

## “Not Just Pen & Paper Anymore!”

### PRODUCER PROFILE: Mariya Gershteyn

Mariya moved to Newton from Russia in February, 1990. She had been an educator at a junior college in Russia, teaching Physics. She reveals, “I dreamed about going to some kind of film school. My parents had told me to forget this dream since I would not be allowed into the ideology field. I didn’t fight this. I graduated from the Polytechnical Institute. But I still wanted to work with people so I went to the college to teach. But I always wanted to be in some part of movies and theater, so I went to classes in Russia. In my city, there was one TV station, and there was one program from the City and one from Moscow – only two programs each night. My classes were for screenwriting only. It was only pen and paper then; it wasn’t possible even to watch how it (technology) works – there were only lectures and seminars.”

“Then in the U.S., I took every class possible that I could get to and could afford – some at Newton North High School and at Wellesley Community College, but I never experienced technology – it was pen and paper again!”

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I asked one teacher about where I could learn editing and he said, ‘try community television.’ I had never heard about this possibility. In Russia we didn’t have it and I couldn’t imagine that this could happen. Fortunately, there was community television in Newton and it was near my house. When I came (to NewTV) for the first time, it was a big surprise – I couldn’t believe it! I was amazed at what I could learn. I could touch it, I could try it!”

Mariya’s first documentary project was “Russian Studio”. She explained that both her sons were attending this club in Newton, which preserves Russian language and culture



through reading, discussion, and performance of Russian literature and poetry. “We wanted our kids to integrate and be involved in American culture, but also to keep their Russian, and we wanted to share that this club exists in Newton.” Mariya

went on to say that “This was a fascinating process for me. I don’t notice time when I’m in the edit room – 4 hours goes like 5 minutes. Every time I’m here I learn something.” She also revealed that “music is a very important part of my work and gives profound emotions that I want people to feel.”

Mariya has produced two other documentaries at NewTV. “First Person, First Generation” (for which she won a NewTV Award of Excellence in 2005) is a continuation of her first project. “We asked three groups of kids of three different ages to talk about their relationships with their peers, families, schools, etc. Some were born in Russia, some in America.” “Encounter with Ilya Enrenberg” is about a Russian novelist, journalist, and public figure. Mariya was introduced to his biographer, who gave her a 2-hour interview and also assisted her with pictures to use in her video. Mariya is now working on “Encounter, Pt. 2”, where she is hoping to produce this same video with an English voiceover.

She emphasized how much she appreciates the opportunity to produce work in the Russian language. “There are a lot of people in Newton who are native Russian speakers and are very grateful.” She also said that she likes being able to now do “what I like the most,” and that “the atmosphere here is so accepting and people are so helpful.” When asked what advice she would give to new producers, she immediately said, “Don’t be afraid. Just do what you want. If you’re really interested in something, you should try to do it.” She added that “sometimes it’s very difficult and you can’t find time, or it’s hard technically, but just do it!”

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