

Мир в Гостях



Photo by Allan Czinger

A World Away

Dual degrees launch international career for WSE alumnus

by Bryan Bernart

Allan Czinger's cell phone rings for a few moments and a boisterous voice picks up. "Hello, this is Allan!" shouts the voice on the other end. The background is noisy, and he explains that he's driving from his home in Portland to Woodland, Washington, where he works. "Even when I'm back in the United States, I'm traveling," he says, chuckling.

Czinger spends much of his time in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, where he is the director of USNR-Russia, a sawmill and plywood equipment supply company. USNR has offices around the globe, but Czinger is a natural fit in Russia. Though born in the U.K. and raised in the U.S., his keen interest in Russia and Russian culture dates back to his high school years.

"When I was a teenager, it was the early 1990s, and with perestroika (the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system) in the news, and *Rocky IV* on TV, I was very interested in the Soviet Union," he explains. He visited Russia on an international exchange while still in high school, and was instantly hooked. "The Cold War had just ended, and that's what it was all about.

I think it was a bigger interest for many people back then, since things were just opening up."

At Oregon State, Czinger studied forest products and international studies, with a minor in Russian language. He eventually received two degrees, a BS and a BA. While at OSU, Czinger studied abroad, spending a full year in Russia. He was one of the first students in the College of Forestry to receive an international degree. Czinger also played rugby and was president of his fraternity, Beta Theta Pi.

Echoing the sentiment of many recent graduates, the first thing Czinger wanted, upon finishing his degrees, was "a job with a paycheck." Right out of school, he worked for Roseburg Forest Products, and later for Vanport International, where he supervised lumber and plywood import and export. While with Vanport, Czinger spent two years in China opening an office there. In 2007, he returned home and was hired to head USNR's Russian office, where he worked first in Woodland and then relocated with his family to Krasnoyarsk in Siberia for two years.

Allan and his family are now back in the United States and he currently has the world's longest commute from Washington to Siberia.

"My day-to-day work life is very mobile," he explains. "When I'm in Russia, I'm either meeting with customers or doing things like tradeshows and marketing, which can involve knocking on doors, but I'm also involved in the company's current projects." At the time of this writing, that project involves helping to set up a sawmill in the city of Lesosibirsk, four hours north of Krasnoyarsk. USNR-Russia specializes in installation supervision, selling equipment and then commissioning the equipment, and fine-tuning the machinery so that it works properly. "Right now," he says, "I transition between working with the customer at our mill site, working with USNR equipment specialists, and helping the mill get up and running."

Now in his eighth year with USNR, Czinger is happily married to his wife, Vera, whom he met in Russia, and they have two children. He feels that his wide cultural experiences have informed the way he does business, which he describes as being "a little different" from how things are in the United States. "The thought process, for instance, that a customer will go through when deciding on a purchase is unlike what we experience

domestically," he explains. "Then again, the challenges are also different. For example, infrastructure—power grid, transportation, and mail—we take it for granted here, but where I work, that's not the case. Overall, it's rewarding to tailor a strategy around unique needs and circumstances."

Czinger advises current undergrads to study a language, if they'd like to work internationally, but cautions that taking classes alone won't do. "To learn a second language, you have to just go there," he says. "Immerse yourself, and don't go to a study abroad program where you're surrounded by a bunch of other Americans in a dormitory. Get out there. Go for a homestay with a family, or to a place with no other English speakers—that's the way to pick up a language."

He also believes that more emphasis on study abroad opportunities would be beneficial to OSU students. "It's an international world and things are growing. We'd do well to have more professor exchanges and scholarship programs," he says, before continuing on to another thought: "It helps with employment, too. Our company is always looking for good, technically skilled folks, and international experience would only be a plus. Send us your best and brightest!"

Find out more at www.usnr.com

Perestroika, along with the 1985 hit movie Rocky IV, sparked Allan Czinger's interest in Russia, where he now provides equipment and helps tailor efficient manufacturing strategies for companies in the wood products industry. (Left) Allan in front of a traditional Siberian log home in Selenginsk, Buryatia, Russia. (Below) Allan on top of a Russian built "straddle-bug" lumber carrier in Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia.



Photo by Sergei Bezprozvannykh