

## Chapter 26

### Krasnoyarsk, Russia

The train pulled into the Krasnoyarsk station around 7:00 a.m. local time. All the sponsors had been advised of the PC volunteers travel plans, and a representative for each volunteer was to meet them upon arrival. Jim Hunt and his other three volunteer friends started moving their bags off the train. One of the sponsors meeting the train had arranged for a porter with a large cart to help with the luggage. Three sponsors' representatives were there to greet the volunteers, but no one from the Siberian Aerospace Academy was to be seen. All the baggage was put on the cart and as they all started walking down the platform toward the station, Anna from the SAA came walking out of the station toward the group. They all walked together to the parking lot outside the station, said their goodbyes, and then each volunteer collected his bags and went with his sponsor to find their new home.

Boris drove Anna and Jim Hunt to the Siberian Aerospace Academy, and Anna took Jim to Victor Federov's office. Anna left, and Victor invited Jim to sit and have some tea. Victor told Jim how happy he was for Jim to be joining them at the academy. Victor suggested Jim take the first couple weeks to get settled in his apartment and to learn his way around the city, before he started teaching. Jim thought this was a good idea and used the opportunity to ask Victor if he knew anyone who might be available to tutor him with Russian lessons once a week. Victor thought for a moment and then said his administrative assistant, Natalia, would be perfect for the job, and he would introduce Natalia to him later when they were finished. They talked a little while, finished their tea, and then Victor took Jim to the office next door that was shared by Yuri, who Jim had already met, and Demitri, the assistant rector of the International Business School. Yuri was at his desk, but Demitri had not come in yet. Victor asked Yuri to go with Jim and Boris to help Jim move into his apartment and then give Jim a little tour around the area.

Jim's apartment was on the same road as the dormitory, where he stayed on his first visit. The apartment building was a standard Russia apartment building. There are thousands of them in Krasnoyarsk and other cities all over Russia. The building was ten stories tall with three entrances. Jim's apartment was on the third floor, and his entrance was the third one. There were elevators inside each entrance, but the one in Jim's entrance didn't work, so Jim and Boris and Yuri each carried one of Jim's bags up to his apartment. The entrance door to the building was heavy metal. It locked automatically when it closed, and from the outside, it could only be opened by key, or if someone on the inside buzzed a person in. However, Jim's entrance door buzzer system didn't work, so the only way to get in was by key. Boris had all the keys so he unlocked the door. At the top of the stairs on the third floor, Jim's apartment was to the right. Directly across from his apartment, to the left of the stairs, was another apartment. The door to Jim's apartment was also metal. Once that metal door was opened, there was a very small space, about 4 feet by 4 feet, and another door, this one wood, on the left. Boris unlocked this door, and it opened into Jim's new apartment. Jim walked inside and realized it was exactly like the apartment in Zelenograd, only reversed. When you walked into the apartment there was a hallway that went left and right. Directly ahead was the living room. Down the hallway to the left were the water closet (toilet room) and the bathroom and the kitchen. Down the hallway to the right was the bedroom. As Jim visited other

apartment buildings, he learned that his apartment was the standard one bedroom apartment in Russia. There were millions of them exactly like Jim's. His apartment had been completely, newly furnished. The living room had large windows at the far end of the room. Against the right wall were a green sofa, which was a hide a bed, two end tables with lamps, and a small desk and chair. The desk had a red telephone on it. Along the left wall was the standard wooden piece of furniture, with cabinets along the lower part and bookshelves above, just like the one in Yelena's Zelenograd apartment. In addition, there were two overstuffed green chairs at the far end of the room, in front of the windows. The floor was covered with a large area rug. There was a coffee table in front of the sofa, on the area rug.

The kitchen cabinets were fully stocked with glasses, dishes, pots and pans and utensils. There were a full sized refrigerator, a stove, and a sink. Against the wall opposite the appliances were a kitchen table and four kitchen chairs.

The bedroom had two single beds, a dresser. and a small closet. In the hallway, outside the bedroom was a small storage closet.

Jim had all his bags put in the bedroom, and told Boris and Yuri that he would unpack later. He asked Boris if he would take him on a short drive around the area to find the closest bus stop and any restaurants and food stores in the area. Yuri decided it would be easier to take a short walk around the area, so Boris left with the car, and Yuri and Jim set off on foot to learn the neighborhood.

Directly outside Jim's apartment building was a large open area with a playground for kids and benches for adults. There was also an area with a wooden fence around it that looked like a very small soccer field. Yuri explained to Jim that when it got colder, the field would be flooded and would become an ice hockey rink. Across the open area were two apartment buildings just like Jim's, and to the left was another apartment building. Behind the apartment to their left was a street, and directly behind that apartment building was a bus stop. Near the bus stop were two very small stores, one sold pastries, and one sold vodka and other drinks and assorted snacks. They walked to the bus stop, and Yuri started explaining the bus system, but it was too complicated for Jim to understand with Yuri's limited English and Jim's limited Russian. Later, he would ask Maria or Anna to help him learn the bus system.

Jim and Yuri walked to the corner of the block and made a right turn. This was one of the main streets that ran parallel to the Yenisey River on the east bank. Along this street Yuri pointed out a grocery store and a couple restaurants. One of the restaurants was a cafeteria-style and was inexpensive. Yuri described the other restaurant as very expensive. They walked past the main SAA building and continued along the same street for a couple more blocks. They came to a small open market where merchants set up little booths along the sidewalk to sell fresh fruits and vegetables and assorted packaged food products like noodles and boxes of tea. A few booths were selling clothing. Yuri mentioned to Jim that there was another, much larger open market a couple kilometers north on this street that he should plan to visit soon. Just past the small sidewalk market, Yuri pointed out a couple buildings that were part of the Siberian Aerospace Academy.

After their tour, Yuri returned to the Academy, and Jim Hunt walked back to his new apartment and unpacked. He found his bug detector and quickly found three bugs, one in the kitchen, one in the living room, and one in the bedroom. He left them

untouched. Then he realized he was dead tired but decided he needed to go to the grocery store and buy some food before he took a nap.

The next day, Jim walked to the SAA, met Natalia, and talked to her about Russian lessons. They agreed to a weekly schedule, and Natalia suggested to Jim that she come to his apartment for the lessons. Jim later learned that Natalia only lived a couple of blocks from his apartment building. He also learned she was married, with one son. She and her husband had lived in East Germany for several years, but when the Berlin wall came down, they moved back to Russia and settled in Krasnoyarsk. Natalia had a car, which looked forty years old, which she drove to work and sometimes would drive to Jim's apartment for his Russian lessons. Jim noticed that others in the admin office called her Natasha. He asked Natalia about the two different names and learned that Natalia was her formal name, and Natasha was the friendly version of the name Natalia. She also explained that many Russian names have a formal and an informal/friendly version. Then she smiled and told Jim he could call her Natasha.

The Peace Corps gave each volunteer a big water purifier to use while they were volunteers. The purifier distilled regular tap water and then passed the water thru a special charcoal filter to filter out bacteria, etc. Jim tried some of the water from the purifier, and it tasted great. Actually, it didn't taste at all, which is what he liked. The fan in the purifier was a little noisy, but Jim was sure he would adjust to it. The good news was this would save him some money that he had been spending on bottled water.

Anna helped Jim learn the bus system, which was not as easy as Jim thought it would be. There were no pamphlets that described the bus routes. And Jim learned that there are approximately 1000 buses that moved people around the city of Krasnoyarsk. Everybody just seems to know which buses went where. Eventually, Jim learned enough to get around the city to the places he wanted to go.

During one of Jim's first trips using the bus system by himself, he walked to the bus stop and caught the bus to the downtown area of the city. The city had a river running thru the center of it with the river running mostly south to north. The "left" bank of the city was on the west shore of the river. As you came across the main bridge connecting the east and west sides of the city, the first thing you saw as you entered the west side was the theater for opera and ballet. There was a large courtyard in front of the theater. During the New Year and Christmas season, the courtyard was filled with giant beautiful ice sculptures. To the right of the theater was the Hotel Krasnoyarsk, reported to be the best hotel in Krasnoyarsk. Attached to the hotel was a large casino, allegedly run by the Russian mafia. Behind the Hotel Krasnoyarsk was the downtown area. Three main streets paralleled the river. The one closest to the river was Karla Marx Street, the next one was Mera (Peace) Street, and the one farthest away from the river was Lenin Street. The downtown area of the city was these three streets, which were eight to ten blocks long. Mera Street was the main shopping street. Jim found that he could buy basically anything he needed: shaving cream and blades, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, etc., plus all kinds of electronic equipment, and all kinds of household things, like pots and pans, dishes, glasses, knives, eating utensils, sheets and pillows and blankets, and clothes, etc. The main department store, named TSUM, had practically anything needed, but the prices were a little high. Jim realized he could buy most things in the smaller shops and outdoor markets at prices much lower than TSUM. He thought about the prices he had paid for a few things. An hour of internet time at the Internet Bar was just under \$1. A double

espresso, which tasted wonderful, was \$2. A small pizza, which he had for lunch, was \$1, and a 2-liter bottle of Coke Light, which he bought on the way home was \$1. It definitely would not be easy to live in Krasnoyarsk on the Peace Corps \$6 per day, but he would try. He expected to dip into his own money from time to time to live a civilized life. The other thing that really made him happy was he found a great camera store, where he could get film developed, and buy new film and other supplies. It was a very nice store, with a Kodak sign hanging outside.

During the next few days, with Anna's help and several trips to the bank, Jim was able to open a bank account, at a bank within walking distance of his apartment. His monthly pay of 5,000 rubles, approximately US\$175, would be transferred to his bank account on the first of every month. The Peace Corps encouraged the volunteers to try to live only using their monthly pay, because the pay was theoretically equal to the amount the average Russian was living on. The philosophy of the Peace Corps was to have the volunteers experience living "like the locals." Jim thought that living in Krasnoyarsk, with an apartment provided to him by the academy, and using the public bus transportation system like most Russians living in Krasnoyarsk, his Peace Corps monthly pay would be close to adequate. It would not allow him to be extravagant or to have the creature comforts that he would like, but the costs of things in Russia were quite low compared to the U.S.

One day, Natasha took Jim's passport and explained to him that he had to be registered with the local government office. The next day, Jim got his passport back.

Jim had not seen Maria, one of the girls who, along with Anna, had been his tour guide when he first visited Krasnoyarsk. He asked Anna if she was still working at the SAA and Anna explained she was still a student but stopped working in the office and had another job, not at SAA. The next day, when Jim walked into the admin office to see Anna, Maria was there talking to Anna. The three of them had lunch together in the cafeteria near the Academy.

The following weekend, Maria and Anna took Jim Hunt on his first hike in the nature preserve, Stolbe. There was a little fresh snow on the ground, and the temperature was about -10 degrees Celsius. Jim had dressed with a few layers and found it very refreshing to be hiking with a couple young girls in the beautiful nature preserve. There were some paved trails to follow, which made the walking easier. Jim found that hiking in Stolbe was one of the favorite things the girls liked to do on weekends. Over the next several months, Jim went on frequent hikes with Maria and Anna.

After the first two weeks living in Krasnoyarsk, Jim began his work at the SAA. The first week he monitored several classes. The next week he actually began teaching five classes: one for first-year students, one for second-year students, one for third-year students, one for an evening class, and one for a Saturday morning class to a group of English teachers who worked at the SAA. Each class met once each week for an hour and twenty minutes. The plan discussed with Victor was for Jim to teach each class for the next five weeks. Then the tentative plan for the second semester, which started in February, was for Jim to continue teaching similar classes.

Jim observed that more than 80 percent of the students taking classes in the business school were female. At that time in Russia, most men continued to pursue degrees in the sciences and engineering. This was consistent with the information learned during the Peace Corps training program. Business in Russia was associated with

criminals and corruption, and young men had not warmed to the idea of pursuing careers in business. Women seemed to be more interested, and thus the heavy ratio of women to men in the business programs at the Siberian Aerospace Academy. The class for the first-year students was a basic Introduction to Business. There were fifteen students, and they met Mondays. The class participants all spoke English; however, many of them were fairly shy about speaking in English in the classroom. Jim used some techniques he had learned during training in Zelenograd to get them all speaking, to help them with their self-confidence.

The Saturday morning class was an English class for twenty-two Russian women, who were all English teachers in the foreign language department at the SAA. One week half the ladies attended, and the next Saturday the other half attended. These English classes were just informal gatherings where they asked questions, and Jim tried to answer them. Jim realized the English teachers knew more about the English language than he did. Their knowledge of all the rules of grammar was outstanding, and their vocabulary was also excellent. Their weakness generally was their verbal skills. Most of them spoke with a heavy accent, and their pronunciation needed help. Jim found they just enjoyed listening to him speak in English, and they used the class time to ask him questions about life in America, and they just liked to listen. Jim accommodated them with his stories of life in America, but he enjoyed also turning it around on them by asking them to tell him about life in Russia, obviously speaking about Russia in English. The English teachers and Jim enjoyed these Saturday morning classes and enjoyed learning from each other.

In addition to the five classes Jim was teaching, at Victor's request, Jim also started an American Club. It met once a week, late in the afternoon, and was an informal gathering of Russians who wanted to practice English by ask Jim questions about America. The language of choice during the American Club meetings was English. Initially only students from the Siberian Aerospace Academy attended, but through word of mouth a few students from other institutions started attending. Some English teachers also occasionally came. Jim also invited the other PC volunteers to speak at the American Club, which the attendees always liked.

At the third American Club meeting Jim noticed a very tall, lanky middle-aged man come in and sit in the back row and just listen to the conversations. The attendees at these meetings were usually young, college age, and about 90 percent were girls. The man in the back row didn't look like he belonged, and he didn't participate at all. After the meeting, as everyone was leaving, the man approached Jim and introduced himself. He told Jim his name was Alexei, and that he owned a bookstore in Krasnoyarsk that specialized in books written in English. He also said he supplied textbooks, written in English, to many of the schools in Krasnoyarsk. He went on to explain that he also ran private English classes for adults in the city. He invited Jim to visit one of his classes, which were taught at night, as a guest speaker. Jim wanted to meet some people outside of the SAA students, teachers and administrators so he told Alexei that he would be pleased to attend one of his classes. Alexei gave Jim his card with his address and phone number and said he looked forward to working with him.

During the next few weeks Jim Hunt had invitations from several other universities in Krasnoyarsk for him to visit and speak. The word was getting around the city that an "elderly" man from America was teaching at the Siberian Aerospace Academy, and many universities and other groups were curious and wanted to get in on

the action. This proved to be an excellent way for Jim to develop contacts and meet people all over Krasnoyarsk.

Jim's evening class was especially interesting. There were only eight students, but they were all a little older than the full-time students at the SAA. All were pursuing their degree part time, by taking night classes and working during the day. This class was half male and half female. They all spoke fairly good English, but like the day students, they were shy about speaking English in class. Jim used a technique for them to practice their English, where they said their name and explained what their job was during the day. Then Jim would ask them some questions about their job. One young man explained that he was in the electronics business. When Jim questioned him, he either didn't understand Jim's questions or his answers were purposely evasive. Jim didn't want to embarrass him so he didn't push him on his answers. A few weeks later, Jim visited a street market he had heard about that was specifically for electronics, like music CDs, computer games, and assorted electronics equipment. It was a huge open-air market that was only open on Saturdays. Merchants set up tables displaying their products, or in some cases just had their things spread out on a blanket on the ground. It was sort of like a flea market in the U.S., but all the stuff for sale was suppose to be new. As Jim was walking around, he saw his student who was in the electronics business. From the people around his table, it appeared he had a very successful business selling laptop computers, printers, and assorted cables and hardware accessories for computers. Jim didn't approach his student, not wanting to embarrass him, and because he was so busy selling his stuff that Jim didn't want to interfere in his business. Jim realized that the open market was part of the black market system that thrived in Russia. Now he had a better idea why there were several very big, tough-looking guys at the entrance gate to this market. They were the enforcers that protected the merchants.

Another of Jim's evening students, Igor, proved interesting. After their first class, Igor offered Jim a ride home. Jim's alternative was to take a bus, so he agreed. Igor drove a flashy black Toyota, which looked new. It was the nicest car Jim had seen in Krasnoyarsk and newer, by ten or more years, than most of the cars on the roads. Igor said he was in the security business. When Jim asked him to elaborate, he told Jim he installed security equipment in buildings. As Igor dropped Jim at his apartment building, he asked Jim if he wanted to have a drink after class next week, and Jim agreed to the invitation.

The following week, after class, Igor drove Jim to pick up one of Igor's friends, who was a policeman. Then Igor drove to a bar on the east bank of Krasnoyarsk in a rundown part of town. The bar had a few pool tables, where they spent a couple hours playing, drinking vodka, and eating some delicious snacks. Igor insisted on paying for everything. The bar was divided into two sections: one was the main bar and tables, and the other section was the poolroom. Jim noticed there were several doors along one wall and naively asked what was behind the doors. Igor explained there was a small room behind each door, which could be used for private conversations, or guys could take girls in there for a quickie. Jim decided not to ask any more questions. He was getting very uncomfortable with the evening. He didn't know why Igor had invited him. Was he just being friendly? Jim doubted that. Or was he checking out Jim to see if he was something more than just a teacher from America. Jim had a feeling that Igor and his cop friend

were probably into activities he didn't want to know about, and he promised himself he would distance himself from Igor after the evening.

One of the interesting things Jim learned about the Siberian Aerospace Academy was their work-study program. This was similar to some universities in the U.S., where students study one semester then work for a semester, basically working their way through college. The students at the SAA had the opportunity to participate in the work-study program, which allowed them to work at the state enterprise next door to the academy. The enterprise reportedly manufactured machinery. Jim learned that the enterprise was closed to him. He talked to some students in a very casual way and was told that some of the products manufactured at the state enterprise were supplied to Krasnoyarsk 26. He also learned that some students actually worked at Krasnoyarsk 26 during their work-study program. The students explained to Jim that K-26 was a large manufacturer of communications satellites and other things for Russia.

Because the Siberian Aerospace Academy was a state-supported school, many of the positions for the students were free. There were five applicants for each free spot. But in addition to the free spots, other students could pay to go to the Academy. Maria said it costs 20,000 rubles per year, about \$700. They were on a two-semester school year, sixteen weeks each. The first semester started at the beginning of September and finished at the end of December. January was reserved for oral exams. The second semester started in February and finished around the end of May, with final tests/exams held in June. July and August were for vacations.

Maria and Anna invited Jim to go hiking again in Stolbe. When they arrived, there was about an inch of snow on the ground. At the top of their climb there was at least a foot of snow. They walked along a nice trail wide enough for a car to drive on, with ice and snow on it, so the footing was delicate. The trail headed steadily up and they walked and walked and walked some more. During the day they probably saw twenty-five or thirty other people out hiking. It was very peaceful and quite beautiful. Jim took a few pictures, but they didn't do it justice. Near the top was one of the famous rock formations, which Anna insisted they climb, so Jim could take a picture from the top. The climb would not have been too difficult in the summer but with snow and ice everywhere Jim realized it was risky. Anyway, not to be outdone by the two young Russian women, he followed and climbed to the top. Getting down was even harder than getting up, but nothing was broken.

After the rock climb they hiked to a warming hut, where they met a man, his wife, son and two lady friends. The man sort of managed the hut, but Jim did not understand exactly how it worked. The girls had brought food, and there was a great long table, so everyone sat at the table and shared the food, which was always the custom in Russia, and everyone had hot tea. The warming hut had at least six large bunk beds for people to use if they wanted to spend the night. Jim asked Maria how much it cost to stay, and she informed him it was free. The man invited them to spend the night, but Anna had a commitment so she declined the invitation. Later, Jim and his two girlfriends headed down the mountain.

By the time they left, it was around 6:00 p.m., and if there had not been a full moon, following the trail would have been impossible. Luckily, with the moon there was some visibility, but walking down a snowy, icy trail with just a little light was a riot. Jim

fell twice, Anna fell a couple times, and Maria fell several times. They just laughed and enjoyed it all. Jim didn't hurt anything so they were all safe and sound. Jim went straight to bed when he got home and slept like a log.

Hey baby, it is cold outside! It was -40 degrees. Jim walked to the academy in the morning and thought about how to describe the feeling of walking in -40 degree weather. It mostly affected his face. The little spot between the eyes, where the eyebrows come together, got an intense ache. Within thirty seconds of being outside, the liquid in his nose started to freeze and made the nose feel stiff. The lips immediately dried out and began to feel brittle. And then after a couple minutes, the nose and cheeks started to burn. It was a little like a bad sunburn, but it was a combination of a hot, dry feeling, and a feeling like a million little needles were pricking the skin. The only other part of the body that suffered was the fingertips. Even wearing very good, ski gloves, after a few minutes, the fingertips started to tingle and they just kept getting colder and colder.