

# Discovering America



*Students from the University of Kishinev  
experience the United States Lafayette-style*

*by James Doughty '90 and Ina Sementchuk*

**D**uring the month of April, 13 students and two professors from the State University of Kishinev in the Soviet Republic of Moldavia visited Lafayette for 12 days. During their stay, they toured local attractions and experienced a brief taste of life on College Hill.

The group visited the Mack Printing Company in Easton, the Paxinosa Elementary School, and Easton Hospital, where they were given guided tours. Day trips took them to the Hershey Chocolate Factory and to the Pennsylvania Dutch country, to a dinner with the members of a Lancaster church group who had met the students in Kishinev a year earlier, and to Philadelphia. The Citizens' Exchange Council, which organized the visit, hosted the Soviets for two days in New York City, where they saw the Statue of Liberty, a Broadway musical, and other at-

tractions. One of the students said that returning to Lafayette from New York was like "coming home."

During a visit to the Binney and Smith crayon factory in Easton, the group was received by Congressman Don Ritter. Ritter, who speaks Russian, spoke with the students while local television cameras filmed the meeting.

On campus, the Soviet students were the stars in a "brown bag lunch," a question and answer session which was open to the whole campus community. There also were numerous receptions and meetings with faculty members and students, along with visits to classes and academic departments.

After a thrilling—and exhausting—week and a half, the group left for Washington and then for home. Gifts and hugs were exchanged with their hosts, many of whom had met their Soviet counterparts when the Lafayette contingent first visited Kishinev last November.

One of the Kishinev students, Ina Sementchuk, shared her impressions before leaving. An English major, Ina spoke with other members of her group to produce a report on what they had seen, heard, and experienced. Here is her story. □

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**S**peaking about the American tendency to travel, Steinbeck said: "One goes not so much to see but to tell afterwards."

When in America we do as Americans do. We are keeping our eyes and ears open and I am sure there will be no end of the stories when we go back to the Soviet Union.

It is impossible to see all of the United States in a couple of weeks, but we managed to see some glimpses of it, making tours of Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, the Pennsylvania Dutch Country, and Easton. Wherever we went we enjoyed a hearty welcome, and it seemed to us that America is the land of smiles.

Together with my friends I'd like to draw a picture of America as we discovered it.

For Igor Kinakh each country begins with its children. "American babies are very smart and have their own ideas very early," he said. When we visited an elementary school we were greeted with a march from a brass band and a sign saying in Russian, "You are welcome." One of the children knew the Rus-

sian word *spasibo*, which means "thank you." Our greatest shock at the school was the class for handicapped children and the excellent care that they received there.

What worries our students is that the American system of higher education based on payment of fees may prevent some children from getting the sort of education they want. At Lafayette College we met lucky people who enjoy going to one of the best schools in the country.

Your campus came as a big surprise for us. So many beautiful buildings, trees, and flowers; libraries for studying; excellent equipment at the departments of psychology, chemistry, and engineering; rooms for having fun; and the church for reflection upon your life. But it is, of course, meeting people at Lafayette that is most important.

This college is a big home housing a family of students and professors. We liked the free and democratic relations between the faculty and the students. We attended classes in English, American and German literature, political economy, religion, and other subjects.

Angela Krechun was greatly im-

pressed by a class in Shakespeare, where she saw a scene from *Hamlet* performed by Lafayette students. "Some of them are born actors," she said. We'd like to organize a joint Shakespeare production in our English-speaking Cheshire Cat Club when the Lafayette students visit Kishinev again. We'll devote it to Shakespeare's 425th birthday.

Some of our students visited a military science class. Aureli Tchinchlei mentioned that American students get more information about the history of military science and the psychological aspect of it than the students in the Soviet Union. He was surprised though that Europe was viewed as a battleground. The consequences of a possible military conflict are not taken into account or at least do not concern the United States.

Igor Bodieu stressed that friendly meetings between young people of our countries are very important. When we become the leading political force in our societies it will never occur to us to strike up a new war. Professor Melentchuk voiced an opinion that such students' exchanges serve the cause of peace.



Elizabeth Keegin Colley

The Kishinev students answered questions and gave their impressions of the United States at a "brown bag" luncheon.