



All the Ilia
news that
fits, we print

Ilia and His Krew Meet in NYC

By Andrea Thompson

NEW YORK - When Ilia Kulik met with his Krew for brunch on March 3, we all got there ahead of time to be in place before Ilia made his entrance. Then a surprising thing happened — Ilia arrived early! He came in with a great smile like he was very anxious to be with us. This was the start of an enjoyable luncheon with him.

For the past three years, Kulik's Krew members have been gathering in New York City for a festive weekend. Activities have included a Friday evening get-together, skating at Rockefeller Center or the Wollman Rink in Central Park, attending *Stars on Ice* at Madison Square Garden and Nassau Coliseum (Long Island), and most important — brunch with Ilia. Ever since Ilia joined *Stars on Ice* in 1998, Krew members have looked forward to dates in February or March for our annual gathering.

The New York Krew gathering in the first year was informal. Members came from various countries around the world for that memorable weekend in February 1999. There was no official business meeting, so this first gathering was strictly a fun weekend that included members getting up at the wee hours on Sunday morning to watch Ilia skate at Rockefeller Center on the *Today Show*.

Later that day in 1999, members gathered at Bryant Park Grill for brunch with Ilia. When he arrived, he greeted members with his beautiful smile. Although Ilia showed signs of being sleepy, he also was glad to be there with the group. He had skated in *Stars on Ice* the night before, and he could have chosen this time to get some well-deserved sleep. The point I'm making — Ilia did not have to be at this brunch, but he chose to be there to spend time with Krew members. In fact, some members were meeting Ilia for the very first time in a non-skating setting.

2000 Konvention

The next year after Ilia again agreed to have brunch with the members in New York, we arranged to have the first annual business meeting as part of the gathering we called the Krew Konvention. Madley Katarungan, our

president, presided, and then we rushed over to Trattoria dell'Arte for brunch with Ilia. Once Ilia entered the door, we sang "We Love You Ilia" to the tune of "We Love You Conrad" from *Bye Bye, Birdie*. New members got the privilege of sitting at the same table with Ilia, and Ilia visited all the tables to greet and meet with members.

This year, Krew members again gathered in March for the annual Krew Konvention. On Friday, members could either attend *Stars on Ice* on Long Island or have dinner at the Saloon following a tour of the Metropolitan Opera House.

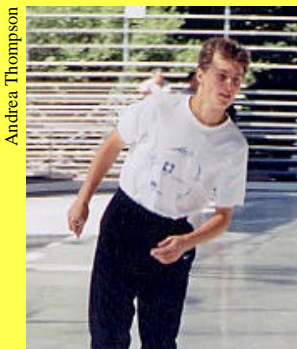
On Saturday morning, Krew members attended the we-have-been-waiting-for-this-all-year brunch with Ilia at Bryant Park Grill. Our planning coordinator, Nancy Hall, suggested that members be there early, and we're glad we

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Doug & Sherry Brown

Ilia in "The Chairmen"



Andrea Thompson

Practice session

Ilia's Sun Valley Serenade

By Andrea Thompson

SUN VALLLEY, Idaho - Ilia skated in the Sun Valley Ice show on Saturday, Aug. 18, his third appearance in the show since 1998. This night, Ilia skated to "Drive/Driven" and "Rockit" — he said his new programs were not ready for this event.

I also got to see him before the show. Shortly after noon Saturday, I was heading to the practice session at the outdoor rink. I turned my head slightly and noticed Ilia was right behind me! He gave me a warm greeting with a smile. I really didn't expect to run into him that way, but

it was a nice surprise. Then Ilia went to an area near the rink to do some stretching exercises. When he got on the ice, I was able to capture some shots of him. I even got an off-ice photo of him as he was leaving the area.

Sun Valley is a beautiful place to visit, with comfortable rooms in the lodge, studio apartments or condominiums, and an outdoor view of surrounding mountains and very green landscape. Sun Valley has two ice rinks, one indoors and one outside. The show took place on the outdoor rink.

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Different Paths, Same Destination

How We Became Ilia Fans

By Sarah A. Cunningham

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - Each of us has a different "Ilia story," on how we became a fan or how Ilia has played a small part in our lives. The stories that follow are the thoughts of fans worldwide on what makes Ilia special to them. It almost always involves his spectacular skating, and always has to do with how he treats his fans.

As one interested in figure skating, sometimes all you need is to see one program to become an instant and lifelong fan of a certain skater. Such is the case for Marjaana Jylha from Finland. (See more from Marjaana below.)

"I became a fan of Ilia's skating at once, the moment I saw it for the first time from the Europeans 1995," Marjaana explained. Incidentally, Ilia won those championships, at age 17. She explained how she felt after seeing Ilia perform "Rigolletto" for his short program.

"It was that wonderful effortlessness of his whole skating and the beautiful jumps which captivated me totally," Marjaana said. "It is so wonderful to follow his career now too, as he has become a pro. I like it very much that his new programs are surprises, always something new. I have very much a feeling that what we have seen this far is only the tip of the iceberg - lots of wonderful things to come."

A meeting with a little girl

From Finland to America, from the skating of Iliushka to his big heart. The following story comes from Cathy Hamilton, secretary of Kulik's Krew. The story is about the affection her young daughter had for Ilia, which was very much returned.

Cathy first saw Ilia skate in person at *Champions on Ice*, when he performed "Mortal Kombat." But the real conquest came when she and her then 4-year-old daughter watched Ilia skate "Rhapsody in Blue" at the Olympics.

"When Ilia came out on the ice, my daughter shrieked, 'Mom! Ilia's a giraffe!' I had to contain my laughter," Cathy says. "My daughter fell in love



Ilia has lunch with his Krew in New York

Emma Abraham

with Ilia that day. We had taped the Olympics, so she would watch Ilia skate every so often, and always gave him a kiss when they showed his face up close."

That fall, Cathy bought tickets so she and her daughter could see Ilia skate at "An Evening on Ice" in Marlboro, Mass. Knowing her daughter wanted to meet the "love of her life," Cathy wrote to Ilia by email.

"To my surprise, he wrote back and said that we could meet right after the show!" Cathy says. "Now I began to really like this man." At the show, Cathy and her daughter sat at center ice, second row, with other Krew members. Afterward, two Krew members took them down to the dressing room area.

"Now, my daughter is normally a rather shy child and it really shocked me to see her walk right up to Ilia and talk to him! He picked her up in his arms and asked her in his deep Russian accent, 'Are you comfortable?' Then he smiled as pictures were taken. My heart absolutely melted at the way he treated her."

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Fans From Afar: The View in Japan and Finland

By Junko Suwa

YOKOHAMA - For many of us Ilia fans, living in Japan is so frustrating a situation. Figure skating is not a major sport here, and TV and magazines cover eligible competitions only, with a few exceptional pro events like the Japan Open and World Pros. Many Japanese fans are starved for Ilia information and dying to see his skating more. Fortunately, or "unfortunately" in a way, I've found my own solution; fly thousands of miles to the States. Why "unfortunately"? Because once you see Ilia's powerful and gorgeous jumps, amazing footwork, smooth stroking and charisma right in front of your eyes, you can't help craving for "next time."

My first experience was Chicago in July 1998, for his last *Champions on Ice*. Since then, I've been totally addicted to his live



Junko Suwa

Junko with Ilia

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By Marjaana Jylha

HELSINKI - To be a European fan of Ilia Kulik means that you cannot see his skating on TV any more. The only exception for Finnish fans has been the possibility to watch the "Disney Special 1999" a couple of months ago. And that was really great to get a first-generation tape of it. Ilia's swing-dancing ability never ceases to amaze and to impress.

Then to see Ilia's skating live you have to travel to the U.S., and to get tapes of the shows and competitions Ilia is skating at, you need to have relatives or friends in the U.S. I'm fortunate as I have both, and it is really great that Krew members are so very kind and helpful toward all Ilia fans. I have understood that fans in different countries do their share by forwarding those tapes to other Ilia fans. To me it has been special fun to have fans visiting me at home and we have together watched the tapes sent to me from the U.S.

As the U.S. is a huge country and Ilia fans are in any case spread all over it - and of course all over the world - being a "fan from afar" does not have so much real meaning generally speaking, because wherever you live, if you have the Internet you are able to have contact with other Ilia fans via email or to meet them on Ilia discussion

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Skating for Charity: Ilia in Miracle Match Tour

By Norma Baker

TOLEDO, Ohio - When we read that "our" Ilia would be appearing in Tara Lipinski's Miracle Match 2001 charity tour, right after the *Stars on Ice* season ended in April, Laurie and I joined Cathy in Michigan, but actually saw the show in Toledo, Ohio, on April 21. We had reservations for front-row center seats. The other skaters in the show were Rosalynn Summers, Anjelika Krylova and Oleg Ovsianikov, Yuka Sato & Jason Dungjen, Angela Nikodinov, Caryn Kadavy and Jayson Denomme; choreographer was Lea Ann Miller; and wardrobe consultant was Jef Billings.

We had a great time driving from Michigan to Ohio, talking non-stop about skating, skaters and all the fun stuff we'd had the opportunity to share since belonging to Kulik's Krew. When we found our front-row seats, they (gasp!) turned out to be on-ice seats! As we sat there, a cute young lady came up to us and introduced herself as Amanda Schaumburger, the president of Tara's fan club - Triumph on Ice - with whom I'd been in email contact. We watched the people arrive and find their seats, and suddenly Amanda was back, handing me backstage passes to "meet and greet" the stars after the show.

Ilia Banners

This was a fun show - we'd seen some of the skaters' routines over the past season, but so what! The skaters were enjoying themselves, entertaining us and doing so for a good cause benefiting leukemia research. For me, personally, it was a great way to end my birthday weekend - great skat-

ers, beautiful costumes, good choreography - well executed and with excellent opportunities for photos. Laurie had brought along the two "Ilia" banners she'd made for the SOI shows, and at first we held the smaller of them and he grinned when he saw it. She later drafted some young ladies to help hold the bigger one, which spread across the whole row, and I know he had to be impressed seeing that one up close and personal - (how could he not see it? It's about five feet long, with his name in big black letters) - because at the show's end, when the skaters all saluted the front-row people, he smiled at us as he whizzed by, high-fiving each of us and calling out "hi girls!"

Fancy Footwork

Ilia was right "on," starting his "Rockit" routine from the side of the rink, instead of emerging from the toy box. He skated magnificently, hitting all the big triples and doing all the fancy footwork that's so impressive in that and "Drive/Driven," his second number in the show.

It was funny to see the finale for this show because the skaters were wearing the costumes from last season's SOI finale - the orange and yellow ones. After

the finale, Tara said "so long" to the audience and said she hoped to see us next year, and the Foundation photographer took some group cast photos. We headed backstage to wait for the skaters to arrive, and when we got into the hallowed area, there was a long table set up for Tara and Ilia. He got there first, so we hovered near the table, kidding him about his haircut and asking him how his hand felt (he'd cut it somehow), and then we moved along so other people could get to him. (We did get him to autograph not only our programs but one of Laurie's banners too.)



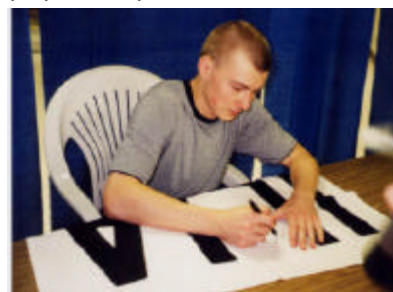
Laurie Asseo

The finale

The Krew Kut

We talked to/got autographs from the rest of the skaters and when we saw that Ilia had left the table and was wandering around, we descended on him en masse. He smiled at us and listened to our excited questions - starting with Cathy asking if we'd ever hear why he got his hair cut. He grinned and said he just wanted to see what his head looked like - he'd never seen it. To tell the truth, I didn't think I'd like it, but it had grown since the initial cut so it was more like a buzz cut, which we christened the Krew Kut. Before he left, we all had photos taken with him. I'd like to add that I've always admired the way Ilia interacts with his fans, having had some lively conversations with him during our Krew brunch in NYC, but he's such a good conversationalist, it's worth mentioning again. And he has a very dry, but funny, sense of humor.

Cathy Hamilton



Signing the banner

Amanda says the Miracle Match tour's "lighting, costuming and music created a very professional and entertaining show for each audience. This is just the beginning!" I know I'll never forget this birthday treat - not only seeing fantastic skaters in a great show, but sharing that time with two wonderful Krewmates like Cathy and Laurie. Fantastic!!

Norma Baker is possibly the oldest member of Kulik's Krew and proud of it!

Japan

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performance, and have visited the States four or five times a year to see his shows and competitions. I often think I'm crazy... Actually, people I meet at the ice arenas are surprised when I tell them that I came all the way from Japan just to see Ilia.

The downsides of such wonderful experiences are the hefty travel expense, always-the-same in-flight meals, and piles of work to make up for my absence. But to me, *Stars on Ice* is like two hours of a dream created by a top-of-the-world cast and staff. I was thunderstruck when I first saw it, and shouted in my mind, "Wow! THIS IS American show business!" Also, a big portion of the pleasure in my trip is sharing fun times with my friends and cheering for our Golden Boy together. We fans show our support to him, and he looks really happy to have us in the audience. What a wonderful moment!

Fortunately, my boss has come to terms with my trips to see Ilia by now. He even teases me, "You are such a big fan of Ilia Kulik, then why don't you come up with a new project of a Kulik brand?" Yes, I work in the Licensing Division and handle marketing of various types of brand licensing projects. Someday we might see clothing, shoes, watches, fragrances etc. under the brand called ILIA or MR. K!? That's one of my wild fancies.

Krew member Junko Suwa lives in Yokohama, Japan.

Finland

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forums. I'd say that if a Krew member is active, you have lots of fun and you get to know wonderful people from different countries. There is one hindrance, though, because of the distance; if Ilia has been on U.S. television, it takes at least a week for the tape to arrive in Finland. At that time the U.S. fans have already discussed the event, but of course we have the opportunity to say our personal opinions about his skating when we get the tape. The same happens with Ilia's magazine appearances; we just have to wait a bit longer to see them. Thanks to a very helpful Krew member friend I have gotten those magazines very quickly.

I'm very happy that so far I have been able to see Ilia skate live a few times: at *Stars on Ice* 2000 and 2001 and at World Pros 2000. They were really exciting experiences to me. And it was so great to see Ilia's skating live with many other Krew members, to get to know fans you had earlier been in contact with by email only, and who now make you feel so very welcome and take such excellent care of you at these events. Actually, because of all that it is great to be a "fan from afar." I just hope that one day I'll have the opportunity to be of help to all these wonderful fellow Ilia fans, too!

Marjaana Jylha lives in Helsinki, Finland, and is a member of Kulik's Krew.



Mr. Big Stuff!

Doug & Sherry Brown

Sun Valley

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For the show, I had an excellent front-row seat at the left side of the rink. When the show began, all the skaters were introduced for the opening number except Ilia. Alexander Abt, Jozef Sabovcik and the skating pair of Anita Hartshorn & Frank Sweiding were some of the skaters performing that night. Finally, Ilia was introduced, and he performed "Drive/Driven." Because I was taking pictures, I can only recall that he executed a huge triple lutz. Next year I will just let someone else take photos and I will sit back and enjoy the show.

When Ilia came out for the second performance the MC announced, "The 1998 Olympic champion, Alexei Yagudin." At first I thought it was to add humor to the show. When Ilia did not go right into "Rockit," I knew the guy had made a huge mistake. Ilia went to the MC to get him to correct the error. Some people near me were murmuring about the mistake. I even held up the ILIA banner I borrowed from Laurie to give the MC some help. With some prompting by the audience and Ilia, the MC apologized and introduced Ilia correctly. I felt the MC's blunder was inexcusable because Ilia was the headliner.

The show went at a fast pace and lasted about 90 minutes. I enjoyed the skaters' performances and the audience appreciated both of Ilia's programs, with his innovative moves on the ice.

Konvention

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were when he arrived early too! New members again had the privilege of dining at the same table with Ilia. Of course, Ilia was given the opportunity to visit every table to interact with members. With only six to eight people at a table, everyone had plenty of opportunity to chat and get to know Mr. Kulik better.

Creating "Rockit"

Ilia seemed happy to be with us, laughing and joking with members. Ilia still had his sense of humor, showing signs of maturity from his first brunch with us. He was very open with questions such as how he developed the "Rockit" program. Ilia said he wanted to do this type of program since he was 15 years old or even younger, but there was no place for it in the eligible circuit.

"I was working out on the floor a lot this summer, trying to get the moves going," Ilia told Krew members at one table. At first, he said, "my body didn't want to move this way... but once you feel it, it's like everything - you feel it."

One member mentioned that her son had the same first name as Ilia's middle name, Alexander. Ilia showed interest by asking her more about her son. I mentioned to Ilia about going to see the musical *Contact*. It had some of the same cast members who were in *Center Stage*. He asked, "How was it and would you recommend going to see?" Of course, I told him it was a great musical. Autograph-signing and photos followed, and Maria Kuhlka had Ilia sign the same T-shirt he wore in *Center Stage*. When it was time for Ilia to

leave, he looked like he didn't want to go. As he left, members stood and applauded, showing their appreciation to Ilia for spending time with us.

After the brunch, officers and members attended the second annual business meeting. We said goodbye to Madley, the outgoing president, and welcomed our new president, Joyce Watson, and our new board members, Maria Kuhlka and Laurie Asseo. Later that evening, members attended the *Stars on Ice* show. Most sat in a group cheering for our Iliushka, while some sat in other areas with signs or smaller banners. Ilia spotted us from the ice and waved! Each year this gathering now called the Krew Konvention is improving. Kulik's Krew and Ilia have gone through many changes, most for the good. With each gathering we learn more how to handle the Konvention effectively so that members and Ilia can come away with great memories.

Andrea Thompson is a music merchandiser and a member of Kulik's Krew.

Order your 2002 Kulik's Krew calendar! Fabulous photos of you-know-who; order forms available at www.kuliks-krew.com. Payment due by Nov. 1.

Different Paths

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"You would think my story would be over, but his charm continued on," Cathy says. That December when her daughter turned 5, she wanted to invite Ilia to her birthday party. "So I sent him an email inviting him, but explaining that I knew he wouldn't be able to come."

"The morning of her party there was an email from Ilia - he 'sang' Happy Birthday and signed it Iliushka!" says Cathy. "I will never forget what he did for me and my daughter in 1998. Spasiba, Ilia!"

Sarah's Story

Ilia's skating has been appreciated and his devotion to his fans has been noted. What Ilia may not know is how much he influenced my life.

I became a general skating fan years earlier, and watching the Nagano Games I began to LOVE figure skating. I really enjoyed the men's portion, and in the long program one skater captured my heart - Ilia Kulik.

High school was a hard time for me, and I was frequently depressed. I used skating as a means to cope, and Ilia's performances inspired me. The more I watched Ilia the more I appreciated his talent. Then I came across Kulik's Krew, which I immediately joined. That year, Ilia gave out backstage passes for *Stars on Ice* to members of the Krew. I could not believe it! Now I had

something in the long run to look forward to.

I wrote to Ilia by email before my *Stars on Ice* performance to tell him how much I was looking forward to meeting him and how excited I was. Amazingly enough, he wrote back to me! When I met Ilia after the show he was very gracious and kind. I think I smiled for about a month after that! I wrote Ilia a thank-you note for his kind gesture, and for the second time he wrote me back. I really believe someone was looking out for me.



Stephanie Warren

Two angels

By keeping Ilia and his kindness in mind, I have lost 20 to 30 pounds and am still counting. I do not know why I chose Ilia as motivation, but I did and it worked. I am now a happy 21-year-old in college who is excited about life every day. I thank Ilia for just being him, and for unknowingly inspiring many others. Spasiba, Ilia, and I hope I see you in New York!

Sarah A. Cunningham is a University of Memphis student and a member of Kulik's Krew.