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Thomas F. Rogers

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Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Thomas Rogers, president of the Russia St. Petersburg Mission, and Reid Johnson, president of the Stockholm Sweden Temple.** The two are in St. Petersburg's royal Summer Garden, where twice in this century Russia was dedicated by Latter-day Saint Apostles for the preaching of the restored gospel.



# Vignettes of Temple-Bound Russians

Thomas F. Rogers

*Excerpts from a recently published personal journal give glimpses of the souls who found their way to the “Russian Weeks” in the Stockholm Sweden Temple.*

While serving as president of the newly opened Russia St. Petersburg Mission, I kept a personal journal that has brought me great joy. The stance my journal took was not to account for my own time and effort but to record events and insights, mundane though they may seem, which struck me at the time as fairly profound. For three charmed years—summer 1993 to summer 1996—I was privileged to witness on an almost daily basis the “mighty change of heart” in missionaries and members, their heightened spiritual awareness, and the courage and heroism they mustered, even though at times they faltered, to rise above the natural man and transcend the constant adversity that accosted each of them in a variety of forms.

In particular, the journal records my personal response, my musings over those events as they occurred, mostly in others’ lives, sometimes in my own. I often responded with amazement and also with a hint of my own inadequacy in comparison with those others. Those three years were truly a time of awakening and spiritual discovery. As I declare in one of the journal’s segments, “Is it not an utterly inspired and ultimately win-win policy that the Lord would, by such extensive delegation, require so many of us, so ostensibly unqualified, to be trusted and, again, entrusted with the carrying forward of his sacred work—the salvation of souls?” My hope is that this and other impressions that came to me then will have some impact and significance for others also.

The following excerpts from the journal, including the remarks of two of our missionaries, mostly relate to members of the Russia St. Petersburg Mission who, during our time there, were endowed in the Sweden Stockholm Temple. These vignettes are preludes to the Russian Weeks described in the preceding article.

## Setting

As it must have been under the tsars, St. Petersburg still affords more of a contrast than probably any other Russian city. The imperial edifices—including numerous ministry buildings—are breathtakingly immense in





Courtesy Andrew Eversole

**View of St. Petersburg's endless high-rise apartments.** During the Communist regime, St. Petersburg was renamed Leningrad. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the city's original name was restored. Residents, however, still refer to this section of the city as Leningrad.

scale, the friezes and outright sculpture of their facades opulent beyond those of such structures anywhere else. But the high-rise tenements most everyone lives in—vast tracts of them—suggest another aesthetic, which is crude if not ugly, monotonous, and barely functional.

This impression is compounded by the condition of streets and walkways everywhere, I'm told, in the later winter. I've whimsically commented that here the earth must have already received its paradisiacal glory—a sea of glass (read “treacherous ice”) mined with canine excrement wherever you put down your feet. The high incidence of broken hips on the part of the many older people who fall on it and the consequent deaths from pneumonia are certainly one way to minimize the state's geriatric caseload and burden of pensioners. The health problems that plague children (due chiefly to polluted water and malnutrition) are other great population levelers. And all of this misfortune couldn't have happened to a more lovable, or in many respects a more innocent, people.

St. Petersburg's climate and its seasons are far from moderate—lately a heat wave alternating with wet, cold weather—and seem to take their toll. The summer white nights encourage people to sleep less, though we all need as much sleep as ever, and induce a kind of listlessness. With it comes



an inattentiveness shown by investigators during lessons or by some members to their Church obligations. All of this coincides with the dacha season, when Russians traditionally spend every weekend (if not weeks on end) throughout the summer in their country gardens—not just tending their crops, but indulging in a general lethargy aided by alcohol.

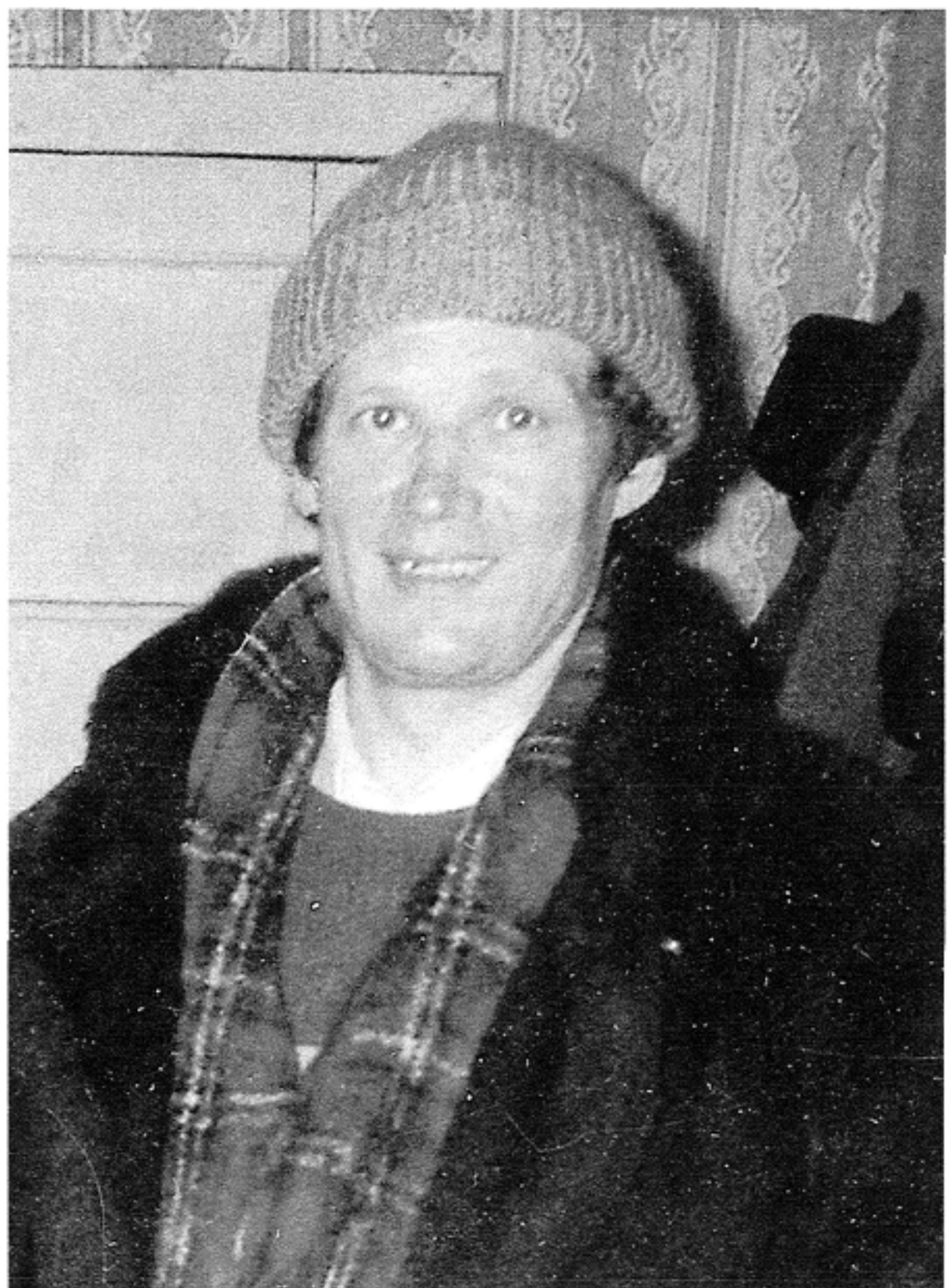
When summer days are eventually displaced by the dark days of winter, an opposite but equally immoderate response takes over instead—depression in some and the urge to sleep too much. Perhaps this in turn reflects, or has to some extent shaped, those manic-depressive extremes so observable in literary characters and in the nation's history.

With essentially two additional winter months taken off to celebrate both the Orthodox and the Western Christmases and New Year's, one can surmise that many Russians spend close to half the year on vacation. How miraculous therefore that some essentially disregard such tradition, join the Church, and attend each Sunday throughout the year.

## Role Model

We were recently invited by one of our branch presidents, Viktor Yakovlev, to the dacha he built with his father and brother. While there, we experienced a Russian *banya* (hot steam sauna) and were then served a simple meal made up entirely of the products from his dacha garden—boiled potatoes, tomato preserves, fresh cabbage, and apples—taken from the root cellar he had also constructed.

What made the experience particularly profound was that this man, though a professor and an engineer, hasn't been paid for half a year. For the very survival of his family, he needs what he grows. Hospitable as ever and in my experience never inclined to ask for a handout or special help, he just happens to be one of the longest-standing branch presidents in St. Petersburg. He also testifies that two summers ago he worked in his garden only one Sunday and came up with a miserable crop. This year he vowed to



Courtesy Morgan Magleby

**President Viktor Yakovlev**, first counselor in the mission presidency.



avoid Sunday gardening altogether and produced a bumper harvest. The bounty testifies to him of the principle of Sabbath keeping. His example testifies to us of that and much more. [Brother Yakovlev later served as first counselor in the mission presidency and assisted with logistical arrangements for excursions to the Stockholm Sweden Temple.]

## Against All Odds

From Elder Paul Anderson:

Last August, Elder Richard Turpin and I went contacting on Grazhdansky Prospect. As it was Monday, however, there were not many people on the street, and our success was minimal. So when a young family of three came into sight, Elder Turpin and I jumped on them. Of course, as the father told me later, they had seen us from a mile or more away. Our white shirts and ties gave us away instantly as foreigners, and they thought we were lost and simply wanted help. How mistaken they were.

However, our broken Russian did not help. I had been in the country for eight months, and Elder Turpin for less than three. In fact, only Tanya, the mother, understood anything we tried to say. I would say

something, and she would transcribe it from missionary Russian into real Russian.

Of course, Tanya was probably more ready for our message. A few days earlier, she had mentioned to her husband, Igor, that in spite of their having all they needed, something was still missing in their lives. She thought it was religion.

We showed them the Book of Mormon, gave them the address to the Ploshchad Muzhestva Branch, and invited them to attend. For the Tarasovs, 11:00 A.M. was much too early to get up on a Sunday. Yet for some reason, both Tanya and Igor woke up on time and came to church.

After sacrament meeting, they found us and invited us to their home. Then they waited . . . and waited . . . and waited, but we never showed. So a week passed, and they came to church again. We set up a time to meet, and then again they waited . . . and waited,



Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Tanya and Igor Tarasov with their son Ale-sha** in the gardens of the Stockholm Sweden Temple—sure proof that, as Elder Anderson tells us, their interest in investigating the Church never flagged.



and again we didn't come. Another week passed, and they came to church again. This time we set up a visit for directly after church so there could be no forgetting and no delay. With my new companion, Elder Seth Campbell, I taught them the first discussion. As Igor explains it, there was a feeling there that allowed them to trust us. It was this feeling that had brought them to church that first Sunday and prompted them to invite us to their home.

Sadly, after three discussions, we were transferred to the Petrogradsky Branch. I called and explained to the Tarasovs that we wouldn't be there for the next discussion. That was difficult for us all. To make matters worse, when Elder Campbell and I moved out of the apartment, I accidentally left the keys inside. Elders Roderic Buttimore and Grant Beckwith were locked out on the very day for which I had scheduled a discussion with the Tarasovs in the missionary apartment.

What might have been a tragedy actually turned out to be a blessing, though. Elder Buttimore called and explained the situation, and Igor offered to help. A few minutes later, both he and Tanya arrived on the scene, and Igor, a professional carpenter, proceeded to take the entire door apart. Eventually, they all got in, but when Elder Buttimore offered to conduct the promised discussion, the Tarasovs declined. They thought Elder Buttimore, who is a very proper Englishman, was just too serious. Yet, as the Tarasovs soon discovered, Elder Buttimore was just as thoughtful and kind as all the rest—if not more so.

At their next appointment, Elder Buttimore asked them to be baptized. We had already scheduled them for September 20; however, the Tarasovs failed to mention this to Elder Buttimore—probably because they had never known about it. How could I have set a baptismal date without letting the Tarasovs know about it? Of course, their forgiving and staying with us after we had failed to show up for two appointments is also rather unbelievable. And everyone knows I have never been *praktichny* [practical]; in fact I am very often *rasseyany* [distracted].

The Tarasovs eventually agreed to a date in October. The Sunday before, Igor received a real answer to his prayers. After several nights of asking for a surer testimony of the truthfulness of our message, he sat with Tanya and Alyosha, his son, in sacrament meeting. Igor saw a distinct glow above President Kondratev, the district president, who was sitting on the stand. The glow lasted for several seconds, and even Tanya noticed it. Igor felt it was the Lord saying that baptism was the right thing for them.

On October 3, all three Tarasovs were baptized. Elder Beckwith baptized Igor, Elder Campbell baptized Alyosha, and I, Tanya. Elder Buttimore conferred the gift of the Holy Ghost upon each of them. A month and a half later, Igor was called as a counselor in the district presidency.

The Tarasovs' conversion story is quite amazing, if only because of all the silly things I did that might have kept them from being converted. Maybe the delays were a test to prove whether they really wanted to receive this blessing. Maybe not. All the same, the Lord is in charge, and if he wants the truth to reach his children who are seeking it, they will receive it.



Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers



**A Mormon Florence Nightingale.** Sister Irina Bereznyak spends much of her time caring for others without public recognition.

## Glue

If there were ever a Mormon Florence Nightingale, I'd nominate Sister Irina Bereznyak. She is always there behind the scenes, doing the cleanup after meetings. She nurses other members' dying parents, attends each of the four districts' conferences, and eagerly promotes cooperative work ventures with other members.

A chemist by profession, she was the first in her enterprise to renounce her Party affiliation when such an action was still precarious. Like so many others, she was deserted by her husband and contends with her only child, a fairly unmanageable and unappreciative teenage daughter. Russian women are, by contrast with many of the men, so

strong, accountable, and hard working—truly the glue that holds this nation together. [Sister Bereznyak has several times served as a Russian-speaking worker in the Stockholm Sweden Temple.]

## Amazing “Coincidences”

In 1991 a young girl from Kirgizstan approached a professor who, with his LDS students, had been touring St. Petersburg and was on the way to a Sunday service. She asked the professor to help her find the branch of the church that coincidentally they were also looking for. She had halfheartedly agreed to attend church at the urging of people associated with the Tabernacle Choir, whose concert she had attended during its tour of Russia the week before. However, she had silently told God that if she did not find where the Church was meeting her obligation to look further would be satisfied. Just three years later, as she was set apart to serve a mission in Moscow, Sister Kalambubu Turgunaliyeva Murzakulova reminded the professor, now her mission president, where they had first met.



Again in 1990, a young man, noticing two missionaries in a subway car, had the strong urge to speak to them, but the missionaries did not approach him. Two years later, he and his family were tracted out by another pair of messengers. He attests to the “light” that radiated from them as they entered his apartment. Vladimir Astafev now presides over St. Petersburg’s Moskovsky Branch.

Another young man and his family attest to the similar presence they felt when the missionaries came to them. Sergey Smelov is now president of the branch in the St. Petersburg suburb Kolpino.



Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Sergey Smelov**, president of the branch in Kolpino, a suburb of St. Petersburg, with his daughters Katya (*left*) and Diana.

In 1991 a young woman, an accomplished pianist, was taking a train to the Ukraine to recover from the shock of her brother’s untimely death. Before the woman boarded, her mother noticed there were only men on the train and advised her daughter to dispose of her ticket and go another time. Then a young American, a returned missionary who had served in another country but was then touring Russia, happened to approach them. He told them he had been prompted in a dream the night before to offer his services to someone that day, and in halting Russian, he offered his protection. For some reason, they trusted him. Learning during the trip about his religious background, the young woman decided to look up the Church after returning home. Asking some young people, who proved to be Baptists, for directions, she was told to beware of the Mormons, who would





Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Vyacheslav and Galina Efimov.** Vyacheslav was the senior district president in St. Petersburg and was later called as the first Russian to serve as a mission president. The couple served in the Russia Ekaterinburg Mission.

later, he served as a branch president and shortly after replaced Vyacheslav Efimov as president of St. Petersburg's East District. He later became a counselor in the mission presidency.

Speaking recently with another of our strong district presidents, I learned that, during the three years *before* he and his family encountered the missionaries, he had not only given up coffee and tea but also had begun to hold his own family home evening. He had also moved from the stance of a convinced atheist to debating matters of faith within himself (the first year), then to submitting to the inner "voice" that argued for faith (the second year), and finally to recognizing that "voice" as indeed the voice of God (the third year). While attending the temple a year after their

shout at her and compel her to stay with them. Remembering the young man, she disbelieved them and went on her way. Jana Orno-Orlova is now our mission's music director and shouts at us to stay in tune!

For several years, a man had taken special notice of one of the principal supervisors at his large workplace. The supervisor, he says, stood out for him because of his honesty and his concern for others. After joining the Church, the first man was both amazed and delighted to discover this exceptionally fine supervisor, Vyacheslav Efimov, was his district president. [Later Efimov became the first Russian mission president to serve in Russia. He died in February 2000.]

In 1993 a missionary was unexpectedly impelled to cross a busy street and speak to a family he had noticed at a considerable distance. The husband, Anatoly Sitonin, then considered himself an atheist, but he and his wife were baptized soon after taking the missionary lessons. Six months



conversion, he immediately recognized that same familiar “voice.” He heard it again when he began to read the Doctrine and Covenants for the first time.

After a fresh falling-out with his senior companion, a young, tender-hearted missionary began to cry as he approached a man on the street. The man responded by embracing and consoling the missionary but did not agree to take a Book of Mormon or meet with him. The next day while tracting, the missionaries reencountered the same man, who remembered the tender-hearted elder and was moved by what had earlier transpired between them. The man invited them in and began receiving the discussions.

While riding in a bus a few weeks ago to the farewell sacrament service featuring a local sister missionary called to Moscow, I noticed a young man and an older lady enter the vehicle. Their backs were turned, and through the crowd I could not see them well. But something about the young man—not just the suit and tie he wore, but his deference to the woman, presumably his mother—made me regret that he was not one of us or one of our missionaries, whom he so resembled. It was an impression I don’t usually have when I’m in a crowd of strangers. I asked myself what it would take to reach people like this young man. One could even assume, given their dress and bearing, that the young man and his mother were going to a church service of one kind or another. Russians don’t ordinarily dress that well or that formally, particularly on Sunday.

But why not to our service? I felt I should approach them and invite them to investigate the Church. But before I had a chance to, the young man turned in my direction—and, behold, it was the brother of our sister missionary, himself a member who had joined after participating in our



**Anatoly and Irina Sitonin** and their children, (*left to right*) Nikita and Vitaly.

Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers



mission play a year earlier. During the sacrament meeting, he spoke and announced his desire to serve a mission, too. In the aftermath, I asked myself what about him already stood out so? (I think I know.) And I chided myself: more is happening “out there” than we are often aware. The appeal of and need for the restored gospel, as well as its amazing comprehensiveness, are truly universal. If that were not so, we could not reach people like that young man, his mother, and his sister, and we would have long ago returned home. [Aleksandr Nepomnyashchy has since then also served a Russian-speaking mission and is now president of the same branch to which I traveled on that memorable Sunday.]

## Celestial Contact

From Elder Kevin Hathaway:

For several days in a row, my companion and I had spent our mornings street contacting. We would always cross the soccer field in front of our apartment, ride the bus a few blocks, and then contact on the streets next to the metro.

On this particular morning, however, we decided that, instead of crossing the soccer field, we would take a different route along the edge of the building in order to avoid the heat of the sun. As we emerged from behind the building onto an unfamiliar street, we saw a tall, muscular man and his petite wife pushing a baby carriage in our direction. As missionaries, we’d been challenged to speak to someone within three minutes of leaving our apartments. On this morning, it was my turn to make the first contact, so I approached the large man with the respect and caution his immense size demanded.

He was surprisingly polite and agreed to listen to my message. He told us his name was Aleksandr Tomak. For the next few minutes, he listened intently as I introduced myself and told him a little bit about the Church. When I removed a Book of Mormon from my bag to show him, his eyes immediately widened and he ceased looking at me. For the rest of our conversation, his gaze was focused on that Book of Mormon. He agreed to meet with us the next day, and when I gave him the book, he cradled it gently in his hands as if it were a small child.

When we arrived the next day to teach Aleksandr the first discussion, he had already read fifteen chapters in the Book of Mormon. It took several minutes to answer all his questions before we could begin to teach him the discussion. Over the next month, I was amazed to see him grow. He attended church every week and continued reading the Book of Mormon. I could soon see the sparkle of a testimony in his eyes.

Only one obstacle stood between Aleksandr and baptism. He loved to smoke. He told me later that after weeks of struggling with that habit, he finally approached the Lord in prayer. He told the Lord how grateful he was for the Church and the Book of Mormon. He expressed his burning desire to





Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Aleksandr and Yulya Tomak and their daughter, Natalya.** As a relatively young member, Aleksandr served as president of St. Petersburg's largest district.

be baptized and then asked the Lord to help him quit smoking. As he opened his eyes, they immediately came to rest on a pack of cigarettes. He removed one of them and looked at it. Suddenly he realized that his physical craving to smoke had disappeared. The cigarette in his hand did not even appeal to him. In fact, it was repulsive. He tossed the whole pack over his balcony railing and walked back into his apartment. From that moment, Aleksandr has never experienced the craving for a cigarette!

I baptized Aleksandr on August 6. The ordinance was performed in a lake not far from his home. As he came up out of the water, his face shone with light. My emotions grew tender as he immersed me in a giant bear hug. I felt like I'd been preparing for that moment for nineteen years.

Later, Aleksandr told me that on the morning we first met, he and his wife had both "just turned down that unfamiliar street for no particular reason." I know without a doubt, as does Aleksandr, that there was a reason why we both decided to take different streets that morning. It had nothing to do with chance or the heat of the day. The Lord needed Aleksandr and his family.

[Brother Tomak was soon called as a branch president and faithfully served in that capacity for several months. During that time, he also baptized his wife, Yulya. Today he is the president of St. Petersburg's largest district. He continues to be an example of faith and obedience to those he serves.]



## Kaddish—Lament for the Dead

Yesterday we attended L's funeral at the crematorium we visited over a year ago. L was only in his forties and was both our mission genealogy leader and a counselor in a district presidency. He was earlier an extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic Sunday School and institute teacher. No one was ever more committed, more focused. But two weeks before his unexpected death, others—mostly sisters—came to me expressing their dismay that he had been called to assist in the temple. They complained about the personal advice they had not asked for, the admonitions, the implied censure, the tendency to dispute small points of doctrine, the assertion of his titles when presiding, his insistence on the superiority of his Jewish bloodline, the need to be recognized as others' patriarch and priesthood advisor (even when he wasn't), his personal history of four unsuccessful marriages prior to joining the Church, and his former wives, who did all they could to keep their whereabouts unknown to him.

What the sisters complained of did not surprise me. L had aggravated me often enough too—and worried me about the impression he made on others as a Church officer. But he had managed to do us all this favor—before the next temple trip, before people could feel further harassed and complain some more, he died. In doing so, he also gave each of us pause to consider whether, in his case, we should have taken the higher road more often. Many felt bad about the way they had resented him so.

On the whole, L's funeral was easier to take than Vladislav's a year ago. Perhaps we knew this time what to expect. L's last wife was there too. I'd been told he had introduced her to the Church, but as far as I know she had been inactive since their divorce. She couldn't have been more than eighteen when they married, just half his age, the one we were told he had beaten. She sobbed throughout. She must have still loved him.

L was clothed in the temple attire we'd managed to have a missionary's parents bring over with them just in time. And his silent and rather nondescript father, an ethnic Jew who, we understood, was not a believer, at the last moment threw himself on the bier and wept with abandon, calling out, "My son! My son!" At that moment, I envied L. Nor did I want to inquire if the Church approves cremation of a corpse dressed in temple garb. Or if the morticians disrobe corpses first. And, if so, do we get the clothing back. I don't think I will inquire either, unless there are other such instances while we are here. I know that L, particularly, would have wanted it that way. He was a man, someone said, who had never known any happiness, but he had demonstrated great hope, faith, and dedication during his two and a half years as a member, particularly with respect to the temple. Those few last years were a meaningful compensation.



And we saw him mellow. The sister who had during his last two weeks so devotedly nursed L—she also has Jewish antecedents—had in turn fallen in love with him. She will succeed him as mission genealogy leader and would like nothing better than to be sealed to him, which we told her could happen only in the life to come if both are willing.

As I think again about the service that preceded L's cremation and the quick destruction of his garb and remains in an oven before we'd even departed, I was somehow reminded of the "strike" in which a play's stage set is reduced to as close to ashes as possible. I've often felt that theater is such an ephemeral art. But so is mortality—extremely ephemeral.

A sad echo of earlier events—the son about to be cremated, the distraught father, both Jews.

### **A Natural**

I was first struck by his surname, Lermontov, which he shares with one of Russia's foremost poets. Then, after casting him as the lead in both of our mission plays, I came to recognize his remarkable charismatic gift—whether on stage or off, it was the same. He had so much integrity and such a simple solid faith. A student of electrical engineering, he had no noticeable aesthetic inclinations or prior experience. But radiating so much of his own true self, he was meant to be the lead in our mission-produced plays. I seriously doubt we could have performed them without him.

What unity and esprit those plays conjured, especially within each cast. So many cast members have since served full-time missions, and some of the nonmembers of the casts have since been baptized. Activities of this order are what the Church needs more of. And I still contend that everyone can be an actor.



Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

Andrey Lermontov and President Rogers



## Tough Call

A number of outstanding young members of missionary age are unable to serve because they are unwilling to register for armed service. Who can blame them? The abuse of new recruits and the heavy loss of Russian lives in the country's questionable venture in Chechnya would incite cynicism and fear in anyone. Still, the Church cannot afford to send these young men to other places and thus unwittingly assist them to avoid their obligation as citizens.

There are notable exceptions like Rodion Batin, the son of an earlier branch president who had one day simply walked away from his calling and never returned to our meetings. Rodion has all along remained enthusiastically involved, as has his younger brother. When it was time for Rodion to register for the draft, he did not hesitate in doing so. Despite his youth, he was then a counselor in the East District presidency. He has since been stationed near enough to St. Petersburg that on weekends he often manages to attend meetings in his home branch. I imagine that, at some point, a full-time mission will follow.

## Celestial Weddings

The precedent of two "celestial weddings" will do much to inspire the members and send familial roots deep into the Russian soil. The student Oleg Martaler is Vyborg's quiet, committed seminary teacher and now a counselor in the Vyborg district presidency. He and his bride from the same community will be the first of our members to marry in the Stockholm temple. (The temple wedding will, of course, follow the obligatory registration ceremony at a local Russian wedding office—but by only a few days).

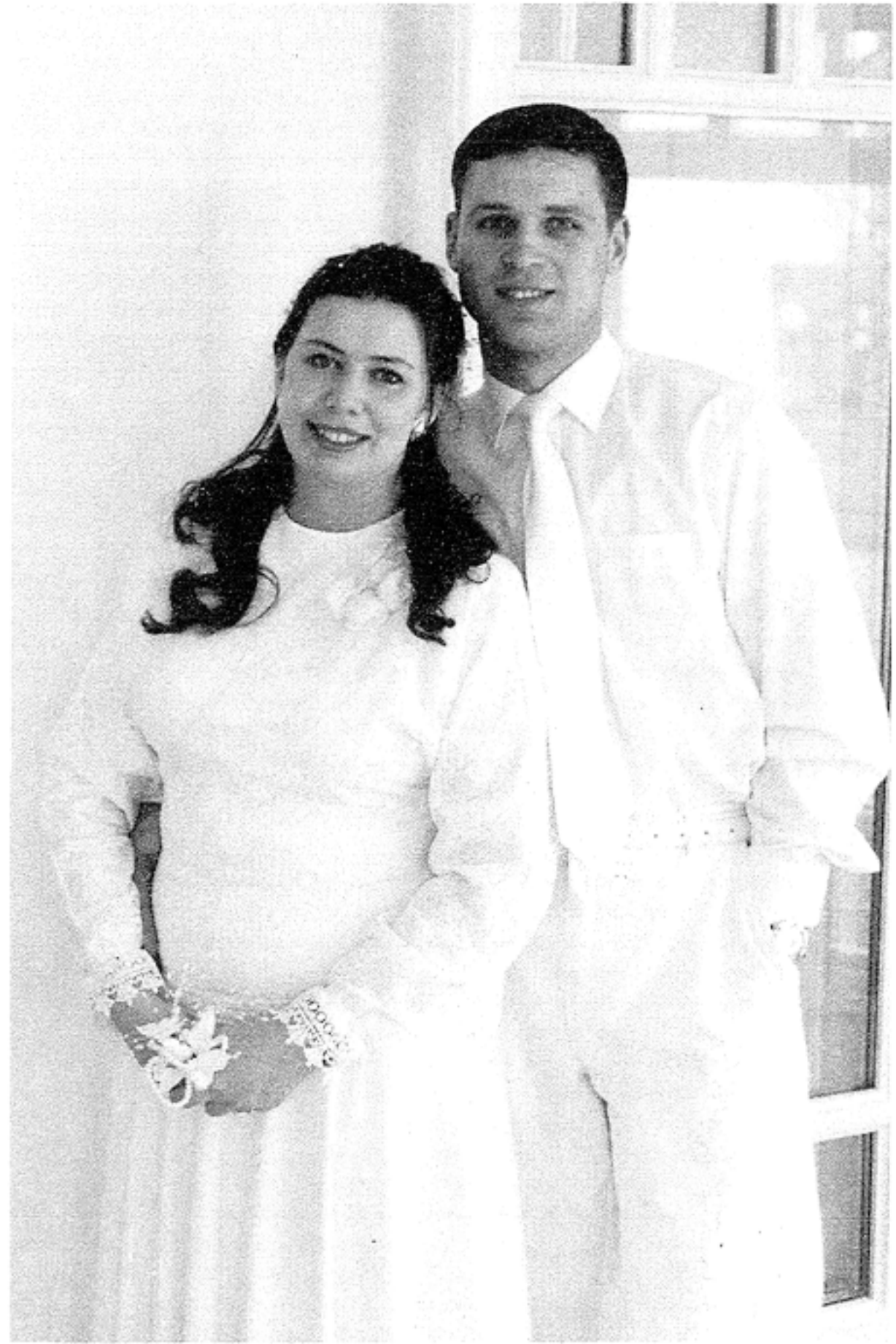


Courtesy Gail Halvorsen

**Russian pioneer.** Oleg Martaler coordinated the seminary and institute programs in Vyborg. He and his wife were the first Russian couple to be married in the Stockholm Sweden Temple.



The second such union is, I believe, also unique to the Church in Russia. It involves two former full-time missionaries: the vivacious Natasha Smirnova, whom I set apart two years ago and who served in the Ukraine Kiev Mission, and the fine Igor Akolyushny, who hails from Ukraine but faithfully served his mission in St. Petersburg. Igor returned here a year after his release, unable to find work in his destitute country. He also has the distinction of having joined the Church after the first American missionaries came to East Germany, where he was serving as a member of the occupying Red Army. This deed alone says volumes about his courage and independence, not to mention his great faith. Not long ago, he came to me, wondering if despite his being almost thirty he should defer marriage for further education. I take credit for saying, “No,” and tilting his resolve by pointing him in Natasha’s direction.



Courtesy Thomas F. Rogers

**Igor and Natasha Akolyushny.** Both served full-time missions—she in Ukraine, he as a Ukrainian Russian in St. Petersburg. They were the first Russian returned missionaries to be married in the Stockholm Sweden Temple. Igor may also be the only Russian who joined the Church while still a member of the Soviet army occupying East Germany. Igor now serves as driver for the Russia St. Petersburg Mission office.

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Thomas F. Rogers served as president of the Russia St. Petersburg Mission from 1993 to 1996. His book, *A Call to Russia*, was recently published by BYU Studies. Rogers has been Professor of Russian at Brigham Young University for thirty-one years and is a BYU Studies Academy member. He received his B.A. in international relations from the University of Utah in 1955, his M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literature from Y University in 1962, and his Ph.D. in Russian Languages and Literature from Georgetown University in 1969. He has published “The Gospel of John as Literature,” *BYU Studies* 28, no. 3 (1988): 67–80, and several plays in his volumes *God’s Fools* (1983) and *Huebener and Other Plays* (1992). He has served as the director of the Honors Program and Chair of the Department of Asian and Slavic Languages at Brigham Young University and as editor for *Encyclia*, the journal of the Utah Academy. In 1998 he received the Lifetime Service Award for the Mormon Festival of the Arts. The author can be reached through the BYU Studies email address: [byu\\_studies@byu.edu](mailto:byu_studies@byu.edu).