

Cherven's flag flies to cosmos

Secondary school #2 in Cherven is easy to find, as any passer-by can guide you. "Are you journalists?" asks a tall teenager, showing us the way. "Are you interested in the school where Oleg Novitsky studied?"

You can't help but feel that this small town is still adjusting to all the attention it's received since the world discovered that the third Belarusian to conquer the cosmos hails from Cherven. Naturally, they are proud but life continues as normal, with market traders setting up at the weekend on the city square and families taking the air.

However, there was a palpable tension before the launch. Not a single citizen can have remained immune to the sense of excitement; it's a small place, so many know Oleg personally or are friends with his relatives. Of course, some worry is also natural in such situations. His close friends and relatives were restrained beforehand and, naturally, are not 'stars' to be interviewed. They advised us to wait for Oleg, who'd tell all on his return.

Path to stars

Multi-coloured wooden houses line both sides of Barykin Street, where Oleg and his brother and sister, Dima and Marina, went to school. On the ground floor, the school's Stand of Honour features photos of Baikonur's space pad; Oleg is smiling, surrounded by colleagues. "This cosmonaut studied here," explains a small girl, noticing our interest. Her friend adds, "Not long ago, he came to see us."

Teacher Irina Zhulego holds a thick file of photos, saying, "I'd never thought that Oleg would become a cosmonaut, as he never mentioned his dream to me." We're sitting in a small classroom for English language studies, where Oleg stewed over his books 25 years ago. Since then, little has changed here: the walls and doors are still painted blue, the wide chalkboard is covered

in writing and the windows face the stadium...

"I've found it!" exclaims Irina, showing me a black-and-white photo of Oleg's class. Dark-haired, he sits at the last but one desk, in the front row. A new table is there now. Another photo features an older Oleg: slim and evidently mature, wearing his cadet uniform.

"They were good pupils: active and sporty. They supported any idea with enthusiasm. On their day of graduation, I quite wanted to cry," Ms. Zhulego admits. She came to the school as a Pioneer guide in 1986. A fire damaged the Pioneers' room but eighth grade pupil Novitsky was eager to help clean and redecorate it. Almost from a scratch, the room was returned to service, due to the hard work of pupils. Oleg helped the girls clean, carrying heavy buck-

ets of water out tirelessly.

Teachers warmly recollect their former pupil and his family. Oleg seldom visits his native Cherven but always pays the school a visit when he does appear. "I loved to ask: Oleg, when will you fly into space? He would reply: soon — I just need to improve my English. Really, he needed to study harder in his school years," smiles Ms.



School #2 in Cherven, where Oleg Novitsky studied



Future cosmonaut

Zhulego.

Not long ago, Oleg met pupils, telling them about his unusual profession. He took a flag bearing Cherven's coat of arms and promised to take it into space, then return with it.

The flag is to become the

first exhibit at a museum of cosmonautics being set up at school #2.

Most beautiful rocket

Dmitry Krasnogir is Oleg's cousin and former classmate. He still lives in Cherven, running a shop selling white goods, jointly with his wife Natalia. Dmitry and Oleg are united by close friendship and joint secrets from childhood. He recollects how they took Oleg's father's bike secretly and how they tried to repair it. The boys also played football together. Oleg was fond of sports and even took part in competitions. Speaking of when his friend decided to become a pilot, Dmitry notes, "It seemed to happen just as we were to graduate from school; our army service was approaching and we had a good example in our cousin, who studied at Borisoglebsk's Aviation School for Pilots. Oleg decided to follow in his steps but was initially rather afraid. He kept his plans private, only daring to hold them in his own head. Of course, the requirements for admission to flying school were tough: you needed to be fit and knowledgeable. However, Oleg is strong-minded and determined, so he set a goal and achieved it."

After graduation, Oleg served in Northern Caucasus, including in Chechnya, then later attended the Gagarin Air Force Academy before successfully passing a contest for cosmonauts.

They meet less often these days, since both are so busy. However, with his wife Yulia and daughter Yana, Oleg visited his relatives

a year ago — helping his mother with household jobs, as usual. Sadly, two years ago, his father — Victor Novitsky — died; Oleg had a close relationship with him.

Dmitry explains that Oleg told him about his intense training schedule, including in the centrifuge and tackling docking and emergency situations. Currently located in Star City (Zvezdny Gorodok), Oleg's family attended the Baikonur launch. "Yulia is great - a true support," stresses Dmitry's wife, Natalia. "Naturally, they are often apart but each farewell is emotional. This one has been especially so. Just imagine, her beloved is leaving her for six months, travelling into space! I love to read her blog; she writes so well that tears appear in my eyes."

Yulia Novitskaya is a journalist, with an Internet blog read by thousands. Her notes are full of her feelings, alongside fascinating details. One of her last blogs reads: 'Before flying to Baikonur, Oleg presented pendants to me and Yanochka, which symbolise the emblem of their crew. Like all women, I love beautiful jewellery and these are truly wonderful! I put on the necklace to see off the crew as they headed to Baikonur and have decided to never take it off. I'll wear it the whole time Oleg is at Baikonur and, if everything goes smoothly and he flies, it'll be our talisman.'

When Oleg called her from Baikonur, Yulia asked him whether he could see his rocket. "Yes," he replied. "Despite all rockets being identical, mine is the most beautiful!" All cosmonauts feel the same. 'I hope that the crew travel into space in the most beautiful rocket!' she adds.

Supercomputer clusters to unite three countries

By Andrey Frisov

Common cyber infrastructure for Belarus, Russia and Moldova

The CIS innovative development programme is next being discussed at the forthcoming session of the CIS Heads of Government, envisaging the creation of joint

supercomputer centres to develop telecommunication infrastructure and new software. It is yet to be decided where exactly the supercomputer clusters will be placed.

A supercomputer cluster could also be created in association with Chinese Inspur, with support from the State Science and Technology Committee as part of the Be-

larus-China sci-tech co-operative programme. Naturally, Belarusian scientists also take part in European projects, with Belarus included in European grid-infrastructure.

Belarus is a full member of the *EGI-Inspire* project (Integrated Sustainable Pan-European Infrastructure for Researchers in Europe) explains Prof. Alexander Tuzik-

ov, who is the Director General of the United Institute of Informatics Problems (UIIP) at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The Doctor of Physical-Mathematical Sciences tells us, "We support our own segment but computing influences everything else. Meanwhile, it's good for us to make use of European resources."

Park certainly deserves award

The Palace and Park Estate of Rumyantsev-Paskevich has received the Grand Prix at The Museums of Belarus to the Third Millennium contest

Hosted by Grodno, the event gathered representatives of 150 museums across the country, as well as those from Russia and Lithuania: state, departmental and

private. Gomel's Palace and Park Estate of Rumyantsev-Paskevich was recognised as the best, with admiration shown for its work with visitors and its export of tourist services. It hasn't yet decided how to spend its prize money but, no doubt, its infrastructure and preservation work will be further extended.