

In new Orleans

- I am in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. It is hot and humid here. It is Sunday and everything is quiet and slow. Right now I am at the Convention Center for the NECC conference. They have excellent internet connection and excellent computers. I have to go have lunch and work on my presentation for tomorrow.
- Monday afternoon, I was sitting and working on the internet. All of a sudden a woman, with many badges on, stood next to me and asked me in a loud voice "Who are you"? I smiled at her and thought she was a security guard. I bent and wanted to take my conference badge out of my bag to show it to her. But she then said "Are you Reima?", I said "yes". She said this is Sally. Sally was working with me online in the evaluation of the proposals. We corresponded but did not know how each looked like. We never met. Later we both went to the reception which the conference organizers had for the international attendees. She sat at the same table with me and was introducing me to all the people she knew. She was worried about my safety and asked me if I needed anything. She introduced me to her gang that accompanied me and did not even want me to walk alone. We walked to the aquarium together and attended the opening ceremony together.
- Yes. This is the presentation about Saudi, Ukrainian and Russian students learning together. Attendees were very interested and impressed. The head of an organization talked to me after the presentation and invited me to participate in their project and to attend their annual conference which will be held this July in Amman Jordan. Students and teachers from 90 countries are participating in this project except Saudi Arabia. I told him will invite my students to participate. Tomorrow I have another one but it is going to be different. I will write about it tomorrow after I see how it goes. On Sunday was the opening ceremony. The Keynote speaker was a journalist from the New York Times. Very inspiring. Very eloquent. Did not read a single word. Afterwards, we were given beads. I got 4 colors and a mini jazz festival started and walked along with us to the aquarium where the reception was held. It was fun. They had a similar jazz band yesterday around 6 p.m. I am not sure if they would have that today. I have

to go to the Exhibits. They are huge and gorgeous. I will tell you about them later.

- I am in Spokane, Washington visiting a friend of mine who was my roommate when I was in college 20 years ago. She lives in the outskirts of the city which looks and feels like the countryside. I sit in her back garden every morning and have breakfast or read. Many apple, plum, maple and cherry trees around. Very peaceful and relaxing. During the day, you can only hear the birds singing and at night you hear the crickets chirping. Before sunset, we take a walk along the river.
- Unfortunately, my friend has skin cancer. She had surgery few months ago. While making my travel arrangements, she asked if she could see me. I changed all my summer plans and will be visiting her for 2 weeks.