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[A whole new world: Russian emigré turns life, photographic eye toward Bedford](#)

A whole new world



Russian emigré turns life, photographic eye toward Bedford

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Vladimir Riabov sees beauty while taking out the trash or looking in his rearview mirror. "You only have a couple of minutes to catch the moment, then it's gone," said the Bedford resident, reviewing a sampling of the more than 50 photo albums he has compiled over the years.

Vladimir Riabov, a Bedford resident who moved to the United States several years ago from Russia, spends much of his free time capturing the beauty of the town on film. At top left, crabapples glow through the recently fallen snow at the entrance to the Mews, where Riabov lives. Above, a magnolia branch blooms in spring on Liberty Hill Road. Above right, fall colors are reflected in the Merrimack River.

(Vladimir Riabov Photos)

The picture Riabov looks at shows the Mount Washington Hotel to the left and a line of White Mountains running across the photo, the sunlight turning the fall mountains golden brown. A small pond in the foreground reflects the image turning it on its head.

"I was driving with my wife, Lyra, and saw this in the rearview mirror," said Riabov. "The light only lasted like that a small amount of time so I ran to get the picture."

Riabov shows another of a rainbow stretching through a sprinkler. He was taking out his trash when this image presented itself.

Photography is just a hobby for Riabov, who takes pictures just about every weekend.

"If I go to the White Mountains, four or five rolls are a must or I couldn't catch everything," he said. "Getting a good photo is like finding gold in the sand."

Riabov, a native of Russia, moved to Bedford in July after living in Manchester for several years. He and his wife travel extensively, and have visited Italy and Greece as well as many places in the United States. In his travels, Riabov focuses on capturing the historical roots of civilization, taking close to 20 to 30 rolls of film. Riabov spent one Christmas in Bethlehem taking pictures of those who came to pray at the Church of the Nativity.

In New England, though, Riabov prefers to focus on nature and how it reflects life. In a short piece Riabov wrote on his reflections on New England, he writes, "Strong winds blow down beautiful leaves from trees in autumn. I have decided to pick them up and bring them to you."

One of Riabov's favorites is a bush on the side of the road overflowing with pink flowers. A "no parking" sign is on the same side of the road being overtaken by the plant.

"It shows the life of the bush," said Riabov. "There is no parking there because it is so beautiful."

But someone else took Riabov's favorite picture a shot of him in a bar sitting under the well-known picture of Albert Einstein sticking his tongue out. Riabov holds a tall glass of beer and another glass is under the picture in tribute to the scientist.

Einstein is a fitting symbol of Riabov's life in the world outside his hobby. He's a computer science professor at Rivier College in Nashua. His interest in computers stems back to his days in Russia.

"In 1957, the Soviets launched Sputnik," said Riabov. "This was very important to all Russians."

"It was a boyhood dream of mine not to fly these rockets, but create them," he said. "At 15 I was invited to attend a special school in math and afterwards it became my specialization."

Riabov worked in the Russian space program for 15 years until Boris Yeltsin came to power and "like a knife" cut the program and let a restaurant open in its offices.

"I didn't spend 15 years doing research to be a waiter," said Riabov on his decision to move to the United States.

Since moving here, Riabov has published 92 research articles, but the one he is most proud of again ties him to Einstein.

Einstein once said, "Only those who attempt the absurd will achieve the impossible."

Riabov's attempt at the absurd was launched by a bagel.

One day teaching at Rivier one of Riabov's students walked in late while eating a bagel. Disappointed in his student's tardiness, Riabov asked the student what his subject for an upcoming paper was, to which the student had no reply. Riabov asked for a paper on the aerodynamics of a bagel.

"Seven weeks later he had submitted his awful paper, entitled 'Applied Aerodynamics of Blunt Objects' and missed an opportunity to participate in the new and challenging projects of NASA's interplanetary missions," said Riabov.

Riabov didn't make the same mistake. NASA is considering his research into the shapes of bagels for parachute systems for returning spacecrafts.



EINSTEIN AND STEIN - Vladimir Riabov, a Bedford resident originally from Russia, poses here with some beer in front of one of his heroes, Albert Einstein, in a cafe in Vienna, Austria. Riabov, a computer science professor at Rivier College Nashua, documents the beauty in life through his photography. (Courtesy Photo)

Whether taking photographs or turning bagels into NASA projects, Riabov credits it all to keeping his eye open for the absurd.

On a recent trip to Boston the day before the marathon, Riabov captured the spirit of the race better than any roll of film full of runners could.

Riabov's first picture is of a windowsill lined with sneakers. One can only assume this runner was a gardener as well, as the row of shoes served as flowerpots.

The second shot shows a white van with sneakers tacked on to almost every inch of it. "It is capturing the moment and sharing it with others," said Riabov.