



BRIDGES

Bridge Builders International

July 2016 • Volume 59



By Chuck Kelley, President of BBI

564 Sheep Perish in Devastating Nighttime Blaze

ERGLI, Latvia – This past March, in the middle of the night, unseen by any known witnesses, the sheep barn located at Eagle's Wings burned to the ground. The cause is not yet known, but it looks to be electrically related.

When the shepherds last checked on the flock, before turning in for the night, 648 Mutton Merino sheep were safely in the barn. When the men returned to feed them the next morning, they arrived to a shocking sight.

BBI Associate Dan Roth recalled, "The guys discovered what happened when they went up to do the morning feeding. Hearing the news, I felt shock and numbness and drove to the barn. It was terrible."

The police could not determine the cause of the disaster, but Camp Director Diks Bortnikovs believes the fire started

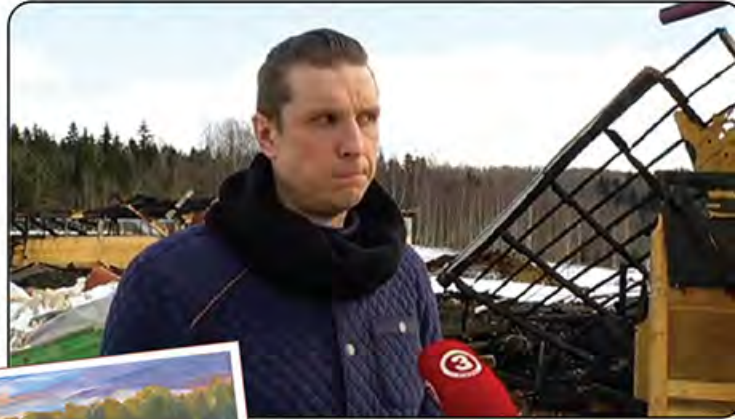
because of defective wiring.

Once it began, the fire spread rapidly as an abundance of hay had been laid down nearly everywhere.

"We cannot say for sure who was really to blame for it all, but we would not want to think that it could be arson," says Diks.

The grim work of cleaning the site by removing the debris and dead animals was daunting. Imagine the

pain of the workers who have known, played with, cared for and raised each and every sheep. As they tore down what was left of the 12,000 square foot



Holding back tears, Diks told a TV journalist, "God has given an unreal strength to withstand it all. All the guys who work here were crying. I must honestly say, thank God, we all have faith and rely on God. He will give us strength to restore it all much better than before."



"The Sheep Farm at Eagle's Wings Camp" by Kristine Peterson

barn, they also did what they had to do...often with tears in their eyes.

A team of 15 men, including volunteers from the local community, worked shoulder-to-shoulder, separating the animals from the wreckage of the building. They then piled the dead in two huge mountains to be collected for disposal in a state-approved facility.

"I went up to the barn," recalled Katie Roth, "and the sight and smell was terrible. I don't know how they can work there all day. But they are tough men."

"We are all in shock," continues Katie, "and would value prayers at this difficult time. We need to mourn our loss, recover our strength and make wise decisions about the future."

Continued on next page

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28

Why Latvia? Why Today?



Kristine Peterson 2016
Soft Peo Gloria



From Devastation...

To Resurrection



The Workers: Not only does the farm at Eagle's Wings provide a sustainable income to support the camp's year-round operating expenses, it also provides jobs throughout the year. The farm is a great outreach to these men and their families. They avoid the downward spiral of unemployment, domestic stress and substance abuse; and take pride in the important work on the farm, experience "on-the-job" fellowship and connection to Christ's love.

The Flock: 564 of 648 the sheep died, including 200 pregnant ewes, 100 ewes who had recently given birth, 140 newborn lambs and 124 yearling lambs. 14 adult rams and 70 yearling ewe lambs managed to escape.

The Loss: Estimates from the tragic sheep farm fire stand initially at \$225,000. The trickle down losses—cut back in employee hours, supplies for rebuilding, new equipment and a new flock will increase that sum considerably.

Uniting Latvia: News about the tragic sheep farm fire traveled quickly throughout Latvia. The images and reports have hit people hard and warmed their hearts. We continue to get requests from volunteers who want to help rebuild or donate.

Resurrection:



The Fieldwork: Without a large sheep flock to sustain the farm's income, the workers sowed 150 acres of fields with oats and beans.

The New Ewe: To keep our farm subsidies, we are required to have a minimum number of sheep, so we have purchased about 100 lambs to keep for the summer. These will be sold in September for meat. In the above photo, Katie and Esther are keeping watch over their flock.

Shear Providence: Sheep shearing continues with the existing 84 sheep who survived the fire. We have plans to purchase 70 more Mutton Merino sheep in the near future.

You Can Help!

- By giving a special gift online using the QR code, visiting the BBI website or through the mail. www.bridgebuildersint.com
- By coming to Latvia to help raise the new barn. info@bridgebuildersint.com



The fire at the Sheep Farm located at Eagle's Wings was devastating, but God is good! It's only been a few months since the tragedy, and the farm is recovering and reinventing itself.



Counting the Cost

Total Value Lost: \$225,000 sheep, buildings and equipment.

Amount Needed: \$296,000 - to rebuild the farm and fund the camp. This includes \$4,000 per month for two years to maintain Eagle's Wings operations due to the loss of sheep farm income.

Amount Raised: \$201,622

Remaining Need: \$94,378

Urgently Needed: Many new monthly commitments to fund the programs and operations of the camp.

Volunteers Needed: Volunteers are already lined up to build a new barn this fall. For more information on how your church can send a missions group, email us at: info@bridgebuildersint.com.

Generosity: Your financial support is critical to restore flock numbers and pay for lumber, labor and supplies to raise the barn. While the farm workers labor diligently in the fields over the next few months we hope the crop sales will be the best immediate source of income.

\$94,378 is needed to restore the barn and fund the camp ministry. Donate online at: www.bridgebuildersint.com.



564 Sheep Perish (Continued from front)

So what of the future? The team has put together a plan to rebuild. The amount of the loss is about \$225,000. The amount to replace everything is quite a lot more.

We celebrate the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. Let's also pray for Diks, Inita, Dan, Katie, Janis, Aelita, Zigurds, Edgars and others, so that at the end of the day it will be clearly evident how God will be glorified.

Out of the Ashes

The Farm at Eagle's Wings

By Dan Roth, BBI Associate and Farmer

Today the farm at Eagle's Wings consists of 450 acres of pastureland. With far fewer sheep, we have decided to plow up as much as we can and plant the oats and beans we had purchased for sheep feed. We will plant about 150 acres this year. Depending on the weather this summer, we will either make silage (wrapped hay bales) for feed or we will let the grain mature and harvest it. Probably, we will do some of both.

Our near term plans are to purchase another 70 Mutton Merino sheep from Germany to add to the 70 females we have left. If raising grain goes well for us, we may diversify the farm to make it a mix of sheep and grain farming. In that case, we would keep a flock of about half the size that we previously had. Time will tell.

Raising the Barn: Either way, we will need a barn before winter. We have purchased the initial material required to begin. We are planning to make a good start and then have a team of volunteers from both the US and Latvia do an old fashioned barn raising in late October. That will give us a finished barn before the snow flies (or at least sticks).

Things the farm does:

- Supports the Eagle's Wings Camp ministry for children and youth, including orphans and vulnerable children.
- Acts as an ambassador for the faith all over the country.
- Brings together volunteers from all over the world to work at the farm (and camp) to serve and support Latvia's children.
- Supports four employees who desperately need the work. These men may otherwise face poverty, substance abuse or extraordinary family stress.



News & Notes

Imago Dei is back!

After a long hiatus, the BBI Art ministry is in full swing this spring with the return of the Imago Dei Soul Care Retreat for Artists. During the third weekend in May several fine artists and musicians came together at Eagle's Wings Camp for mutual encouragement, spiritual formation and planning future outreaches and festivals.

amazon SMILE!



Did you know that to support Bridge Builders International, all you have to do is SMILE? BBI is now registered with Amazon Smile so when you shop at Amazon.com, a portion of each purchase goes directly to the ministry. If you are an Amazon

Prime member this is true for you as well. Buy a book, and you can help a Latvian orphan! Order that Star Wars Millennium Falcon Tie, and you can reach out to Latvian artists and musicians and bring them closer to a relationship with Christ. Simply log on to smile.amazon.com and select Bridge Builders International as the organization you wish to support. There is no cost added to your purchase by doing this. Thank you!

Behind the Barn: Summer Camp Season is Here!

Despite the financial setbacks from the sheep farm fire, Eagle's Wings Camp is thriving and steadfast in its mission: to reach children and youth, including orphans and at-risk teens and bring them into a meaningful, lifelong relationship with Christ. This summer Eagle's Wings Camp is in full swing with 300 kids expected to attend 7 different camps.



Kids will have a chance to...well...be kids again. Swimming, boating, ziplines, hiking trails and a climbing wall are all on the agenda as these kids find their way beyond difficult emotional and physical circumstances and thrive in fellowship, hope and love. In the coming months, please keep these precious children in your prayers as they soar on Eagle's Wings.



In Memoriam:

Elizabeth Lydia Feldmanis

In May, we celebrated the life and legacy of Elizabeth Lydia Feldmanis, the mother of BBI President Charles Kelley. Born in Latvia in 1932, Elizabeth experienced the terrifying years of the Soviet occupation and the Nazi invasion of Latvia until after World War II when her family emigrated to the U.S. where she married, raised a family, studied and worked as a nurse. She lived in Los Angeles for 67 years, but died on May 4, 2016 in Corvallis, OR surrounded by her family. The BBI family celebrates her commitment to BBI's ministry and the joy in her eternal life with Christ. Memorial gifts may be given, in her name, to BBI that she faithfully supported for more than twenty years. Bridge Builders International, P.O. Box 1472, Wheaton, IL 60187 USA.



Cheryl Renee McDonald



BBI friends of Cheryl Renee McDonald were saddened by her death, April 8, 2016. The McDonald family has been involved and supportive of Latvian ministry for many years. They worked in Gipka (VBS), Mesrags and Riga. They were instrumental in the development of the first Christian Recording Studio in Latvia.

Renee is survived by her husband (of 35 years) Joe Tom McDonald, two children and one grandson.

BBI thanks the McDonalds for their love and service to and in Latvia. We would also like to thank those who remembered Renee through memorial donations.

www.bridgebuildersint.com

Team USA

- Charles Kelley President
- David Jones Sr. Advisor to the President
- Naomi Strauser Vice President
- Helen T. Goody Communications
- Matt Strauser Director of Technology
- Dustin & Kristine Peterson BBI Associates
- Robin Bruner Graphic Designer

Team Latvia

- Lienite Bemera Project Manager
- Vineta Zale Partners Office Manager
- Diks Bortnikovs Eagle's Wings Camp Director
- Dan & Katie Roth Leadership and Education
- Paula Hewitt Ministering to Latvians in Ireland
- Jaycee Jensen Orphan Ministry
- Katie Leatherwood Ministry to Disabled
- Gatis Lidums Counseling and Education



Bridge Builders International
PO Box 1472
Wheaton, IL 60187-1472
541-602-6968