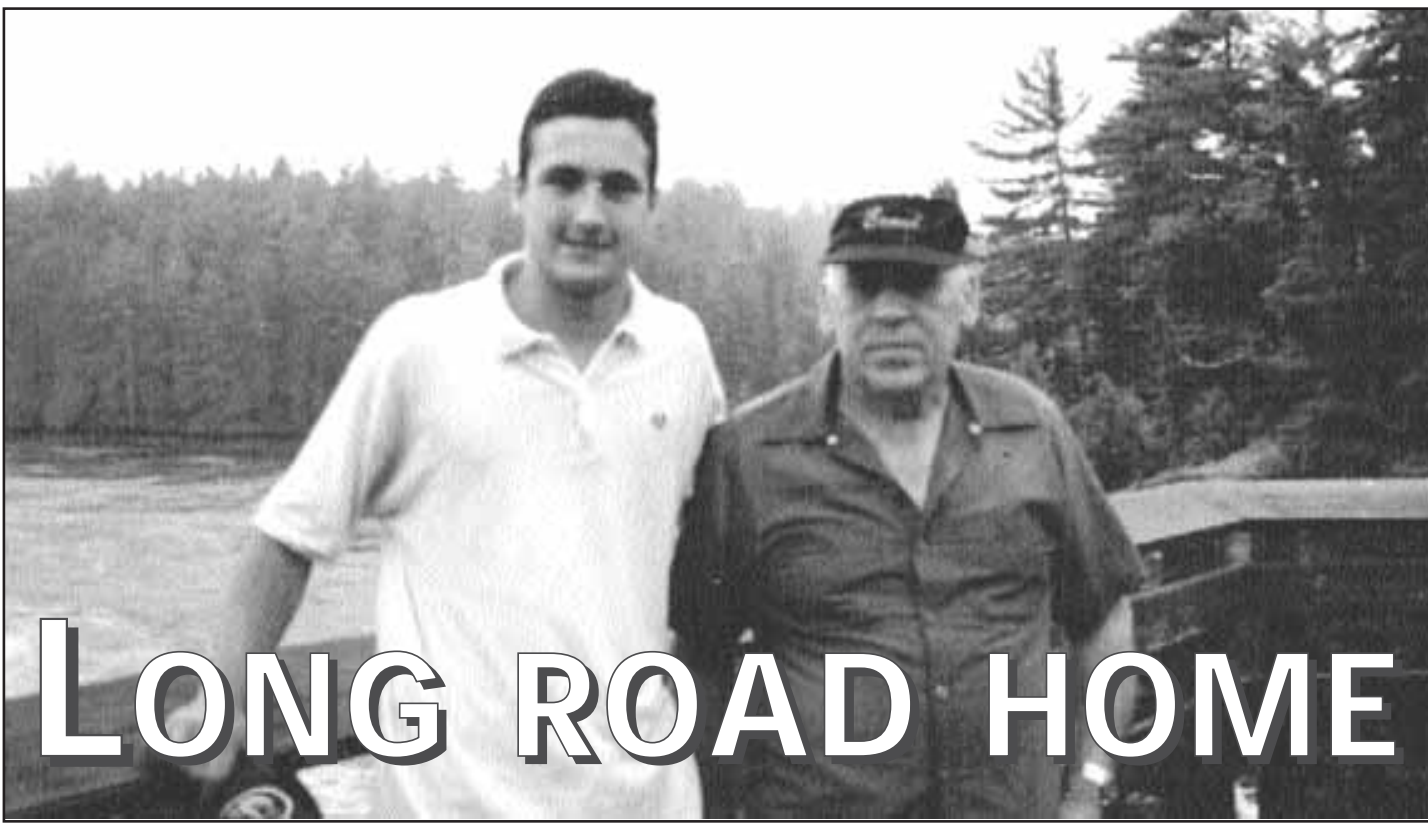


# Extraordinary Stories III



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At left, Sam Sayeed and Gennadiy Dudin pose for a photo at the Kettle Falls Dam, one of the pair's favorite spots. Sayeed tells the story of his uncle, Dudin, for this edition. Dudin left the Russian Red Army during World War II to escape to Russia. He finally found a sense of home in Littlefork. Above, Dudin, his mother-in-law Fatima Gazizoff, and his wife Sadiye Dudin stand in front of the Dudin home in Littlefork.

## LONG ROAD HOME

Russian soldier escapes Communism and finds new homeland in Littlefork

By KATIE KOLT HALL  
Staff Writer

Political oppression drove them away from their homeland. But a love of that country brought them to Borderland.

This is the story of Gennadiy and Sadiye Dudin, two ex-patriots who left their homes in the north of Russia to escape the former Soviet Union after World War II, and eventually settled in Borderland because of love and longing for their homeland.

About 5,000 miles separate Perm, Russia, from northern Minnesota, and the two locations are quite literally a world apart. But the Russian city and Borderland may have more in common than may seem at first glance.

Perm is a northern Russian city on the west side of the Ural Mountains. It is on the European side of what is known as the European/Asian Russia border, and is situated along the Kama River, among Europe's longest rivers.

Perm has distinct seasons. Winter temperatures average around zero degrees Fahrenheit, with snow cover frequent. Warm, mild summers entice many natives and tourists to spend time along the river.

Much of Russia, including Perm, is part of the taiga, or boreal forest, biome characterized by coniferous forests. This biome stretches from the tundra as far south as northern Minnesota. Michigan's Upper Peninsula and some parts of the extreme Northeast U.S. It also encompasses much of Russia.

Among Perm's industries are wood processing, pulp and paper. Its location and the availability of transportation networks, including water and rail, link this city to other parts of Russia to the east and west.

Some of these similarities between Russia and Minnesota caught the attention of Perm-born Dudin, according to his nephew, Sam Sayeed, and has led both

men to find a sense of home in Littlefork.

"The reason he chose Borderland was that he said that when he first arrived in America, he was always trying to find a place that reminded him of his rural childhood town in the wild north of Russia," Sayeed said.

Dudin considered places in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and northern New York, but could not find any place that was as rural, scenic, cold or beautiful as his hometown, Sayeed said of his uncle.

After hearing about northern Minnesota, Dudin traveled to Borderland and

came across a 40-acre spread in Cingmars in Littlefork, which he purchased immediately."

Dudin would return to New York only to prepare for the trip west.

But it was a long journey from his hometown of Perm to where Dudin would eventually make his home in Littlefork.

### Dudin's journey

Dudin was born in 1933 to Sergei and Christina Dudin and raised in the small northern Russia town of Perm.

"It was a beautiful town surrounded by dense conifer forests and large wild rivers and lakes with a harsh cold and snowy climate," describes Sayeed.

Joseph Stalin was the leader of the Soviet Union during Dudin's childhood.

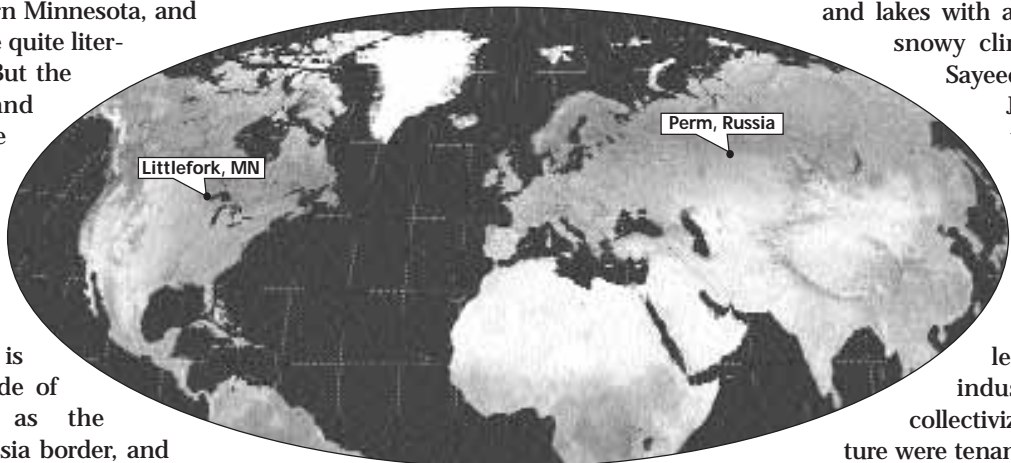
Under Stalin's brand of Communist leadership, rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture were tenants of his first few

"five-year plans." Those plans would ultimately bring a mixed bag of success and failure to the country that underwent a boom in industrial sectors but also faced deadly famine.

"Times were tough and he lived through poverty, food rationing and limited supplies. However, he learned to live off the land and make the most of the little that he and his family had to work with," Sayeed said.

His uncle's favorite memories of his

See **DUDIN** Page 6A



"He fell in love instantly ... He finally found the place he had always been looking for in America."

**Sam Sayeed**, Speaking about his uncle's love for the Borderland area

Gennadiy and Sadiye Dudin relocated from New York to Littlefork because it reminded them of their native Russia. Above, Gennadiy Dudin stands on a dock at Rainy Lake's Black Bay, one of his favorite fishing spots. Dudin introduced his nephew, Sam Sayeed, to the rivers and lakes in the area and is instrumental in his family feeling at home in Borderland, Sayeed said. Above that is a photo of the Dudin's Littlefork land in the winter. Above right, a cat perches on Dudin's shoulder.

Below Fatima Gazizoff, sitting center, is joined by four of her sons, Mustakim, Devlet, Emir and Safuk, in her later years. Gazizoff brought her family of seven children from Russia to the United States in search of a better life. Her husband Mekki Gazizoff was never heard from after being taken by the soviet military because he worked for the Japanese in Manchuria. As she was able, Fatima brought her children to the United States.

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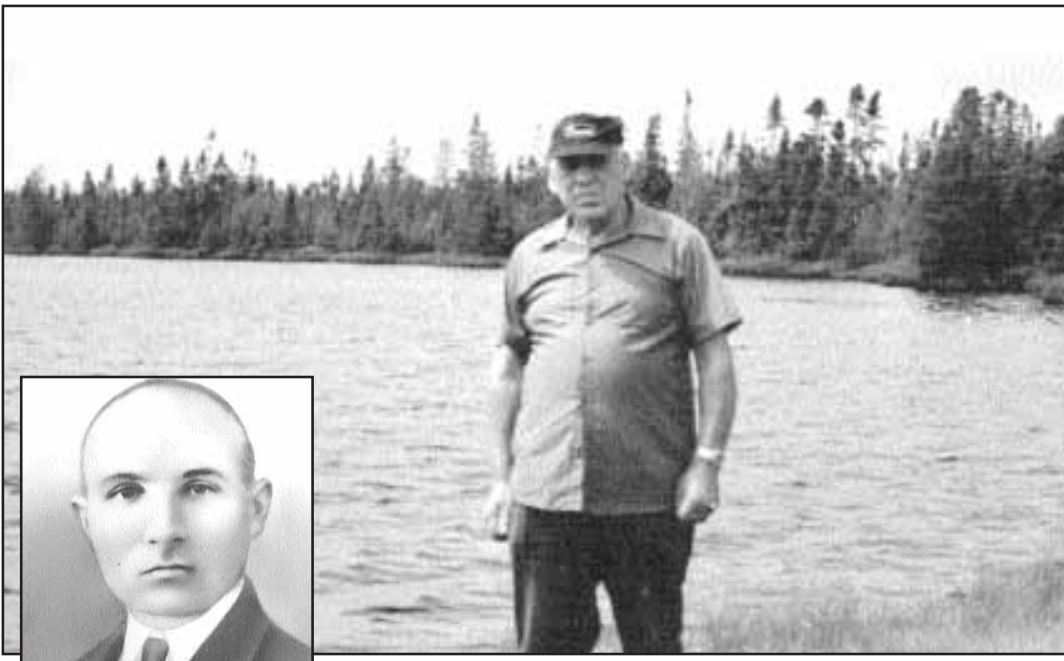
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# Extraordinary Stories III



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Gennadiy Dudin, above at Moose Lake near Littlefork, immigrated to the United States after escaping the Russian Red Army during World War II. Dudin would eventually settle in Littlefork with his wife, Sadiye. Above right, Sam Sayeed, his maternal grandmother Fatima Gazizoff and his uncle, Dudin, pose for a family photo. At left is a photo of young Mekki Gazizoff, Fatima's husband, who was taken by the Soviet government for his work with the Japanese during the time of WWII. He was never found. Below left, Sadiye poses with her son Tahir and oldest brother, Jalay. Fatima — Sadiye and Jalay's mother — brought her seven children from Russia to America.



## Dudin

Continued from Page 5A



youth involve playing with his sister and going sledding down the ice of the frozen river near their home in a makeshift sled made from logging scraps and thrown-out equipment, described Sayeed.

But that simple existence would change after Dudin was forced into the Red Army at the age of 18.

"After that, he saw his family very seldom,

mean almost certain arrest, imprisonment, and even execution. By several accounts, the Soviet Red Army was not immune from the purge under Stalin, as the Cold War had heightened tensions.

Sayeed continues:

"At one point, he was stationed in East Germany. There, one night, he left the Russian camp and walked through the forest and came upon a U.S. Army camp. There he was confronted by an American soldier. They engaged in conversation and the U.S. soldier took him to his commanding officer.

"There, my uncle pleaded with them to take him in as one of their own and make him a soldier with the U.S. Army. He told them that he would do anything for them and serve for as long as they wanted. He just wanted to get away from the cruel Red Army and be on the safe American side, and hopefully one day be able to go the promised land of America and live the American dream."



Above is the Littlefork home of Gennadiy and Sadiye Dudin, who moved to the area because it reminded them of their native Russia. Below is Fatima Gazizoff as she crossed through Turkey while leaving Russia. She would eventually bring her seven children to the United States. Below right, Gazizoff poses with her daughter Bibinur in the 1950s. Bibinur is the mother of Sam Sayeed, who shared his family's story.

being stationed far away. And had to endure frigid conditions with inadequate clothing and little food, as was standard Red Army treatment," said Sayeed. "If he protested or complained, he would have been sent to Siberia to die or would have been shot."

The 1936

Constitution of the USSR required universal military service and called it "honorable duty." It further states: "To defend the fatherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the U.S.S.R. Treason to the country — violation of the oath of allegiance, desertion to the enemy, impairing the military power of the state, espionage is punishable with all the severity of the law as the most heinous of crimes."

From 1936 until 1953, the "purge," or being expelled from the Communist Party, came to

Dudin got his wish, according to Sayeed, and was made a U.S. soldier. This paved the way for the Russian to find a new home.

"The only catch was that he would never again see his parents or his sister, as he could never reenter Russia under any circumstance for fear of being imprisoned by the Red Army," recalled Sayeed. "He went on to stay in the U.S. Army for six years, and due to his language skills was stationed in Germany to help fight the Cold War. In 1962, he was granted honorable discharge and U.S. citizenship and was able to settle in the U.S."

After his discharge from the U.S. Army, Dudin started a new life on his own in America.

### Sadiye's journey

In America, Dudin would meet his wife, Sadiye, a woman who would undoubtedly understand the circumstances of his immigration. Her family, too, had moved from Russia due to the tense political environment.

Sadiye's mother, Fatima Gazizoff, was a member of the nomadic Tatar tribe of Russia, which Sayeed said was a distinct population of people known for their sheep herding and horseman skills. She was born in 1905 in the town of Irkustk at Lake Baikal. In order to escape Soviet Communism, she and her family were forced to leave their home by fording a river on a homemade raft and crossing into the rugged mountains of northern Manchuria around 1917.

There, they started a new life; and it was there that Sadiye was born in 1927. They lived in crude

huts in the beginning, using the local river for water and bathing and hunting for food, Sayeed relates.

"They eventually grew to love their new home as it was a very healthy and natural life in the wilderness and eventually more people from Siberia would come to their area," Sayeed said.

Sadiye's parents, Mekki and Fatima Gazizoff, met in Manchuria as more Siberians escaped to that area. Mekki was working for the Japanese in Manchuria, as they controlled part of the region after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904.

"As a result of his employment with the Japanese, the Soviets came to my grandparents' home one day in Manchuria and took him away in 1945," Sayeed said. "We never heard from him again and don't know what happened to him."

"There is some speculation that he might have been taken to the coal mines in remote Siberia where he was put to work in a Siberian prison work camp, and he likely succumbed to the cold or disease. There is absolutely no trace of him in any Russian record books."

Fatima — with the help of one of her elder sons, Safuk, who went to work as a logger and

interest in International Falls, Littlefork and the Borderland area.

"My aunt also found Borderland to be like her home in Manchuria and so felt very much at home there, too," said Sayeed. "My Grandma (Fatima) and I made frequent trips to visit my aunt and uncle in Borderland, and my grandma also enjoyed the visits as she, too, felt that my aunt and uncle had found a place that reminded her of her native Siberia."

The Dudins had a daughter, Sophia Dudin Doviak, and a stepson, Tahir Dimsuyu, both in New York.

Sayeed, of Long Island, N.Y., said that his uncle became "a very beloved and respected member of the Borderland community, particularly International Falls and Littlefork."

Dudin worked his 40-acre spread in Littlefork, cutting hay, logging, raising pigs, chickens and other livestock, and trying to recreate the situation that he had as a child, Sayeed said.

"My uncle in just a short time in Borderland became known far and wide by people in the Littlefork and International Falls area," Sayeed said of Dudin. "He was extremely sociable and outgoing and made an effort to get to know as many people as he could in the area. He would reach out to any stranger that crossed his path."

Dudin said his Borderland relations were known for welcoming others into their home for a meal. "Eventually, his name became known throughout the area and to this day, people in the Borderland still have a sparkle in their eye when they hear his name. Twelve years after his death, he is still remembered as the kind, friendly, yet simple Russian always willing to lend a hand and cook someone a delicious dinner or supper. To many in the area, he was known as the heart of gold."

Dudin explained that one aspect of this area that his uncle loved was the lakes.

Sayeed said Dudin admired the border lakes of Rainy, Kabetogama, Namakan, and Crane and spent a great deal of time exploring them by boat and canoe. Sayeed said his uncle introduced him to the lakes region at a young age and he, too, became an admirer of the region.

"He wanted me to keep a close connection with the area as he said that there was no other place really like it in the new world and such beauty and scenery and people could only maybe be found in the Russia of the past," Sayeed said. "He felt that in my complicated life back in New York, I would need a place to escape to several times of the year to clear my head and keep my sanity. My uncle drove me through every back road in the region and we spent many hours fishing on the rivers and lakes in the area and hunting the woods in the fall."

"He also showed me the importance of farming and living off the land and always dreamed that I would someday take over his little farm and

keep it going as a family heirloom and retreat. He taught me about the topography, terrain, the flora and fauna and climate of the region and how it was so unique from anywhere else in the U.S."

Sayeed said he was introduced to his uncle's friends and neighbors.

"He referred to them as his extended family and wanted me to think of them as the same," said Sayeed. "Once he knew that I had also fallen in love with the area, he was hopeful that someday I would open my medical practice in the area and settle down next to his farm in Littlefork. Unfortunately, he did not live to see that day, due to an untimely death in September 1997 from Russia's number-one killer of men: heart disease."

Sadiye died in June of 2000 at age 73. Fatima died in 2001 at age 97.

"Because he could never return to Russia due to the circumstances of his coming to the U.S., he was always happy that he found Borderland, which he said filled the gap and made him feel at home," Sayeed said.

"Because he could never return to Russia due to the circumstances of his coming to the U.S., he was always happy he found Borderland, which he said filled the gap and made him feel at home."

Sam Sayeed, speaking of his uncle, Gennadiy Dudin who moved from Perm, Russia to the U.S. and settled in Littlefork

woodsman in the Manchurian forest to help support the family — was forced to raise seven children by herself.

"It was a sad time but luckily my grandma was a very strong woman who kept the family together," Sayeed said.

The family stayed in Manchuria until the 1950s, when Communist oppression once again made a presence as the Soviets were pushing into the region. Again, they were forced to escape. Local Chinese, Japanese and Mongolian interests helped them get to the coast where they used what was probably their life savings to pay a ship captain to transport them across the Yellow Sea out of China and to Turkey where Russian refugees were welcome, Sayeed said.

They remained in Turkey for a few years awaiting the possibility of immigrating to America, where loosening rules opened the doors to Russian immigrants and displaced Russian refugees. In 1961, Fatima was able to get into the Russian immigration pool to America and was able to bring each of her seven children (brothers Safuk, Devlet, Emir, Mustakim, Jalay; and sisters Sadiye and Bibinur, Sayeed's mother) to New York one at a time.

### At home in Littlefork

It was in New York where Gennadiy and Sadiye would meet. His yearning for a place like his birthplace and homeland would bring them to Borderland, Sayeed said.

"He never liked it for even one minute in New York," Sayeed said. "It was too urban, noisy, populated, polluted and man-made. He always yearned for something like home."

He considered other places suggested by other people. "... my uncle returned disappointed from all these places. They were just not good enough," said Sayeed.

Upon visiting Borderland, Dudin fell in love instantly, Sayeed said. And Dudin would share his love of this area with his extended family, including Sayeed, leading others to take an



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