





Viile Tecii, just south of the minor city of Bistrita, in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains (Transylvania).

Mission to the Gypsies of Romania

Brightside June, 2018

By Dr. Derek Conte

It was a long 10-hour flight with a connection in London to Budapest, Hungary, followed by an 8-hour drive to Bistrita, a small Romanian town set in the foothills of the Carpathian mountains in northern Transylvania. Yes, I said "Transylvania", and it was nothing like I imagined it would be.

Huge tree-topped mounds were covered by green pastures which held herds of sheep and cattle. Along the roads six-foot pelican nests crowned tall telephone poles. Gypsies drove their families on horse-drawn home-made wagons fitted with auto tires. The horses were adorned on each ear with bright red tassels. As the huge hills sloped and leveled to the roads, the greenery gave way to disciplined plots of crops popping from the rich, black hand-tilled earth. Entire yards seemed to be a chicken pen with roosters, hens and little chicks scurrying away from playful dogs. Aside from the road noise of occasional trucks and speeding cars it was very quiet and peaceful.

The Romanian people are a mixture of the Slavic and the Roman race (as the result of ancient colonization) with a language that closely resembles Italian with many Latin words and endings and some Slavic mixed in. The language when spoken, however, was not identifiable to my Italian ears!

We were warmly greeted in the late afternoon by Pastor John Fracker, his family, and some of his staff and parishioners. Within 30 minutes we began the work we volunteered to do: chiropractic work. The "We" I refer to are Dr. Robert Brooks of Ohio and me. We graduated from Life University together in the June, 2000 class.

Afterward, we enjoyed a delicious homemade meal prepared by Pastor John's wife, Rita, who fed us just as well the entire week of our mission effort, the focus of which were the Gypsy people, which is what they call themselves.

The Gypsies, who also call themselves "Rom" or "Roma", have been a wandering people for centuries and though they have no alphabet or written language, that language, Romany, is closely related to the Sanskrit and Hindi of northern India from where it is believed they originally came to Europe in the early 1300's through Persia and Armenia. Genetic studies have found that the vast majority of Gypsies come from a very narrow lineage and are closely related, possibly explaining the clear sense of extended family and in-group closeness we observed. The children seemed to belong to all. The family structure is clearly patriarchal.

The Gypsies have no religion of origin but their loyalty to and closeness with their own kind is unsurpassed. It was explained to us that there existed a cultural bias against them in Romania, but their tendency to remain free and unencumbered, energetically resisting assimilation, seems at least partly responsible for the poverty and isolation we encountered. But in nearly every case, every day, we found the Gypsies to be grateful for the work we did. Some were cautious of us at first but came round once we fully engaged them. Most were joyous and stayed around to watch as their family members and friends were adjusted and see some 'little miracles' occur.

The Romanian people

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If you would like to donate to the work or, better yet, have a personal adventure while receiving the blessings found in helping others just contact Pastor John Fracker at ourlifemission.org and he will take it from there and answer all questions and even make all necessary arrangements for transportation for you.