

From the Helm
Murray, Kentucky
December 28th – January 8th, 2009

From the Helm – Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Well, one thing leads to another and the plans *man* makes change in accordance with *God's* ultimate plan. Fortunately, all I see is what's in front of me.

I was prepared to travel yesterday morning, bags packed and my thought process already adjusting to the challenges in the *Valley*. But, a last minute doctor's appointment for my father turned in to yet another appointment and then another. His heart is functioning at a very low rate of output which, by the very description, is not a good thing.

I have postponed my travels until it is clear to me that it's right to proceed. I spent considerable time on the phone yesterday taking care of the details that must be tended to in preparation for our trip with the Murray team. I am truly blessed with a competent, loyal staff to lean on when things become unpredictable. They do just fine with or without me.

So, today is all that remains for me to contemplate. I think I'll just take it as He reveals it and thus know that I will be in the right place, doing the next right thing, each step of the way...

From the Helm – Thursday, December 18, 2008

Dad's CT-Scan went well yesterday. After two days on his new heart meds, his breathing has improved dramatically. William is taking me to the Little Rock airport in a few minutes. I feel at peace with leaving. I am grateful for the many, many prayers that have been prayed. I was humbled by the many encouraging emails and phone calls that came yesterday. Thank you for your kindness and caring...

ETA for Manaus is something around 1:00 PM, Friday.

From the Helm – Friday, December 19, 2008

6:00 PM – I arrived in Manaus at 1:00 this afternoon after a *very* long day, night and yet another day of travel. A bit tired, no baggage and plenty to do. It seems that my luggage never left Little Rock and therefore, no other connection thereafter. Airport traffic was heavy and the weather over the past days has things backed up in the USA.

Anderson was waiting for me at the airport with my list for the afternoon. First, we drove downtown to handle some money, then, out to the *AMOR/Beatriz*. She is *BEAUTIFUL!* Much has been done – all worth the time, resources and effort. By Wednesday, *She* and the *AMOR/Lori* should be ready to set sail.

We then went around and paid some bills. Lots of driving and my adrenaline began to wane. By the time we got around to a department store to pick up a bit of everything that is in my absent luggage, I feel fortunate I was able to distinguish between men's boxers and lady's panties, etc. (yes, I'm *that* tired...)

9:30 PM – Just got back to my room after dinner with our transportation people. The buses are lined up for the team next week. I'm full of beef and salads from the "churrascaria" and about to lay it down for the night. What a way to end *any* day...

It's good to be back in the *Valley*. It's hot and humid; People all over the place; All are well back home. I am grateful for the day I was gifted to walk through. And now, I'm grateful the walking is done...

From the Helm – Saturday, December 20, 2008

7:30 PM – The day started at 8 this morning. Much was accomplished, one thing at a time. We ended up at the *Beatriz*, delivering new pumps, belts, supplies and a late lunch of grilled chicken and the works for the crew. The *Lori* was the crew's main concentration today. She is in fine shape but we'll have to schedule to pull her for some hull work in the spring. She hasn't been pulled in 5 years. There are several planks in the stern that are ready for replacement. All in due time...

I returned to the hotel a couple of hours ago. William, Phillip and Matthew are on their way to Little Rock to begin their journey to South Brasil for Christmas with Cida, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and childhood friends. I am excited for them and am grateful for the "angels" that made their trip possible...

Just one more meeting tonight. Hopefully, I'll be curled up with a book by 10 o'clock. Rest sounds really good. My body is relaxed. My mind is clear and sharp. My spirit is calm and at ease. I am grateful God has allowed me a smooth day to enjoy...

From the Helm – Sunday, December 21, 2008

3:00 PM – There's a gentle, steady rain falling outside. I love the rain in the *Valley*. It's soothing and seems appropriate in the heart of this tremendous rain forest.

Didn't get to sleep til late last night. My Boys got turned around on their way to Little Rock with news that they would probably not make all their connections on the way to Rio. So, around midnight, they called letting me know they were back home, safe and sound. They will begin the trek again this afternoon. It will all work out as it works out.

I slept through to 7 this morning. Not a great deal to do today. Pastor Pedro and Luiza arrive from Parintins in a few hours. They are a big help with banking and trip preparations. Anderson will pick them up and deliver them to the *Beatriz* at 4 this afternoon. It'll be good seeing them in the morning.

I had the television news on in the background while enjoying my coffee. I was a bit shocked to find that the economy, world and humanity in general, continue on even in my absence... I am *truly grateful* that my responsibility is limited to my own path, as God reveals it; Taking care of what is displayed before me; Having the wealth of His Wisdom to draw on when the path is unclear to my eyes and heart.

I was reminded that there is really no "crisis" lurking in the shadows around me - Only situations that present opportunities for growth in dependence upon my God. All God really requires of me is that I seek Him and take the action that He makes clear. As long as I keep the relationship *simply* defined, all will be just as it should be; Chaos will remain delegated to those better adapted to a state of perpetual panic and anxiety. I am humbled and comforted by the *absolute* knowledge that my God has *no* challenges whatever; He *holds* the path to be taken; I need but live in *complete* surrender to know *total* peace. This is the paradox that so profoundly secures my soul and rests my spirit...

It's good to be alive today. It wasn't always like that. The days seemed to begin in the wake of destitute yesterdays that tended to lead into miserable tomorrows. The *aloneness* was overwhelming - Hope was not an emotion within my understanding, much less my grasp. Then, one day a stranger, whom I scarcely knew, was placed in my path. That stranger introduced me to the path leading to a life previously unfathomable to me. This path led to my God, Lord and Savior.

This God is why I live as I live and do as I do today. He is my reason for going to any lengths, on any path He points to, in order to share with another the peace He so freely gave to me. This, I am usually gifted to do, as a stranger, led into the path of someone as destitute as I once was - one that God has made ready to hear simple, saving truth, just as He had made me to be.

How grateful I am to be alive *this* day - not merely existing through it in a seemingly hopeless state of mind and spirit. By His grace, the indescribable aloneness I once lived is still vividly emblazoned on my mind to remind me of the abyss from which He lifted me. I recognize it the eyes of many I pass each day. My only prayer for them is that He touches them in the way He touched me. If I am to have a part in it, He will slow the pace and give the words to make it possible. What a deal it is. How grateful I am for it all, indeed...

Form the Helm - Monday, December 22, 2008

4:20 AM - There's a bit more than a "gentle" rain coming down outside. This is the rainy season, which means rain falls at various rates and angles *all day long* - unlike the dry season when the rain comes just a little bit *every* day. It's good that only the

AMOR's/ WilPhilMatt, Dan Shipley and T&T are dry-docked for fresh paint. Of course, they can tend to the *Beatriz* and *Lori* without the fresh paint but would look *much* better with the annual make-up applied...

The boys are awake back in Little Rock, headed to the airport for another try at South Brasil. It'd be nice if all went well for them along the way. I pray God's wisdom on them today.

8:20 PM – Just got in for the day. It rained *all* day! Was still able to considerably chip away at the countdown list for departure.

Met up with Pedro and Luiza over lunch. They were going in different directions taking care of some legal and finance matters for us. It was one of those 2-hour lunches that yielded well.

- When I was back at the room for a few minutes this afternoon, I received word that a high-school buddy of mine was living through the final stages of a cancer that has ravaged his body. This is a friend that I've lost contact with, other than fleeting encounters throughout the years. My prayers go up for him, his family and to those caring for him today. Not much else I can do. Somehow I know that's all that's needed from me...

- The Boys called from Miami. They are set to go in a couple of hours - tired and ready to make an attempt at sleep during the 8-hour flight. God's protection and speed be with them, as always.

As for me, I am ready for a shower, dinner and sleep. It's been a good day. I am grateful.

Form the Helm – Tuesday, December 23, 2008

4:45 PM - Up and out the door by 7 this morning. Got the well supplies on the way to the *Beatriz*, along with various "tid-bits" for various little projects in progress.

Met my Chef (Filipino) downtown for a meeting later in the morning. He's something else – Insistent that one of his assistants *goes with* the sub-team up to Inaja. Nothing I said to try and ease his determination seemed to work. He wants us taken care of no matter what! When I told him we planned to eat what the Indians killed, fished and cooked, he just frowned and said that *his assistant* would prepare whatever the Indians killed or fished! I guess our little sub-team will have to settle for a chef while on location, just a few miles beyond the ends of the earth. I don't think any of us will complain *too* awfully much about the deal...

- Spoke with the Parents earlier – all is well. I thank God for caring for them. He does all the caring, even when I'm closer to home – He simply allows me to be there so I can meet them for coffee and share bits and pieces of the days. I am grateful for the privilege

God has bestowed upon me to be close to Mom and Dad during my times away from the *Valley*. I cherish the hours I'm able to spend enjoying their company. I will be grateful for these times, always...

The day is about over. Traffic (in this city of 2 million) is incredible this close to Christmas. It's bad *all* the time but today was unusually numbing. Without Anderson driving, waiting in "no-parking zones" and helping turn two-lane highways into 6-laners, I'd have had little hope of accomplishing much of anything at all. He's been our driver for 5 years now. Before him, it was Wellington (his brother-in-law) for 9 years. These young men have been priceless confidants, body-guards and family. We've laughed a lot; buried their parents; married them off; birthed their babies; and they, while I was scrambling to get here, buried my only brother Winston, in 2005...

God has been good to place many people of high caliber in our lives in every field of service that's required to do what He's called us to do. We have a total of 19 staffers, working around the clock when both the *AMOR/Beatriz* and *AMOR/Lori* are underway or on location. Their jobs range from commanders, deck-hands and mechanics to Chefs, laundry ladies and interpreters - Each performing unique and sometimes overlapping duties. *All* performed with smiles and seemingly endless energy. I take *none* of them for granted. They are blessings to me and our work, indeed...

Well, tonight I seem to be the *only* guest at the Davinci Hotel. The hotel must to be fully staffed, no matter what holiday it might be. So, the owner has invited me to the Employee Christmas Dinner this evening. Free food *always* sounds good to me! So, I look forward to it and plan on enjoying the whole deal - Maybe even meet the chef that prepares my coffee at *unthinkable* hours of the day and night - God bless him!!

From the Helm – Wednesday, December 24, 2008

6:25 PM – Sleep was unsettled last night. I took a shower and went down for a quiet dinner. I decided not to go to the Christmas party for the employees. Just didn't feel up to a lot of noise and idle conversation – for sure, I wasn't missed. I was in bed, reading by 9:30.

At 2 this morning, I woke up, *wide awake*. I'm used to this when we're underway or on location. I enjoy the solitude of the early morning. But, at a hotel, there's just a room! Anyway, I was able to drink some coffee and catch up on some paperwork.

- I spoke with Cida this morning. She and the boys are home in Minas, enjoying each other very much. She said the boys had some friends over last night and didn't think they slept at all til early this morning. Lots of catching up to do. She didn't mention there were any girls involved. However, I'll keep my hand out of the fire on that one...

Anderson came by and we had breakfast and were on the road by 8 o'clock. I had several last minute chores to do before things shut down for Christmas. I sent all but a skeleton crew home from the boats at Noon. They were happy to get on dry-land for a day or so.

- Anderson's family has invited me to their home tonight for the Midnight Eve's Feast. I look forward to it. He drew me a name for the "secret friend" gift exchange. So, I did my best in getting something for a cousin of his who he described to be a "quite large, middle-aged mother of *way* too many children". Like I said, I did my best...

- I returned to my room after calling Carla at the distributorship to get the meds ready for the trip. All should be delivered by Friday evening or Saturday morning.

- Dad called from the doctor's office while I was on the road. The nurse came on the phone to fill me in on his CTscan results. His heart ejection rate is about 15% but his breathing continues to improve. The docs put him on additional medication to try and raise his heart function. So, his BP needs to be monitored closely to make sure it doesn't drop dramatically. I hope his BP machine is working right at home. I've bought several, trying to find a simple one for him to operate. He'll be fine. I just look forward to being close again to help with all this. All in due time...

You know, I'm grateful to know that God gives good direction when He is selflessly sought. He quieted my spirit with peace when I asked if it would be alright for me to come to prepare for this trip. I don't question in *any* way that I am in the right place today. Therefore, I needn't question what is taking place across the oceans. God is faithful to care for *all* things in the executing of His Perfect Will. I'm grateful He has allowed me the ability to call home while I'm away, via cell and satellite. But, even with the absence of such a luxury, it'd be ok, just the same.

- Well, I guess I'd better shower and stretch out for a bit. This "midnight" eating deal is a bit of a stretch for me! But, I've had Filipino prepare his famed, 4 kg "*Pinarucu Cordon bleu*" as my contribution to the potluck tonight. Now *that's* worth staying up and going out for...

I really appreciate the words of cheer and encouragement that people have sent by email. I've received a couple of calls as well. Not sure if people are aware of how good it is to hear from them, even though I'm limited as to my ability to respond in kind. But, it *is* good to hear. Good, indeed...

From the Helm – Thursday, December 25, 2008

5:50 PM – It's been a good day. The rain held off until a few minutes ago – now it's pouring down. I love it...

Anderson brought me home from the family Christmas party about 1:45 this morning. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Anderson's family is one of modest means. They live on the terrace of a small, three-story building in the heart of a neighborhood right out of a Latin spy novel. The streets are barely wide enough for a single car to pass. The houses and buildings, so close together the alleyways wouldn't fit a person much wider than me.

We climbed a steep, wooden staircase to reach an open terrace where children were dancing to pagode, shouting and playing in the misting rain. It was picturesque... We moved through the sea of little people into the house where Anderson's mom was waiting for me with a tall glass of "agua com gas" (the cheap "Perrier" I love so much). From that moment on, those narrow halls of chipped and cracked plaster became home to me for the night.

Several of the little girls gravitated to me right off and stole away with my camera. It vanished until I was ready to leave, except for a few glimpses I caught of it "flashing" throughout the night. Good thing they had several "gigs" of memory to fill.

The food and fellowship was relaxing. The attention they gave me, humbling. Everywhere I stood or sat, the little girls and boys would gather round, bringing me "agua com gas" and puppies to pet. I imagine this might be what it'll be like when my Boys start generating grandbabies for me to melt over. I love the children – thankfully, they seem to love me, too.

- At 9 this morning, Anderson picked me up and we were off to see what the streets of downtown Manaus had to show us. There, in various building fronts and sheltered alleys, we met up with Bill, Vicente, Bendito, Ildo, Paulo, Ivan, Bob Marley, Carlos and Rogerio. These men were *not* in the midst of warm, family settings. They were filthy, worn and destitute.

Each man's eyes told a similar story of hopelessness and defeat. We couldn't visit for very long with any one of them. But, we left them each with a box filled with cheeses, canned meat, fruit juices and crackers along with a prayer that God would give them a moment of clarity that would lead them to Him. Today, they each know that He is there for the asking, if they will earnestly seek Him with all they have left. There *is* hope. Only a slight step need be made in His direction and their world *will* change. God will surely lead someone else into their lives to help them along the way. If that one is meant to be me, He will make it abundantly clear as well...

- I Spoke with Mom and Dad, the Boys, Cida and her parents during the course of the morning. They've all had a relaxing Christmas Day. It was good to hear everyone's voice and to know they are well.

I'm grateful to have been blessed with a Christmas such as this. I couldn't have planned it with such perfection in my wildest imagination. It's all been very good...

I wish a relaxing and reflective day to all. It's been a day of recognizing the magnitude of God's blessings upon my life. I am humbled He thinks of me as He does. Thank You Lord, for it all...

From the Helm – Friday, December 26, 2008

5:45 PM – It's been *quite* a day. I just arrived from the *Beatriz*.

It all started off smoothly enough until I got on-board for a final check of things. I called the fueling station to reserve a couple of hour's tomorrow morning – that's when things started to come strangely unglued.

When I called the manager, Lazaro, he asked me about a fuel bill from back in June that remains unpaid in the amount of R\$ 19,891.00 (US\$ 9,251.00). I was taken aback. It was from a fueling in the middle of the night (most fueling is done in the middle of the night) on which my credit card had not gone through correctly. In the midst of all that transpires during the trip season, it went unnoticed for these past several months, until the station began closing the books for the year. I never questioned anything because our credit card is automatically paid each month and I assumed everything was clear. The only thing I can do is pay the old bill with my card and fuel on in-house credit tomorrow. The bill is legitimate. We owe the money.

This is an unnerving thing for me right now. Funds, like most times, are sparse... Hopefully, all the summer teams will make their scheduled deposits next week. Hopefully, some unexpected contributions will arrive. God *does* know how this is to work out in the end. I remain dependant on His provision. There is nothing I can do about it right here, right now. And, worrying about the "*hopefully's*" is not a productive endeavor for this simple mind...

- Filipino is out securing the fish and meats for the trip. Pedro and Luiza are onboard tending to kitchen and pharmacy details. Anderson is picking up the final departure documentation and hammocks.

As for me, I've found my quiet place to have a cup of good coffee and do the phone work, as this day continues to unfold. I've asked God to settle my spirit – He is faithful to do so. Just writing a bit has helped a great deal - It most always does. Writing is a good friend to me. A good friend indeed.

From the Helm – Saturday, December 27, 2008

4:40 PM - The *AMOR's Beatriz* and *Lori* completed fueling about an hour ago and are anchored in a cove off the Negro River. I've received word that our Team has been sent out from Kentucky, headed to the *Valley*. Cida and William are on their way to the

airport in Belo Horizonte for him to catch his flight in the early morning. I pray God's grace and protection upon each of their lives.

I'm in the last hours before moving on-board. There's been much encouraging mail during the course of preparations. I'll miss being able to respond. But, that's just the way of things once we're underway. I'll still enjoy hearing though.

- These past days have progressed just as they were meant to progress. Whatever pride or self-reliance that creped up from time-to-time was appropriately nullified by the people, places and things placed in my path. Of the fact that God *chose* to allow me to take part in these days, I am acutely aware of and thankful for.

It's good to be on the eve of yet another trip, deep into the *Valley* – deeper than I've had the pleasure of taking most teams in the past; into yet another venture, cradled in God's comfort, leading and care.

I'm grateful for the *absolute* assurance that, to the measure I stay clear of the path, He'll show and teach me beautiful things of His ways – allowing me to watch everything He graciously ordains for me to see, as He unfolds the days...

From the Helm – Sunday, December 28, 2008

6:30 AM – Just got off the phone with Dwain in Miami. The group is checked-in and ready to board. William should be on a plane, headed this way from South Brasil as well. All is seemingly set to go.

I slept fitfully last night. The sunrise revealed it hadn't rained much at all. It's cloudy and humid. The Negro and Amazon are calm for now – a perfect day to cruise.

I've gone over my bag of lists – all has been checked off. It's a good feeling when all I know to do, has been done. It is at *just* that point God's grace, mercy, sovereignty and provision take on a whole new dimension of clarity for me. This is the dimension I've come to know so well and cherish with all that I am. Not surprisingly, this is a place that *only I* can remove myself from by whatever degree of independence I choose to claim. It's just the way it is. It's how it works in my life. Thank You, Lord, for the simplicity of it all. Thank You for choosing to share such a truth with a spirit that was once so overwhelmed, confused and destitute. Thank You, thank You...

8:50 AM – Well, off I go to the *Beatriz* and the airport. We'll make a few calls when we get underway to let folks back home know the deal on the arrival of the Team and the departure of our vessels. For here and now, I say good-bye. If the Sat system remains as it is, I look forward to sharing our journey with all who might be interested. Wow, it's time to turn the page and go...

Happy Birthday, Robbie! You're dear to me and I wish you all the best there is.

From the Helm – Monday, December 29, 2008

4:00 AM – We are now passing Itaquatiara off the starboard side. The night's cruise has been good but eventful. Spotlights burning out (a total of three) and lots of river traffic all the way. Just fine-tuning in power supplies along with river life in general. With the *Lori* in tow, we are down about 10% from normal cruise speed – small price to pay for the benefits she brings.

- The team arrived 15 minutes ahead of schedule (12:05)! *Not one* bag was checked by Customs and we were on the bus headed to the *Beatriz* within an hour and a half. A beautiful beginning.

It's good to have so many old friends aboard. About half the team has been on multiple trips over the years. William was a sight for sore eyes. I've missed my boys these past days. I know their mother misses them, as only a mother can know, when they're back home in the USA with. I'm so grateful God allowed this time for them to spend with her this Christmas and New Year.

Braginha and Geziel are on alert as to our arrival plans to the Trombetas River. The permits to enter the Wai-Wai Nation, in hand. Four interpreters and a dentist await us in Oriximina.

The *Beatriz* is running well. The Amazon is smooth as a reflection. The skies are producing a muggy mixture of rain and stars. It's good to be back...

ETA for Oriximina is set at midnight, tonight. But, I'm confident we'll actually get there at the *exact* moment of arrival – My, my, my. How insightful....

From the Helm – Tuesday, December 30, 2008

3:30 AM – Arrived in Oriximina a couple of hours ago. Picked up Braginha and Caitano (our Brazilian dentist) and are now underway toward Carimu to rendezvous with Geziel.

Pedro, Braginha and I just went over the details of the sub-team's trip to Inaja. All is on schedule for us to depart from Cachoeira Porteira at dawn, tomorrow. So, the *Lori* will split from the *Beatriz* carrying us guys and our provisions at dusk, today.

Our little meeting was brief (scarcely a cup of coffee's worth) because Braginha has *no* idea what awaits us on the trip up – he has never made the trip while the falls were exposed. The best he could tell us is that the trip up will take us a full, long day in 3-4 dugout canoes, piloted by Wai-Wai Indians. It will be what it will be...

- Last night was eventful. More trouble with the primary spot lights on the *Beatriz* and *Lori*. The 12 and 24 volt auxiliary spots are providing the navigation lights we need. However, the boys will work to re-wire everything again later today. While passing Parintins, I dispatched a boat to get the water pump on our back-up generator repaired.

During routine testing yesterday afternoon, the bearings went out. All is back in place and working normally. Just little details that tend to come up, daily, aboard our floating, little city...

A windless rain fell as we cruised through the night. It was good to keep the waters calm. My hammock felt good for a few hours.

- The team is ready for a different kind of day – one on location. Spirits are sweet and high. I had the opportunity to visit with several during the day and into the night. I pray God's blessing of peace and health on each one over the days to come.

9:00 AM – Arrived in Carimu at 7 this morning. All teams on location and working by Eight o'clock. It's always good to begin our service to the ones we came to share with. It's going to be a good time for the team as the day unfolds.

It's been determined that the *Lori* must set sail for Cachoeira Porteira at 1:00 this afternoon. The time has been pushed up due to the strong currents which will delay us considerably. So, we are packing up to leave immediately after lunch.

I'm excited about these coming days. I have no idea what lies ahead. But, I have peace that it is all meant to be. My spirit is calm. I'm ready to just breathe it all in.

I'll miss being able to make the daily entries *From the Helm*. Taking the Sat system with me is out of the question. When I get back to the *Beatriz* in a few days, I'll catch up for sure. William and Debbie will be making daily phone calls with updates on the core group, from the *Beatriz*, for the folks in Kentucky and Arkansas.

Well everyone, I'll catch up with you on or around Saturday. We cherish your prayers for guidance and protection, as always...

From the Helm – Tuesday, December 30, 2008

Interesting twist on today's *From the Helm*, my father will not be able to make his daily entries so I am going to try to fill in for him while he is gone. He is a great writer, so it is not easy to just pick it up after him. Bear with me...

For those who do not know me, my name is William Walker, I'm Boyd's son. I am coordinating the boat while he is off wondering around in strange waters.

We said our goodbyes today to the men going up to Inaja. It is going to be a long journey and I'm sure, full of challenges, but God will keep them safe so they can come back and re-join us. After they left it was time to get back to work.

We had a really good day with over 150 people treated in medical. Things were getting hectic because we had a lot of people to see, but our pace was limited since we were short

an interpreter. I would come in and try to help for a little bit, that was my field before taking the manager spot, but Debbie and the others had it under control after a while. Our interpreters did a fantastic job today, and I am grateful to have them in my team.

Over 80 teeth were pulled out of 30 people in Dental. Grant was struggling because he did not want to hurt the patients, then Caetano, our Brazilian dentist, would come in and do it the painful way. I felt sorry for the patients and also for Grant because he really did not want to let Caetano do the work. Dentists already have a bad reputation to start with. Caetano is a nice man though, when he is not holding any tools. I had a chance to talk to him last night and he is full of interesting stories.

The construction team started a roof repairing project on the other side of the river. This man had his roof badly damaged with all the bad weather. By the updates I got it looks like everything is going smoothly over there.

VBS, like always, never disappoints. We had several children participating. They learned a few songs and a bible verse for the night service.

After the work day was over it was time to head back to the boat for a nice meal and a cool shower. Later we headed back for the night service. Pastor Geziel preached and it was a good night. The children sang the songs they learned in VBS and a few of the villagers came up to the front and worshiped also.

After the service 3 people accepted Christ. In all that we have done today, that is what it's all about, and if we left to go home tonight our trip would have been worthwhile.

After the night service I sat on the deck with a few people and shared stories. Luiza, Pastor Pedro's wife had a lot to tell. It was a nice conversation.

I pray that God continues blessing us as he did today. A lot of progress was made in his work.

I also pray for my father and the members of the group with him as they go up to Inaja at a time of the year where it could be dangerous.

I will be posting the daily *From the Helm* for the next few days. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers.

God Bless.

From the Helm – Tuesday, December 31, 2008

It was a very successful stay in the village of Carimu. Everyone that needed to be seen was seen; everyone that needed a tooth pulled got it pulled!

Construction finished their roof project, and VBS of course kept the children busy and happy.

It rained heavy last night, and it caught us by surprise. It was still dark when a carpet of thick rain covered the boat. My hammock is upstairs right next to the railings so I woke up immediately. There was no time to get the crew, the place was already soaked. So me and a couple of the group members that also woke up thinking they wet their hammock helped drop the tarps so that no more damage was done. It was hectic but we got it everything under control...

After a successful day in Carimu it was time to head to our next location, the community of Batata. There was no night service because most people were going to be at home for the New Years so Pastor Geziel suggested us to just get on our way.

New Years was special in the Amazon, thanks to my father. He left a good amount of fireworks for us to light up for the New Year celebration. The members of the church in Batata invited the group to participate in a service that would take them to the next year. I took advantage of that and had a few crew members help me set up the fireworks on top of the *Beatriz*.

The village was on a hill top, the *Beatriz* was on the middle of the river and as soon as church was over, and a couple of false starts later, the show began. It was beautiful the way all the colors reflected on the water and the *Beatriz* sat gracefully bellow the presentation.

It was the first time New Years was celebrated on the boat. After everyone was back in the boat and probably the entire group was sleeping, me and a few of the crew and interpreters stayed up and shared funny stories and laughed all night long. One of the crewman came to me and told me it has been a long time since he has had this much fun during New Year. That was really good to hear.

I pray that God continues to bless us during this trip as we prepare for more challenges ahead. And also pray that all of AMOR's goals are met in 2009.

Thank you to all of you who support our work here, and I hope you achieve everything you desire in the New Year coming up and that all your goals are met according to what God has planned.

Happy New Year!

God Bless.

From the Helm – Tuesday, January 1, 2008

Busy day... This community is bigger than Carimu, and there are several smaller communities around it. There were not many people today since its New Year day and several people though we were coming in tomorrow. I let the team start the work a little later since everybody stayed up late last night. Medical and Dental still finished their work early.

The water well was the main event today. It took all morning to install and get it working, but it was a beauty when it came to life though.

We have promised a water well in this community before. Several years ago we came here and tried to drill one but it did not work out. We ended up drilling in two different spots and never got the job done.

This time around I was personally committed to making this project work. I had never participated in the well drilling in the past; I left that for the experts, and simply watched from a distance. The construction group and few of the crew worked hard to make this project work.

This time I was interested in how everything worked, from the water pump to the engine throttle. That well was my top priority today. Slowly but steadily we are going deeper into the ground. We hit a very hard spot and its taking some time to get through it; we stopped in the evening for supper. We were the last ones to the boat.

Service was great. Tonight it was all about the Americans. The people in the community wanted the service to be run by them. They started with a couple of worship songs, and then Pastor Warren came up and spoke in the name of God. This is a Christian community and most people are believers in Christ. It is good to see how the spreading of the gospel affected these people.

I interpreted the service and my Portuguese is rusty! But people got the message and were thankful.

A good nights rest will do us all very good. There is gator hunting planned for tomorrow night so I really don't think anyone is sleeping then.

Tired as I could be, I went to my hammock happy to finally be able to rest. I noticed my hammock was not tied up like I last recalled, it was down, and it looked like someone was in it. I went to the hammock and it was under the covers but it was too small to be a person, maybe a baby? I pulled the covers and there it was the biggest watermelon from the boat's stock was in my hammock. None of them will admit it, but they were quick to point fingers. My crew had pulled a prank on me, and there is not way to deny it, prank season has started on the Amor Beatriz...

Thank you so much for your kind comments, it makes this job so much easier.

I pray that if it is God's will that this well will be done, and that he gives us all who are working on it strength and patience to carry one and give this community their first working well.

God Bless.

From the Helm – Monday, January 5, 2008

I had some technical difficulties in the past few days, and I have not been able to post the daily *From the Helm*. I am going to try to summarize our last few days to the best of my ability.

We dock the *Beatriz* at shore during the day, going to the middle of the river only for lunch and supper, and anchoring there. After the night services we pull the boat back and anchor for the night. The anchor is tied to a life saver which is thrown into the water before we head to shore. After we are done and ready to pull out, we know where the anchor is, so the process is only done once.

After the night service on the 3rd we all headed back to the *Beatriz* ready for the night snack, nice conversations, and a good nights rest. To find the life saver at night we use our spot light. After we turned off our spot light some of crew and I saw a beam of light from behind the shore line shooting up and swinging from side to side. I ask one of the boys to do the same, and the strange beam responded doing the same again. Less then five minutes later a smaller boat appears from behind the shore line and starts making its way toward us, by then everyone in the *Beatriz* knew what it was. Joy and relief filled our hearts...

As the *Lori* was being tied up to our side I could see the exhaustion in the faces of the men in the boat. The trip back was long and the best thing for them was some sleep, but the joy to be back and close to their loved ones could still be seen through all that. They had run out of water and clean clothes to wear on the way back, we could all smell it, and maybe that explained the early arrival.

Some could not wait to hear the stories the adventurers had to tell. I received a present sent from the Inaja Indian Chief, Foracha. It was a beautiful bow made out of a strong and flexible piece wood called Wood of the Arch and it had a set of arrows that came with it. They say the tips of the bow will almost touch but it will not break, I pulled the string with all my strength and the beautiful piece of art did not show any sign of giving in. After a warm welcome and a few short stories, everyone retired to their place of rest for the night. We could catch up later...

We still had a day and a half in our last location, the community of Batata. We had seen all the people needed to be seen in medical, and pulled all the teeth needed to be pulled in

dental. The main event in the community was the water well drilling. Everything that could have gone wrong did, and things were not looking up for us...

On the 4th, I asked Big John if he would take us hunting that night, he is our main hunter and is the deadliest person with a harpoon I have ever seen. He said yes and that he would arm the harpoon and we will leave at night.

It was getting late, but I was having a very good conversation and I did not feel sleepy. We heard some noises coming from the side of the boat, we were at the bow. I looked down from the second floor of the boat and see Big John getting the john boat ready. It took him long to get the harpoon ready but now he was ready to go. There was lightning in the distance and I asked him if it was not too dangerous, he responded "men don't die from rain." I turned around and asked Kelsey, "wanna go huntin?"

We were about a mile and a half away from the boat. Big John fetched a two footer with his hand earlier that later went loose in the boat, but everyone was okay and no animals were hurt, after everything was under control, and the tiny animal was completely tied up, we gave it little attention.

Big John spotted a gator, we were forty yards out and only the eyes could be seen. When hunting for alligators, the best way to get near them is to have a very strong flash light that can reach its light to the bay, when the light hits a gator's eyes it shines red. The light blinds the gator and distracts them completely from what is going on around them. There is very little difference in the brightness of the eye from size to size, but as soon as he spotted this one he turned around asked for the harpoon. He has a keen eye for these things...

We were almost on top of it when Big John threw the spear at the water and a huge splash soaked the boat. Little Charlie was the pilot, and at the yelling command of Big John he put the boat on full reverse, the water was calm but the boat did not move. Then all of the sudden the boat was jerked to the side and was being pulled through the water and floating grass deep into a closed corner by the bank, the boat was still on full reverse.

We were not going to stop. The giant animal was pulling us wherever it wanted to go and there was nothing we could do about it. Big John was holding the rope with all his strength but it was too much. We were passing by a tree trunk and he tried to tie the rope on it, but as soon as he did the trunk snapped with the pressure. After that there was no more pulling, the monstrous force pulling us to nowhere was not there, but as Little Charlie was backing the boat out Big john could feel that the monster was still hooked.

Alligators are vicious animals with tremendous strength, but they have a short energy span. Our gator had lost a lot of its energy with the fight, so that gave us time to drag it back to the *Beatriz*. With no machete or any kind of weapon, there was no way it would go in the boat. I hardly doubt it would have fit in it.

We were dragging a 900 pound alligator in the back of our little john boat, so the trip back was much slower. A mile and a half was an eternity especially since we were in the much deeper main river, and that any time our little friend decided to wake up it could take us to the bottom with it. I tried not to think about it...

When we got back to the boat I had to make sure everyone saw this thing. I woke my father up first, and with the noise I made everyone else started getting up, not having a clue of what was going on.

We jumped from the john boat to the *Beatriz*, Big John still holding the rope. Our friend was still resting so all he had to do was try to pull the heavy animal to the surface. It was going to be the first time that we actually get to see the monster, Big John kept pulling.

It was bigger than any of us thought it was its massive body was overwhelming. The head alone was about two and a half feet long and two palms wide. Its arms looked just as long as mine, and teeth, even with the mouth shut, stuck out about two inches. My dad wanted to measure it, because it may have been the biggest one in AMOR's gator hunting history. The previous record was 15, 4 feet.

Unfortunately we would never get that chance. Big John thought it would be best to tie it up to the side of the *Beatriz* until morning so that after a night fighting to get away, it would be tired enough for us to get near him. After a couple of times when the monster whipped the boat and the whole vessel shook, we understood what he meant.

In the morning the monster was gone. It had ripped the knot and taken the harpoon head with it. It was not God's will for us to kill that animal; it had lived a long healthy life, and maybe it was unfair to end it at that time. I was a Tinga, a species of alligator that is not as aggressive as the Cayman, so it will not be a danger to the surrounding community and hopefully it will live the rest of its life in the waters it was born in...

In that same morning, all eyes were on the well drilling crew, it was the only part of the group that was not finished with the work. We could dig deep enough to hit water, but as soon as the bit was pulled from the hole, it caved in about half way in.

We decided to start the plumbing anyway, with the depth we were in we could at least hit the water level of the river, but in the dry season the well would dry up. We were leaving in a few hours so we had to settle with that.

This was our third try at hitting water in this community this trip alone. In the first one were too high up and would never hit the water. In the second try were at the right spot, but we dug too deep, and the sand and mud would not settle. Finally in the third try we dug less, but we were still having trouble with cave-ins.

Then, something miraculous happened... The drilling crew decided to beat through all the sand that caved in with the pipe, the more they twisted and turned the deeper the pipe

went in. we ended up being able to get almost to where we dug, and that would be enough to when the dry season came, the water well would not dry up.

After doing the plumbing part, it was time to install the water pump that would spit the water out as we pumped. After a long few minutes nothing but air came out the end of the pipe, there was a hole in our pump and that little lack of pressure is enough to keep the water from coming up. Denilson, a crew member that had been working on the well drilling since the beginning said we had an extra pump in the boat and jokingly said it was for sale.

We installed the new pump that did not look like it was in any better shape than the other, but it did not have holes in it, so we were in good shape. Like the first try, nothing but air came out at first, then Daniel, another crew member suggested we feed the pump some water and see if that would stimulate the rest, we had tried everything in the book, and off the book, we would try anything.

Another few moments of silence and we could hear water coming up fast. And seconds later the first few squirts of sandy water came out. Every villager that was there, along with crew, and most of the group members applauded as the water kept coming out. Everyone that wanted took a turn at pumping the water.

A close to perfect trip. All medical and dental needs in both communities were met, VBS had run out of activities to do with the children, and the first well of the community of Batata was finally working after six total tries. Mission accomplished...

I thank God for all the blessings he has given us in this trip, all the great people he led me to meet, and strength and commitment given to us to get the job done.

I said my goodbyes to the local pastor, Jasse, who has been very generous in all the help he has provided, and Pastor Geziel who never failed to encourage me to continue this work. This was a great trip indeed...

We pulled out at 11:30 AM to start our journey back to Manaus. It was going to be nice for all of us to catch up on some sleep and reflect on the trip that past.

This will be my final journal, my father will take over from now. The entries below are all from him and his trip to the Wai Wai Indian Nation. He's got some good stories to tell...

God Bless.

From the Helm – Tuesday, January 06, 2009

2:30 AM – Smooth sailing through the night (other than running aground a couple of times...). I was asleep by 7 o'clock and didn't budge until a few minutes ago. We set sail from Oriximina as the sun was setting. The temperature dropped a bit after a rain. It's all good.

Manaus is a long way off this time of year. With the river on the rise, the currents increase. What would normally be a 50 hour cruise from Lago de Batata, will stretch to 55 or better. I don't mind at all. It's an opportunity for reflection and rest.

In these days, I've seen my son William in a new light. It's as if he laid down one night a boy and woke the next morning, a man. In my mind and heart, he has taken on a new shape. One of a man immersing from what was once a boy. One that leads from wonder to wisdom. One that leads from folly to more solid ground. It's taken me 49 years to reach the place he rests in today. I pray God's blessings, protection and wisdom upon him in whatever He chooses to do with his life. I pray he seek You *first*, always. To the exact measure he does this simple thing, I know *all* will be well. It's all I desire for each of my precious boys...

- This has been a journey of many levels for me. I have experienced life-changing wonders by God's grace and mercy. He has allowed me to see new places and peoples that, in turn, have gently changed the way I see new places and new peoples.

He has opened my eyes in a special way during these days. He has blessed with a strange new peace in my spirit regarding limitations to what He might have us do as a ministry and, most importantly, what He might have me do as a solitary child of His.

God has shown me I am to have *no* boundaries in my willingness to contemplate His leading. He has not placed me in a box. He instead has established perimeters, infinitely expandable through my willingness to take the steps He makes clear as I walk in His care.

From the beginning, God gifted me with being the son of the greatest man I have ever known. My father led by example and passing comments of profound depth. He allowed me to travel the rivers and lake systems of the *Valley* in his shadow from the age of six. Many of the things he taught me back then are only now coming into focus. One early morning some forty years ago, we were headed upstream on the Solimoes River, to a destination I don't recall. Dad was at the wheel. He slowed the *Eric Nelson* down to a crawl as he studied the mouth of a black-water creek. After a moment, he steered our boat toward the mouth. When I asked him why we were headed that way, he simply responded, "Where there is water, there are people. Where there are people, there is need". Dad had *no* idea the impact his words would have on my life today. God did...

The journey we've just made up the *Mapueira River* has once again proven my father's insight to be true. There is a beautiful Nation of people in a place that defies "normal"

logistics. The rewards of going anyway, tremendous; my desire to go back, still deeper, near overwhelming...

I've come to see my reluctance to take groups to places such as this as matter of pride and self-reliance. There is no room for such attitudes in God's world. I feel grateful and relieved He's pointed out the flaw...

Deep in my soul, I feel a page has turned in God's dealings with me; with **AMOR**. I pray God's continued grace as He allows me to see the path more clearly. There are to be no more boundaries as to how far or how challenging a destination should be. No limiting factors as to where groups should go as God leads. No chains of self-pride and self-assurance to shadow what God would have us to see. Thank You Lord for a life indescribable. Thank You Lord for provision, comfort and mercy by Your grace. Thank You Lord, for it all...

From the Helm – Inaja/Wai-Wai Nation Journeys December 30-January 3, 2009

Monday, December 31, 2008

We (the *Lori*) parted ways with the *Beatriz* at 3 yesterday afternoon... Our team is made up of nine team members, two crew, Pedro, our cook and me. The trip was hot, muggy and uneventful until about 1:30 this morning...

Big John began scurrying around with an intense look in his eyes and finally informed me that the *Lori* was taking on an “unusual” amount of water. I told him to head for shore at full throttle. When I asked if we could make it the half-mile to shore, he responded that he *thought* so.

Based on this less-than-desirable prognosis, I went to the back cabin, got the men up and guided them to the forward, port side to try and level the flood in the hold below. We were soon to shore and the emergency pumps had just about dried up our immediate problem. The men went back to bed, some of whom probably still think I’m crazy to have woken them up to go look out the forward door at seemingly nothing at all!

At 3 o’clock, approaching the rapids just below Cachoeira Porteira, our main engine started to fail. This is not a very appropriate time to lose an engine but we had already reached the point of no return. By God’s grace and protection, we arrive in port at 4 AM with only a 3 mph positive speed against the punishing currents. I was relieved to here the engine shut down after we were tied off and was able to sleep soundly until 5...

- By 8:30, under a downpour of rain, we set out up-stream on the 8 hour “canoe faze” of our trip under the watch care of Inaja’s Elder Chief Foracha, 7 of his boatmen and three, 40 foot dugout canoes. The rapids on the Mapueira River are as wicked as I’ve ever experienced. They are beautiful yet, commanding of caution and respect. On two occasions, we had to be set off at shore to walk around the more torturous falls. These 20 minute walks through the virgin rainforest were amazing. It’s so dark and cool. We walked on a bed of fallen trees, limbs and foliage soft to the step. The sounds of birds, bug life and the roar of the falls had a soothing, surreal effect. It was all good.

The day just kept on and on and the rain was relentless. I was grateful for it though. Eight hours unprotected from the sun would have left our team weak and sick before we even arrived on location. As it was, we were cold, shivering and wet but, arrived well; ready for shelter.

- When we arrived in Inaja, the reception was sweet. Practically all the villagers were standing or squatting on the rocks above us. All were smiling and seemed glad (mixed with curiosity over our life jackets and many action packers) we had finally made it!

Vice-chief Marciano was the first to personally greet us. He walked us through the throng of people to what was to become our home for the next days. He had moved his family to lesser accommodations so that our team could have his home. We were all humbled by the gesture. I felt a bonding with his spirit almost instantly. He is gentle and soft-spoken. Yet, an aura of absolute authority radiates from him. A true leader; easily recognizable...

10:00 PM – It's New Year's Eve and we're all exhausted from the journey. Several of us went up to watch the festivities in the "Big House" but soon surrendered to call of our hammocks. I think I'll welcome 2009 after it's had a few hours to grow accustomed to itself...

Tuesday – January 1, 2009

Up early this morning. I walked in the milky dawn down to our "bathing rock" and took a dip in the icy water. This smooth, mound of rock extends some 60 feet out into the river. The roar of the rushing water is loud from the falls, 100 yards downstream. What a place! What an incredible piece of God's creation!!

- After a breakfast of fresh pineapple, bananas, papaya and melons, the team was off to the construction site to begin work. When we arrived last night, we found that the floor of the church building was not level. The work was to be far more involved than we had thought. The entire community got busy and by lunchtime, the team was ready to pour the concrete. It was a community effort indeed.

The division of labor among the Wai-Wai people is clear – all the heavier tasks are left to the women. The ladies and girls carried the water and bagged sand 300 yards up the hill from the river bank. The men mixed the mud and carried it by wheel barrel, thirty feet to the floor of the building. Seems pretty fair and equitable to me. I'm sure it *must* be biblical in some way or another...

- The day was long. The guys leveled the floor and pour 1/3 of the concrete! A day that started out a bit overwhelming ended in substantial progress.

We all found our way to the "rock" and soaked til dark. During the afternoon, one man brought us a hind-quarter of deer he killed this morning. Another brought pineapples and bananas. Yet another gifted us with fresh ground pepper seasoning and a bucket of juice that defies *any* description of taste and texture. The Wai-Wais have made us feel welcomed and at home among them. I am honored to be part of their family these days. I am humbled by the care and love they express through each act, smile and giggled. A truly beautiful spirit runs through this place...

Wednesday, January 2, 2009

A good night's sleep last night! When we arrive night before last, we were somehow one hammock short. So I had slept atop the big wooden table on the ground floor of our little

castle. Unbeknownst to me, Chief Marciano came over and saw me sleeping there. Last night he brought me a new hammock as a gift from the Elder Chief, Foracha! My, my. Who would have ever thought such kindness and comradery would exist in the midst of a remoteness so profound...

It's certainly good to have Rubin (our cook) along with us! It was but a pipedream of mine that we would be up to fixing what little we had brought along for meals at appropriate times. He has been good to fix tasty cuisine under the most primitive of conditions.

- There was no food for the people of Inaja today. So, a fishing team was sent out along with a hunting team. Big John and Pedro went along as observers. By 3 this afternoon, they had returned with a boat full of fish, a couple of turtles and a bit unnerved by the experience! According to their account of things, death was lurking at every turn and caution played no role in the experience! The Indian pros were accurate to the extreme with their nets, arrows and shotguns. My two men will have tales to tell the grandkids for years to come...

- Martin and I were graced with the privilege of being led around by both Chiefs on a tour of their community this afternoon. We walked all over the place. They showed us their 6 acre garden, the air strip, and all the huts in the area. We walked and the Chiefs talked. They shared much history, hopes and dreams as we went along.

It seems several people over the years have come through here, promising help in one way or another. Few have ever followed through. One even suggested they carve out an airstrip so the missionaries could land and visit. Well, the community *did* carve out an airstrip, 2000 feet long, by hand! Yet, nobody came to visit. These comments from the Chiefs were not said in anger – just disappointment.

- The final pour was completed by 5 o'clock this afternoon. We are out of material but little is left to do. Braghina will come up in a week or two with more material to finish the job. Our team feels good about what was accomplished. I believe we feel better yet about the new friendships we've made here among the people of Inaja.

- We're due to leave out in the morning on the ride down the rapids, back to the Lori. After a meal of fried and baked fish of various species, we bathed off the "rock" a final time. There is a service planned at the "Big House" in a few minutes. I look forward to it very much. It's been a good day in God's providence. The floor was finished; food for the whole village was secured; friendships were further solidified. Can't think of a better place to be for today or a better way to have lived it. Such a deal, indeed...

Thursday, January 3, 2009

The service last night will remain in my memory for as long as I am able to keep it there. The entire community came to the "Big House" for a service in honor of the "Americanos". There was much singing and speaking by the leadership. Then, we stood

up in front while the entire community filed by to greet us. They came bearing gifts – adorning us with necklaces, bracelets and headbands. Chief Foracha gave me his own bow and several arrows as a gift – We were humbled by the attention and the gifts. Such a neat thing to experience.

- After an early breakfast of fruits and coffee, we said our goodbyes, loaded our canoes and set sail down the rapids toward the *Lori*.

The downhill run was a bit faster than coming up. Even with a couple stops along the way to visit other villages, we arrived at the *Lori* in just 6 hours. The sun was brutal but bearable. The sight of the *Lori* as we came over the last set of rapids was beautiful to behold! It's time to go home...

10:30 PM – We pulled alongside the *Beatriz* a few minutes ago. Great reunion indeed. It's good to be aboard my baby again! Even with the A/C blown out in my quarters, there's no other place I'd rather be tonight. It's good to be home again...

William has done a phenomenal job running things. The comments from the team regarding his character and leadership made me proud as a father could ever be! I'm grateful to God for the boys he has given me. They are gifts on loan to me that have brought nothing but joy through the years. Thank You Lord for the privilege of fatherhood. Thank You for William, Phillip and Matthew.

From the Helm – Wednesday, January 07, 2009

2:50 AM – We've just pulled away from the port of Itacoatiara. I thought our fuel would be enough to reach Manaus. I thought wrong. We had to take on an additional 250 gallons. With the *Lori* in tow and the currents being what they are the going is slower. Even under her own power, the *Lori* makes us heavy. I'm grateful to have her along just the same.

Yesterday was a full day of cruising, as will be today. Our ETA for Manaus is estimated to be late this evening or early in the morning (Thursday). I look forward to a stop at Wellington's farm in the Eva later today if it works out. I look forward to savoring some of his exquisite buffalo cheese and strong coffee...

- Well, the Wai-Wai and Inaja are still settling into my heart and mind. I feel drawn to go back someday soon, as God leads and provides. Dwain and I spoke a good deal about the whole experience on the bow of the *Beatriz* yesterday as we cruised. A comment by Chief Foracha made an impact on both of us. He said, "You have come to the center of the jungle where all begins and ends and I thank you..." Even *he* recognizes the remoteness.

Such places intrigue me. Much of it is the high adventure of the journey. Most though, comes from my desire to experience what God has in mind for me to see and do. He has

yet to place a people or a place on my heart that did not enrich my life if I but obeyed in going. Interesting how that works...

There are nine clans living among the rapids and falls of the *Mapueira River*. I've been blessed to spend time in but two of them. If that's all God had for me, I am more than satisfied. If not, I stand ready for more. We'll just have to see how it all unfolds, one day at a time. I do better with such limited planning...

5:00 AM – The sun is about to give birth to yet another day. We are cruising along with intermittent slow-downs due to low spots and debris. I think I'll watch it all from the helm for a bit.

10:25 AM – The tarps just came down. A windless rain is falling at a steady pace. It's been a comfortable morning for travel - cloudy and cool; seas are smooth as glass.

Earlier, we had a good time of devotion and sharing. Our team continues to have such a sweet spirit. God has touched many lives both on land and among our members. I hope and pray any insight gleaned from our time together will be internalized for a lifetime. So many come to the *Valley*; see great things; gain new wisdom. Then, go home and consider all the blessings to be something isolated to their time here. I pray each will realize that God has allowed them to be here in order to enrich their lives in ways not possible back home. This, to make life more complete and meaningful *anywhere* He may lead them from here...

4:15 PM – Just pulled away from Wellington's a few minutes ago. Cheese and coffee led to a good visit that lasted longer than expected. He's needed to talk to somebody for awhile. I was it. He's going through some changes in life – difficult times. We had a good long talk. He'll be alright eventually. Acceptance of things the way they are and recognition of his part in it all will see him through.

We're now underway toward Manaus. The rain is still falling. Night will soon overcome this day. I look forward to a little rest. I love the wee hours of the morning but by dark, I'm done...

Thank You, Lord, for another day well lived. It's been peaceful. I'm grateful to You...

From the Helm – Thursday, January 08, 2009

11:30 AM – Arrived and anchored at Lake Janauari at 10:30 last night. I slept like a baby til 5:00 this morning. I must have needed a little extra.

The team's share time this morning was beautiful. Everyone has been touched the experiences of these past days. God has moved in the hearts and minds of each one in the way only He is able. I love to see it all happen...

Today should be a day of shopping and lounging in preparation for tomorrow's journey homeward. I spoke with Dad this morning for the first time in a couple of days. Our satellite system is on the blink, reducing us to no communication at all. Glad to be back in cell phone range.

It's been a wonderful time cradled in God's providence. He has kept my spirit calm. He has been faithful through it all - I never doubted the fact. It's how it works in my life, both here in the *Valley* as well as at home. I am grateful for the sweet fellowship He graces me with wherever I go. He is my Father, Comfort, Provision, Serenity and Purpose. He is all that I've ever needed and all that I have yet to need for the days I may left to see His wonders. The beautiful fact of it all is that when I've breathed my last, it is only just begun. Thank You, Lord. Thank You for it all...