

**PO Box 796 Sitka, Alaska 99835  
First Sunday in Advent, 2001,**



Dear Friends,

In Serbia the new millennium began on January 13, 2001, New Year, Julian calendar. "Old New Year," (left) is one of our favorite oxy-morons. Since there was no year zero, the millennium had to begin in 2001. Our Orthodox friends tell us that and they know how to count.



At the beginning of the year our goods and our lives were spread across four homes: flats in Podgorica, Montenegro; Belgrade, Serbia; Budapest, Hungary and our home in Sitka. Now we have one home, and our lives and possessions, for the moment, are gathered in Sitka (we photographed the Northern Lights from our deck last week, above right) where we will spend the holidays with our kids and our friends. We had intended that this would be the first year since 1993 when we spent more time in the States than abroad. It didn't work out that way. Events conspired to keep us working in the Balkans into October, but what events!

In Serbia the new government had taken over Milosevic still haunted the Balkans. The the West demanded he be arrested. Suzi and went to Milosevic's home in Belgrade to watch there to "protect" him from arrest. As the posters started appearing in Belgrade's streets bars and the question "When?" (center) Like spent two sleepless nights watching the drama



power but the specter of United States and most of I, along with many others, a guard of retired people winter turned to spring with Milosevic behind the rest of Belgrade we of his arrest on TV.

After the October 2000 fall of Milosevic our main work was helping the independent media attain legal status and some sense of financial viability. The new government is almost as afraid of independent media that speaks freely as was the old one. But this year we are thankful that none of the people we work with have been beaten, shot, burned out, kidnapped or arrested. Things do get better. We had planned to leave our jobs right after Easter, but events kept us working into June. We saw through the project of converting ANEM (the Association of Independent Electronic Media) from an underground organization into a legal and professional broadcast trade association. In May a Congress of free and independent stations, held openly, adopted a charter. That gave us a great sense of accomplishment. At the end of June we were ready to return home.

We left Belgrade on June 29, St. Vitas Day, an important day in Serbian history. It was the day on which the historic battle of Kosovo was fought, the day a Bosnian Serb assassinated an Austrian Arch Duke starting the First World War, and the day Milosevic gave the stirring speech that brought him to power. We flew out of Serbia via the Netherlands and met our friends Dave and Carol Lam and spent the day sightseeing. We decided to go to The Hague, where we saw rows of TV satellite trucks. We turned on the BBC and found that Milosevic had been turned over to the tribunal and was arriving at The Hague. The person who defined our lives in the Balkans, from the time we were in Albania in 1993, was leaving the same day we were, and to the same place.



While we had originally intended for June to mark the end of our residency in the Balkans we agreed to return in August for two months to do some wrap-up work on some of the projects we had been working on, but we had managed to get agreement from IREX to let us spend much of the summer in the States. We wanted to return to Alaska for a while, but that didn't happen. Rich's mother broke her hip and we spent much of our time in New Jersey with her. We spent some time in Minnesota; we got to the Winnipeg Folk Festival; and took a family vacation, with Brian and Kevin (in blue) to Rhode Island to attend the wedding of Ben Lam, Dave and Carol's son.

In August we went back to Europe on what was to become the great Suzi and Rich farewell tour. We taught in a journalism summer school in

Montenegro, spent a week visiting friends in Albania, spent three weeks consulting in Kosovo, did some follow up work in Slovakia, worked with Jon Newstrom on a research project in Croatia, spent a week in Belgrade celebrating the first anniversary of the revolution that toppled Milosevic and took a week of holiday in France with Dave and Carol Lam touring Gothic cathedrals. (The Chagall window from Rheims is at the bottom of this page.) Everywhere we went we renewed friendships.



The emotional highlight of the year for us was our trip to Albania. (Tirana is on the right.) We had not been in the country for four years and, a special treat for us, our old flat was open, so we stayed in the neighborhood, sitting up late at night eating, drinking, and talking with our friends. From that emotional high we went to Kosovo. We started our class training on September 11.

At the end of the first day of class our translator's cell phone sent a message that there had been attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A sad faced porter from the hotel where the training was happening came up to us and ushered us to a wide screen where we watched, with the rest of the world, in horror. His arm rested softly on my shoulder. The response of Albanian Kosovars was amazing. People stopped us in the streets to offer condolences. Shortly before midnight people started leaving their homes with candles and flowers to lay them at the entrance to the US Office, which serves as an embassy. When the local TV picked up on this at around 2 AM the crowds grew larger. The next day all of Prishtina came to a full stop as people gathered in a show of support for America, the country that had stood for Kosovo. I remember some young men trying to set up a chant "USA, USA" but their elders told them to keep silence. This was not a demonstration it was a remembrance. One holding a poster, they were "America, we are with you" picture (center) is of a turbaned imam printed by a local paper overnight, the people of Kosovo."



We came home to a spent a week with Rich's we had bought over the Minnesota visiting Suzi's completing our drive west

changed country on October 15. We mother and started driving west in a car summer. We spent two weeks in parents and Brian and Kevin before and home.

The trip took us through with a pilgrimage to Jefferson's home at Monticello. We visited friends in Tennessee and Illinois, traveled across the plains, badlands and mountains before taking the ferry from Bellingham Washington home. We don't know what's next. For the moment we are taking a bit of a rest. We may end up overseas again, or perhaps we will find some channel for our energy at home.

the Blue Ridge Mountains in full color,



The past 9 years of being expats has made us more patriotic and more skeptical. We are unnerved by all signs of nationalism, in the Balkans and at home, but we are encouraged by what we see at home. Americans have the need to act, to do something, and as a result Americans we've met seem much more interested in world affairs now than when we were home this summer. Then people always wanted to change the topic from things foreign to almost anything else. Now, we are reaffirmed in the generosity of our country. As we traveled we saw that not only were people taking up collections for those in New York, but in every town there were collection boxes for crippled children, scholarship funds or the humane society. We saw Americans engaged in ways that we don't see in Europe, volunteering in the co-op, picking up trash on highways. That is what makes us different and strong.

This year we have more of a holiday request than a holiday wish for you. Our request is that you stay involved with your community through civic groups, sports, local charities or communities of faith. That you speak out when you feel you need to, that you not be afraid, that you get to know your neighbors, and especially that we all support and love each other.

-Peace

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