

2005 Guatemala Mission Team Daily News

Ron Amberg, Communications

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Spring Valley United Methodist Church

Thursday was the last work day for the team. Tom Purcell, Ginny Bitting, Frank Andersen, Peg Gilbert, and Jerry Malone share their stories.



DAY SIX, THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2005 SPRING VALLEY GUATEMALA MISSION TEAM

Tom Purcell:

We have mixed emotions about leaving our Guatemala friends BUT we are ready. We all have sore muscles and are mucho tired. Everyone has worked very, very hard mixing concrete, carrying blocks, sawing wood to make bunk beds for the caretakers' rooms which we had tiled last year. We moved a lot of dirt with a wheel barrow which we used to help fill up an old well. We also had a little excitement as someone slipped and let the wheel barrow fall into the well. Thank goodness they didn't follow it down.

Like last year some of us took a little time after work this afternoon to play a little baseball with our little helpers. Our little slugger from last year, Israel, has been here all week. Roger Martens had given us a baseball glove to give him but it was way too big. We did give Israel the hooded jacket that was donated by the elementary school in Rockwall, Texas. For their information, Israel is 6 years old, is in the second grade, has 4 siblings—three sisters and one brother, and lives next to the clinic.



Israel with his new hooded jacket.



Nathan (Israel's brother) with his new baseball glove.

We also took some time to teach him a few words in English.

We gave the glove to his brother, Nathan, who seems like a very good responsible kid.

Our job was more than just construction. It was about some relationship building.

For three days some of us had fun giving families photos of themselves. They all loved the gift and we got a number of

hugs. Hopefully they will have good memories of us. We certainly will have good memories of them.

- Tom Purcell

Ginny Bitting:

Good Morning Friends,

Yesterday, Wednesday, our team split up so that six of us went to the urban clinic in Quetzaltenango which is a two hour "van" ride from ChiChi. Frank [Andersen] is always a vital person there, as well as nurse Carol [Baughn]. The drive there is absolutely beautiful and we reached the highest peak in Guatemala known here as Alaska. The sun was shining on the valley below which made for spectacular photo taking.

Then we hit the old familiar bumpy stretch or road leading into the Urbina clinic. There were already many families waiting outside for medical treatment, and so many of those ended up as dental patients. They were easy to spot as each one held a cloth over their mouth. They had my full sympathy!! Frank will write his update on the medical part.



The team is building a wall around the Salud y Paz compound.

Since our work started Monday, Don Barnes, Tom Purcell and I have been a photography team. Tom takes a picture of the Guatemala family, or person, comes back to the printer and gets it finished. Ginny then mounts the photo on a folded piece of colored construction paper and puts a label on the inside which reads “Dios Tu Ama” (God Loves You). Don, who speaks Spanish, then delivers the finished product to the waiting person who receives the picture with wide grins and a large crowd hovering around them. We were extremely busy in Urbina as an announcement was made to all the waiting crowd and they immediately began lining up. We know that

for most of these dear people, this is their first photo ever. They show their appreciation in several ways, but the best and most rewarding for the three of us were the big hugs we got and kind remarks of thanks. It's not the project that matters, but the interaction with the people. They are wonderful.

We enjoyed a good home cooked meal at the clinic and continued our work until 3 p.m. which put us back in ChiChi around 5 p.m. The aches and pains and fatigue no longer matter and are soon forgotten in retelling the events of the day to the rest of our team!

The time is going by much too quickly, and once again, I will leave a part of my heart here in this beautiful country. Next year????

Love and prayers,
- Ginny Bitting

Frank Andersen:

A final medical note...

It is said that you should be careful what you ask for ... Yesterday was a good day, but the problems were pretty routine, so I hoped we might have some more challenging cases today. The most difficult was a 10 year old girl with several skin ulcers on her face – I had already diagnosed impetigo while she was sitting in the waiting area, but when she came into the office I found out that the ulcers had started only a week ago and involved her face, arms, neck and chest as well as a fever. Consulting the Index Medicus loaded on my palm pilot confirmed “staphylococcal scaled skin syndrome” a much more serious infection. In the U.S. she would be hospitalized for IV antibiotics, but it is not a viable option here (her only choice would be to go to a government hospital and wait for treatment). I started her on Dicloxacillin (heavy duty antibiotics) and Tylenol and she will return to see Dr. Freddy in a week. Dr. Freddy recognized it immediately and didn't seem surprised (perhaps he sees it somewhat commonly). Interestingly, he recommended that they wash the ulcers with a tea called “manzanilla”. It is frustrating to not have all



10 year old girl with extensive staph infection.

the resources we're accustomed to; and equally frustrating that I probably will not find out what happens with her.

Other interesting cases included a young woman who was pregnant with her first baby. The doppler fetal

stethoscope that we brought last year was still in the cupboard and she was able to hear her baby's heartbeat for the first time (She was 14 weeks pregnant.). A 45 year old woman came in with chronic eye pain that had not responded to eye drops during the last month. I suspect she has glaucoma. Fortunately, an ophthalmological team is coming in November so we made an appointment so that they can do a proper eye exam. (I'm an obstetrician. My approach to an eye exam is to count how many are there!)



A family of three that Dr. Frank Andersen saw at the Urbina clinic (diarrhea, asthma, acne and bronchitis).

All told we saw 52 patients today. I usually see a little less than half of the patients (I saw 24 today and Dr. Freddy 28). If he was alone, he would see 30 to 35 patients so it's good to know that more patients were seen because our team was here. About half way through the afternoon we ran out of ranitidine (Zantac – I use it for at least 10 patients each day.), but the team brought a large quantity

of it to the Comanchaj clinic so they will be able to transfer some to the Urbina clinic. It will be good to get home, but it's also sad to leave when we see so much need. Dr. Phil is already talking about next year. It's good to hear that there are more teams coming down, including badly needed specialties like ophthalmology.

I thank you all for your prayers and support. It truly makes a difference.

- Frank Andersen, MD

Peg Gilbert:

Greetings from Survivor: Chichicastenango,

Our days here have been full of challenges, joys, a few tears and lots of laughs.

The first challenge given the team members was to navigate the world famous Chichi Marketplace. The money was exchanged, and teams dashed off to shop until they dropped. George [Sikes] and Phyllis [Sikes] appeared to be the winners of the shopping challenge by completely filling a new, large backpack. However, Liz [Gross] and Robert [Gross] gave them a run for their Quetzals as they are bringing back jade necklaces, wilted gladiolas, and clothing. Look for the lovely pair of shoes that Liz found while shopping for bologna at the new supermarket.

The construction team was given the challenge of tying rebar, digging a 17 yard ditch, mixing buckets and buckets of cement, and building a 9 to10 foot high cinder block fence. Watching Robert [Gross], Ted [Butler], and Jerry [Malone] fill the wheelbarrow with rocks, run across the yard and dump the rocks on a pile of sand—was a great spectator sport.



Two bunk beds built by the team.

While the cement was being prepared; Carol [Baughn], Betty [Reichel], Terry [Baughn], Stephen [Beverly], and Jerry [Malone] were busy competing in a rebar tying and cutting race. All went well until George [Sikes] began to teach the neighborhood children to do their jobs. I wondered why George was talking to Adolfo about the price of land in Guatemala...Child labor???

Meanwhile, in the kitchen the Pop and Count Team changed hats and started making the noon repast. It was



"Dion" was the foreman of the workers at Salud y Paz and a bull of a worker. This is a picture with Daniel at the end of the day.

Jan [Andersen] making her Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches against Leona's [Wynne] famous Bologna and Cheese. The PB&J won hands down. It could have been because Jan used the entire Jar of Peanut butter while making only 10 sandwiches.

The next challenge came at the Orphan Home we visited on Tuesday. The Medical Team and the Construction Team competed in the Orphan Toss Contest. Jerry, Ted and Robert were sure they winning until Dr. Frank threw a child through the ceiling.

The final contest came as the women's construction team defeated the men in a Treasure Hunt. Betty found several ancient coins as she was sifting sand. Robert was given a couple of rocks with ancient Mayan writing on them. Unfortunately Ginny [Bitting] had drawn a smiley face on one of the rocks.

To be continued....on the next Survivor: Guatemala.

- Peg Gilbert

Jerry Malone:

To give truth to rumor, it was I who tried to dispose of a wheelbarrow down a 120 foot deep abandoned well. Fortunately our construction foreman Dion was able to fish it out so that we were able to keep on working. All of the rain and mud made for slippery conditions and it just slipped out of my hands as I was emptying it. That is my story and I am sticking to it, no matter what Ted Butler says. It was a great week and not only were we able to see all of the progress made at the clinic over the last year, but we could also see the progress that we made in a week, as shown in all of the pictures sent back this week. We are already looking forward to returning next year. Thank you for all of your prayers and support. See you next Sunday!

- Jerry Malone