

## **Humorous asides**

These are lighter episodes that VNIIA's Andrey Sviridov interjected into his serious accounts of collaborative activities of his institute.

By Andrey Sviridov, VNIIA

1994: The first American visitors to Mayak, the vast nuclear materials storage and processing complex in the closed city of Ozersk in the Urals

During the discussion of the visit program in the hotel hall, the Americans put a satellite imaging map of Ozersk and Mayak site on the table. The reaction of Mayak people was quite interesting. It seemed to me that the security service officer tried to faint and snatch the map away from the Americans at the same time.

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The head of the US delegation was Mr. Chakovsky from the State Department. After the end of the technical part of the visit to Mayak, the city administration of Ozersk invited the guests to the musical concert played by the students and teachers of the local musical school. The concert was really great, the quality of performance was really high, and the highlight of the evening was the performance of a cello quartette – tall, slim, and charming female teachers of the school. The head of the US delegation thanked the musicians after the concert and said that he was especially delighted to listen to this concert since his family name was Tchaikovsky. The audience applauded!

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1995: My three-month trip to Los Alamos

The next day after my arrival in Los-Alamos was the Columbus Day (October 5) and the lab was closed for three days. Ron Augustson, understanding my problems, in the first days of my stay decided to provide me with a rental car. Office clerk filled in the papers for my car in Budget rent-a-car office, we went to the car, got into it, and she handed me the keys. Seeing my confusion (it was my first experience with the automatic transmission), the woman asked if I could drive at all, then briefed me on the basics of AT. When asked what gears 1 and 2 stood for, she said I would not need it and asked me to drive around the parking lot. After making sure I could drive and my hands were not trembling too much, she left me alone. My next adventure was the discovery of the fact that in the US they as a rule put traffic lights **behind** the crossroads. After stopping my car on the red light in the **middle** of my very first crossroads in the USA (luckily it happened in Los-Alamos where there was not too much traffic), I quickly understood the specifics of the local traffic rules, thus confirming the postulate that a graduate of the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute was capable of coping with any problem, given the motivation.