



REAL LIFE ADVENTURES



With ROYAL RANGERS

Article and photos by **Aubra George**

The journey to Royal Rangers Camporama is not for the faint of heart. Gravel roads, complete with hills and hairpin turns reminiscent of a roller coaster, wind through the woods of southwest Missouri, ending at last at an open, 1,400-acre spread known as Camp Eagle Rock. For four days every four years, this campground is the gathering place for more than 5,000 Royal Rangers and their leaders, all eager to experience the adventure of a lifetime.

And adventure is what missionary Doug Marsh, national Royal Rangers director, intends for them.

“Adventure calls us to confront our fears, abandon the familiar and develop strength we don’t currently have,” he says.

Standing atop the campground’s climbing tower, Doug laughs as he overhears a child exuberantly yell while descending a zip line. The smiling faces of the campers leave no doubt that



Doug Marsh, national Royal Rangers director



Camporama is fun. However, Doug's goal is that the days at camp translate into more than just a memorable experience.

"When I say that God builds boys into strong, godly men by taking them on an adventure with Him," he says, "I'm really saying that following Christ can be as heart pounding and adrenaline rushing as any adventure you can think of."

Hundreds of well-trained leaders diligently teach and encourage campers to push the limits of their comfort and physical abilities. Their hope is that the activities will serve as platforms to communicate the core values of Royal Rangers: Christlike character formation and servant leadership.

"Royal Rangers accomplishes three things,"

Doug explains. "We do activities that build relationships, we have Bible studies that help them learn what it is to be a godly man, and we provide resources to help them develop as leaders. But ultimately, discipleship and leadership development really make Rangers what it is."

In 2002, Royal Rangers International was launched as an outreach to youth worldwide. Since then, the ministry has grown to 7,115 outposts in 87 countries. More than 250,000 Rangers from ages 5 to 17 attend.

Two-thirds of the international groups are open to both boys and girls.

Represented among those who attended this year's Camporama, held July 9-13, were 163 Rangers who traveled from 28 countries. This was the largest group from Royal Rangers International



ever to come to Camp Eagle Rock.

Samuel Hernandez, a Royal Rangers leader from El Salvador, says, "When our group was traveling through the airport in Dallas, we saw Rangers from many parts of the world, one by one, filling the terminal with a variety of emblems, uniforms, flags and languages, but united under one promise and one brotherhood."

Other international guests echo Samuel. "Camporama is certainly a highlight in my life," says Erwin Chan, a Royal Rangers commander from Singapore, "but the most important things I'm gaining are the relationships that are formed and seeing the difference Royal Rangers can make in the lives of youth."

Royal Rangers International is creating inroads into areas where no witness of Christ existed. "There

are so many requests for Royal Rangers in Eurasia that we don't have the manpower to fill them," says John Wilson, missionary to Russia.

At Camporama, John and other missionaries reported that Royal Rangers is opening doors for ministry in places that are resistant to traditional means of ministry. "Our Royal Rangers commanders are going to places we couldn't go as missionaries," says John. "As a result, people are hearing the gospel."

A Royal Rangers leader in Ukraine goes regularly to a young men's prison to share the gospel with 15- and 16-year-old inmates. Other leaders hold outreaches in remote villages, orphanages, schools and a home for children with special needs.

Members of a newly formed outpost in the heart of Mongolia travel to remote, outlying areas to host activities with children. Since camping and

outdoors skills are a part of everyday life in Mongolia, Royal Rangers leaders use technology as an attention-grabbing activity by offering children computer training.

“Churches in Eurasia desperately need children’s ministries,” says Mark Broberg, Eurasia Royal Rangers coordinator. “But Royal Rangers International is beginning to change that. Pastors are beginning to see the benefit of investing in tomorrow’s leaders through this ministry.”

Especially in former Soviet bloc countries, programs similar to Boy Scouts have long been popular. In the mid-1920s Russian dictator Josef Stalin copied aspects of scouting to create Pioneers, a program to indoctrinate young people in the ways of communism. Pioneers was abolished many years ago, but the scouting format still creates interest among young people. Royal Rangers International is filling the void by planting outposts that emphasize Christian values and biblical principles. As a result, the outreach is growing in popularity.

“We have a lot of disjointed, hurting families,” says Mark. “It means so much to these kids when we show them the love of Jesus, give them direction, and disciple them through Royal Rangers. We’re praying that Rangers will become an incredible youth movement, and that pastors, evangelists and missionaries will come out of the program.”

Outpost leaders have seen dramatic turnarounds in the lives of children who attend Royal Rangers.

Gerhard and Tammy Uys oversee 14 Royal Rangers outposts scattered across Cape Town, South Africa, and neighboring Swaziland. Because many of the 850 children who attend live in extreme poverty, the Royal Rangers program incorporates educational opportunities with its regular activities.

While picking up children for a Rangers meeting in a Cape Town slum, Gerhard saw Nicole, a teenage girl, standing on a street corner, ready to begin a life of prostitution. Gerhard had previously invited Nicole to Royal Rangers, but she had never attended.

Gerhard recalls the day clearly. He says, “I slammed on my brakes and said, ‘Nicole, get into this car. We are going to our meeting, and you are coming with us.’”

Nicole agreed and faithfully attended Royal Rangers meetings from that day forward. She accepted Christ, and through the sponsorship of Royal Rangers in South Africa, she trained to become a nurse.

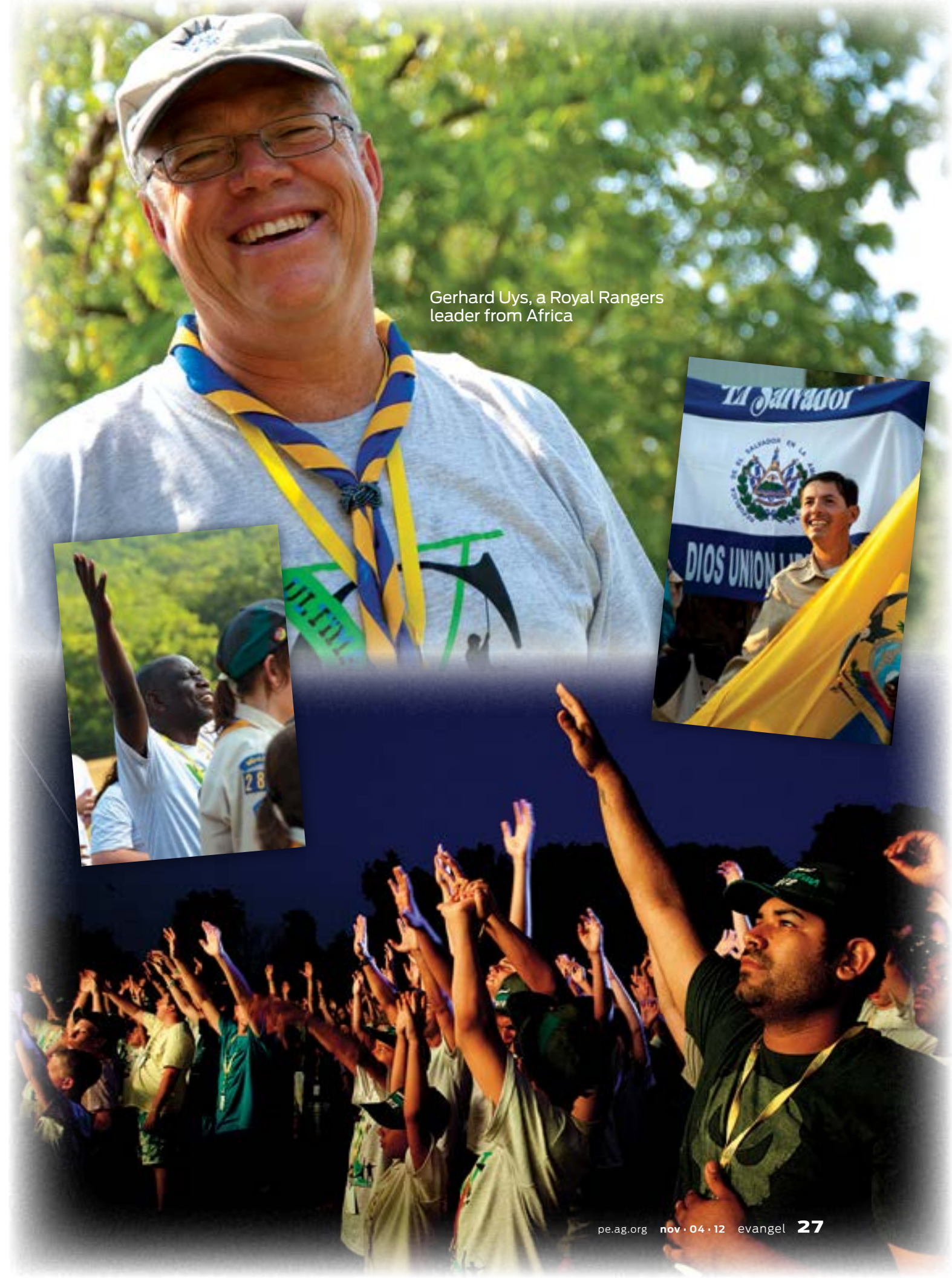
As the day’s activities wind down at Camporama, 5,200 campers pack the outdoor meeting area for the evening service. In the fading sunlight, the international Royal Rangers carry the flags of their nations as a visual demonstration of the far-reaching impact of Royal Rangers International.

Observing the scene, Mark Broberg says, “It’s not by laws or politics that we truly change a nation. It’s in the hearts of boys and girls.”

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Missionary Mark Broberg



Gerhard Uys, a Royal Rangers leader from Africa