

**From the Helm**  
***Mountain Home to Mamuru and Beyond***  
***June 28 – July 08, 2009***

***From the Helm – Friday, June 26, 2009***

**7:15 PM** - Today ended up as a gentle walk through a myriad of things. We were able to get pretty much all the provisioning done and stowed aboard the *Beatriz*. Just a few details remain for tomorrow. Our team for the *Maumuru/Flexal* region is scheduled to arrive Sunday afternoon. But, for sure, I'll just be "on call" about the actual when and where of it all...

- The last from Arkansas and Oklahoma boarded for home last night. Our time together was an amazing journey to have witnessed. It was a privilege to watch and experience all that took place.

It all began with the changes in the arrival time for half our team. This, in effect, ruled out our original, "planned" destination. In reality though, all it did was put us on the course God had for us all along - *Lago Grande do Araria*...

The peace God gave in the re-routing became more embedded as the days unfolded. The events that transpired left no doubt He'd put the whole deal together in a beautiful way, long ago.

The lives changed through the work and sharing tell the whole story. What began with a tumor removal done by Steve and Pat on a lady last year (hours away in Lago Preto) led to what God had for us in Lago Grande: Hope displacing destitution; Peace overcoming the yearnings of the soul...

I'm so very grateful, Lord, You allowed me to see such wonders. Such relief of burdens; Such giving of new life; To see You do for others the very thing You so graciously did for me. I thank You for the days You've allowed me thus far. I eagerly look toward any others You might have for me...

- The Boys are out finishing up today's list. It's good to have their company and companionship.

I'm relaxed but tired tonight. I look forward to the possibility of a day of rest tomorrow. It'll all be good, no matter what - Of that, I'm certain...

***From the Helm – Sunday, June 28, 2009***

Yesterday was relaxing. By Noon, all preparations were completed for departure. Fueling will take place as I write. The *Beatriz* will be heavy and ready to sail in the matter of a couple of hours.

I've tried to call Brent several times this morning – no luck. I guess they're busy checking in and boarding in Miami. I look forward to seeing them when they arrive. Our departure is set for +/- Three this afternoon with an ETA in Obidos some 30 hours later.

- Our sat system onboard is a very costly endeavor. I'm grateful to Mickey, Robbie and *Rudolph's* for setting up a new mail system that should drastically reduce our costs in the future. Hopefully, we will get it up and running between this and the next trip (weekend of July 10<sup>th</sup>). I'm grateful for the communication ability we have. It fails from time to time but it always seems to be up when it's needed most.

- I'm looking forward to seeing everyone down in Mamuru. It's been many years since my last visit to that region. I was under the impression a sister organization was continuing to minister there after we pulled up to move on. I was mistaken in my assumption. There has been no encouragement by way of a group in a number of years. The information passed on to me is that this destination is just too far to maintain...

So, here we are and there we go... God has never allowed me to consider distance or comfort as determining factors in a destination He's laid upon my heart. I suppose this is why *AMOR* many times struggles financially at the end of each year. We've either gone "too far" or we've beat up the *Beatriz* too much due to "difficult passages", requiring major repairs. Regardless of how it all affects us, we continue to go where God leads and He continues to grace us with His provision – always just enough to continue on. All we've ever needed is just enough to carry on...

From time to time, I allow myself to ponder what will take place when this Trip Season is over, and our operating funds are depleted. When I look to those I might serve away from *AMOR* in order to make a living, I realize they are precisely those who could never pay my bills. Based on this reality, I refuse to ponder further. Lord, You know my heart and the *necessity* I have in following as You lead.

There is a peace in my soul that refreshes and reassures me that the *following* is all I need do. I know in my heart of hearts You will provide to either continue on as we are or You will lead in a new direction that will delight my soul. Either way, the ride will be more beautiful than I'm able to contemplate.

Thank You for loving me the way You do. Thank You for the simple truth You've made so clear to me. Thank You for allowing me to share it as You make it possible. Thank You for it all, indeed...

***From the Helm – Monday, June 29, 2009***

**9:00 AM** - Lots of passing ships and vessels last night. Made for a rather bouncy trip til just before dawn. The Amazon itself has been smooth and kind thus far.

The team is upstairs unpacking and repacking in preparation for our first day on location. All seem to be well and rested.

- It was good seeing all the familiar faces come through the gates at the airport. I know practically everyone this time. Although the group arrived ahead of schedule yesterday, we delayed our departure so everyone interested could watch the USA fall to Brasil in the finals of the Confederate Cup. Bitter sweet...

- During our devotional this morning, we took some time to slow down, catch our breath and be reminded of why we are all here. On the one hand, this is a personal journey for each of us - One that may lead to untold blessings if we choose to allow it. On the other hand, we are a collective tool that may be used of God to share the hope of our salvation with those lost and confused. Once again though, this is a matter of choice.

My prayer for each aboard is a simple one. The same one I have for most that cross my path: That each chooses to surrender to God's leading each step of the way, regardless of where this appears to be taking them. That each will understand that it isn't the destination or task that matters, it's the discoveries God has for each along the way that means all to all – through these, we have something valid to share with those placed in our path as the days unfold...

**4:00 PM** – Just came through our second storm of the day. All is well and the River is once again smooth. She is much larger down this way, demanding more respect and vigilance. Just part of the deal.

Our ETA for the mouth of the creek leading to Mamuru is still set for sometime in the night or early morning. The dawn will need to come before the *Beatriz* makes the trek in to the winding, low hung topography of the creek. We plan to anchor at the mouth for the remainder of the night. Send a scout ahead at daybreak. We'll see how it goes...

I'm looking forward to "dark-thirty". I'm quite ready for the comfort of my hammock...

*From the Helm – Tuesday, June 30, 2009*

Arrived in Obidos at ten last night and anchor in a nearby cove. When this morning dawned, I was amazed at how small the city looked. Its entire frontage has been overtaken by the waters. The port is gone as well as the first two major streets. The good news is the waters seem to have crested on Sunday. The slow, receding process can now begin.

- After picking up a pastor and his family, we headed out for Mamuru. The trip through the canal was beautiful and slow. The community has worked hard to clear the overhang to make things easier for us. The *Beatriz* was braced for damages that never materialized. God is good, indeed...

Upon arrival, the reunion was grand. Many old friends everywhere. In reminiscing, we discovered it's been 11 years since *our* last visit with a team. Nine years since the last visit of any team at all. We've found our way home once again, as if no time at all has passed. A beautiful deal for which I am grateful.

**10:00 AM** - All teams ashore and working by 9 o'clock. The well equipment is now being set up for an attempted drill. The day has started...

**1:00 PM** – We're at anchor for lunch. A morning well worked. The well equipment is set to drill. All is well.

I met up with an old friend this morning. His name is Baldo. I've thought of him many times over the years. He was a huge, muscular young man – always eager to help in any way. One of the finest caiman hunters I've ever known. He taught me a thing or two about the harpoon I still use from time to time.

When we arrived this morning, I met his wife for the first time. They are now separated and have 2 adorable little girls – 9 and 2. The wife began to share with me how Baldo had gotten old and was feeble. After a bit of conversation, she and I took off across the lake to see him.

Well, if he's "old" and "feeble", I must look like something dug out of a grave somewhere! He is now 41 and every bit as strong as I remembered him to be. What his wife was *referring* to is he's no longer able to wrestle a full grown bull to the ground for branding like he did when I was last here! (Women often see things differently than us guys – imagine that...) We had coffee and took an hour or so to catch up.

Baldo was the guy that was, while a Prestonwood team was here, asked what his plans for the future were. He sat and pondered the question for a minute or so, then replied, "you mean tomorrow!?!?" I *heard* a huge lesson that day about how I should live my life. In the innocence of his response, I saw clearly that today is literally all I have with which to love, cry, play and work. Today is all God has given for any of these things. Although I *heard* the truth that day, it took many years for me to *understand* and *live* it. So much

weight place on tomorrow that I failed at living today. Thank You Lord, that I *understand* a simple truth, now and again, these days. Thank You, indeed...

**4:00 PM** – The day is running its course. The well is sinking nicely. Brent, Ken and Rita are plucking away in dental. Medical is seeing a steady flow of precious people of all ages. VBS is about to begin the “outside” games. Matthew, Chase and Jake are out practicing up with the harpoon for tonight’s caiman deal. I’m scheduled to cut on a few eyes in a bit. Just waiting for the unwitting victims to arrive... Services are scheduled for Seven tonight. I look forward to it all...

*From the Helm – Wednesday, July 01, 2009*

*Happy 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mom and Dad!!* May your day be peaceful and restful...

The day ended well yesterday. Kevin had a rough night of it but seems to be on the mend. He’s the only one this year that has had to sit out a day. His parents think he drank a bit too much of the lake water. Just the way it goes sometimes.

Last night’s service was a neat deal. I got the chance to say “hello” for Johnson, Jackie, Jeff and all the rest from Dallas. Just more of the continuing reunion I’ve been blessed to have. Baldo was there along with Pastors Antonio and Dorenilson.

- Dorenilson was a young man of 24 when one of our teams arrived in 1994. He was the Catechist of the catholic church in Castanhaduba. He graciously allowed us to use his facilities for VBS. By week’s end, He had accepted Christ as his Savior along with 40 others of the community and was elected, by the 40 new Christians, to lead and teach them in their new found Faith. This is a turn of events no man could have ever planned or orchestrated – it was an act of the Holy Spirit opening the minds and hearts of a hardened people as only He is able. Just the thing I’ve been graced to witness time and again, throughout this great *Valley*.

In his own words, Dorenilson is the fruit of obedience. The obedience of those who came from so far away to share the simple, life saving Truth. Today, he has borne much fruit through his own obedience in doing the same thing. The leader of the church here in Mamuru, Antonio, is one of these. And so go the perfect Workings of my Great God. We need but follow as He leads. Obey when clearly instructed. The rest is the resulting pure joy alive in my soul today...

**11:00 AM** – The well is down to 72 feet. Our goal (the second water shelf) should be within 10 to 15 feet. It’s exhilarating to be so close!

- I’ve been “on call” all morning. Here and there, answering medical questions in my unprofessional and rather clueless manner. At least it must have sounded good – all patients have survived thus far...

Gonna do a nose job during lunch. For some reason, this poor fellow thinks he might like to have a scare rather than a large growth on the tip of his nose. Little does he know of what he's asked me to do. Time to wipe off last year's scalpel for another go-round. Carving the turkey with it last November may have dulled it a bit, too. Nothing like have all the right tools together when an opportunity like this arises...

**4:00 PM** – We struck water about an hour ago! Sweet, indeed!!

- Aluizio showed up on location to pay us a visit. So good to see him! He's back working with the churches in Curua and below. I was so relieved to see him back in the field. Knowing his heart, I never felt quite at peace with his absence from this area. I'm grateful God brought him home to do what he's always felt God's called him to do – share the message as he so beautifully does... We've made a commitment to join in encouraging his area next year, if the Lord so leads.

- We're at a bit of a lull in the flow of people coming in for clinic and dental. Pedro, Dorenilson and I have committed to seek what God tells us about staying on another day. We have several viable options in communities with great need. By the end of the night, our next step should be clear. Thank You, Lord, for the assurance of Your presence. Thank You for making our path clear. Thank You for including me in it at all...

***From the Helm – Thursday, July 02, 2009***

My wake-up knock didn't come til 4:30 this morning. I was sleeping so fitfully it didn't really matter. The Boy's didn't get in until late last night. The thrill of the hunt must have overtaken them...

The house was full for the service last night – well over a hundred, plus our team. After much good music and a couple of testimonies, Aluizio brought the message. The Word is taught so purely out here. I miss the simplicity of it all when I'm back home. Somehow, many of our teachers feel a need to entertain – keep their jobs. The push for political correctness virtually washing away any depth their message might have. Just as sad is that the audiences seek a fix of circumstances rather than a correction in path. Unfortunately, the fixes rarely yield more than future agony and despair, requiring yet another fixing of circumstances. I don't say this critically. Just in recognition of fact.

Lord, I was once that way. All I ever desired was that everything and everyone around me change to fit my perceived needs. By Your Grace and Mercy, I came to know that the only change needed was the change in *me*. I used up every lifeline extended me until there was none left but You. You, my Lord, are my sufficiency. You are my Life, Hope and Comfort. I'm grateful, Lord, You sent someone my way to share the simple truth as I hear it, repeatedly, here in the *Valley*. It's what You've given me. It's all I desire to share with those You place in my path. Thank You for being compassionate and considerate of me. Thank You for being tolerant of my wonderings and wanderings. Thank You, Lord, indeed...

**10:00 AM** - It's been a good morning. The well is pumping rather sandy but, cool water. People have come from far away for medical and dental. God has answered - we are to stay yet another day in this place.

Aluizio left some time in the night, headed for home. This morning another dear friend, Espedito, came up from Obidos to visit. This is a fine layman who spends more of his time helping these interior pastors than he does seeing to his own businesses. But you know, he'll be the first to tell that he's never missed a meal or a payroll while tending to what God's called him to do. His is a kindred spirit to mine...

**3:45 PM** – The babies and children of this place are beautiful. Of course, I'm a terrible one to judge – *every* child I see is beautiful to me. There's a little down syndrome girl that's taken up with me. She's a doll. No malice – just a sweet child destined to remain as such forever. It's obvious the community takes good care of her. A special little creation to help teach us unconditional love. A true blessing....

- We've about decided to drill a second well over by the school. The teachers pleaded with me after we'd already begun the one here. Of course, my heart took a little dip. So, here we go. We should know the possibilities by day's end.

Medical and dental have another day of work, at least. So, we will continue on in Mamuru until the people stop coming. No rush to leave because God's not shown that we should. I think we'll just stay put til He does...

***From the Helm – Friday, July 03, 2009***

**10:30 AM** - Well, this day, we will continue on here in Mamuru. Many people continue to arrive from far away villages. Much need. As the day progresses we will know more of when to go or stay. Looking from the point of logic though, if we remain through tomorrow, we will just continue on until Sunday night. Our next community would be Flexal. To make her would take half a day's travel and set up in order to minister. Not exactly a move in good stewardship. But again, logic plays lightly in our determinations these days...

- The service last night touched the hearts of many – mine included. An elderly gentleman came forward professing Christ's presence in his life for the very first time. It is a beautiful thing to witness. A couple of our team gave their testimonies and the singing was heart warming.

- I was able to spend some time with Espedito this morning. He gave us some bibles to distribute and we topped off his tank and help of what we had toward a missionary journey he's planned for the weekend. He's a beautiful man of God. It's been a privilege for me to be in his presence.

- William, Matthew and Phillip took off with Baldo last night on a gator hunt. This morning, the bow of the *AMOR/TT* displayed a 5 foot caiman and a smaller “rock” gator – both alive and later released. I guess they had fun. Just to look at the boys this morning gives me a clue as to how late they stayed out. It’s neat that my boys are getting to know Baldo. He’s a rugged bull of a man with one of the gentlest spirits I’ve come to know. It’s all been good for this old man to watch...

- The well is still filtering. We’ve made the good water, for sure. Lots of sand and sediment remains to settle out. It’ll just take some time. The second well over by the school won’t be possible this time around. Our capacity for depth is only about 90 feet. Due to the topography across the hill, it would require at least a 150 foot dig. Maybe next time...

- All teams are working steadily. Construction is taking the day off to experience the other ministries about around the village. All are well. A couple of our young people are on the mend from a little “bug” floating around. Just part of the deal some times...

**4:45 PM** – It’s been an interesting afternoon. Our docs have been on the move in house calls. A lady from across the lake was sent home to die of complications related to her diabetes. The doctors in Santarem claimed inability to do anything for her. Our docs went and examined her just to find she suffers from nothing life threatening. Simple adjustments in her meds should bring about remarkable improvements. I’m grateful we were able to encourage in some way.

- Our construction team has been out visiting the houses around the lake. It’s been a good thing for them and for those they visited. They’ve enjoyed experiencing some of the local culture.

- Medical finished up earlier than usual this afternoon. More people are scheduled to arrive tomorrow morning. Just have to wait and see.

- I’ve planned a surprise *4<sup>th</sup> of July* fireworks show for tomorrow evening. The crew is already actively seeking the most expendable among them to be volunteered as the fuse lighter. I’ve noticed an increased level of “busy work” going on around the *Beatriz* in efforts to prove each one’s “indispensable” qualities...

- It’s been a good day. I’m feeling a bit tired this afternoon. I’m enjoying all that’s taking place. It’ll just feel good to lay it all to rest after awhile. Thank you, Lord, for the beautiful unfolding of this day. Thank You for the thoughts, conversations and events You’ve graced me with experiencing. It’s been a good one, indeed...

*From the Helm – Saturday, July 04, 2009*

– It's *Independence Day* back home. I only wish my Nation realized the fragility of its state. Our arrogance and greed have led us to the point of complete surrender. We've surrendered to fear, not power; to chaos rather than peace of mind. We've quickly turned to the promise of a change that cannot occur with the way things are. Not that change isn't possible, even essential – it's the parts of the equation we've chosen that are incorrect, at best.

In my heart, I know the route being preached and followed will lead to an even worse tomorrow. The sick life of an individual (*or* that of a nation) can only be rebuilt from its foundation. Simple remodeling leads only to false confidence and an ultimately greater collapse of the structure.

I see these things as a matter of fact. I blame no leader, past or present. All, with few exceptions, have been self-limited by pride and self-delusion. Our problem as a nation is our refusal to accept the notion of error or defeat on any level. We have defeated ourselves through our selfishness and self-centeredness. Through our false pride, we've rendered ourselves unteachable. Via the choices we've made, we've mapped our destiny. It's nobody's fault but our own. We are individually confused and collectively lost.

*The good news is this:* The future of my Nation is contingent upon the healing of the individuals who make up the Nation. These matters of the heart and soul can only be affected through God's power, grace and mercy. I can neither change nor influence anyone – that's a relief in itself... God, however, can and will *if* He be sought.

So, I no longer pray for us as a Nation. I pray the *individuals* of our nation will seek *God's* wisdom. If change does not occur on this most primal of levels, as a Nation it cannot happen at all.

Today, I pray God allow whatever it takes to bring the people of our Nation to that miraculous place of surrender to Him. I pray *He* takes the place of our surrender to the vague promises of the eloquent and charismatic – the powerfully lost and confused who's wisdom we've chosen over His. Regardless of who they may be, I pray we surrender to no man whatever. Folly closely follows in the path of such folly...

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**9:30 AM** - About the time I was waking up this morning, the Boys were coming in from the hunt. Jake harpooned a seven foot caiman. By the looks of the thing, it wasn't very happy about the whole ordeal. After a photo-op, its release was far less tedious than its capture. I remember well the thrill of such escapades. Nothing like it. These days though, I'm happy to just live vicariously through these younger guys. The little caiman they brought home and deposited in one of the bathrooms caused a few quick awakenings for the early morning bathers, too. Children, children...

- A morning I'd thought would be one used to finish things up here in Mamuru in turning in to another full day in all areas of ministry. I like it when people in need show up unannounced. Actually, I love it. Castanhaduba has just showed up in full force.

- We've reconsidered the second well. The equipment has been set up over by the school. Our team is confident that water can be reached. The plan is to drill through the day and night until it's done. I'm grateful for our crew and their desire to help the children in this way. When children are the primary recipient of a benefit within our grasp, it's easy to find the energy to continue on at virtually any task...

- I sent to Obidos for some supplies. We've invited the whole area to a cookout tomorrow. Luiza is picking up 80lbs of beef, chicken and pork sausage along with a boat load of rice and vinaigrette fixing's. We look forward to a fellowship of about two hundred-fifty folks. Dad would have done it a bit differently, for sure. He's been know to buy a whole steer for such occasions. The butchering and dressing of it being part of the experience. Sorry Dad, since that day all our "pet" chickens showed up on our kitchen table as dinner back in 1969, I've preferred that my meat come in neat packages from the grocers. It thus has a lesser effect on my appetite...

- Tainara, Baldo's nine year old, has stolen the hearts of me and Boys. She is precious. Won't unglue from Matthew for a single minute. We'd take her home in a second! Maybe it's best we can't. She'd be absolutely ruined in a matter of days at our house. We'll just enjoy spoiling her for the days we're here. Matthew has already raided our stock of chocolates and goodies on her behalf. So cute to watch it all. Cida would take her in a minute as well. However, I know Cida'd be worse at spoiling her than we guys are able to even contemplate...

**3:30 PM** – What a day this has been. Medical is just finishing up with those who have sought help. We're also just about out of medicine. Dental will just work on for another hour, and then close. VBS is handing out some clothing to all the children present this afternoon. The well struck good water with the last rod we had (80 feet). It should be lined and capped by dark. How beautiful it all is.

- A lady of 30 came to clinic today. In 1991 Jim Davison (I'm almost certain), from Dallas, performed some corrective surgery on her cleft lip and palate. I immediately remembered the case. She's gone on to live a normal life - a wife and mother of 2. The compassion Jim showed toward her 18 years ago led to as normal a life as any in this village. I'm grateful to God for those He touches to come and serve in all areas of ministry here in the *Valley*. It matters little to me who they come with or where they go. I'm simply grateful they come at all...

- I'm looking forward to a quiet night aboard the *Beatriz*. I look forward to the "mass meal" tomorrow as well. It's all been good thus far. I've no reason to believe it will continue in any other manner...

*From the Helm – Sunday, July 05, 2009*

**Noon** – Our group and the community are in the middle of a great time of eating, soccer games and general socializing. The service this morning was both moving and humbling. Many people came forward to express their gratitude for all that was done here.

Neither the church nor the community has a generator to power anything. So, we gave them a small one left behind by Murray's team earlier this year. It will be use for all church activities making the church the center of attention. I'm grateful to Dwain and his team for having the foresight and generosity to bring a spare last December. It wasn't a spare after all...

- The well for the children is now complete and pumping clear, cool water. I'm so grateful God made this possible.

- Today, there is a peace within me that's hard to describe. I woke up in such a state of gratitude; Like butterflies in my stomach. This has been an incredible six days in Mamuru. The experiences have been numerous. The emotional pulls and tugs, many. The fall out of these days will take a while to settle in to the fiber of my soul. I look forward to it...

In a few hours, we'll set sail for Obidos. Emmanuel Baptist has asked that we come as their guests this evening. This is the "mother" church of this entire area. One that was started and built by teams from Mountain Home, Arkansas many years ago. The fruits of that labor of love and obedience continue to come forth in beautiful ways. It will be good...

- I leave Mamuru with my heart filled with joy and longing. It's been so good to revisit old friends. It's been so good to see all the babies I remember from the past now bringing babies of their own for me to gloat over. Lord, You are so very kind to me. I thank You for all of this. I thank You for Your consideration of me – These expressions of You love for me...

- If all goes as it seems to be going, we will depart for Manaus at first light tomorrow, from Obidos. ETA in Manaus should be about 50 hours from sail – a good long ride. Homeward bound...

*From the Helm – Monday, July 06, 2009*

**3:00 PM** – Set sail at 3 this morning. The waters were smooth and calm most of the morning. Since just before noon, however, we've been either under siege or threat of storms. The rains have been sparing throughout the trip, allowing bright, breezy days for our activities. I guess it's time to cool this down a bit. The team is broken in small groups, playing dominoes and cards – suffering through the bad weather in the air-conditioning upstairs...

- Last night, the service in Obidos was moving. There were a couple of youth groups that performed some choreography. Testimonies were given and Pedro brought the message.

This is a church that was organized and built by teams from Mountain Home over a 5 year period in the early Nineties. It has grown to be a powerhouse in the city. Brent and Nancy were the only original team members here this time. I observed as they proudly took it all in.

The church has asked that a team return to Obidos and help one of it's daughters in a neighborhood on the outskirts of town. It's a challenge the Blomquist's will certainly take home to Twin Lakes Baptist. We'll see what comes of it... Mamuru has also asked for help building a new building of brick and Aluizio is already on the docket for a team to his area.

At the onset of these days on the river I, for some reason, felt this might be a "final hello and good-bye" to this region. Now that the trip is coming to an end, it's become obvious God led us here to see what is yet to be done. I know not where the teams will come from. I *do* know whoever determines to come will be richly blessed. This field is both fertile for planting and ripe for harvest. God's Holy Spirit has been at work all these long years. I'm so grateful to have been included among these who have been graced to witness it all.

- We're now a few hours below Parintins. ETA in Manaus is set for about 36 hours from there. Barring any further excitement or prevailing thoughts, I'm going to take a rest and ponder the wonders of these past days. God will surely show me the things I've missed if I settle and wait upon Him.

Lord, this has all been grand and humbling. You continue to embrace me in Your leisure. For this, I am grateful to You. So grateful, indeed...