

To boldly go...

Dear friends,

July 2009



I'm a Trekkie from way back but I gotta tell ya, there's *no* Star Trek episode where a landing party spent eight days on dirt roads in an

Uaz. Star Fleet guys always beam down or fly down in a shuttlecraft and nobody's uniform gets mussed. Well, missionaries get mussed.



Robin and I just returned from nearly a month in Russia. Except for the Uaz part, it was among the best trips we've had in Russia.



Our travels first took us from Atlanta to Moscow then up to Saint Petersburg to attend graduation ceremonies of the International Academy of St. Petersburg (I chair the USA board of the school and needed to talk to my counterpart in St. Pete). From there we returned to Moscow in time to pick up teammate Mark Charles and then onto Ulan Ude five time zones to the right. The three of us spoke at a conference Robin helped to organize that's centered on contextualizing the gospel to indigenous peoples.

Most of the church planting going on among indigenous people in Russia is being done by cultural outsiders; the result is not a pretty sight. Our task was to show how much more effective it is to grow churches that look and feel rooted in the local community instead of reflecting the missionary's home culture.

The conference was well attended and culminated in a first ever Buryat new song festival; Robin was asked to serve as co-MC.



The festival was inspired by the



Sakha new song festival held two years ago in Yakutsk. The Buryats were totally wowed by the Sakha festival but managed to pull off *their* festival on a scale that was very impressive. The local community came in to watch over 40 participants proclaim Christ with local music styles, costumes and national instruments. We were thrilled!



From there, on to Yakutsk and across the Lena River to a half dozen towns and villages accessible only by gravel roads and helicopter (we hadn't budgeted for a helicopter or shuttlecraft, which doomed us to the Uaz).





Valeri and Maria Kononov are the Sakha couple who took us deep into the outback for eight days. It was a fantastic trip filled with key meetings and numerous interviews.



I took along two tiny high-definition video cameras and collected many interviews of Robin and Sakha leaders. Robin's goal was to build relationships with higher social strata Sakha people who have been (for the most part) inaccessible to most evangelicals; the trip was a resounding success.



The fact that Robin is working on her Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology on a subject that celebrates the Sakha culture opened doors wherever we went. She was welcomed into circles that will be important to her dissertation and give her access to people who would otherwise go unreached.



Each evening I was able to edit the footage I had shot that day, so most of the 250 gigabytes of video footage I gathered are already edited. What a fantastic trip both technically and relationally. We are so grateful to you for your prayers!



Robin is currently in South Africa speaking at a secular ethnomusicology conference. She is giving a scholarly paper there about the Sakha music genre we went to Yakutia to learn about and she'll be gathering fellow Int'l Council of Ethnodoxology (ICE) members there for fellowship and networking. It seems that because of ICE, wherever she goes, Robin finds people she already knows. Her ministry through ICE is now truly global.

Katherine has committed herself to attending Peabody Conservatory this coming fall. Robin and I are so happy to see God's blessing on her. Imagine! Katherine has a full graduate assistantship scholarship (paying for her tuition) to one of the best conservatories in the world. We praise God for the favor He is lavishing on her!

- We praise the Lord for His blessings on:**
- Our fantastic trip to Russia
 - Katherine attending Peabody
- Please pray for:**
- Our son, James serving in Iraq
 - Robin's trip to South Africa

We never forget that we are able to boldly go because of your financial support and prayers. Thank you for being on our team!

Yours in Him,

Bill and Robin

E-mail: Bill@BillandRobinHarris.com or Robin@BillandRobinHarris.com

Write/Phone Us: 70 Saint Andrews Walk, Sharpsburg, GA 30277 (770) 990-6924

Donations: Operation Mobilization, P.O. Box 444, Tyrone, GA 30290 (770) 631-0432

Website: www.billandrobinharris.com **Book Orders:** Books@BillandRobinHarris.com

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