



March 11, 2007

TOCCI FAMILY WORLD VISION MISSION TRIP TO ARMENIA AND GEORGIA



World Vision Team and Georgia/Armenia Mission Participants

From left to right: Bill Bryce (WV USA) Carla (WV USA), Yeva (WV USA), Nancy (John Snow, Inc, public healthcare advocacy), Patty Frye (WV donor) Jerry (WV Public Health Expert), Tim Tocci, Lila Tocci, David (WV Georgia Director) and Matt (WV Georgia).

Day 2 Poem from Lila Tocci

Sunday clear sky
breakfast window opens old city Tbilisi
church bells beckon to mass
like a primitive toll
at the foot of the ancient stone steps a peasant woman collects coins from the faithful
higher up the mountain the sun silhouettes another church
calling other faithful

Breakfast is simple satisfying
cured meats, cheeses, yogurt and boiled eggs,
homemade fig preserves and local honey
on to an apartment, a small group, introductions, stories,
(told quietly: powerful people hardworking in obscurity to help, to lift)
songs and hymns acapella
scripture study on children
coffee, donuts, photos, goodbyes, perhaps forever
a ride, a walk to see the city.



Broad and grand Rustavelli Avenue, Gold statue, eternal flame
Hard by uneven cobblestones, ravages and rubble of war
High fashion walks next to the clothes on his back
A steady stream of citizens young and old
Carry towel and clean clothes to the public baths
Although Sunday, construction continues
Manpower means men shovel a trench
No heavy equipment in sight.

On the road to the monastery the police flag us down
Documents are produced, the interpreters explain the infraction
Photographing the US Embassy
The tight lines of confrontation relax into a near smile and we relax
John yields his camera, photos erased, we proceed

Lunch along the way at a lovely riverside café serving Georgian fare
Pouring Georgian wine
A lesson on the art of eating chingali
A local folk pop group serenades
An elderly widow sells posies as we leave
We buy, she hugs
uttering endearments in the soft voice of her mother tongue

The monastery road winds up a mountain, past pastures of sheep
Parking and climbing the stone pathway many others
Are coming or leaving
Two priests almost as ancient as the stones need help with the descent
Although the location and architecture picturesque,
visitors more devout than curious
Crossing themselves slowly, deliberately
Pencil thin tapers are lit before icons, prayers offered

Our first full day on Georgian soil
portends the hearty mixture of heaven and earth
we drink of deeply throughout our stay.