

2011

## Snippets from our Adventures in the Former Soviet Union from 1991-2011

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### Recommended Citation

Fawver, Gary, "Snippets from our Adventures in the Former Soviet Union from 1991-2011" (2011). *Papers*.  
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## **Snippets from our Adventures in the Former Soviet Union from 1991-2011**

Overview of our Russia involvement in Christian Camping:

In 1991 we took our daughter Michelle and joined Dave and Elfrieda Loewen to run the first summer long Christian camp in Russia- site of Logos Bible school at a former Young Pioneer camp in Belorechensk. This was about 100 miles north of the Black Sea in the republic of Russia. What a thrill to watch how camping ministries have sprung up all across that huge country of 11 time zones. Our hearts have turned time and again to the ministry in the Former Soviet Union. We returned in 1998 to conduct a camp in Mirny, in Sakha, the Yakutia Republic of the Russian Federation in Siberia. Then during a sabbatical in the winter/spring of 1999 we accompanied Dan Degroat for leadership training seminars for camp directors and counselors in six places across Russia. Numerous training trips have taken place. Our Russia Ministry culminated in the development of a Camp Directors Institute (CDI), following a 2003 summer visit to 15 camps in Russia and Ukraine to assess their needs. CCI/Russia has published a book I wrote called *God's Creations: Orientation for Christian Camp Counselors and Nature Teachers*, and a book of counselor led outdoor experiences based on Scripture. It is called *God's Art Gallery*.

**Russia-1991**- the first summer long Christian camp in Russia

- There had been 70 years of Young Pioneer camps throughout the Soviet Union. Thousands of camps were built and all Soviet youth were required to attend these camps
- 30 plus hour train ride with 15 boxes of Bibles, knowing nothing of Russian language or ways. Train in bad shape
- Description of campsite (see report of summer)
- Rough outline of the daily program
- Hot, hot, hot, flies, less and less food
- “Goosey, goosey, ga, ga, ga”
- KGB, phones tapped, jets with missiles flew over.
- Very little nature emphasis in camp
- Susan and I stayed with Nikolai and family several blocks from the camp
- Purchased a Drum set from hardware store. No hardware in the store.
- Archery-had to make our own targets with blue and white paint.
- trampoline—batut; very popular, not much safety, nurse cared for it lovingly
- Canoeing: cow pond and quarry lake
- Overnight campout to quarry lake
- Train trip to “National Park”
- earthball very popular, hung off 2<sup>nd</sup> floor balcony at night

- softball- took 8 hours to teach campers.
- Jesus* Movie, preaching and repentance night
- I preached at a Baptist church—I was the 4<sup>th</sup> of five sermons, just before pastor, so he could correct any heresy
- Attended a wedding after church service in Mykop
- Present for the first outdoor baptism held in years in Mykop
- Visited an underground camp with unregistered church youth—long meetings, “jail”, food on beach, rinse dishes in flooded river, sick
- Train ride back to Moscow very nice
- Left Russia for a Christian camp in Germany 3 days before the August coup in Moscow.

- 1998-** helped conduct a camp in Siberia near the town of Mirnyy first campsite completely flooded out, so this was a late find
- delayed camp start several times due to lack of or not good water tests
  - horrible mosquitoes-3 hatches at once due to permafrost
  - beautiful wild flowers
  - took camper/staff photo under same large red star as Pioneer camp staff had years before
  - worked with an interpreter all summer
  - visited homes--Yakutian family, descendents of Genghis Khan- mare's milk; shop owner/mafia; geologist who looked for diamonds
  - Sent one of the English speaking staff home for discipline reasons
  - camp owner's ethics less than honest

- 1999-**Jan/February-Irkutsk, Kazan, Minsk Belerus. Flew into Khabarovsk for Camp director's training
- suitcases lost (-20 to -30 degrees) caught up with us a week later when we arrived in Moscow. Borrowed some things from a missionary barrel
  - purchase of my Shopka
  - accident going to Lake Baikal. I have the truck lug bolt
  - pizza- Minsk, Belarus (3,675,000 rubles = \$14.00)

- 1999-**May/June- Yekaterinburg, Moscow area, Riga Latvia.
- I wrote and CCI printed a Russian language manual on nature that we used
  - crow rookery in camp and had MIG jet and landing boat to play on,
  - Moth that opened wings in front of students
  - found photo scrap books from Pioneer camp days
  - Mafia controlling cabs when we wanted to travel

**2003**—Visited 15 camps in Latvia, Ukraine, Siberia, and Russia, noting strengths and needs. Purpose was to develop needs based curriculum for Camp Director's training institute

-Our transportation: a GMC/Astro through Ukraine  
-pickpocketed in St. Petersburg subway

**2005/2006** Camp Directors Institute #1

**2008**—Graduation in Istra for CDI #2

**2011**—To Istra for CCLC with CCI/Russia, to celebrate 20 years of Christian camping in FSU.

- \* notes from 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary CCI celebration
- \* see Photo library on Russia
- \* video from '91 now on DVD