

This is likely my last update. Tho I am sure there will be a lot to think about coming home -but I fly tomorrow and it feels like a chapter ending.

I want to tell you a bit more about Western Ukraine. The war trauma feels less here - but of course that is not the case depending on what is happening within a family. It just seems on the streets that there are less reminders, and people generally walk more freely, with fewer air-raid alerts. Today, most of the attacks from Russia are on the East and North East, and South East - though Lviv and other towns in the West have also recently been bombed. Still, no doubt, you can look and still see the war in everyone. It's palpable.

***and update today - Lviv was attacked last night in one of the most extensively targeted nights since the war started. Black smoke over the whole city. 140 drones got through Ukrainian defenses as well as 23 cruise missiles. How unhinged does this have to get? ***

Western Ukraine's history of fighting oppression is very strong as they not only, of course, fight off the Russians today, but they fought off Nazis, Russians, and Poles only decades ago ... And even earlier - was under control of Austria and Hungary. And of course, endured being under the Soviet regime as part of the USSR from WWII to 1991. It is the parents and grandparents of the people here today that endured concentration camps, firing squads, and fear of captivity and torture for being Ukrainian. So the Western Ukrainian borders have changed and changed, and the people here know very well the fierce struggle for Independence.

Western Ukraine can boast having a strong history of claiming its own heritage, no doubt.

Recruitment, and sometimes forcible recruitment for the Ukrainian Army is stronger here. In rural areas it is easier to detain young men and enlist them with or without their consent. There are "checkpoints" at borders to the districts, and sometimes randomly by roadsides. Young men are to carry papers stating their mobilization requirements or exemptions. It is easier to evade the authorities in the big cities, but it is also harder to live there. Ukraine is running out of young men to fight the war. This is something.

The county-side is populated with family homes and extensive gardens - truly beautiful gardens that are really more like small family farms. Lots of food crops and tons of flowers. Homes are well kept with fresh paint, meticulous repairs, and attention to beauty everywhere. Common parks and pathways are clean and easy to access. Public space is important and people gather on benches, and families walk together.

There are churches and chapels everywhere. In every town or village, and even just off the sides of the road. Highly decorated, brilliantly shining buildings with golden domes and bright paint.

There are also cemeteries everywhere. Again, in every town, village and some by churches, or some just in beautiful surroundings off the road. People are attentive to their care, and the many varied flags of Ukraine fly over the dead who have sacrificed their lives. Towns will also display pictures in the town squares of those who have recently died.

In Banyliv I had the opportunity to visit and work (one patient!) at a Rehabilitation Center for amputees. It was a residential facility for the recently injured to arrive, get pre-prosthetic eval and treatment, fitted, and post-prosthetic rehabilitation. Some stay up to 4-6 months. others less. I was able to meet with the head of the department. She gave me a tour. The facilities looked quite well equipped, staff were friendly, and again you could see the camaraderie among Defenders eating together, encouraging each other on the machines, or just talking casually. Their dormitories were upstairs. There were trees all around.

The head of the department was very generous with me, and understood my work, and my questions about the detail regarding the physiology of “phantom pain”. She explained that they are understanding more about how to address the nerve endings at the stub. If they are not well addressed surgically, these nerve endings can create fibrous neuromas that cause a lot of pain. Sometimes they are even re-doing surgeries to ensure just muscle tissue is at the stub, reducing the risk of these neuromas. I have no experience, but I am curious if there is any role in addressing these neuromas with manual therapy as I routinely mitigate neuromas in my current practice - just not from amputations of course. There is a lot more to this and I know I am in over my head. I am curious to get home and see what more I can learn about this. And I am sure there is more to these issues of “phantom pain”. I do love working with pain syndromes, and for today I can only wonder. I don’t know.

Before I share with you my journey out of Ukraine, I want to tell you more about one of the ways the resource infrastructures work in Ukraine. I think this may be an outcome of existing infrastructures getting bombed out of any routine dependency. From transport, to utilities, to schooling, etc.

And thus the advent of all these “channels” on Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, Viber etc. People join these “groups” with hundreds or sometimes thousands of people to learn about what is needed, as well as for news. The first channel i was “invited to” was through a contact at Seeds. A ‘Denverite’ now living in Kharkiv is a Medic and Driver.

On this chat with several hundred people I could see many listings every day. And this is how I learned a lot about what is going on. This channel was for “Transport” (and others are more specifically medical or veterinarian, or refugees or....) And some channels are for specific cities or areas etc.

Anyways, this transport channel was interesting to me because I could see what people were dealing with. For example, finding transport for abandoned pets, bringing supplies in from Poland, learning needs at the Front. The detail is fascinating - from batteries for radios, to sturdy boots, to camo netting, to cat food, to evacuating people, to tools... People just post needing wheelbarrows for example to carry gear to the Front. Or collecting seatbelts out of abandoned cars to make stretchers with blankets. And of course medical supplies - simple things like basic equipment or antiseptics for shrapnel wound debridement, or bags of IV saline solution,... where to donate blood and what types were needed. Really anything that anyone needs that involves having to get the supplies somewhere - transport is involved. And people just step up. Any regular person with a vehicle after work can private-message a post and take care of a chore. The needs are always changing, and there is no way to maintain consistent supply chains when people are getting bombed and getting by so minimally. So these channels are essential.

In Kyiv there are channels for foreign volunteers, for medics, for debris clean up crews, for construction, teachers, etc. You are vetted for these groups as they deal with “bot” attacks, but for the most part they work well. People are conscientious not to clog the airways with personal chats or political commentary for example.

My best news has also come from these channels. It took me a bit to get the best ones - as different people had different opinions about which ones they used. It was important for me to find good ones so I can follow better when I get home.

And of course, there are the channels for evaluating air-raids and ground invasions. This also took a bit to figure out. I have needed to understand the districts of Kyiv and which ones were getting targeted - so of course apps with maps were better for me. And to understand what may or may not be a threat as not every air-raid alert needs to be responded to. Some air raid alerts last for hours and hours, and some are short - but you can have several a day or night. I can understand that after a while people can't just keep checking and checking all this - it's just overwhelming. And truthfully hard to clearly evaluate. The biggest threats are the ones that come in fast and low, and are hard for defense forces to track and shoot down - so you may not know about those anyway. Some are just scary to track, as Ukrainians can follow the ground preparations of the planes at airports in Russia. They can see how many

planes are getting loaded with bombs, and you can get a sense that something is coming, but you don't yet know where.

I left by train. This is from the train station in Kyiv:
It shows all the train destinations that are no longer possible because these cities are

in the occupied territories. I am not sure why Kherson is white - maybe because it goes back and forth between being occupied or not - I am not sure. I do know that there is a lot of fighting there. Ukrainians all know these cities, of course, and have traveled to them to visit family and friends. This would be for us, like not being able to travel to the neighboring state because it had been occupied by a foreign enemy.



I shared my journey from Kyiv to Lviv with one Defender, and one young man who is clearly in the new generation wearing a Columbia down jacket and very civilian clothes, haircut, glasses. I had spent some time with the older Defender before the younger guy came on. The Defender told me he had family in Lviv and was going home with a cancer diagnosis. He showed me a skin picture from his leg and it looked like melanoma. And he likely had mets as he pointed to different parts of his body.

The younger guy comes in, and I am so curious as I get to watch what I think will be a cultural divide - but no - they get along famously. They talked and talked and shared YouTube workout videos. I am facing them, between them, and we are so closely cramped in this railway car that if I relax my knees it would touch them. They talked back and forth, me swiveling my head imagining what they were saying. When the Defender goes out to smoke, I can talk with the young guy - he works in Kyiv, family in Lviv, and his bags are mostly gifts. And yes, he is a computer programmer for the government tax system.

He then goes up to sleep in the upper bunk. The Defender comes back and is sitting there, leaning on his crutch trying to ease his back pain. I ask if he would like me to work on him. He looks at me with a bit of disbelief - but says sure, yes. So I just sit next to him - not a 'real' session but I just have my hand on his back, soothing his pain. I don't know what any of this means, but his back is easing under my hand, and I can't think of anything I would rather be doing anyway. When the young guy comes down from his nap the Defender tells him "what I did" (?) and demonstrates several times how he can stand up and sit down more easily. Time went by quickly though it was now many hours later.



Defender on the train. We are almost at Lviv.

In Lviv the two men were replaced by 2 Ukrainian women going to Vienna for holiday. We did not talk much as it was dark and everyone retired to their bunks. My bunk was at the top and you could barely lay on your side without scraping the roof. But we got through customs and then to Vienna by late morning.

I don't have much to say about Vienna. My head is still in Ukraine and I am being pulled strongly back home - it just happens. There are friends that I care about, and I want to be close.

But here are a couple pics anyways. This is from my second ferris wheel journey in a month.



Tomorrow I fly. I leave in the morning, and arrive in the afternoon (except add 8 hours for the time change). There will be other warps I'm sure.



Thank you all for reading these updates. I have enjoyed writing them as it made me feel closer. I really needed feeling you all, so Thank You.