

GEORGIA

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Monday, May 22--Monday June 5, 2000

Visit #18

“Swords into Plowshares”

Partnership for Peace Information Management Program (PIMS)
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS)
International Medical Programs (IMP)

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<http://www.emory.edu/MED/EXCHANGE/HKW/>

Monday, May 22

Out of Atlanta at 1:40 p.m. on Delta, two hour layover at Kennedy in New York, then on to Moscow, to arrive at 4 a.m. Eastern Daylight time. Left Atlanta in the middle of Spring. Have spent a lot of time in the last two weeks on the spring plantings. Decided to concentrate on petunias, geraniums and vinca this year. Old fashioned flowers, reminiscent of childhood out on a rural Southern farm. All bright colors that will attract humming birds, butterflies and bees to my front yard and courtyard. Just planted caladiums as a border around the banana trees (courtesy of two years in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam war). On the morning of departure ordered a solar powered pump with a miniature waterfall that floats in the swimming pool and makes water noise. A bit hard to leave with so much beginning to happen.

But looking forward a lot to this trip. Jim Zimble, President of USUHS, the military medical school at Bethesda, and a good friend, has agreed to come over next week. Product of my importuning the last three years. The Partnership for Peace Information Management System (PIMS) people will be there too, along with three physicians (two former deans--Dartmouth and Buffalo--and the former chair of Plastic Surgery from a New York medical school) who have a grant to design modular training programs built around distance learning systems. They sail under the name of "International Medical Programs" ("IMPs").

Some thoughts about the Tbilisi work since 1992. We began in a country that was devastated in every respect: spirit; economy; healthcare; political system; virtually every societal institution. The initial part of our partnership dealt with healthcare reform. Then we began to get involved with problems whose solutions will come about over a long period of time. First, we set up an Emergency Medical Services training center, for "first responders." Then we established the National Information Learning Centre, which has become one of the anchors of our efforts here. We train individuals in accessing western electronic data bases, and provide them with an opportunity to surf the Internet in search of whatever. We also became deeply involved in medical education, with close to 30 Georgian medical students coming to Emory, and a similar number of our students going there. Neonatal resuscitation and other projects were done during this period of our partnership, about 1994 through 1999. Beginning somewhere around 1997 or 1998, in partnership with Georgia State University, we have begun to get involved in longer range activities: an MBA school; a nursing school; and plans for an allied health school and public health school. We have also put in a grant proposal that will strengthen enormously distance learning, serving the schools that are being set up.

Another highly productive new piece to our partnership has been our involvement with PIMS, which began to come to fruition one to two years ago. We and they are using Georgia as a test bed to develop a template for the productive involvement of the military in civilian needs, such as healthcare and disaster management. This has now come to involve the IMP physicians, who are developing distance learning programs using cutting edge technology, such as video streaming. The situation in Tbilisi, and our partners there, have evolved along with us. We are focusing upon longer term

efforts. I quote from our grant proposal to the State Department:

Purpose: to leverage information technology and Western educational theory and practice to transform institutions and influence individuals who can be agents of change in Georgia, the former Soviet Union republic. The proposal builds upon a partnership of nine years duration among a group of institutions in Atlanta, Georgia and Tbilisi, Georgia. It takes advantage of an existing information infrastructure established in collaboration with the United States Partnership for Peace Information Management System, and upon previous projects funded by the US Agency for International Development. The final result will be a template which can be extended to other countries in the Caucasus and elsewhere.

There are two principles upon which this proposal is based:

- The United States has both the matchless opportunity and the responsibility to share information and human expertise with countries of the former Soviet Union and other similar countries, supporting the goals of improving the lives of their peoples and strengthening their fragile democracies.
- It is possible now to store vast collections of recorded multimedia information and to transfer the information virtually anywhere in the world at almost the speed of light. A question to ask at the outset of the new millennium is: how can humanity benefit from this new and suddenly acquired ability to use modern information technologies? The answer is brief and unequivocal: we must place the wealth of existing, purposeful human knowledge and expertise at the disposal of the less advantaged peoples and countries of the world, and assist them in using it.

This period of time then marks the beginning of a different sort of effort in Georgia.

In addition to working with the PIMS people and the deans, I have decided to begin a big effort to accomplish getting a western style hospital of about 150 beds in Tbilisi. We worked unsuccessfully over the years at modifying an old Tbilisi hospital, City Hospital #2, to this end. Gave up on this effort three years ago, when the building was occupied by refugees from the Abkhazian war. We have now either trained or are in the processing of training about 35 young Georgian physicians at Emory. In internal medicine, nephrology, infectious diseases, hematology-oncology, cardiology, neurology, psychiatry, general surgery. All of them have done at least one or more years at Emory. They have nothing to go back to in which they can practice what they have learned in the U.S. They will figure out in one way or another how not to go back. The health system of Georgia will slowly and relentlessly deteriorate. If the newly trained physicians had a good hospital, many of them would return. A potent additional stimulus is the family ties and loyalty of virtually every Georgian.

So I have decided to begin working in earnest on something I don't consider I'm any good at doing: finding out how to come up with a large sum of money (\$50 million?).

The World Bank would seem a place to start, but they are completely opposed to such a hospital. They feel the focus of healthcare in developing countries should be rural and preventive and not on anything that smacks of tertiary care. I maintain that any country who wishes to have a modern healthcare system must have a tertiary care backbone that will serve as the anchor and breeding ground for excellent healthcare. Scholarship is the fountain from which excellent healthcare systems spring, and a tertiary care nidus is essential to its development and fostering. So I will work on this as my new focus, even though I'm not good at it.

Tuesday May 23

Uneventful arrival in Moscow at 12 noon, overcast and about 55°. Sheremetevo airport unchanged: dank, dark, dirty, unappealing. Usually have to stand in line for passport check for an hour, wait again for customs. This time I had asked for a VIP arrival, figuring it would cost \$30 or so. Discovered to my horror when it was too late to change that it was \$130. It was much easier--no waiting, no lines, luggage brought to the car--but not worth what it cost.

Went with the driver Sergei to Levan Vasadze's apartment . Levan lived with me in Atlanta two years while getting his MBA from Emory; now works for the Sistema holding company--owns Moscow telecom, Intourist, banks, newspapers, etc.-- as vice president in charge of interfacing with Western companies. Kissed Nino, his wife, went with her to her gym, then to Levan's office. The Sistema company occupies the old German Embassy near the Kremlin; the German ambassador was killed on its staircase during the 1920's. Levan is in the process of trying to buy a penthouse apartment. An entire floor, once owned by the KGB, in downtown. Thousands of square feet. Five families live there now, each owning an apartment. They have gotten together and offered to sell if the buyer will find and buy each of them a satisfactory apartment. Levan is working on this, and anticipates it being a daunting task.

Off to Vnukovo airport for a two hour flight and nine p.m. arrival in Tbilisi, to be met by about fifteen Georgians. Off to Betsy's Hotel. Betsy was written up awhile ago in the *New York Times* as "Bogart in High Heels." The article is so good I thought I'd reproduce some of it:

Betsy's Place: An Oasis Fit for Bogart

BYLINE: By ALESSANDRA STANLEY

DATELINE: TBILISI, Georgia

In Casablanca, everybody went to Rick's. In Tbilisi, they go to Betsy's Place.

On a narrow, steep and crumbling side street of the once raffish and now mostly ravaged capital of Georgia, there is a small hotel. Diplomats, World Bank analysts and consultants stay there. *Le tout* Tbilisi and visiting jet-setters drop in for dinner. In June, Shahpari Khashoggi, the wife of Adnan

Khashoggi, the Saudi financier and former arms trader, had dinner there with the owner, daintily sampling *lobio* and *satsivi* by candlelight on the rooftop terrace.

The proprietor of the elegant Betsy's Place is in her own way as improbable an expatriate as the one played by Humphrey Bogart. Betsy is actually Elizabeth Haskell, an exquisitely dressed, impeccably coiffed former Baltimore debutante in her late 50's who most days looks as if she just stepped out of a garden club meeting in Georgetown.

"I wanted to call the hotel '21,' as in its address, 21 Gogibashvili, you know, like '21' in New York," she explained in brisk, upper-class tones. "But people kept calling it 'Betsy's Place,' and I figured I had better register before somebody stole the name."

The story behind Betsy's Place could not be more different from the founding of "21" in Manhattan. In 1994, Tbilisi, not yet recovered from civil war with neighboring Abkhazia, was in the throes of a power struggle between rival private armies. It was a city under curfew, with no heat, running water or electricity and gunfire echoing through the night.

That summer, Kalashnikov-toting paramilitary men loyal to Jaba Ioseliani, a charismatic bandit-rebel who is now in jail, took over the lobby of the Metechi Palace, a huge luxury hotel built by an Austrian chain in 1989. Combatants had a habit of spraying the lobby with bullets, leading the United States Embassy to decide it would be imprudent to continue putting up its visiting officials and humanitarian aid workers there.

"The embassy asked me if I could find someplace else," Ms. Haskell, who was then running her own real estate company here, recalled. "I had this wonderful house for rent, with bathrooms on every floor, so I said yes." Three weeks later, she opened for business.

Peace has been restored under President Eduard A. Shevardnadze. Prosperity, however, remains elusive. Foreign investors are not yet flocking in droves, and the occupancy rate of the \$300-a-night Metechi Palace hovers at 20 percent.

The 13 rooms and two suites that make up Betsy's Place, however, are booked months in advance and cost \$100 to \$130 a night. Guests are greeted by cool stone and gleaming hardwood floors, plush Oriental carpets, antique furniture and fresh flowers.

Ms. Haskell installed a diesel-fueled furnace to provide heat and hot water for showers -- one of the few houses in Tbilisi with such a luxury. She has a generator --and candles -- to deal with the frequent power failures. Telephone service in Tbilisi remains erratic, and guests cannot make trans-Atlantic calls from their rooms. Ms. Haskell is arranging to provide all guests with rented cellular phones. She said she still had to ship in most supplies from Turkey, even cleaning products, sheets, towels and glassware. "The cost of business is high because everything

is imported," she said. "It's like living on Nantucket."

With Georgian and foreign backers, she has also opened a swanky private business club, the Transcaucasian, in a stately mansion belonging to the composers' union. Worried that hotel guests will weary of the local fare of eggplant, tomatoes and cucumber, she is starting her own farm to grow peas and asparagus for her restaurant. "You can get bored with the food," she said with a small sigh. "There isn't much variety."

Ms. Haskell, a former labor organizer who is divorced and was widowed twice, has led a varied life, but she had never run her own business until she moved to Tbilisi five years ago. She had never even lived overseas.

When the Berlin wall came down and the Soviet empire began to crumble, Ms. Haskell was ensconced in Georgetown, running an exchange program to promote understanding between American politicians and their Soviet and Eastern European counterparts.

"Betsy would sweep these foreign dignitaries from the airport in her Chevrolet convertible, take them around and entertain them with fabulous dinner parties at her house," said Ann Polk, a friend in Washington. "Of course, they were all just enchanted."

But the exchange program shut down soon after the failed 1991 coup against the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Ms. Haskell said that without the program to run, she grew bored and restless in Washington. When a young Georgian politician came to her for advice on how to foster democracy under the rule of Georgia's first, authoritarian President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, she ended up traveling to Tbilisi to organize a seminar on business planning and foreign investment.

Upon her return to Washington, she won a \$250,000 grant from Metromedia, the communications giant, to encourage private investment in Georgia. That led to the opening of her real estate firm in 1993 with two female Georgian partners. Asked whether she knew anything about real estate before she started, Ms. Haskell airily replied, "No, but I moved a lot - after a while, you just sort of know." She said it was easy. "After a month, we had a huge data base," she said. "Basically every house was available -- Georgians always have three houses."

She sold the firm to her partners last year to manage the hotel full time. The secret of her success in the uncharted and Byzantine world of Georgian business, said the confident and well-connected Ms. Haskell, is that she is a sole proprietor, unfettered by the shifting rules that can stymie major joint ventures.

"I'm not a winery or a bottling plant -- I'm a small-business blip," she said. She laughed when asked about corruption, saying, "Corruption can also work your way."

Ms. Haskell, who drives herself around town in a new, teal blue Russian-

made Lada, said her only regret was that Tbilisi has nothing in the way of Chinese food, Western movie theaters or shopping.

"There are no real stores here," she said. "I order my clothes from Talbots."

Then to Levan's mother's house for a late night snack. Beso Zhgenti, Levan's nephew, was there with his mother and father. Arrived at midnight, immediately taken to a huge feast that began at 2 a.m.

Wednesday, May 24

Awakened with the usual grogginess and unpleasantness of the first day post-overseas flight. Off to the National Information Learning Centre (NILC) and met Jim Strickler and Daniel Wiener of the International Medical Program. They outlined their plans for a series of learning modules. The first one will be on acute cardiovascular syndromes and the second on tuberculosis. The thrust is to update physicians in developing countries with the latest information. I sent the following email to Hank Blumberg and Carlos del Rio at Emory after meeting with them, outlining the project:

Here in Tbilisi meeting with a group that includes former deans of Dartmouth and Buffalo medical schools and chair Plastic Surgery in New York, which is part of reason I came over here now. We and they are working up an interactive learning program, that will use Tbilisi and our informatics setup here as template for other developing nations. Tie-in with NATO: Partnership for Peace Information Management System (PIMS). PIMS has provided us with a satellite here, a 2 megabyte LAN connecting 8 institutions here. The deans (known as International Medical Programs or IMP) are putting together their first program, on acute cardiac problems. It will be ready to go in the fall. Meanwhile they are beginning to work on their second program, on TB.

They would like for two external reviewers of content, people who are familiar with local situation as well as experts in the field.. I suggested and they agreed to ask you. Will pay. When my email address systems comes up again I will connect them and you.

Each topic will be divided into modules, like this:

1. A video of the content that will be presented in subsequent modules, complete with detailed outline in English, Russian and Georgian. This is designed to bring everyone up to a level starting ground in understanding what comes next. All participants will study this before the other part of the topic. An outline will be developed in Georgian and Russian, and ultimately other languages, designed to help the participants as they work through this video. I viewed part of the one on acute coronary syndromes: unstable angina, q-wave infarcts and non-q-wave infarcts were covered.

2. Interactive session run from U.S. medical school with 4-5 cases that illustrate various points. Moderator on both ends.
3. A "virtual visit" to state of the art places in US. E.g., for cardiology will be CCU, cardiac cath lab, etc.
4. Interactive panel conference that will utilize experts who will discuss the leading edge of the particular topic. For cardiology the sites will be MGH, Mayo, and Cleveland Clinic.
5. Archives will be set up on Web site, with mirror server over here, that will illustrate and expand upon various parts of the program. Also have plans for a follow-up journal club, details to be worked out.

They aim to develop this as a template in Georgia and then for other places. A way to present complicated medical topics that will update physicians in countries such as here, utilizing video streaming, etc., with a lot of interactivity.

Hank and Carlos have just had CRDF grants from the NIH (grants that pair researchers in U.S. with researchers in developing nations) renewed for another cycle. At a meeting in Moscow last week Hank sent this email to me:

Ken--greetings from Moscow. REally cold here and it has been snowing! I only brought a sweater which I have been wearing every day. Really interesting place here and I wish I had two weeks to explore things here.

Good news--the CRDF announced the next round of funding and Gia [director of TB institute in Tbilisi] and I received a new second grant from CRDF to study the clinical and molecular epidemiology of drug resistant TB in the Republic of Georgia (first grant expired April 1). Also good was that Tengiz [director of the AIDS institute] and his collaborators (Johns Hopkins Univ and also Carlos) received funding for a HIV related grant.

The IMP project will utilize streaming video, interactivity, live TV productions and archives for updating, as illustrated above. It is highly ambitious. I particularly liked the initial part of trying to bring everyone up to speed before presenting the rest. The five topics, three presentations each, are:

- acute cardiology
- tuberculosis
- environmental disaster and catastrophe medicine
- acute chest trauma
- emergency field medicine

Archil, Zviad, the IMP physicians, Kakha (young cardiologist who spent time with us in US) and myself had a long discussion of the "information access habits" of physicians in developing countries, focusing upon physicians here in Georgia. Use of the NILC has been less than I had expected, and it has not been clear to me why. One

reason I think is that our advertising of it has not been sufficient. Another reason I wonder about is that reading journals doesn't appear to have been the way physicians kept up here during the former Soviet Union days. Every five years or so each physician had to spend several months in a hospital under the aegis of the Postgraduate Education Institute, which in some cases ran its own hospitals and in others had separate staffs in other hospitals. Also, I am not sure whether there were many medical journals, how expensive they were and how hard to get access to them.

For our project to be successful an enthusiastic, persevering and motivated audience is essential. We discussed how to "incentivize" physicians. Some ideas:

- give a certificate
- form a 'learning society' of attendees
- access to medical consultation

We left the topic, agreeing the solution to attendance at all three programs on each topic was crucial. We discussed the need to involve and get the support of the professional societies. We have run afoul of this principle in some of our small attempts at continuing medical education here in the past. We decided to have an opening 'event,' attending by the Ambassador, President and like, if we can bring it off. We decided to construct an evaluation process that would mainly be a questionnaire to give to the attendees. We could not figure out how to get a reasonable outcome evaluation.

Beer with David Arveladze, a young physician who works in the AIDS Institute and who spent two months with us at Grady. Working mightily to get into a US residency program. Then beer with Rashden Kutelia, similar situation, and his brother Batu, who is in the Foreign Ministry.

Thursday, May 25

Awakened in the middle of the night to the sound of a mocking bird singing to high heaven. My brother, who is quite knowledgeable about birds, explained this odd behavior of the mocking bird at night in the spring to me with one succinct word: "sex." Mating season. Back to sleep, awakened just before dawn by the sound of the roosters greeting the sun. Reassuring to hear such sounds, which are never ever heard in Atlanta.

We went over to Tbilisi State University with the IMP physicians to meet with Roin Metrevelli, the rector, and Temur Khurodze, the provost. Dan Weiner described what IMP was doing and made these points about their proposal:

The three involved physicians (Weiner, Strickler and Tartaglia; two former deans and former department chair) have had 25 years experience with international health work. There is a worldwide crisis in medicine, especially in developing countries. US is decreasing its training of FMGs by making access more difficult--e.g., now all FMGs have to come to Philadel-

phia and take the Clinical Skills Examination. Training done better in the countries themselves, rather than the expensive and difficult proposition of bringing physicians to the US. New technology offers unique educational opportunities, and direct access to US medicine in ways not before possible. The new technology offers a great opportunity to enhance the teaching of medicine. Example: streaming video. So technology plus great need combined to push IMP to focus on developing areas. The US Department of Defense has a giant satellite system that was developed for the Cold War, and now has much down time that can be converted to peaceful means. Medical education is good example of a prime area for this to occur: swords to plowshares.

We discussed the eventual involvement of TSU in the program and left on that mutually agreed upon note.

We went to the NILC and discussed the IMP projects at some length, then lunch at the "Batonebi" (ბატონები) restaurant (plural of Mr., as in Mr. Walker; so "The Mistery"). A good blend of Georgian and American cuisine. To Betsy's for a circadian adjustment nap. Met with two aspiring intern applicants who did not get in the last two years, Gocha and Gia, and encouraged them to keep trying. Then a supra for the IMP physicians.

Friday May 26th

Breakfast with Giorgi Kervalishvili, a teenager who spent last summer in Atlanta. Then a planning meeting for Jim Zimble's visit next week with Tom Newcomb, the US Army defense attache. Then Zviad and I discussed the return of Dato Sheshelidze to the NILC in September. He is a young physician who has been on an NLM scholarship with Randy Miller at Vanderbilt the last two years, and will be an inestimable addition to the NILC. We talked about how to get enough money for him to stay at the NILC. With his training he could instantly get a well-paying job with one of the Internet companies beginning to turn up in Tbilisi. We decided we had to figure out how to get the money.

A lengthy planning session for the IMP program at the NILC with everyone present. The syllabus that accompanies the first video, which is aimed at getting all the participants up to the same playing ground, will be written by Archil, Zviad and others as appropriate for the topic. It will be in Georgian and English, and have a running explanation/commentary, with an annotated bibliography. The bibliographic materials will be maintained at the NILC, so anyone can consult them. There will be a variety of pre-course advertising: Web page; flyer; poster; newspaper ads; TV roundtable; solicitation of the medical societies and hospitals. There will be an opening of the program in mid-September, with the first program to begin one week later. Three programs over three weeks for each topic. We are not too concerned about getting an audience for the first program, but having them continue may be difficult. We will invite notables, and pre-register 100 people, with auditorium capacity somewhere in the eighties. Archil is responsible for the syllabus and Zviad for the marketing. We will ask each registrant to come to the NILC before the first program and pick up the syllabus and video to study. The program will be offered simulta-

neously, without the interactivity, in each of the three PIMS/NILC satellites: military medical school; military hospital; and Central Clinical Hospital. The time line:

- July 1: marketing materials ready
- July 15: marketing and registration begins
- Sept. 1: pre-course materials ready; serious registration
- Sept 15: opening ceremony
- Oct. 1: first program, with one every week for three weeks.

We agreed there needs to be one or more dry runs in August or late July, to be sure the technical aspects are working. We need three video projects for the satellites, which have to be bought and installed.

To the airport to meet Jim Hendrick, the Director of PIMS. Then a supra for all of us at the "Mirage," directly across the highway from the Sheraton Metechi.

Saturday, May 27th

Awakened in the middle of the night with abdominal cramps, rushed headlong to the Cipro bottle. Queasy stomach all day, but settled down by nightfall. Turned out Archil had similar experience; probably the restaurant last night.

Meeting with Avto Jorbenadze, the Minister of Health, and PIMS. Jim Hendrick told him about the PIMS credo: "Information Technology as an Outreach Tool." Described our joint plans to have an information technology nest in Tbilisi, bringing in other US agencies and other institutions, such as WHO. The technology will be in Tbilisi, brought in by PIMS in collaboration with us. Our challenge will be the content and how to use it. We agreed PIMS would find a way to wire the Republican Children's Hospital, using private funds.

To lunch again at Batonebi with the IMPs. After lunch I went to the Central Clinical Hospital (the largest hospital in Tbilisi; formerly 1500 beds) to see a patient, the nephew of Archil. Twenty-four year old lad, fluent English speaker, closed trauma without seatbelt in SUV eighteen days ago, with C₅ fracture. Significant right-sided spasticity in beginning, now largely gone, but weakness right side. I reviewed the CT: C₅ was pretty much crushed, initially with some small amount of impingement on the spinal cord. Small intracerebral hemorrhage. On examination right-sided increased reflexes, perhaps some weakness, no sensory findings. He was in a neck collar, and the neurosurgeons had decided not to do internal fixation. Father and Archil wanted my opinion. I simply said I was not competent, but would be happy to have the films reviewed at Emory and get their opinion. Archil will email the to me. The least ill patient I've ever been asked to see on my trips to Tbilisi.

I had beer with the Kutelia brothers: Batu, a rising star in the Foreign Ministry, and Rashden, who spent two months at Grady and is applying for residency. Batu aspires to be the Georgian ambassador to the US. I think that is a good possibility: smart, poised, charming, intensely motivated. A meeting with Paata Kervalishvili, the father of

Giorgi who spent last summer in Atlanta, at the Mirage restaurant. A mini-supra, to my distress. Then to dinner at Stones restaurant with Archil, his son Sergo and Zviad. Sergo will be a freshman at Emory this fall. Tom Burns, of the history department, sponsored him for a full four year tuition scholarship (\$90,000), and to our delight he was accepted. He is a freshman at Georgian Technical University this year. He is tall, handsome, articulate (made 670 on Toefel). He is a host on a TV show where teen-agers call in for advice. Plays baseball, soccer. Stones is a unique restaurant. Small pieces of beef are brought, with a variety of sauces in small containers, along with a large extremely hot stone. Each person cooks their own meat.

Sunday, May 28

Got up at the ungodly time of 2 a.m. and went to the airport to meet Jim Zimble, president of USUHS, and Manoli Cassimatis, associate dean for clinical and international affairs. The military medical school of Tbilisi State Medical School was out in full force, complete with uniforms and two senior students. I was impressed. We all went back to Betsy's and promptly to bed. At breakfast I met two people from the University of Georgia in Athens, Dr. Maner and Dr. Lopes, who are over here teaching Public Administration in the school set up by John Stewart of the University of Tennessee a few years ago. We talked at some length at what we all are doing. They had heard of us and our efforts. I filled them in on our \$14.5 million grant proposal, that is now making its way through channels in Washington, and we agreed there were several areas for possible collaboration.

In the afternoon we took Jim and Manoli to the NILC, and then on a sightseeing tour. First to Mtskheta the old capital of Georgia. The cathedral there, Georgian Orthodox, has many Georgian kings buried in its floor, with their tombstones there for all to walk upon. Then Djvari, probably the first church built in Georgia, around the fifth century a.d., standing high upon a mountain overlooking Mtskheta. The two holiest sites in Georgia.

Dinner at Betsy's: Jim Zimble, Manoli, Betsy, Archil, Jim Hendrick and Rita Purcell of PIMS, Alex Rondeli, Robert McSwain (will be cardiology fellow at Emory in July; now on a European and Asian tour). Alex is an eminent Georgian political scientist who is widely respected. Virtually every article about Georgia in the *New York Times* quotes him. On my last visit I had seen him in consultation. Myocardial infarction in February, in hospital a couple of weeks--just as we did when I was an intern--then in his apartment, sessile. He came to Emory and had a cardiac catheterization and coronary angioplasty a month or so ago, now doing splendidly. The dinner was a smashing success. Everyone just clicked. Jim Zimble started his military career as a submarine physician, and told of his interview with Admiral Hyman Rickover. Told to report to a certain address at 5:20 a.m. exactly. Summoned into the Admiral's room. Rickover was silhouetted by a window, so all Jim saw was his shadowed outline. Don't fiddle with your clothes or make nervous gestures. Speak only when spoken to. Asked a question or two, dismissed. Jim regaled us with other tales of Rickover. His iron control over the submarine service. His masterly manipulation of Congress, who wouldn't pass any military bill unless Rickover was on the list of people to be

promoted that year.

Betsy was splendid as usual. I brought up the story in the *Times* about her a couple of years ago, "Bogart in Heels." I said I always privately wanted to modify it to "Bogart without Balls," but never did, since the statement is not true. She said Georgian produce is beginning to come up to snuff. This year, for the first time since she has been here since 1992, she is able to buy Georgian grown asparagus of high quality. Betsy also said Tbilisi was not a place where a woman could get any decent exercise by walking. "London, Rome, Paris--all the great cities of the world--a woman can go shopping at fabulous places and do a lot of walking." Betsy's view of exercise.

Monday, May 29

Breakfast with Jim Zimble and Manoli. Just as last week was devoted to the IMPs, this week's activities are focused around USUHS. The PIMS people, Jim Hendrick and Rita Purcell, are integral parts of both weeks. Joined at breakfast by Beso Zhgenti and Robert McSwain. Beso is the cousin of Levan Vasadze, who lived with me in Atlanta some years ago and got his MBA. Beso now lives with me and is working on his MBA. He has been in Tbilisi the last month having a vacation. Eating, drinking, sleeping..... Having a great time, and is now ready to go back to Atlanta and finish his MBA.

To Tbilisi State Medical University (TMSU) and a meeting with Ramaz Khetsouriani, the rector, before lunch. He told Jim and Manoli how TMSU was spun off from Tbilisi State University seventy-five years ago. It has 5,000 students, with schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and others. Faculty number 1200. A staff of 5,000. Budget \$2 million USD per year. TMSU has a military medical school division, that has about twenty students per year in it. We had lunch with the faculty, then visited the military medical school. The head of the division, Zurab Katsadze, described the school in some detail, and then we had a tour. The school was started seven years ago, and has just graduated its first students. There is no tuition, but the students are obligated to serve as a physician in the military for three years. In contrast, USUHS was begun in 1976 and has 165 students per year. Zurab and Jim Zimble discussed at length how the two schools, the US military medical school and the Georgian one, might interact. The Georgian military medical faculty are concerned about whether or not the Georgian government considers the school relevant and needed. There was an amusing interchange where Jim described something they were doing and said the school here might consider the same. Whereupon Zurab said, we can't do that--you can, because you are from the number one country in the world. Jim Zimble: "But the number one country in the world has tried on several occasions to close my medical school!" referring to a past history, now over with, of the bureaucracy trying each year to write off USUHS.

Two senior students were with us on our tour. Fluent English, bright, ambitious. One was a Georgian rarity--redheaded--Paata Ratiani (პაატა რატიანი) and Jaba Nachkhebia (ჯაბა ნაჭყებია). One possibility of cooperation between the schools is exchange of students, in addition to faculty.

Beso and I visited the mother and father of a Georgian friend in Atlanta. The father is Ushangi Imerlishvili, an artist and movie set designer. He had a transurethral resection two months ago, and his son had asked me to cast a clinical eye upon how he was doing. He showed me a prescription just given today to him, of twenty days of isoniazid and rifampin. These are two antituberculosis drugs, and for the life of me I could not figure out why he was to get them. We admired his paintings, and he promised me one the next time I do not go out through Moscow. His son Irakli has just finished his master's degree in design at Georgia State University.

Tuesday, May 30

Jim Zimble, Manoli, Archil and I visited Avto, the Minister of Defense. He talked about a potpourri of issues. The economics of health care in Georgia: tiny percentage of GNP goes to it. The great need for preventive medicine. The emphasis being put on development of information technology following the course of the Silk Road. Importance of putting distance learning into place. Manoli is a distinguished psychiatrist, as well as being deeply involved in the AMA and the American Psychiatric Association. The two of them discussed how he might be helpful to psychiatry in Georgia, and arranged for him to meet the director of the Institute of Psychiatry.

Yesterday afternoon was devoted to USUHS and the military medical school. This afternoon is related to the Georgian military medical service and the military hospital. We had lunch with Col. Rezo Jijeishvili, commander of the military medical service, and Col. Archil Burjanadze, chief doctor of the military hospital. We heard the Georgian army has 27,000 troops, five hospitals and 800 military physicians. Jim and the two military people had a lively discussion about a number of ways in which he could help them. We then went to the military hospital, which has 250 beds. Built a few years ago, quite clean, light and a bit more like current US hospitals than the dark, dank, dirty deteriorating hospitals elsewhere in Georgia. Jim gave a set of books about current military medicine to the hospital, as he had earlier to the medical school. About twenty or so volumes. We toured the hospital at some length. Saw a young soldier who had attempted to commit suicide with organic phosphates; deeply comatose, no spontaneous respirations. Afterwards a long discussion about the specifics of mutual collaboration, with intense interest and much discussion on the part of the military people. The session ended with an agreement to sign a memorandum of understanding and collaboration among the three parties: USUHS, military medicine and military medical school.

Before Jim's visit I had been quite apprehensive about whether the military entities would be interested. Archil and I had visited both the medical school and hospital several times in the past year in preparation, and could never quite decide how interested they were. To my delight the interest and wish for involvement turned out to be intense. It was quite clear that Col Jijeishvili, commander of the military medical service, considered Jim's visit to be a milestone. Jim's rank as a retired Vice Admiral (former Surgeon General of the US Navy) opened their arms to him as they were never opened to me (retired US Air Force captain) and Archil.

We had another supra at Betsy's, and then I went to the Turkish bath with Levan Kacharava, brother of one of our previous residents, after dinner. The masseuse was a 40 year old chunkily built Turk, who began the bath by walking up and down my back and legs as I lay face down on a marble slab (in spite of all my efforts I think of the morgue and medical school dissecting room when I get on the slab). The last time I had that done to me was in 1967, when I was in the Air Force during the Viet Nam war, and was in Manila for rest and recuperation. We would go to Philippine bath houses, where the masseuses were young ladies who also began with a back and leg walk. Brought back a lot of memories of Southeast Asia.

Levan proposed we take a helicopter Thursday and fly to Svaneti, a fabled mountainous land in Western Georgia. I have always wanted to go there, and promptly accepted, since we have no plans for Thursday.

Wednesday, May 31

We went to the Space Institute of Georgian Technical University and met its famous space scientist, Dr. Elgudja Medzmariashvili. He has just completed a huge radiotelescope jointly with Daimler Benz, and he showed us a video of the telescope, which was tested in space a couple of months ago, and other innovative structures for use in space. E.g., bridges which fold up for passage, and then can be unfolded into substantial structures. Medzmariashvili is famous for such portable devices for use in space. The Space Institute was a vital part of the Soviet space effort. After meeting him in Tbilisi we went to the assembly plant in Saguramo, about twenty minutes from Tbilisi. I have wished to go there since I first heard of it. There were two huge buildings designed to mimic conditions in space. One was a gigantic tank that held twenty million tons of water.

Then to the NILC for an afternoon presentation on what the Georgians had learned from the Abkhazian ethnic conflict that tore the nation apart from 1992-94, and is still unsettled. There were large numbers of mine injuries. The military physicians were present, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Health. A good afternoon.

At the end of the afternoon we revisited the idea of taking Jim Zimble and Manoli in a Russian helicopter to a distant place the next day, and decided we could only do so if we had gotten Embassy clearance in advance. We did not see any way of doing that on short notice, so put the helicopter trip off until another visit.

To the Metechi to see Jim Hendrick of PIMS, who was ill with fever, chills, vomiting and diarrhea. The worst appeared to be over, so I advised Borjomi water (Georgian gatorade) and rest.

Some private time, then to Archil's for a supra with Jim Zimble, Rita Purcell of PIMS and Manoli. Archil's son-in-law, a world famous professional soccer player, was there. Archil forced me to be tamada, and I tried to hold forth eloquently, remembering I can never equal reach Archil's talents at the table. Nothing like

growing up as a Georgian male and being in training all your life to be a tamada.

Thursday, June 1

Levan Bakanidze came over for breakfast. Spent six months with us at Grady a few years ago, now a head and neck surgery resident at the Oncology Institute. I have tried a number of times to get the institute connected with a surgical oncology section in the US, but so far have not succeeded. Levan had just done his first major operation, a partial thyroidectomy, by himself the day before, and was flush with a sense of accomplishment. I am taking a letter back from his institute to the American Cancer Society, in an effort to establish some collaboration.

Jim Zimble, Manoli, Archil and I met Colonel Burjanadze for a meeting with David Tevzadze, the Minister of Defense. Walked up seven floors in the defense ministry building since the elevator wasn't working. Makes one wonder about the health of more advanced machines, such as tanks and airplanes. The Minister is 50-55 I judge, and speaks English fluently as a result of considerable time in the US at the War College, etc. Medium size, shaved head, powerfully built. I was told he keeps weights in his office and relaxes with them. He speaks almost in a whisper, forcing one to listen intently to what he is saying. Unheard of in Georgians, whose ordinary speech most of the rest of us would characterize as strident shouting. He indicated he shared the feelings of Col. Burjanadze as to the importance of the collaboration with USUHS, at which point the colonel positively beamed, another indication of how Jim Zimble has charmed everyone over here.

We met the Minister of Defense at 9 a.m., and at 11 a.m. his brother, head of procurement for the army, was killed by a radio controlled car bomb, just on the outskirts of Tbilisi. It was placed in the driver's seat, and was carefully designed to be small enough to kill only the driver. The speculation is that he had cut off somebody's drainage of the public trough.

All of us went to the Sheraton Metechi Hotel to see how Jim Hendrick was faring before his departure to the airport. Last night he had another episode of fever, chills and diarrhea. I did what I should have yesterday--gave him Cipro. Worried a bit about giardiasis, which I had two visits before. Told him if Cipro didn't cure him in 36 hours, to go to his private physician and ask for Flagyl.

I went to the Embassy and met with Laura Leventis, the new assistant public relations officer. Then I spoke with Steve Fagan, the consul, about the Georgian physicians who come to Atlanta and my writing letters of invitation for them to get visas. I told him I would be writing a letter for Eliko Mkheidze, the sister of Archil, who wishes to come over when Andro and Salome Kacharava have twins in about a month. He is a young Embassy officer who has been to Georgia five times now. Speaks fluent Georgian. I met Susan Somers, the nurse practitioner at the Embassy, and agreed to meet with her and others in the afternoon at the NILC.

At the NILC I met Kakha Shengelia, the new dean picked for the MBA school set up by

Georgia State University in Tbilisi. The school is called the Caucasus School of Business, and is a consortium of three schools: Georgian Technical University; Tbilisi State University; and the International School of Economics. The MBA school is the baby of Bijan Fazlollahi of GSU. The three universities were given equal say in the school, and it has suffered from a lack of direction. Kakha was chosen after competition several weeks ago by Bijan. He has excellent business credentials. He is smart, articulate, enthusiastic and highly personable. He will make a superb dean.

In the afternoon we went to the Sarajishvili brandy factory on the outskirts of Tbilisi. An absolutely beautiful place. Huge grounds with ancient trees, flowers, a pervasive aura of serenity, old stucco buildings with compellingly beautiful wood. The doors are gigantic, carved attractively and inlaid with brass. Founded in 1865, and was the purveyor of a majority of the brandy of the former Soviet Union. Gigantic casks of brandy, dating back to the founding of the factory. They buy wine from the vineyards and make the brandy. They gave us a sampling of 107 year old brandy. Why didn't they sell it, we asked? "No one could afford it." Each of got a bottle of brandy of our exact age (provided secretly to them the previous day by Levan Kacharava, who arranged the visit) with our name printed on the label. I took mine, knowing I would have to hide it at my house. My brother comes up from St. Simons about once a month, and has a late night drinking session with Beso. I have no doubt which bottle will be the first one tapped this next month. The marketing director said they were having a lot of problems with marketing. They have approached Seagram and other firms without result. Jim thought there might be some possibility of the Department of Defense considering the brandy for their exchanges.

Back to the NILC, where I met with Susan Somers, the Embassy nurse practitioner, Kathryn Fischer, the recently arrived AID physician advisor for the Caucasuses and Robin Dubow, medical advisor to the English Embassy in Moscow. Archil and I outlined our partnership since 1992 and its accomplishments, along with our intentions for the future. AID is quite interested in new proposals for TB, which I will pass along to Hank Blumberg in our department. I passed up an invitation to stay with Robin at his flat in Moscow, since I will be staying with Levan Vasadze, but I regretted having to do so.

Beer with three young Georgians. Lado, the brother of Khatuna in Atlanta, who has just gotten an internship slot in New York, and he wished to express the family gratitude. Giorgi, Lado's friend, who is applying to Georgia State University for the MBA program. Guram, a police lieutenant in the Interior Ministry, a friend of the family. Lado graduated a couple of years ago from TSMU, and is about to go into a psychiatry residency in Tbilisi. I prodded him a bit about why, and didn't get much, even when I tried to provoke him by saying some people went into the specialty because of their own needs.

Jim Zimble, Manoli and I went to the home of Vaso Egnatishvili for dinner. Vaso is in Atlanta studying for Part I and II. I have spoken of him before. His grandfather was the wealthy merchant in Gori for whom Stalin's mother worked. Stalin was raised in his home, and was put through Tbilisi seminary by the grandfather. Some rumors that the

grandfather was in fact Stalin's father. Vaso had suggested in Atlanta we visit his mother. There were four people: Lado's mother Irina Bregvadze, who works in the National Health Management Center; Rezo, Vaso's uncle, who was head of the KGB in Viet Nam during the war; Dodo, Rezo's wife, who teaches English literature at TSU; Leila, who is Irina's sister and a famous movie star; her son is a famous musician who teaches at Indiana University; and Shalvar, a peer of Vaso, who works in tax collection.

Talk centered around the difficulties of living in Tbilisi now. Salaries of \$25+ dollars a month, but they haven't been paid for up to a year. Dodo said Roin Metrevelli and Tbilisi State University were doing splendidly in this regard: salaries paid at the end of each month. In the background were intimations of what life had been like for the elite, such as this family, in the halcyon days of the former Soviet Union--the sixties until the early eighties. The flat had been one of the luxury flats: large, spacious rooms; elegant old furniture; exquisite wallpaper; beautiful paintings. There were pictures of Stalin in his forties. Pride in what their children were doing was intermingled with anguish about what life was like now. It was a memorable evening.

As we were driving back I heard a whippoorwill casting its song onto the night air. First time I had heard one in Georgia. Reminded me of growing up on an isolated farm and being lulled to sleep at night by their sound. I have been sensitized to birds in Tbilisi by my brother, who is a rabid birder. After my first trip he asked me about the birds. "What birds?" I asked, never having noted any. I was roundly excoriated for being so unobservant.

I ended the night by visiting Beso, who was having a farewell part in his parents' flat with his friends. The party was in full force. Beso told me later that when you plan a party in Georgia you count on two liters of wine per guest. About fourteen of his friends. All in their late twenties, various jobs: Georgia International Oil Company; Ministry of Internal Affairs; World Bank; sparkling wine factory. Interesting that these are mostly post-breakup companies or Western institutions that are very much a part of what will be a new Georgia. Their salaries are also more than the usual Georgian business--\$300 to \$500 a month I suspect, versus about \$25 to \$50. The warmth, friendship and mutual regard was thick enough to cut. I was struck once again by the socialization of Georgians: tight little groups of friends who have grown up together in secondary school. The groups are eight to twelve or so, by my observation. I have watched it now with Levan Vasadze and Beso, and also Archil, who frequently makes the observation when about to call someone, e.g., Ramaz Khurodze, "he was one of my close friends when we grew up; I introduced him to his wife....." and so forth. Georgians would rank high on the list of homophobic nations--most Georgian men would make Don Juan look gay--but young people of the same sex walking with their arms around each other are a common sight on Rustavelli Avenue.

Friday, June 2

Jim Zimble, Archil and I met with Temur Khurodze, the provost of TSU. We discussed establishing a public health school there, as we have applied for in a grant. Agreed

some of the major divisions would be: epidemiology; preventive health; informatics; healthcare management; informatics; emerging infectious diseases, including AIDS; and disaster management. These programs are designed for countries such as Georgia. Jim Zimble said the military medical school and military have to be a part of such a school in a country like Georgia.

Manoli then went to the Institute of Psychiatry, since he is a psychiatrist who is deeply involved in psychiatry--e.g., AMA--in the US. Jim Zimble, Archil and I went to the Bacteriophage Institute, which was written up in the *New York Times* recently. Jim is quite interested in the potential of phages, and promised to do some thinking about getting US involvement in the subject.

Jim Zimble and Manoli Cassimatis left in the afternoon for Vienna, then Washington. I went with Levan Kacharava to some new land he has purchased and on which he is planning to build a house. Up in the hills in Tskheti (წყნეთი), which is a favoured place for Georgian summer houses. Just a few kilometers outside of Tbilisi. Home to Betsy's, where Archil and I were interviewed by a reporter from the Georgian equivalent of the *Wall Street Journal*. Wanted to know about telemedicine, our view of Georgia. Dinner at Betsy's with Betsy, Mike McCarthy, Robert McSwain and Archil. Then some time with Levan Kacharava, ending up with the Turkish bath late at night.

Saturday, June 3

Breakfast with David Arveladze and Giorgi Kandelaki, the two aspiring interns who work in the AIDS Institute. To the NILC and a final answering of emails before departure to Moscow this afternoon. Lunch with Alex Rondeli, who was over to Emory recently for percutaneous coronary angioplasty. In a new restaurant to me that I enjoyed quite a lot. Some discussion of the politics of Georgia now. Several members of Mr. Shevardnadze's party have just resigned, citing their displeasure over the lack of apparent efforts to stomp out corruption.

To the airport, and off to Vnukovo airport in Moscow. I was met by a nervous Intourist agent, who said President Clinton was due shortly, and we needed to be out before the highways to Vnukovo were closed for two hours. To Levan's apartment, to be met by his son "Ika," who is about two years old now. Bright, handsome, the future of the former Soviet Union. Then Beso, who is in Moscow to go back with me, Levan and his wife Nino and I went to see the movie "Gladiator" and sushi at the Radisson.

Sunday, June 4

Up early, and down to the G.U.M. store by the Kremlin for some Baltic amber to bring back to the U.S. There are two amber stores there, and their offerings are the best in the world. The last visit I brought back a large amphibian encased in amber for my brother. I saw, but did not buy, a large black tarantula-looking spider in a huge piece of amber. About \$200. Will buy next time.

Off to Sheremetev airport, where we discovered the Delta plane from New York had

turned back to New York after three hours due to mechanical problems. So Flight 31 was canceled. Back to Levan's, where we spent the rest of the day watching Clinton and Putin on TV. Enormous interest by the Russians in Clinton. He spent one hour on a call-in TV show, where he answered all questions. I'm sure this was a first for Russia. The station had a call-in question, where you call one number for one answer, and another for a different answer. Question: do you think relations with the US are improving? About 3000 said yes, and 2600 said no.

Monday, June 5

To our great relief the plane came in from New York, and it is off to New York then Atlanta.