

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear MAPS,

I had a lovely stay with Evgeny and his family last week. He has a charming wife and two beautiful children. I arrived in St. Petersburg on Thursday and left on Sunday night.

St. Petersburg is an epic city with incredible architecture, public sculpture and museums. The ballet was unbelievable. I now see why they say it is the best in the world.

St. Petersburg has a darker side as well. It is a city out of control. It's like being in the movie *Clockwork Orange* to be there. Authoritarian police, Mafia, gangs of drunken adolescents, crazy erratic driving on ripped up roads. Evgeny is working with very little resources and under great pressure to continue the work he is pioneering in the field of alcohol and drug treatment. He is a good guy struggling in a system that is going through incredible social, political and economic change. The stress he is experiencing is hard for us as Westerners to appreciate unless you live there. The typical treatment program is still patterned after the old soviet system that includes injections that the patient believes are drugs that will kill him if he drinks alcohol. They are in fact placebos.

The ketamine session is a radical departure from this form of treatment. It emphasizes spiritual and positive life changes instead of fear. It is carried out in a fairly sterile hospital environment and two anesthesiologists are present at all time. They administer the

drug and monitor vital signs. There is a very small chance of respiratory failure which is watched for closely.

I participated in a session as the patient and felt very safe. I'm the first person from the West to go through the ketamine psychedelic therapy procedure, I've been told. Evgeny put me through a screening process that is carried out with all patients to determine my suitability. I received an IM shot of 1.5 mg/kg in the buttocks. The drug took a few minutes to take effect and those attending seemed surprised at how long it took. They gave me a booster shot in the arm and I lost feeling of my body. I was lying down on a bed with blankets over me and wearing eyeshades. Music was played during the one hour session and Evgeny offered emotional support during the entire experience. The visualizations were very vivid and I had a feeling of traveling and flying through holographic landscapes. It was very transcendental or transpersonal or whatever it's called. You pass over the threshold as you do with other psychedelics like LSD or mescaline. It is a profound experience. I could see how given the right set and setting and the proper follow-up and support, such a profound experience can contribute to the healing process of alcohol treatment.

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Heffter Online

On May 24, 1995, the Heffter Research Institute (HRI) officially opened public access to its home page on the World Wide Web. For those of you with the capability to browse the Web, the HRI home page can be found at <http://www.heffter.org/>. The home page presently lists basic information about the Institute: its mission, the founders, the scientific advisory board, etc., and also has links to related Web sites, including MAPS. In addition, it contains an interesting biography of Arthur Heffter, who was quite a remarkable individual, as well as molecular graphics of several psychedelic substances. It is anticipated that in the future the HRI home page will be expanded to include research reports, announcements of scientific conferences and meetings, and other public service information appropriate to the mission of the Heffter Institute, which is to foster legitimate scientific research utilizing psychedelic agents. After viewing the HRI home page, if you have comments and suggestions, you may email them to the address listed on the home page.

MAPS Online

The MAPS home page is experiencing a revitalization. It can be reached at <http://www.blueline.com/passenger-deck/maps/>. In the coming months, we hope to add more links and pictures to report on current psychedelic research and interest the Net community in MAPS' efforts and achievements. To retrieve individual articles from back-issues, send mail to: Majordomo@server.blueline.com with the message <index maps> <help> <end>. The subject line gets ignored by Majordomo, so you can leave it blank or type anything there. The help message which you will receive will guide you to selecting and retrieving articles. Please send comments and questions to st.maps@cybernetics.net.