

Gary Fawver: Speaker at 2007 Annual Members Meeting - Drift Creek Camp

I am a 68-year-old retired *George Fox University* professor from Newberg, Oregon. Perhaps the fact that I've lived in all four continental U.S. time zones will form the framework for telling a bit about myself.

I began my journey in Freeport, Illinois, with a wonderful caring family. One childhood experience radically changed my life when I ran out in front of a car and nearly lost my foot. While I was recovering in the hospital, a friendly pastor brought me candy and comic books, and gently led me to a personal faith in Christ. My recovery went so well that the next fall I set an all-city 50-yard-dash record. During grade school years I enjoyed Boy Scout and YMCA camps.

High school years were filled with music, forensics, basketball, track, wonderful summer church camp experiences, and weekends at my folks' cabin on a Wisconsin lake.

Four years at Wheaton College in Illinois, where I majored in Christian education, set the direction for the rest of my life. I spent one summer at Honey Rock, Wheaton's Christian camp and educational laboratory, and at Wheaton I met the Georgia peach I later married. (A closely guarded secret is that I was a yell leader for Wheaton's varsity sports, and was privileged to cheer the basketball team on to its first national basketball championship.)

In the Eastern time zone, Susan and I spent several wonderful years at Gordon Conwell Seminary in Wenham, Massachusetts, as I pursued my M.Div. degree. Each weekend during those years we drove to New Hampshire where I gained experience as a youth pastor and choir director.

Back in Illinois our first son, Michael, joined the family, and I began my first full-time youth ministry job. I had to leave the church position abruptly after two years when the pastor determined we weren't compatible theologically. Still under 30, I felt my confidence bruised and my emotions smarting. But God provided me with a job in Oregon (our third time zone). As I worked into the position of director of backpacking for Youth Adventures, a ministry to wards of the juvenile courts, I received godly and caring counsel that allowed me to forgive the pastor and learn valuable life lessons. The five years at Youth Adventures were some of the best, yet the hardest, years of my life. Our family became complete when our daughter, Michelle, and son Stephen were born.

Estes Park, Colorado, where we lived for more than a year, became our fourth time zone. The summers of 1970-71 were wonderful as I led groups of young people into Rocky Mountain National Forest on backpack and rock-climbing adventures. But it was during the winter of 1971 that I read about, applied for, and was accepted to be the director of a new camp back in Newberg, Oregon. Thus began nearly twenty years of my most thrilling ministry adventure at Tilikum: Center for Retreats and Outdoor Ministries. What a beautiful place to run day camps and retreats and raise our three kids on 92 acres of fir forest, meadows, and lake.

When Tilikum came under the ministry umbrella of *George Fox College* (now University), I began adjunct teaching—Bible, wilderness survival, camp programming. During a sabbatical I was mentored by Dr. Carl Lundquist of Bethel College and Seminary in a body of literature called the *Christian Classics*. My six weeks living with those writings changed my life in a way no other experience has. Since then I have been able to share these writings with retreat groups and to teach a twice-a-year course on the classics at *George Fox University*.

Now the three kids have grown up and we have nine grandchildren, one to eight years old. In the mid-1990s I completed my D.Min. degree, and for the last 12 years I have taught full time as professor of outdoor ministry at the university. Now that I am retired, I will no longer be paid for my camping and educational endeavors—like traveling to Russia to train young Russian Christians to conduct Christian camps. However, Susan and I love to travel, so we will continue as long as our energy holds out. During the summer of 2005 we spent time in China visiting and working in Christian camps and viewing God's creation in Costa Rica.