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Hello family and friends ... having just returned from a two-week odyssey to Romania and Ukraine our experiences and adventures were many. We thought that perhaps you might be interested in the things we have encountered and learned. If so, pull up an easy chair and get ready ... for we have many tales to tell. Our telling is narrative with some images to boost the story line. We hope you enjoy reading it ... and learn something along the way.

Romania and Ukraine ... two countries that are a puzzle and a contradiction. Caught in a time warp ... they have one foot in the 21st century ... their other foot in the 19th. Where else can one see the roads being shared by BMW's and horse drawn carts ... roads that in some sections are newly paved but eventually transform into sections that can best be described as "primitive". Urban professionals with mobile phones next to the "tzigani" and beggars ... a modern office building next to an old Orthodox church under reconstruction ... street vendors hawking produce next to Western-style sidewalk cafes.

Based on our limited but direct experiences in both countries, we have come to understand their similarities as well as their particular differences. Our views encompass the breadth of exposures ... from customs at the airport and passport control ... to the people on the street, in the shops, and in the countryside.

Romania pushes onward and has as its goal joining the family of nations embracing democracy and a free market economy. Romania is progressive ... while retaining its heritage and cultural values, it seeks out and adopts the best of the West. Foreigners are readily welcomed and, although not treated preferentially, are accorded courtesies that state, "...welcome to Romania." The police and military have a minor presence in public and one can feel safe virtually anywhere (common sense being the rule) ... walking the streets of Bucharest at 10PM or the dark and deserted streets of the smallest village in the countryside.

Ukraine, on the other hand, is still mired in a Soviet-style mentality where mistrust of the West is pervasive and, with exceptions, is reflected in the views of its citizens. This is not only our view but that of a number of Ukrainian people we have encountered. One can state one's view on any subject without fear of reprisal by the State, however, as one Ukrainian told us, " ... we do not fear the police, but we do not trust them." Border crossings are tense and inconsistent ... "fees" are arbitrary and unpredictable. Foreigners are routinely singled out for "delay of entry or exit", resulting in "small tokens (\$ of appreciation" being suggested. The presence of paramilitary, security, and various police forces is excessive, all fully armed with automatic weapons. It is not uncommon to be stopped on any road for a "security check", usually resulting in a small bribe. On the average, the common people of Ukraine are neutral in their acceptance of foreigners. We have experienced no problems in any of our dealings with the people, although trying to extract a small smile from anyone is at best difficult. Cost of living in Ukraine is high ... but the income level is low by Western standards. Virtually all people we have met resort to numerous means to earn extra "hard currency" to make ends meet. To this regard, foreigners are welcomed.

Having said the above ... both countries are trying to move ahead within the limits of their abilities, politically and economically. The people are resilient and for the most part hard working. They are innovative and have one eye on the future. The older generations are accepting their current lot in life while the younger generations are keenly aware of what life is like outside their respective countries and look to the future with optimism. We traveled to this part of Europe without any preconceived opinions or mindsets and have returned with a deeper understanding ... that we are truly blessed to live in the United States and have the freedom and the opportunities denied others.

Why did we go to Romania and Ukraine! ... If someone told us a year ago that this trip would be undertaken we would reply that they were smoking something funny. Unlikely ... improbable ... nearly impossible, that's for sure. What would be the reason? Leave the past alone and let memories stay true. But then something odd occurred ... an awakening of the need to learn about our ancestors, our past, our place of birth and all the lateral bits of information that would reveal the complete history of the "Rozyłowicz Family". Embarking on this journey was slow but as the pace of progress increased and the Rozyłowicz puzzle began to take shape, facts and circumstances surfaced that began to nag at the heart ... "Can we go back and re-visit our heritage at its source?" That in itself was not enough to trigger going back until ... January of 2001. Call it a miracle or a revelation but we have located distant relatives in Romania ... first cousins Romeo and Gheorghita Rozyłowicz ... recently discovered Uncle Leo's descendants. The motivation and the reason were now before us ... yes: we can go back with a purpose and a goal.

The preparation and the agenda! ... In March 2001 we decided to travel to Romania to meet our newly discovered family. The first order of business was to determine what else to do on this trip besides saying "hello" and then "goodbye". Cost and effort was high and we needed to derive additional value from this trip. Then it became obvious ... do some archival research to fill in the holes in our family's pedigree ... in Ukraine. What started out as a simple premise turned out to be a full-fledged expedition. Besides a new passport, full inoculations were required (14 shots in all). Romania does not require a visa ... Ukraine does. We would have a guide and interpreter in Romania (Laurentiu, first cousin's son) but we needed one in Ukraine. Through the assistance of a colleague in Canada (Brian Lenius), who visited Ukraine, we were introduced to a Lviv native by the name of Olesya Boyko, who would act as our hostess, guide and interpreter. Now, Bucharest and Lviv are 600km apart. How does one get from one place to the other? The answer was as simple as it was innovative ... Laurentiu arranged for us to have the use of the University of Bucharest car (an ARO 10) and we were authorized to use it in both countries, fully insured. What a wonderful surprise. Now we had the freedom to do more while in transit.

While on the way from Bucharest to Lviv, why not stop in Chernivchi (Chernowitz), Ukraine the place of birth of Marian Rozyłowicz and all of his siblings, including Laurentiu's grandfather Leo, and do some archival research at the State Oblast (County) Archive. Then while on the way to Lviv, stop by Targovicia (Targowica), Ukraine, where great-uncle Stephan lived, married in 1908 and had a family. Then stop in Kalush, Ukraine, where grandfather Joannes (John) Rozyłowicz was born in 1857. All of these towns and villages are on the way to Lviv. The notion that we could retrace the steps of our ancestors by walking the soil they walked on was chilling. Dare we think that we could actually stand where they stood and reflect on their life so long ago? The chill was replaced by joy that perhaps at last we could complete the circle and "come back home". However, some additional work had to be done in our preparation. Again, colleague Lenius came through with assistance in suggesting the many archival books that we could research at the Lviv State Archives in the hope of finding answers to unanswered questions regarding gaps in our family tree.

From early March till mid-August it was a non-stop effort consolidating the many details to make this trip materialize and to structure an ambitious agenda with the hope of achieving a modicum of success. During this prep-time period, along came Muzyłowice. Our previous conversations with Brian Lenius revealed that the former German Catholic Colony of Muenchenal, present day Muzyłowice, Ukraine, may be an ancestral home of our maternal grandfather Gregory Lautsch, Gizella and Julia Lautsch's father, as there are indicators that this surname occurs frequently there. Muzyłowice is close enough to Lviv that a day trip could be in order, to visit the village and the abandoned dilapidated church, which is the subject of a restoration project under consideration. It is hoped that our archival search in Lviv may shed light as to a Lautsch's lineage being traceable to Muzyłowice.

The odyssey begins! ... August 13th we depart for Romania. After three connecting flights and over 16 hours in the air we arrive at Otopeni Airport in Bucharest. Otopeni is modern ... frequented by all the major European air carriers. Passport control is quick and uneventful. Even as a foreigner there are no questions ... compare your mug to that on the passport and you are cleared. After retrieving our luggage, customs control is even simpler ... we join the line with "no declarations" and ask the official, "Do we need to declare anything?" Their smiling courteous reply is "No" ... and we exit. Mind you, we are bringing in nearly \$1,000 worth of gifts for the family and no questions. Exiting the terminal we are greeted by a fellow holding a small sign reading "Edward Rozyłowicz". That's our man ... Laurentiu Rozyłowicz. Good-looking fellow ... like the rest of the men in the family. A handshake and a bear hug and then we are mobbed by more greeters. Our cousin Gheorghita, husband Nicu and a neighbor who is the driver plus two of Laurentiu's fellow University faculty members, Cristi the ARO 10 driver and Marius who just came along for the ride. What a reception ... smiles, handshakes, hugs and an overall perception that all were happy to see us (until Marius had to pick up the bags ... they were heavy). Then it's off to Bucharest proper and Gheorghita's flat, where we will spend the next few nights. The journey has begun.



First, a few words about our car, the ARO 10 (left)! ... Our first impression of this vehicle was at best a surprise. This "thing" will transport us 2000km over the next two weeks? We hope "it" and "we" survive. Boxy and unimpressive, it was a 4-cylinder, 4-speed manual, 4x4 car, Romanian made, a copy of a Land Rover. Its paint long past prime, shocks gone, doors needing careful handling and the interior looking gruesome, it cast a long and foreboding look at the prospect of a two-week journey. With no power steering and recently upgraded brakes, we made a "sign of the cross" and hoped for the best. Surprisingly ... with the exception of a single episode towards the end of the trip, the ARO performed quite well, survived all that Romanian and Ukrainian roads had to give and, at times, was even fun to drive.

Secondly, a few words about driving in Romania and the Ukraine! ... Before venturing out onto the roads of either country, it is best to understand their "rules of the road" ... there are NO rules of the road.

Every driver has the right to do whatever it takes to get to their destination by any means possible. Road signs in Romania are good and fairly informative (when they do exist) ... in the Ukraine they are unknown. Lane markings are a novelty. Passing on the left or right ... that's OK. Passing on curves and mountainous switchbacks ... acceptable. Driving in the opposite lane when passing, even with approaching traffic, is not only expected, it is obligatory. What we came to realize fast was that everyone gave turn signals not as a matter of courtesy, but as a matter of survival ... tell the other drivers your intentions and avoid an accident. If an approaching car is in your lane with their passing signal on, simply drift to the shoulder and give him room to clear you. If a car behind you blinks his lights ... move over for he's probably doing 150km/hr (90mph) and will pass you, room or no room.

Parking anywhere in any fashion is the norm (see above). Middle of the street between two trolley tracks is acceptable. Lock it and leave. Sidewalks ... they are especially made for convenient diagonal parking. Pedestrians simply walk around cars blocking their way. No ugly stares. Meet a friend on a country road? Park in the middle of your lane and have a drink, break some bread and have your conversation ... traffic will detour around you with no hardships to anyone. However, as unsafe and hazardous as these situations appear, at no time did we see or encounter any aggressive action on the part of any driver that would endanger any other person. Horse drawn carts (right) were accorded space and courtesies when passing. Pedestrians were treated similarly, as both countries have a plethora of walkers on all roads, at all times, morning through evening. When in doubt, every car driver employs that ultimate safety device ... the "horn". Beep, and it is the responsibility of the other party to get out of your way. However, when that person is in a designated "pedestrian walkway", no matter the circumstances, all traffic stops. It's the law and all understand and respect this rule. And it works!



Meanwhile back in Bucharest! ... Driving from Otopeni Airport to Gheorghita's flat was an eye-opener of sorts. Otopeni, the suburb, is a mixture of low-rise apartment buildings and shops lining the main road to town. Their state of disrepair was disheartening. The road was adequate but still in need of repairs. Our attention was riveted to the surrounding conditions while Marius, Cristi and Laurentiu carried on in their best English giving us the latest on the happenings in Bucharest and Romania. Their endless good-natured bantering was a reprieve from the view out the window. It seems that our arrival triggered their need to practice their English ... and we were delighted that their mastery of English was so good. Can anyone of us say the same ... knowing a second language? Anyway, the drive commenced through the green parks of Bucharest, through their Arch de Triumpe (of sorts), their wide avenues and into the city proper. As we progressed through the commercial center of town and into the residential areas, our hearts sank deeper into disbelief. The remaining vestiges of the Soviet-era apartment buildings were truly disheartening (left). Tall, dark and crumbling they stood out as monoliths of depression. Lining both sides of the main thoroughfares they stood like dark sentinels ... foreboding, ugly and incredibly unsafe

looking. How could people live in such squalid conditions ... such dehumanizing surroundings?

But before anyone get the impression that this scene is a reflection of the spirit and the resignation of the people of Bucharest as a whole ... let us say emphatically that as our stay in Bucharest progressed nothing could be farther from the truth. The people of Bucharest, as we have found out in person, do not allow their material surroundings to impact their view on life in general. They are, for the most part, willing to accept the current state of affairs because their freedom is only 12 years old ... since 1989, and progress takes time. They see their future in terms of becoming a member of the European Union and of progress in their standard of living increasing yearly. They see small steps taken to replace these monoliths with smaller more personalized housing as the opportunities arise. The City Center with its many architectural jewels and grandiose Soviet edifices reflects positively that the future of Bucharest springs outward from the city's heart and will, in time, arrive at the farthest reaches of this metropolis. Progress takes time and Bucharest's time will come. The spirit for the need for a better quality of life is not limited to Westerners ... it rests in the mind in the many people we have met here.



.... [Continued in Section 2](#)