too.

These traditions are closely tied to the folk holiday of Kaliady. The word itself refers to the whole period of Christmas celebrations. Kaliady has its roots in pre-Christian time. It involves celebrating the beginning of the new year. As Christianity evolved into the main religion on Belarusian lands, Kaliady was timed to the Christmas season.

Kaliadavanne is one of the most characteristic Christmas customs. From December 25 to January 6, Belarusian New Yorkers in the Atlantic Avenue area of

Brooklyn don native costumes and wander from house to house, singing traditional Christmas songs like "shchadrouki" and "kaliadki." The main symbol of this live performance is Kaza, a person dressed up as a goat — a symbol of wealth. A component of this performance is the Christmas star. The master of the house visited during kaliadavanne is supposed to treat the singers with money or food.

The culmination of Christmas holidays in the Belarusian community in New York occurs on January 7. At 7 p.m. the evening before, Belarusians observe a vigil at Saint Cyril's of Turau Cathedral. After that, they have Christmas Eve supper.

It's a twelve-dish meal consisting of twelve meatless dishes representing the twelve Apostles. The table is full of Lenten dishes — fish (herring, carp), all kinds of pancakes, kalduny (dumplings), mushrooms, oatmeal kisel — a dessert with fruit and berries sometimes served with milk. The dish served last is kutsia — porridge with honey, raisins, poppy seeds and nuts.

Belarusians also celebrate winter holidays at Saint Cyril's with a traditional, well-loved Batlejka or Christmas puppet show. Children get their presents from Saint Nicholas then. In New York you have the opportunity to sing Belarusian and English carols. And after that will be dinner. You can try traditional seasonal food and drink — both Belarusian and American specialties. Sound good? Come to 401 Atlantic Avenue and share Belarusian style Christmas this year. Everybody's welcome!



A greeting card handmade by Natalia Sorogovets using the Belarusian folk art of papercutting — Wycinanka.

A Winter Escape

By ALEXANDRU ANATCHII (MOLDOVA)

JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO, we said goodbye to summer. Just yesterday, we were fascinated by fall colors. And now, it's winter—sometimes mild, sometimes cold.

When the weather is dank and rainy, thoughts about summer come more and more often. There are some surefire ways to maintain a good mood: tasty food, uplifting music, good friends. Have you ever thought about a real escape to summer? A beautiful oasis of greenery and sun? Ready, set, go!

One such amazing place in New York City is the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG) at 150 Eastern Parkway (Eastern Pkwy/Brooklyn Museum, Subway 2 or 3).

The BBG was founded in 1910 on city land and has since expanded to 52 acres. More than 750,000 people visit BBG every year to see collections that include as many as 12,000 kinds of plants from around the world.

One of the most popular BBG places in wintertime is the Steinhardt Conservatory. It consists of the Bonsai Museum, Aquatic House, Tropical Pavilion, Desert Pavilion, and Warm Temperate Pavilion.

The Bonsai Museum would be a good start in any season. The art of Bonsai surfaced in China and India around the fourth century BC, later coming to Japan in the second century AD. Bonsai consists of a tiny, fully mature tree no larger than tabletop size, grown in a shallow vessel. Many people believe that Bonsai are dwarf tree species, but this is not so. In fact, they are what would be normal-sized trees grown in a special way.

This unusual art emphasizes the beauty of nature in miniature.



A bog in the Aquatic House at BBG

The BBG collection boasts approximately 350 trees including some almost 200 years old. It is considered one of the grandest public displays in the world outside of Japan. It contains cold-temperate trees such as juniper and cedar, as well as tropical, subtropical, Mediterranean, and warm-temperate species like cypress and winged elm.

Next stop is the Aquatic House — kingdom of orchids, tree-ferns and mosses. The central pool of the Aquatic House simulates a bog ecosystem, where plants have adapted to living in water.

The large orchid collection of over 6,000 plants is located here. Those on public display include a Tiger Orchid, a 300-pound tropical behemoth, which produces dozens of flower spikes and hundreds of yellow-and-brown-spotted blossoms. Although many of the orchids bloom infrequently (the Tiger Orchid only once every two to four years), you can always find exotics in flower.

After the mossy bogs and the blooming orchids, the best way to remember summer is to move downstairs to the Tropical Pavilion. Have you ever been in a real tropical forest full of waterfalls and streams? Well, look around!

At 65 feet in height and covering 6,000 square feet, this largest pavilion in BBG's conservatory complex contains an Amazon basin, an African rainforest, and the tropics of eastern Asia. Guava, coffee, papaya, and banana, to name only a few delicacies, originate in these climates.

By the way, did you know that: a) Papaya grows quickly, up to six feet per year, almost constantly making flowers and fruits; b) Bananas are large, herbaceous plants, their stems are not woody and they are not considered trees; and c) Tropical rainforests' annual rainfall varies from 80 to 400 inches per year; New York City, in contrast, receives only 40 inches of rain per year.

After wading through these unusual facts, let's dry off a bit. The Desert Pavilion is the last leg of our journey today. It houses plants from Mexico, Peru, the American Southwest, Namibia, and



A tropical scene at BBG

Photo by Alexandru

Madagascar, like the desert rose, aloe, cactus, and agave.

Here you can see the variety of survival mechanisms plants have developed to adapt to an arid climate. In some, the leaves have been transformed into thorns to reduce water evaporation. Desert plants such as cleistocactus and echinopsis can look very bizarre, reminiscent of snakes or octopuses.

The last pavilion has been seen. It's time to go home. It's still winter, but today's sunny picture will sustain us while waiting for next summer.



A Sargent juniper bonsai

Photo by Alexandru

Winter Fun in the Burbs

BY NATALLIA BIALEVICH (BELARUS)

WINTER IS A BEAUTIFUL SEASON with lots of opportunities for enjoyment. It's a great time for outdoor activities. Entertainment abounds for everyone, for kids and adults, in the New Jersey suburbs. Get in some skiing and skating, snow boarding and snow tubing, take the kids snow sledding, and finally, visit the winter festivals.

Visiting one of the New Jersey ski areas is a great way for a family to get outdoors and enjoy a healthy, exciting, and scenic adventure. If you have not gone skiing and snow boarding before it is not a problem. Most of the resorts offer training lessons and rental equipment. It is a very helpful service especially for beginners. Furthermore, night skiing is very popular for the busy family. It is a chance to take a few trips downhill before the day ends.

As long as the weather remains cold, ski areas stay open from December 1 to March 31. Some beautiful places to enjoy winter sport activities include Campgaw Mountain, Mahwah, a very small mountain in North Jersey. Campgaw is ideally suited for families with kids and beginners with an interest in skiing, tubing and snow boarding. Skiing and snow boarding there do not present a big challenge.

Another place for good skiing, snow boarding, and snow tubing is Mountain Creek Ski Resort. This is the largest resort in the state, located about one and a half hours northwest of New York City. It boasts 46 trails with seven tubing

Cont'd. on page six

A Neo-Gothic Jewel

BY LINA TAPIA (ECUADOR)



Saint Patrick's Cathedral portal

Photo by Lina

Archdiocese of New York by architect Joseph Francois Mangin in Gothic Revival Style, which is characterized by its romantic medieval design full of complex and irregular shapes. Elements such as castle-like towers, parapets and tracery windows contribute to the high style, and pointed, arched windows and entries that often have slender columns, and porches with decorative turned posts with flattened arches connecting them add to the grandeur.

Contributions from the small, impoverished Catholic community—especially the Irish women parishioners, who worked hard and contributed as much as they could from their meager salaries—made the first cathedral a reality. These churchgoers wanted to build a place to practice their religion at a time when they

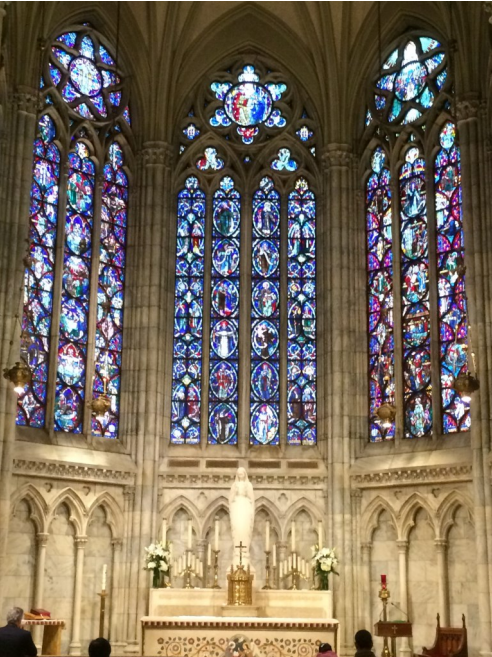
WALKING AS A NEW RESIDENT IN NEW YORK CITY, trying to know this huge and sometimes intimidating place, I decided to see another famous New York landmark. I entered a magnificent building and religious monument that sparked my curiosity. So I decided to investigate a bit more about the story of this Neo-Gothic jewel that stands proud among old and modern buildings, among diverse cultures, religions and people.

I learned that it is not just another place that was built with the sole purpose of making a profit. I now know it is the Second Saint Patrick's Cathedral. The first one, The Basilica of Saint Patrick's Old Cathedral at 260 Mulberry Street in Manhattan, was built from 1809 to 1815 for the Roman Catholic

were in the minority because in 1785 there were only about 200 Catholic parishioners and one priest in the entire city.

The current Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue at 50th Street provides more space to the growing Catholic community. The cornerstone was laid in 1858 and the new Roman Catholic Cathedral opened its doors in 1879 to thousands of poor immigrants and 103 prominent citizens who contributed to the magnificent interior designed by architect James Renwick, Jr. in the splendor of the Neo-Gothic Style.

Today, churchgoers are still summoned by the sound of the Cathedral's 19 bells to attend mass surrounded by marble pointed arches, where 2,400 parishioners can be seated and 600 more can attend standing in the gallery. The brick clad marble cathedral stands 174 feet wide and 332 feet long, housing a majestic organ, more than 2,800 stained glass and rose-shaped panels, beautiful sculptures, and 21 chapel altars each named for a different saint. Many who attend may not realize they are seeing the contributions of their predecessors who fought for more than their religion, but for democracy, freedom and tolerance and these are some of the best gifts, responsibilities and privileges that all human beings should fight for and never give up.



Altar with stained glass panels

Photo by Lina

The cornerstone placed by Rev. John Hughes, containing a metal box with the list of 100 people that donated funds to the Cathedral construction, has never been found.

Trends in Toyland

BY OLGA SIBRIÁN (COLOMBIA)

CHRISTMAS SEASON IS HERE and with it not only the lights, music, food, parties, but also different trend-setting cultural traditions. At this time of year people care about travel, clothing and gifts. Especially children, who look forward to receiving them.



Photo by Olga

An aisle-end display of the perennial Barbie

For this reason one of the industries that has greater exposure at this time is the manufacture and marketing of toys. It is estimated that in the United States alone, toys are a \$22 billion industry. WHAT PREVAILS TODAY IN THE WORLD OF TOYS? Classic concepts involving dolls, action figures, cars, and construction sets never go out of style and are all updated, of course, but are not so remote from the entertainment children enjoyed half a century ago. Think of the perennial, if not immortal Barbie, who each year hits stores in new versions. Toys inspired by comic books, movies and TV series from Disney, Princesses, Dora the Explorer, to superheroes or characters like the dog Snoopy flood the market. We cannot ignore how much smartphones and tablets now complement toys and promote user communities especially with tie-ins to sports-related products.

The Nuremberg Toy Fair, the Toy Fair in New York, and the international trade fair for Consumer Electronics (CES) all set the trends that will affect millions of products and consumers around the world. These fairs unveil the trends that will

sweep the toy market each year. First, we must highlight the creation and movement games that allow children to build their own unique toys. Second, the games are important leading to creative toys that develop problem-solving skills, allowing children to use their freedom to decide how and when they want to play. Mini attractions also take center stage, given the tendency to buy small toys that come in tiny boxes as well as smaller versions of highly successful toys.

We must also highlight the growing number of academic and educational toys on the market that

involve innovative teaching in science with children's games, as well as engineering, technology, mathematics and arts. Toys with an aquatic theme, either because children play with them in the water or because they deal with the physical landscape of oceans, lakes, rivers and currents, are also important trends. Last, but not least, must be mentioned the latest technology (the toy industry continues to invest in the latest technology to let you create art toys) and, of course, dinosaurs.

Ring in the holiday season. Choose and go out and buy the remarkable and innovative toys that this new season offers.

An Innovative Learning Environment

BY RADMILA SHANKOVA (RUSSIA)

I WOULD LIKE TO TELL everyone about the Children's Museum of Manhattan (CMOM). You can spend a wonderful time there with children, facilitating play and learning at the same time.

CMOM was founded in 1973 to bring the learning power of the arts to New York City families. Today, its mission is to inspire children through a unique environment of interactive exhibitions and programs. Children learn about themselves and the culturally diverse world in which they live. In doing so, CMOM focuses on the following areas: early childhood education, creativity in the arts and sciences, healthy lifestyles, and exploration of world cultures and global diversity.

CMOM has five floors of educational fun for children from six months to 12 years old. There is pretty much something for everyone. I would recommend the first and fourth floors for older children. On the first floor, there are rotating exhibits. The second and third floors are completely for little kids. There are activities appropriate for children as young as six months with a "crawling obstacle course" and board books.

There is a cool Fire Department with real firefighter costumes, a truck that flashes lights and a fireman's pole. There is even an activity where kids have to put out fires with laser hoses. Other attractions include a play market/bodega, and a physics area where kids can experiment with different cause and effect puzzles. A neat phonics section speaks the sounds of lettered tiles when you feed them to a lime green crocodile puppet or place them on special racks to form words.

CMOM's programs and exhibits are designed to address the multiple ways children learn. They also help parents understand and support their children's development.

I definitely agree with Adie C., a mother who said: "What a fantastic place!!! Just brilliant and our kids (five and three) absolutely love it!! If you have children you cannot come to NYC and not go here."

The museum also offers lots of classes and special programs throughout the day. This makes it easier to visit with children of different ages. You can drop older kids off in a class and go visit the little kid areas that would bore more mature children.

CMOM is a great place to go during the week, either during the day with babies and toddlers, or after school with older children.

Located at 212 West 83rd Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. on Manhattan's Upper West Side, admission is \$11 per person. For details on all of CMOM's programs, visitors should go to www.cmom.org or call 212-721-1223.



Photos by Radmila

CMOM entrance, fire truck and a crocodile linguist

Winter Holiday below the Equator

BY ZINAIDA BAYMURATOVA (KARAKALPAKSTAN)

WINTER HOLIDAYS ARE CELEBRATED in different ways. Some people visit their parents, others celebrate with friends. Some people celebrate at home, others travel to a different country.

Every year we went to our parents’ home for the winter holidays. But one year we decided to visit South Africa. It took us some time to choose a place to stay, but at last we decided on Cape Town, which is located on the south coast of South Africa and is the second largest city after Johannesburg.

In December, when we arrived in Cape Town it was 86 degrees Fahrenheit which is typical for summer in South Africa, which lasts from December to March. We visited the most popular tourist destinations, the first of which was the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, the large entertainment and trade center.

We stopped by Two Oceans Aquarium and watched more than 200 types of fishes and marine animals from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans: translucent jellyfish, tiny Knysna seahorses, spider crabs, orange-and-white -striped Nemo fish, ragged-tooth sharks and stingrays, turtles, penguins, silver fishes, and many others. Our kids enjoyed exploring marine life by touching different fish and starfish.

Our next destination was Table Mountain, a flat-topped symbol of the city featured on the Cape Town flag. It is 3,566 feet high. We used the cableway to get to the top but others can hike it. It is much colder at the top than at the bottom. From this vantage point you take in a beautiful view of the city. You can also see Robin Island in the distance, where Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, spent 27 years in prison.

One of our most memorable trips was to the Cape of Good Hope, where two oceans, the Atlantic and Indian, meet each other. It is famous for the Castle of Good Hope, which is the oldest building in South Africa. We also visited Cape Point with its famous old lighthouse. In the past, this lighthouse guided ships traveling between Europe and Asia. The flora of the Cape of Good Hope is rich with more than a thousand exotic species of plants: Peninsula Sandstone Fynbos, Hangklip Sand, Cape Flats Dune Strandveld, proteas, ericas, restios, pelargonium, freesias, daisies and many others. It is also home to such animals as antelopes, zebra, ostrich and baboons.

The cuisine in Cape Town is a mix of African, European, Asian and Middle Eastern cooking traditions. We enjoyed a variety of seafood dishes such as tuna, salmon, lobsters, and crabs. We also tried a few traditional Afrikaans dishes such as boerewors (sausage), braai (beef barbeque), potjiekos (a meat and vegetable stew cooked over a fire in a cast iron pot), and frikadelle (meat balls). At dinner, we tried South African red wines: Paul Sauer, Warwick, and Vergelegen.

Cont’d, on page six



Table mountain in Cape Town, South Africa

Photo by Zinaida

Worlds Apart in Brooklyn

BY STANISLAV VASILIEV (RUSSIA)

I FIRST CAME HERE AT NIGHT and got into a conversation with a man. “We never call it American Veterans Memorial Pier,” he told me. “We call it just the 69th Street Pier.” Loud music from at least three sources accompanied a dozen languages spoken simultaneously. As I walked to the far end, lively children were running around with scooters, skates and hip, hands-free Segway boards. Adults were not so rambunctious, sitting at tables, eating pizza. Some even contrived to fish but I doubted the edibility of anything caught here.

It all seemed too boisterous to me that I decided to return early the next morning for a dog walk. There was not a soul there when we came. Visibility was excellent, so I had a good chance to enjoy some of the best views of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, lower Manhattan, and the uncommon tint of the sky. I was so carried away by sightseeing that King, the reddish-brown American Staffordshire terrier, began to whimper to remind me it was high time to leave the pier and set out for Owl’s Head Park. A true gem in the neighborhood’s northwest corner, it covers more than 24 acres with basketball courts, children’s playgrounds, a spray pool and a popular skate park. However, King was only interested in the dog run. I opened the gate and he started to gallop and romp with his fellows while I continued to ponder.

Having looked at New York Harbor’s breathtaking views, I concluded that Bay Ridge is a dazzling place in many ways. It has a quality that feels like the pulse of life. Its main commercial strips, Third and Fifth avenues, have all kinds of stores and cafés where you can have anything you want. You do not need a car. Everything you may want or need you can reach by walking. For longer trips, there is the conveniently located Bay Ridge Ave. station of the R train. On the other hand, this pulse may sometimes be annoying, as there is no night without screams outdoors and helicopters that start their flights at 5 a.m. I decided it was far better for me when the time came to move to Brooklyn’s other end, a community by the name of Georgetown.

Directly opposite Bay Ridge, it met me with only the low sound of water sprinklers at the Hickman playground. Since it was night, the tranquil atmosphere did not seem unusual. Later, I was surprised to discover that it does not depend on the time of day.

The suburban scenery of this place is quite consistent. Buildings of more than two stories in height are few and far between. Most of the homes are pretty new and have a parking space for at least two cars. A strip mall, Georgetown Shopping Center, fits right in; any mall taller than one floor would not suit the landscape. I like the style, which reminds me of a typical scene in an American movie.

Walking along the sunny streets with no traffic and the absence of people brings forth half-remembered memories of early childhood. They are vague because of remoteness, feelings that are difficult to clothe in words, like the uncertain sensation of bliss when you are so little and have nothing to care about.

Even the “reliable” B41 bus serving this area cannot spoil the delight. One of its stops I use daily, a triangle-shaped island surrounded by deserted avenues; it’s a truly magical place where the peaceful vista relaxes, and the peal of nearby church bells puts peace in my mind.



Children having fun at Owl’s Head Park in Bay Ridge

Photo by Stanislav

De Gustibus

Tasty Christmas Delights

BY CESAR VARGAS (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)

Family feasts are often a part of Christmas Day celebrations.

MANY PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES celebrate Christmas on December 25. The holiday celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ and it is often combined with customs from pre-Christian winter celebrations.

Many people put up Christmas trees, decorate their homes and gardens with greenery and lights, visit family or friends and exchange gifts with them. People celebrate Christmas Day in many ways. Children, in particular, often receive a lot of gifts from their parents and other relatives and the jolly figure of Santa Claus.

It is customary to organize a special meal, often consisting of turkey and a lot of other festive foods. Since America is a country of immigrants who arrive with their own gastronomic cultures, the range of celebratory foods is enormous.

Italy. *Panettone*. This is a sweet yeast cake that is a traditional part of Christmas in Italy served with coffee at breakfast. Panettone keeps well in an airtight container and can be reheated whole. (I really like it spread with butter and jam!)

Latin America. *Lechon*. Whole roasted piglet is prepared throughout the year for many special occasions. For many families it is a holiday must-have, similar to turkey on Thanksgiving. *Tamales*. A traditional Latin-

American food. Especially welcome during holiday festivities, they are filled with both sweets such as raisins, banana, or carrots and meats either pork, chicken or beef. *Buñuelos*. Resembling doughnuts, these are a traditional Christmas sweet sprinkled with cinnamon and served with natillas (cooked sugary milk).

The United Kingdom. *Christmas Pudding*. A steamed, sticky pudding made with dried fruits such as prunes, figs and dates.

Mince Pies. These are nice hot or cold. A traditional UK Christmas treat!

Tunis Cake. A Christmas cake with a Madeira/sponge base and covered in chocolate! *Wassail*. An alcoholic punch for adults! Good to warm you up on cold winters nights!

Scotland. *Shortbread*. Yummy! Nice to have with a cup of tea or coffee.

New Zealand. *Pavlova*. This is a light meringue of egg whites that can be eaten with fruit, cream or anything you like!

Belarus. *Draniki*. Potato pancakes. *Klecki*. Dumplings similar to gnocchi. *Kalduny*. Boiled dumplings usually stuffed with mushrooms.

Togo. *Fufu*. Mashed yams. *Pate*. Cornmeal mush.

Who doesn't like holiday cookies?

Christmas Cookies

1/2 cup butter-flavored shortening

1 cup sugar

1 egg

1-1/2 teaspoons lemon extract

1/2 cup sour cream

1 teaspoon grated lemon peel

2-3/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS. In a large bowl, cream shortening and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and extract. Stir in sour cream and peel. Combine the flour, baking soda and salt; gradually add to creamed mixture and mix well. Divide dough into three balls; cover and refrigerate for three hours or until easy to handle. Remove one portion of dough from the refrigerator at a time. On a lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut with a floured two-inch star cookie cutter. Place one inch apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 375° for 6-8 minutes or until edges are lightly



Photo by Volha

Belarusian kalduny

Slam! Dunk! America’s Favorite Sport

BY NATALLIA ASADCHAYA (BELARUS)

“Over 26 million Americans play basketball. 15.5 million people play casual/pick-up basketball. 4.1 million play in organized leagues. 5.8 million play on a school or college team. More people play basketball in the U.S. than any sport.”
— SGMA’s U.S. Trends in Team Sports

WINTER IS THE COLDEST SEASON of the year and often associated with low temperatures and icy weather. It’s not a good time to picnic in the park or sunbathe on the beach, but it is a great time to play or watch basketball.

James Naismith invented basketball in 1891 in Springfield, Massachusetts, as a game for the wintertime. He used a soccer ball and a peach basket, which he nailed onto a 10-foot (3.05 m) elevated track, and wrote the basic rules for the game. Way back when, there were 13 simple rules. Since then, the game's rules have changed, making it even more engrossing.

The game is played on a rectangular floor called the court, and there is a basket at each end. Each team has 12 players, but two teams of only five players at a time each try to score by shooting a ball through the basket. The mid-court line divides the court into two sections and each team is assigned a basket or goal to defend. This means that the other basket is their scoring basket. The team with the ball is called the offense while the team without it is called the defense. Players with the ball can use passing or dribbling or shooting to make a basket. Players without the ball try to steal the ball, block shots, steal and deflect passes, and garner rebounds.

Basketball is good for your health. It requires a combination of physical attributes—height, strength, speed, agility, power—to play successfully. On top of that, basketball is fun to watch. It is fast and full of excitement and lots of scoring. It’s also an all-weather sport: You can play outside in parks or playgrounds, but is also a winter sport you can play indoors year round.

The stars of college basketball are the UConn Huskies women's basketball team.

These incredible athletes have won more than 90 games. They won 39 games and went undefeated during the 2008–09 season, becoming the winner of their sixth national championship,

following it up in 2009–10 by winning their seventh national title.

In addition, children love to play basketball. At the elementary, middle and high school levels children play and participate in competitions. Basketball summer camps allow children to play basketball when not in school. Various sports clubs offer after school practice.

Basketball is fascinating, health-giving and fun for everyone. With good reason, it is America’s favorite sport.



The Brooklyn Nets defeat the Phoenix Suns on December 1 at the Barclays Center, New York

Photo by Natallia A.

Below the Equator

Cont’d. from page five

Despite the hot weather in December in Cape Town, there were different attractions set-up for the winter holidays. Our kids enjoyed ice skating at ICEWORLD and winter slides at the local shopping mall. The entire city was decorated with garlands, balloons and toys. It was very unusual for us to see a Christmas tree in front of the shopping mall with people in summer clothes passing by. Moreover, young men and women dressed in Christmas costumes were dancing and singing in front of the Christmas tree.

It is always interesting and exciting to visit other countries, especially during the winter holidays. When you visit new places, you experience new cultures and meet different people. On top of that, you see how winter holidays are celebrated in those countries. This will make your winter holiday a truly memorable experience.

In the Burbs

Cont’d. from page three

lanes covering more than 16 miles. The less skilled can enjoy snow tubing. It is like sledding but easier and some say more fun. Slide down a snow-slicked slope on top of an inner tube, then ride a T-bar lift back up to do it over again. Everyone must try it at least once.

If skiing and snow boarding seem too complicated for you, try cross county skiing at High Point XC Ski Center, Sussex, which boasts the highest snowfall in the state. It is a great leisure activity for all ages.

Every child likes sledding. It is a fun, healthy, simple kids’ exercise and it is also inexpensive. New Jersey has plenty of great hills for excellent sledding. You can ask any mom about a good hill. Some good advice from mom Hilary M.: “The Mountain Way School, in Morris Plains, has a majorly steep hill. The ultimate for sledding. That’s where we used to go all the time.” Another mom Reesa L. says: “My family loves the giant hill at Holmdel Park. We’ve been going there since my now six year old was two!”

You can ice-skate year round at indoor rinks. But in the wintertime it’s cheaper to find a frozen-over pond with skate rentals and lessons for beginners. For the more skilled skater, there are programs for adult and youth hockey instruction, figure skating, and more. Ice skating rinks are also popular places to celebrate kids’ birthdays.

If you prefer less vigorous entertainment, visit a New Jersey winter festival. The Fire and Ice festival in Mount Holly opens on January 31 in 2016 and highlights an ice carving competition, dog sled demonstrations, gingerbread house decorating, fire engine rides, and lots more.

For free, you can also participate in the Lambertville-

New Hope Winter festival.

This nine-day event from January 23 to 31, 2016 has live ice sculpting, free puppet theater, theater arts, story times, a performance of the musical *Frosty the Snowman*, a parade, and a dance show.

Let’s all enjoy winter-time and have a lot of family fun!



Photo by Natallia B.

Kids frolicking in the snow

Inquiring Photographers

How do you maintain a positive attitude?

BY KOKOU DOTCHE KOUMESSI (TOGO), VOLHA TALATYNIK (BELARUS) AND LINA TAPIA (ECUADOR)

I like cooking. So to maintain my positive attitude I cook traditional Belarusian dishes every weekend. The last one was our traditional drink "Krambambula."

— ALENA TALATYNIK (BELARUS)



Don't take any situation, or yourself, too seriously. Everything is temporary, so take it all in stride .

— JOSHUA SZIMONISZ (UNITED STATES)



Meeting with interesting people helps me maintain my positive attitude.

— DZMITRIY KOVALIOU (BELARUS)



From the morning sunlight, to the view of Manhattan from faraway, I try to appreciate the simple things in life .

— ERIKA WISEBERG (JAPAN/UNITED STATES)



I always try to do my best in any situation. I treat others with respect and look for a good side in everyone. I forgive people who offend me. But in most cases people are respectful and this helps me to maintain a positive attitude.

— EI MOE KHINE (MYANMAR)



I think about positive things that have happened to me before. They make me believe in myself and I deserve better, and I try not to think about negative things.

— MARLON FRANDO REINA (COLOMBIA)