

GEORGIA

საქართველო

Saturday December 29, 2001--Saturday, January 5, 2002

Visit #25

Death of Archil Kobaladze

Appendix A: An Apropos by Zviad Kirtava

Appendix B: Obituary

H. Kenneth Walker M.D.
Emory University School of Medicine

<http://www.emory.edu/MED/EXCHANGE/HKW/>

Sunday, December 30, 2001

Left Atlanta yesterday at 4 p.m. To Paris, then Vienna, then Tbilisi. Bag didn't make the connection to Vienna, due to 45 minute connection time in Paris. I expected this, so I had put enough clothes in a carry-on. Got to Vienna, without luggage but with carry-on, and they wouldn't let me take it on the plane because it weighed 10 kilos instead of 8 kilos. Checked it with many reservations: I had a suit in it for Archil's funeral, and I was not at all confident it would make it to Tbilisi, leaving me bereft of two bags. To my surprise, the bag did make it to Tbilisi. I was met at the airport by a host of people, including Zviad Kirtava (director of the National Information Learning Center--NILC), Guram Lezhava, George Turkia, and others, all saddened at the death of Archil.

I had been in Tbilisi Monday, October 8 through Tuesday, October 16, just two and one-half months ago. The weekend preceding my visit Archil had a severe case of the flu, and told me "I had the worst headache I have ever had." All his other symptoms were clearly influenza--severe myalgias, fever, fatigue--and a few days after I arrived all his symptoms had gone, including the headache. At the airport on the day I left I noticed he had a slight but definite left lower facial weakness, that I was confident he had not had before. I mentioned this, in fact, to the student who accompanied me on the trip, Andrew Styperek. I said nothing about it to Archil, thinking it might be the beginning of a Bell's palsy, or even that I had been mistaken about his not having it before: such a weakness is quite common in many of us due to birth injury, just plain old asymmetry, old Bell's palsy. I thought nothing further about it, talking with Archil as usual on the telephone fairly often.

Then to my horror I got a phone call from an agitated Zviad, telling me Archil had been mildly confused on a couple of occasions, and his mother had remarked upon a change in behavior: Archil had become obsequiously and fawningly polite in a way "that isn't like my son". An MRI was done that showed what was interpreted as a large tumor of the right hemisphere. Digital images were sent to me a few minutes later, and our neuroradiologists thought the changes were unclear due to quality of the images, but thought they might indicate meningitis such as herpes. A very worrisome aspect was there was quite a lot of cerebral edema, with the brain being compressed by the uncus of the temporal lobe, which is quite a serious complication. I consulted with the neurologists and infectious disease specialists, and advised he be placed on steroids and acyclovir, and hospitalized.

The people in Tbilisi and I had a number of talks, and decided the best course was for him to come to Emory and have a definitive diagnosis. I considered it entirely possible it was a brain tumor, and knew that the location, MRI characteristics and clinical manifestations made it highly likely it would be an aggressively malignant tumor. On the other hand, he had had a flu-like illness, and some of the characteristics were like herpes, and there was the tentative opinion of the neuroradiologists that this might fit into a chronic meningitis picture. In the end we decided to bring him to Emory.

He was hospitalized on arrival and sophisticated MRIs indicated pretty conclusively he had a highly malignant tumor, probably a glioblastoma multiforme. A brain biopsy put the grade of the tumor just below that: an anaplastic astrocytoma. Practically makes little difference, since pathologically the two are separated only by a few mitoses per field, and sampling error plays a

large role. The neurosurgeon, a highly experienced and respected man who is an oncologic neurosurgeon, said an operation was not feasible and in fact might result in immediate death due to the size and diffuse infiltrative nature of the tumor. I sent all the materials to a neuro-oncologist at MD Anderson and he and the people at Emory agreed on a six week course of irradiation with concomitant chemotherapy. The drug was temodor, which is new and had shown some promise. I devoutly hoped this would give Archil a year or with luck two years.

His daughter Salome had come with him, and they rented a house near Emory. Sergo, his son, is a sophomore at Emory, and was able to spend quite a lot of time with him, much of it quality time. Salome left after a week and Archil's wife Nona came over. For three or a bit more weeks there was some improvement in alertness and content of language. The last week there was obvious improvement: his left slight hemiparesis disappeared, and he walked five blocks with Sergo on Sunday, which was unheard of when he arrived. Then on Monday he was obviously much worse: less alert, almost unable to get out of bed and walk unaided. I thought it highly likely he was having an intercurrent infection, such as pneumonia. He had been on high dose steroids for a month and chemotherapy for several weeks. He declined even more over the next day, and on was hospitalized. Sergo was due to go to Tbilisi since his visa was running out. I advised him to go ahead, figuring an infection was most likely. This was due to his significant clinical improvement, which I thought had to indicate response to therapy.

Upon hospitalization an MRI showed no change in his tumor, which was expected, since anatomic change from radiation and chemotherapy takes time. But to my dismay there was no sign of infection, and he continued to worsen, dying quietly and without any pain on Christmas eve. The two possibilities were progression of the tumor in spite with compression of critical brain stem areas in spite of the seeming clinical improvement, or radiation edema. We raised his steroids to astronomical levels but to no avail.

There had been some discussion between me and some officials in Washington about not bringing Archil to Emory. The downsides were pointed out to me: money, which Archil and his family would have to pay; and the possibility of his getting into a chronic state requiring a nursing home and not being able to be transported back to Tbilisi. I decided, along with his family, that the trip was very much worth it, for a number of reasons:

1. We could get a definitive diagnosis, and provide therapy. If this turned out to be a highly malignant tumor, there was the possibility of gaining a year or more. He would not die in Tbilisi with the continual uncertainty that such might not have happened with aggressive but appropriate diagnosis and therapy.
2. His son Sergo, who along with their two daughters is the pride and joy of Nona and Archil, is a sophomore at Emory. Sergo and Archil would have the opportunity to spend a lot of time together, along with Nona, Archil's wife.

Even considering the outcome, I think without any doubt this was right. Archil very much agreed with this decision.

We had many problems arranging for his body to be transported back to Tbilisi. An American airline had to take it to some point in Europe and then an European airline take over. Air Georgia

has the most cities that it flies from, but we discovered no Western carrier has an agreement of cargo transfer with Air Georgia--probably due to unreliability and nonpayment of fees. And no carrier wants to have an unclaimed body on its hands in a place such as Frankfurt or Amsterdam. The funeral home and Delta absolutely refused shipment without an ironclad agreement about transfer, or without a destination funeral home agreeing to take the body upon arrival. One possibility was to arrange for a funeral home in, e.g., Frankfurt, to accept the body and then transfer to Air Georgia. For a while the best arrangement seemed to be a wait of a week and then shipment on Delta to Istanbul and then transfer to Turkish air. The delay being due to no flights on New Year's eve or day. Complicating the affair was the fact that Georgians only bury people on certain days of the week: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday or Sunday. And New Year's day was Tuesday, which ruled out Tuesday of that week. Finally President Shevardnadze's office intervened and basically forced Air Georgia and Delta to agree to the transfer. Archil's body left Atlanta on Thursday, December 27th (three days after death) and arrived in Frankfurt on Friday. His wife Nona left Atlanta on Friday for Frankfurt, and accompanied it to Tbilisi, arriving around 3 a.m. or so on Sunday, December 30th. The plane was met by Avto Jorbenadze (who had just been 'promoted' from Minister of Health to Prime Minister--called State Minister in Georgia) and a large group of family and friends.

We had arranged for Archil's friends in Atlanta to come to the funeral home on Wednesday pm and meet Nona. A large number of Georgians and US friends came. The overarching emotions were shock and deep grief, just as occurred later in Tbilisi. His illness was so sudden, and progressed so rapidly, that no one was prepared.

I went to Betsy's Hotel and checked in, then had dinner with Zviad. Went to Stones, arguably Archil's favorite restaurant, and sat where he and I usually sat. Continually expected to turn around and see him. Went to Archil's home and met with Nona, Sergo and Salome. Then a collapse in bed.

Monday, December 31, 2001

Up and had breakfast. Met Zviad and went to NILC and caught up on my email. Then to meet Amiran Gamkrelidze, the new Minister of Health. Has been the deputy for many years. In his late forties, a pulmonary specialist, and really outstanding at what he does. A good listener. No baggage. An easy person with whom to do business. He said he thought Zviad was the appropriate person to take Archil's place in our enterprises, and wanted to make sure I agreed. I did. We talked about the necessity of coming up with an appropriate memorial for Archil, and agreed to keep this at the top of our minds during the next few months.

I told Amiran about our success in Congress a week ago. We have been working for the entire year to get an 'earmark' in the Foreign Aid appropriations bill in Congress. We joined forces with Steve Wolfe, a lobbyist in Washington, and after a lot of work got the bill passed just as Archil was dying. We wish to establish a Nursing School, Public Health School and Distance Learning facility in Tbilisi. We decided on these plans several years ago, and have been unable to finding any funding sources. We have been to AID repeatedly, only to be told they do not fund these kinds of help for other countries. We finally decided to enlist the aid of the congressional delegation of the State of Georgia and get an earmark in the Foreign Aid bill. Jack Kingston, the representative from southeast Georgia, is the second ranking Republic on the foreign aid

subcommittee. John Steele, in his office, was enormously helpful. We in fact were helped by the representatives and senators from Georgia in a remarkable fashion.

Amiran was promoted to being the Minister just a couple of weeks ago, when Avto Jorbenadze, the minister with whom we have been dealing for many years, became State Minister (in effect Prime Minister). Amiran had just moved into the minister's office today. I consider this auspicious.

He gave me his vision of what he wishes to accomplish. He wants to establish a center modeled after the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. He gave me this in rapid outline, and we agreed I would return for a later meeting and get all the details. He said he would be in New York March 1-3, and then spend three days in Washington, where he would like to meet our Congressional people and US AID, in addition to Secretary of Health and Human Services Thompson.

I could see then that a good scheme would be as follows: for us to come back to Georgia the week of Jan 20th and have intense meetings finding out all the ways in which we might interact with other projects of the Ministry. Secondly, for us to go to Washington in February and present our proposal to the top people in AID in order to inform them of what we are doing. Then when Amiran comes we will go together to AID, if that seems feasible. In this fashion we will get the support of the government of Georgia for our proposal. And in an appropriate fashion, since we will be working together to put it into a final form.

I went to Archil's home and visited the family. I had learned through a discussion in Atlanta with Andro Kacharava, Archil's nephew and a former resident of ours who will join our faculty in February as a cardiologist, that there are no funeral homes in Georgia. Instead after death the body is taken to what might be called an embalming parlor, and then is returned to the family. It stays in the family's house or apartment for several days, until the funeral. From 4-6 pm every day the family receives friends, who circle around and view the body, which is placed in the center of the room. It is placed in a wooden coffin (not a metal one; so the biblical stricture can be followed: "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust") that has a detachable cover (unlike American caskets, whose cover is attached), so it is visible in an entire circle. The family stands for hours and receives visitors. This is what we did when I grew up out from Washington, Georgia. It was only in the fifties that funeral homes, as such, were developed and the body kept there with visit periods, rather than in the home.

Archil's mother Tina was having the most difficult time, saying she wished she were demented so she would not know what was happening.

I visited Gio Ramishvili, the partner of Levan Kacharava, Andro's brother and nephew of Archil. We had dinner together and discussed the economy and politics of Georgia. Gio and Levan are world class entrepreneurs, with their company doing business in areas ranging from the garbage disposal in Tbilisi to transporting the oil produced in Uzbekistan to the port in Poti, Georgia. They are involved with the Perdue chicken company and are building a cold storage warehouse in Poti that ultimately will have a capacity of 8 million square meters.

I went to the flat of Andro's mother and father in law. I met a Georgian pediatric cardiac surgeon,

Vladimir Alexi-Meskishvili, who works in Germany at the German Heart Institute (*Deutsches Herzzentrum Berlin*), which he says does more cardiac operations than any other institution in the world. About sixty, quite impressive. A good example of Georgians who can hold their own with anyone in the world in their field, and who are working outside of Georgia due to a lack of opportunity and facilities in Georgia.

Nick Rurua, the other son-in-law, was there. He is a favorite of mine. He has just returned to Georgia after getting his LLD at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He arrived four years ago, not speaking a word of English. His essay one year later, to get into law school, was brilliant. He is one of only two US LLDs in Georgia. He is working with a project of the U.S. Embassy to bring jury trials to Georgia. He is putting on mock jury trials throughout Georgia in order to acquaint lawyers and the public with the concept of jury trials. In about a year he will help write a law mandating jury trials.

All of us saw the New Year in. There were a lot of firecrackers and gunshots outside. New Year is the biggest holiday in all of the republics of the former Soviet Union. As a Georgian explained to me once, it was the time of the year when you were grateful the past year was done, and hoped like hell the new one would be a lot better.

To Betsy's and collapse.

Tuesday, January 1, 2002

Awakened at 3 a.m. as usual with circadian rhythm all screwed up. Back to sleep at 7 for a few minutes. Breakfast with Ia Kamkhadze. Ia is a cardiologist from Kaspi, Georgia (boondocks), who spent several months learning echocardiography with John Merlino at Crawford Long Hospital of Emory. On a recent trip we dedicated her 'clinic' at Kaspi. We recently found an x-ray machine for her in Atlanta (gift of Jacinto del Mazo, a private practitioner at Crawford Long, and former faculty member). It is being shipped under the auspices of Norma Hassinger of Atlanta and the State Department. We discussed Ia's plans to line the room with lead, etc. She is a marvel of energy and farsightedness. Lost her husband in the Abkhazian ethnic conflict in the early nineties, and basically has dedicated the remainder of her life to the healthcare of Georgians. A lot of similarities to Archil, who respected her a lot: "she has vision and she takes advice." She is working with Leslie Tate, of the US Peace Corps in Kaspi, to set up seminars for healthcare workers.

Had lunch with Sergo Kobaladze. Archil's son, and pride and joy. A sophomore at Emory, majoring in Economics. Full tuition scholarship, arranged by Tom Burns of Emory's History Department. Straight A student. Given a bid by every fraternity at Emory, joined Sigma Chi. Will spend next year, his junior year abroad, at the London School of Economics. Bright, charming, handsome, mature beyond his years. Will go very far in life. We went to the Sheraton Metechi, since everything else was closed on New Year's day. I brought up the last time I had a meal with Archil here, and as usual he knew every beautiful woman in the place, and was his usual charming self to them. Sergo told me how, when Archil had finished medical school in Tbilisi, and three days remained before he was due to go to St. Petersburg for residency training, he told his parents he could not go without Nona. In one day they arranged a giant wedding, with all the associated happenings. Archil's father, Sergo Kobaladze, was the most

eminent professor of internal medicine of his day in Georgia. Died in the mid to late eighties.

To the NILC for email, then back to Archil's house. This was the day the priest comes and blesses the body in an Orthodox ritual. I looked once again at my favorite picture of Archil, on a cabinet in the main room of his house, where his body lay. Taken in hospital whites in St. Petersburg, when he must have been about twenty-five. Broad smile on his face, a twinkle in his eyes, magnetically charming and handsome, even in a photo. Sergo, seeing my gaze, whispered to me (we were standing in the family line greeting mourners) that the nurses in the hospital could request the shifts they worked. They would find out when Archil was due to work, and twenty-five of them requested to be among the two or three nurses that worked his shift. To the astonishment and disbelief of his chief.

I went to Zviad's home for a supra, along with Caron Fraser. She is an intern in the NILC from an organization in Canada that sponsors such internships. She has a business degree, and is bringing a lot of business expertise to the NILC. Zviad's wife is beautiful and bright. He has a son, Becka, about eight to ten years old, and the household rightly revolves around him.

Afterwards I dropped by Archil's house again. The family was clustered on chairs around his body. I sat with his mother, and asked her how she was doing. She openly talked about her grief, and how life was not worth living any more. I spoke about her other family and her responsibility to them, etc. She is a wonderful person. In her eighties, continues to be beautiful, and is a principal strength of the family. A gracious, elegant, erudite and charming woman. One can see where much of Archil's charm and wisdom came from.

Wednesday, January 2nd, 2002: "Fate Day"

Georgian lore has it that your fate during the rest of the year is determined by the happenings on the second day of the New Year: "fate day." An important day. Ordinarily Archil would have been buried on this day, but not on fate day.

Levan Bakanidze and Guram Lezhava had breakfast with me. Levan is a resident in the Cancer Institute hospital, and spent six months with us as an exchange junior medical student. Guram is a faculty member in communications and engineering at the Georgian Technical University, and works closely with Georgia State University in the MBA school. One of Archil's closest friends. A director of Georgia Telecom, a state telecommunications organization. His son Buba is a favorite of mine. In his twenties, finished medical school and now is finishing his MBA at the Caucasus School of Business (CSB). Has been in Atlanta this semester taking courses in Georgia State's MBA school, in preparation for coming back and being on the faculty of CSB. We discussed Archil.

George Turkia, dean of the business school at Georgian Technical University, came by. He has a project with the bacteriophage people, and wanted to sound me out about support. The phage laboratory was written up a couple of years ago in the *New York Times* as being one of the most comprehensive in the world. They are planning to study the uses of phages in veterinary medicine. Gave me some interesting figures: there are three million cattle and thirty million chickens in Georgia, much more than the government expected to find before a recent survey. They want to study using phages instead of antibiotics in cattle and poultry. I expressed interest,

but told him I had no money. I understand they have just gotten a sizable grant from the NIH for some research on the efficacy of phage in treating bacterial infections.

I went over to the house of Ramaz Khurodze, the rector of Georgian Technical University, and talked to him and his brother, Temur, the provost of Tbilisi State University. We spoke at length about Archil. Ramaz was perhaps his closest friend, a friendship that began in kindergarten. We discussed the future of our projects without Archil.

To the NILC and email, and further discussion with Zviad and David Sheshelidze. David is a physician who went to Vanderbilt to study medical informatics for two years, and now works in the NILC. He has just married Ina, a German clinical pharmacologist and molecular biologist who was also studying at Vanderbilt. David promised me two years in the NILC as return on our investment of him at Vanderbilt (got a National Library of Medicine scholarship for it) and his 'time' is up at the end of this academic year. Nevertheless I hope to get something out of him in the future since he is so able. I would like to have him involved in a major way in managing our Distance Learning initiative. We'll see. Unfortunately his new wife has no opportunities in molecular biology in Tbilisi. He will have to do a lot of commuting if we can work something out.

Zviad and I went to the house of Batu Kutelia, another favorite of mine. I met him through his brother, Rashden, who is now a resident in medicine in the US. Batu is about twenty-eight, and has immense promise. He is the associate director of the Russian military liaison part of the Foreign Ministry of Georgia. Last year he spent six months in a NATO military fellowship in Italy. This stay resulted in a monograph on security issues in the Silk Road countries. In the thirty years of the fellowship, only ten students have produced work deemed suitable for publishing. Batu gave me a copy of his monograph. I looked over it briefly, and was very impressed with the quality and excellence of the writing--in English, of course, since it was a NATO publication. His mother and father were there. His father is a professor at Georgian Technical University, and is very well known internationally. A bright and very able family.

Then a late meeting with Amiran, where he gave me in detail his vision of his Georgian National Institutes of Health. There will be three principal components in terms of geography:

1. Digomi area of Tbilisi:

This is a part of the city of Tbilisi where there are already several healthcare facilities, and it will in effect be the main NIH campus, devoted to clinical work, medical education and research (when Georgia becomes able to fund it in the future). It will have these components:

- a. New hospital: this is now in the process of construction. More accurately, an old hospital building is being completely renovated into a modern 196 bed general hospital. This will be the hospital jewel of the Georgian healthcare system, a model of the best healthcare possible. One floor will be devoted to a satellite of the NILC, providing healthcare workers with access to all scientific literature of the world.

- b. Institute of Therapy (i.e., internal medicine): this has been on site for many years. Alex Aladashvili, who spent time with us at Emory, has his cardiac cath lab there. On a previous visit last year I went to the dedication by President Shevardnadze. Alex has put in almost 200 stents.

A German cardiac surgery team comes there once a month and does open heart surgery.

c. Institute of Surgery: I don't know much about it, but it is the surgical counterpart of the internal medicine institute.

d. Republican Children's Hospital: aimed to be a modern pediatric hospital

e. Railway Hospital: a huge, currently empty structure. Might be used for some of our efforts (NILC, Distance Learning) with suitable renovation, if this seems reasonable.

f. Research: two institutes who exist under the Academy of Science of Georgia

- Institute of Biotechnology
- Institute of Experimental Morphology

g. Medical Education: Ayety Medical School: a private school that sprang up in the nineties. Will be in the Republican Children's Hospital.

2. Units in other areas, principally where our NILC is now, and adjacent to the Tbilisi Medical University (TSMU) campus.

a. Central Clinic of TSMU (formerly Republican Hospital; used to have 1500 beds)

b. Postgraduate Medical Academy: responsible for licensure, certification and residency training.

c. National Health Management Center (same bldg. as NILC now)

- National Health Management Center (the policy unit of the Ministry)
- World Bank Continuing Clinical Education Center

d. Communicable Disease Center of Georgia

e. National Institute of Information (Georgian National Library of Medicine)

- Library at Central Clinical Center in Digomi
- Statistics Center (or put it with CDC)
- NILC

We discussed our proposed public health school. It could become part of a Institute of Public Health that would include:

- Public Health School
- National Health Management Center
- World Bank Continuing Clinical Education Center
- Communicable Disease Center
- Statistics Center

Mexico apparently has a similar sort of Public Health Institute, where the public health school is one component. We agreed all of this needed much more thought. In particular, the public health school needs to be degree granting, and this is possible only through a university. This immediately gets into murky academic politics. The people in our public health school also think the school needs some autonomy or independence.

I went by Archil's home, and then had a late night drink with Alex Rondeli. Alex is the Henry Kissinger of Georgia, but much better. He is the close friend and mentor of Levan Vasade and Lado Gurgenidze, and is highly respected. Most *New York Times* articles have a quote from him. He told me an interview with him on Georgia had just been published in the European edition of *Time* magazine, where he had some constructive criticism of President Shevardnadze. I asked him how the President handled his fairly frequently quoted critical remarks. He said he would get a mild comment by someone that the President had been informed of them, but nothing more. He has a position as advisor to the Foreign Ministry, and is head of a political think tank--the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies-- that has just gotten a substantial grant from the Rand people. We discussed the current political situation, and the recent crisis that Shevardnadze had survived narrowly. I had earlier talked with a young man--about twenty-eight--who told me there would be a sort of coup before Shevardnadze served out his current term, which will end two years from now. Alex said the students and others who had participated in the protests had stopped only because they realized that nothing was set up to come next if they overthrew the president.

To Betsy's and collapse again. Jet lag not over yet.

Thursday, January 3rd, 2002

The day of Archil's funeral. Snow mixed with rain; cold; overcast. The first day that was not sunny and bright since my arrival.

Had breakfast with David Sheshelidze and his new wife, Ina. Talked about the new projects we are about to undertake. Also about the differences in universities in Germany and the US, based upon Ina's experience in both places. Professors are lifelong jobs, and many of them stop producing fairly early. Top heavy, and few assistant professors. Research by block grants, and not the merit system of the NIH. Research productivity and work ethic much lower than US.

Met with the deputy minister of communications and Guram Lezhava. A fallout of my telling Guram about our congressional success. Conversation about what they are doing with respect to the Silk Road concept.

At noon to the Ministry of Health, where a TV crew interviewed me and then Jim Smith of AIHA about Archil. To be shown on Wednesday as part of a larger program about Archil. Zviad will record it for me.

To Archil's house for two and one-half hours, standing in line with the family greeting what seemed to me to be thousands of people. The street outside overflowed. They came up the stairs, filed around the coffin, shaking hands with the family and others of us close to Archil. His

brother-in-law; the father of his middle daughter's husband; and a few others I did not know.

Almost an hour later than planned the coffin was covered and brought out into the street, where it was loaded into a station wagon, with flowers on the top. Then to the cemetery, the "new Pantheon," on a hill just beyond the Coliseum. Still raining, cold, overcast, with intermittent snow. We followed the casket as it was taken to the grave, where his friends and a couple of workers placed it suspended on ropes over the open grave. Amiran Gamkrelidze was the director of the ceremony, and began with a speech. Then Jim Smith, myself and finally Ramaz Khurodze, his close friend. I made mine quite brief. I said he was a great man who had vision: where the rest of us saw rocks, he saw the building blocks of a great cathedral. He loved his family, his country, and his profession. He was ჩემი ძმა -- "my brother." And I would sorely miss him.

We then went to a restaurant for the funeral supra. I estimated two to three hundred. Ramaz Khurodze was *tamada*. The protocol was strict: to Archil's memory (or soul traditionally). To his father, mother, children, friends, and finally his soul again. Jim Smith and I were singled out as friends, and I was asked to make a few remarks. I commented upon how great I thought he was, and how, when I laboriously pronounced the Georgian words for "my brother," I instinctively looked over my shoulder for his wry smile at my trying my Georgian once again!

I went then to the Turkish bath for a thirty minute interlude before being picked up at Betsy's by Amiran. We went to another supra. Amiran, myself, Jim Smith, Avto Jorbenadze and his assistant Akaki Zoidize. The talk started with Archil, then focused on Avto's new job as State Minister. He explored whether we had ideas about getting more attention from Western businessmen on Georgia. Jim suggested that Strobe Talbot, under Bill Clinton the individual in charge of the former Soviet Union at the State Department, might be interested in convening a several day conference on the Caucasus region: politics; security; economy; its future. Georgia would be the host. Talbot now has a foundation at Yale. I suggested that Sam Nunn's foundation at Georgia Tech in Atlanta might be another possibility.

Then to Betsy's to bed. Jet lag over, just as I'm leaving.

Friday, January 4th, 2002

Awakened to a lot of wind and some snow. An 8 a.m. plane to Moscow. Zviad picked me up and off to the airport. Tea in the VIP lounge and then boarded Air Georgia Boeing 737.

Plenty of time for reflection about Archil and recent events on the flight to Moscow. I had first gotten to know Archil on a hot night (Saturday, August 15th) in Tbilisi in August, 1992. We arrived at 11 p.m., and were met on the tarmac by a group of about ten people, one of whom was Archil, although I did not know him then. I quote from my journal of that night:

We arrived at Tbilisi around 11 p.m., and were met by the Minister of Health and his entourage. We were put into two long black limousines, just like you saw Brezhnev and the like riding in on the news, and taken to the *dacha* reserved previously for visiting Communist leaders such as Gorbachev. This is a large airy building that is quite comfortable. Two people share a suite with two bedrooms (small short beds) and a large conference room; the furniture is

elegant.

At midnight we sat down to a typical Georgian meal that lasted until about 3 a.m. We gather this is invariable when guests arrive.

At that supra I first made my acquaintance with Archil. I quote again from that first journal, the next day, Sunday August 16th, 1992:

The hospital is associated with both the Medical and Postgraduate institutes. It has medical students and residents. The Chief of Medicine is Archil Kobaladze. He is the consultant to the Ministry of Health, and was instrumental in getting this project going. He is an internist and clinical pharmacologist who has spent time in the U.S. He was one of our hosts and was with us constantly. We were quite impressed by him: articulate, intelligent, desirous of improvement.

In my second trip, June 1993, I only had this about Archil:

In the evening Archil Kobaladze, the clinical pharmacologist who is the primary person with whom we work, gave a dinner for us and the American ambassador at his home.

On the third trip, February 1994, there are thirty-two references to Archil. Quite a change from the one above. An example:

At night had dinner with Archil at his house. No light. Candlelight and space heaters. American Ambassador, Betsy Haskell, Sherry, Archil and his wife. Mayor of Tbilisi invited, but out of city. Many toasts and much conversation about everything.

The relationship with Archil took shape during the year from June 1993 to February 1994. This coincided with the time the Partnership had an on-site representative for a year, Sherry Carlin. RN and MPH from Emory, was outstanding as our representative there. Now an AID executive type in the Gaza strip, dealing with Palestinians and Israelis.

From June, 1994, a characteristic episode:

We then visited the head librarian of Tbilisi University, Irina Chanturishvili's boss. Three million volumes. University founded 1918. Huge cavernous building that was put up just as *perestroika* began, and never had money to fill it. The director was in his sixties, and his mind in its nineties. No vision, not willing to try anything new. I took Archil, Levan and Gia Bochuchava along with me to meet the librarian and Irina. I had two goals: to help Irina when she returns; to convey my concept of the electronic library to the director, and begin to lay the foundation for the university library's participation when Internet comes. I set the director and Archil upon each other. Archil of course is very modern, quite impatient with the old ways, and ever desirous of pushing Georgia into the modern west. The librarian said everything was hopeless, nothing could be done,

etc. Archil spoke eloquently and with passion about the need to try, and to have determination.

Archil became much worse on Thursday, December 20th, and died on Monday, December 24th. My only nephew, Jared, a straight A senior at Auburn University, was found in cardiac arrest, after vomiting and aspirating, by my brother and his wife in the afternoon of Saturday, December 22nd. Jared was declared brain dead and taken off life support on Christmas Day, the day after Archil died. His body was cremated. I attended and gave a brief talk at a memorial service for him on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, on Thursday, December 26th, then caught the plane the next day for Archil's funeral.

The differences in the handling of the events surrounding death and the funeral in the US and Georgia came across to me in a striking fashion during the two weeks. On the US side there was a visit to the funeral home the night before the memorial service, without the body because of cremation. (Without cremation, of course, the body would have been there. But at a funeral home, not in the family home, and the visit would have lasted only two hours or so, not for five days, virtually continuously.) Then a memorial service complete with preacher and eulogies. Interment some weeks later, attended only by the family. In Georgia the body lies in an open casket for, in this case, five days in the home of the family. The family and close friends (the "cabinet") greet mourners in a reception line for several hours a day. A priest performs a ritual, but using a litany and not anything personal. At the graveside there are some eulogies, followed by a lengthy supra celebrating the person afterwards. Wine, food, toasts that follow a prescribed ritual (to the soul or memory; parents; family members who are dead; living family--wife, mother, children, grandchildren; relatives; friends; professional associates; neighbors; finally, to the soul of the deceased again). The handling of the casket, placing it on the ropes over the grave, lowering it, and filling the grave with dirt was all done by friends and family members, all of whom ritually cast some dirt over the coffin. As one might expect, there was awkwardness and occasionally fumbling and uncertainty about exactly what to do next, since these are people who don't do this often. In contrast to the US, where funeral home employees who do this up to six times a day do it smoothly and with unctuous professional expertise. Andro Kacharava, Archil's nephew who is about to be on our faculty, opines that in twenty years Georgia will have followed the US. In fact, during my childhood our practices were quite similar to those of Georgia today. I well remember going with my parents to the home of Mr. Satterfield, our neighbor a mile up the road, and his body lying in the living room.

There are clearly things to be said for both ways of going about it. The US side is more abstract, the Georgia way much more visceral and emotional. The US spares the family, and the Georgian is more brutal on the family. I put these remarks here because the differences were so striking to me, who was a bereaved family member of one (Jared *Kenneth* Walker), and the close friend and spiritual brother of the other. I was equally emotionally devastated, without regard to either way of going about it.

I said at my nephew's memorial service that one of the pleasures of getting older was watching young people "reveal" themselves over time as they reach the masterpieces that they become. Jared was a partially revealed person, one full of bright intelligence, quirky and insightful humor, relentless curiosity and great sensitivity to others. Archil had been mostly revealed: a man of great vision and wisdom. Jared at twenty-one will live on as a set of memories of a super

human being; Archil will live both in memory and in the continuation of what the work he shaped and inspired.

An Apropos Zviad Kirtava

Freezing wind of grief has blown to our hearts...

Sitting at my desk in NILC, Tbilisi, listening usual this time generator's noise, scrolling down monitor through usual Christmas e-cards and feeling knife-sharp pain all over on this sad for us Christmas day...

For us - who knew Archil Kobaladze...

The Man who was an expression of Life himself, The Man who was the best optimist among us, The Man which interconnected so many of us, The Man which nested multiple talents, joy, inspiration and action –

ARCHIL KOBALADZE DIED!

We have passed so many tragic deaths through last years, we have lost so many hopes before their maturation, we have became used to survive and even work in so bad conditions, we have passed so great disappointments, that sometimes one could think that our souls became frozen and stale...

And regretfully it's the irreplaceable loss, which makes you assured that even such stale soul can still feel the pain...

I came back to Tbilisi from Moscow in 1988. I was directed to work at Archil's department of Clinical Pharmacology. He was then 44. I remember him youthfully jumping over low (40cm) car-gate entering Tbilisi State Institute and looking back to me smiling – “still young, still in a good shape”, that smile was saying...

And he was indeed always young. There are people, which are always young by their spirit – even if you meet them at elder age. His optimism, his continuous search for something innovative, his constant initializing efforts, his love to travel and to meet people - these were the best signs of his young spirit.

Archil started Georgian-American cultural relations at the new level even before Georgia got independence, in 80s. He was among those very few, who correctly understood the great potential of public diplomacy and cultural-scientific links with western world. As his friends said he was “Ambassador of healthcare system of Georgia to foreign countries”. He was making people connecting with partners. “Partnership” was his lifestyle, his motto. He was a man who would never sustain a day at Robinson's island [lonely] – he needed people around: family, students, teachers, friends, supporters, even opponents. He was very *Social*, linking the best of this word in both Georgian and western meaning. He was a *Great Partner*, easy to catch an idea, brilliant to provide new vision, talented to advise and never requiring a penny as share or gratitude as reward!..

It is uneasy to enlist all the fields of medicine, healthcare, social science and even politics, where Archil Kobaladze has made significant, invaluable contribution:

atherosclerosis, clinical pharmacology, iodine deficiency, public health, healthcare management, nursing, medical informatics, telemedicine, distance education.... He was pioneering development of most of these directions in Georgia. And again, he was always keen to guide newcomers to those fields, never pretending for chairman's title – something yet rare in our country.

He was a new kind of teacher to us – not an old type professor, not a guru, but a tutor, which was entrusting and empowering students more than anybody could and would do.

Archil was incredibly productive and enthusiastic all this year. He planned and designed many new projects, among them one mega project related to Distance Education, Public Health and Nursing. He became associated and one of the most prominent members of the Health Committee of the Council of Europe. He established new structure – Health Science Research Center at the Tbilisi State University... He was working all summer, igniting us by his optimism and enthusiasm. Subconsciously he was rushing to accomplish as much as he could... Only in November made "just in case" MRI gave shocking result: brain tumor. Archil was soon taken to the Emory Hospital in Atlanta. We all knew the outcome might be bad any time, but still, how could we think about such ruthless and rapid end?!

writing this Apropos on Christmas, 25th, yet only few people in Tbilisi know this sad news. Archil's family kindly requested to us to keep people unaware until 26th – protecting their holiday mood. So, most of Archil's friends probably rise toasts to his health today and expect him back from his [last] journey: from his beloved Atlanta in his another Georgia - to his sweetest Tbilisi...

Tbilisi, which will not be the same without **Archil Kobaladze** ...

25th Dec, 2001

Obituary of Archil Kobaladze

Archil Kobaladze – Chief Clinical Pharmacologist of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia; Chairman of the Board of the Partners for Health Foundation; Director of the Health Science Center of the Tbilisi State University, Member of the Council of Europe’s Health Committee – died Dec 24th, 2001.

Archil Kobaladze was born on June 30, 1944. His father, Prof. Sergo Kobaladze was the founder of Clinical Pharmacology in Georgia. Archil has graduated Tbilisi State Medical Institute in 1967. In 1968-73 has passed postgraduate research training at the Medical Genetics Laboratory of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad. In 1973 defended PhD Thesis about Atherosclerosis.

During 1973-88 A. Kobaladze was Assistant (lecturer), then Docent at the Chair of Internal Medicine of the Tbilisi State Medical Institute, and Chief of Cardiology Department at City Hospital #2. During 1981-89 – Researcher, then head of Department at the Institute of Pharmacochemistry of the Ministry of Health of Georgia. 1985-86 Dr. Kobaladze had 10-month research training at Tokyo Medical University, working on problems of Cholesterol metabolism.

In January 1988 Dr. Kobaladze has established at the Tbilisi State Medical Institute (currently – Tbilisi State Medical University) a Division of Clinical Pharmacology, which he has led until 2000. In October 2000 Dr. Kobaladze was appointed as a Director of the Health Science Center at Tbilisi State University.

Dr. Kobaladze was Adviser of the Minister of Health since 1991, World Bank Georgia Health Project Consultant in 1995-97. He was Vice-President of the Internal Medicine Society and Cardiology Association of Georgia, Member of New York Academy of Sciences. Since 2000 Dr. Kobaladze was representative of Georgia at the Health Committee of the Council of Europe.

Dr. Kobaladze was among the first partners of the American International Health Alliance, Coordinator of the Tbilisi-Atlanta Health Partnership in 1992-99. Since 1999 he became a Chairman of the Board of the *Partners for Health* Foundation. Under his leadership there have been established several new institutions in Georgia – EMS training Center, National Information Learning Center, Georgian Nursing Association,

Neonatologists NGO Neonatus, Journal *Medicine and Pharmacology*. A. Kobaladze has promoted development of medical informatics, Health Management and Public Health, Telemedicine and Distance Education in Georgia.

A. Kobaladze was author of 6 monographs and 75 scientific articles.

In October 2001 Dr. Kobaladze was presented to the Ordain of Honor of Georgia.