

**From the Helm**  
***Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri & New Jersey***  
***Lago Grande do Maues Acu***  
***June 13-24, 2009***

***From the Helm – Saturday, June 13, 2009***

**7:00 PM** – I just heard from Stacy in Atlanta. Ron is on the plane but she volunteered to get off and come tomorrow via Sao Paulo. The slow arrival process of this team has begun.

The way it looks right now, Ron gets here in a few hours. Mickey and his team, along with Gary and Charlene, will arrive Monday at midnight. The Boys, Norman, Ramona and Andy will arrive Tuesday afternoon. At this rate, we'll set sail when everyone in onboard that is supposed to be onboard...

- Today has been a good one. Anderson and I were able to kill our list by Noon as the stores were beginning to close for the weekend. Most of the provisions are already aboard the *Beatriz*. All that's lacking is Monday's list of final preparations.

I have a meeting at nine tomorrow morning. That should just about do it for the day. I've spoken with the Boys, Mom and Dad. All is well.

***From the Helm – Sunday, June 14, 2009***

I picked up Ron and was back in the room by 2 this morning. He breezed through customs and immigration. He seems relieved to have finally arrived.

- For the past couple of days, I've been feeling a bit blue. It hasn't been anything consuming. Just an overall state of slowness; sluggish in thought and motivation.

As I sat at the airport last night, watching the multitude of humanity going about the task of being human, I felt alone. It started becoming clear that my spirit is hungry. Upon arrival at the Davinci, I got Ron settled in his room and quickly retreated to my own.

I slept restlessly last night. Waking frequently. Feeling the need to get up yet, desiring to stay down. I began to pray for peace.

As I prayed, all the things subtly disturbing me came to the forefront of my thoughts. I've been guilty of a process dangerous to me. The process of "assuming" surrender to God's provision and protection as apposed to deliberate surrender. Confession of my weaknesses and concerns has taken a back seat to simply lumping them in an obscure bundle of unresolved conversations with God. Speaking to Him in general terms as apposed to specific.

When I don't talk to God about what's truly on my mind, I effectively release myself from the beauty of His comfort and guidance. I know the benefits of specific confession and gratitude. I likewise know the downside of their absence.

Instead of yielding to the knowledge of His love and provision, I choose to drift to where there is no comfort at all - my own understanding. *AMOR*'s finances, family matters, personal finances. In all these things, I know my limitations. I know my heart. I know God's love and diligence. However, my occasional desire to see it all right now, dampens the joy of His presence.

I humbly ask You Lord, calm my spirit; feed me of Your boundless comfort; Draw me to Your lap; Rest my mind; Feed me, please. Thank You for giving me a life to live. Thank You for leading me to where I am today. Thank You for my family. Thank You for the work You've led us to do. I love You. I hunger for Your presence. I'm humbled that You listen to my words at all. I stand in awe of Your magnitude, grace and mercy...

### ***From the Helm – Monday, June 15, 2009***

**5:00 AM** – Awoke early this morning. Went to bed early last night. I'm rested.

Much to do today. It's the usual "trip's eve" deal. All that needs to be done will get that way a thing at a time. By midnight, it will seem like much more than a single day has been lived. I look forward to seeing it all unfold.

Yesterday afternoon, God was gracious in the time we spent together. He took from me each burden as I surrendered them, one at a time. I sat quietly until the deed was done. The experience was one I'd been craving; one I know so well; one I often put off until I'm empty. Quite a phenomenon...

**7:00 AM** – Time to start this day. I pray God's clear direction in every decision, each step of the way...

**10:30 PM** – It's been a *very* long day. All went well. Just took awhile to get everything done. I'm on my way now to meet Mickey and his team at the airport. Haven't heard from the Boys yet – probably still on their way to Miami. Our departure is planned after fueling around 4 tomorrow afternoon. I'm ready to get underway. I'm excited about it all – the cruise, destination and the beauty in what God will show.

### ***From the Helm – Tuesday, June 16, 2009***

Well, well, well... And all changes in the blink of the eye.

As I was leaving to pick up our team last night, I felt compelled to check my mail. Among the several awaiting me was one from Mickey. Weather has caused delays across the board and their arrival in Manaus has been changed to Thursday afternoon.

This set in motion a series of phone calls cancelling buses and contacting pastors and authorities. Our plans had changed decidedly. By midnight, all was adjusted. All is well.

I now know the source of the unrest that was within me through the weekend. It was preparing me for what has taken place. It was God slowing me so I could think and see more clearly.

I'd had a certain, unspoken reserve regarding our original destination. I was eager to go yet I felt somewhat restrained about the timing – things just didn't seem right... During our last trip, Edno had spoken of a new lake region God had burdened his heart with. As he described the area and the logistical difficulty to reach it, my heart lit with intrigue. The only time to reach such a place is during the extreme highs in water levels – now or this time next year. Kentucky agreed to undertake this endeavor in 2010. However, it is clear to me that God's idea is for us to go now.

So, our new destination is Lago Grande, off the Maues Acu River. I have no clue as to the details of our travels. I know nothing of the peoples there other than they have requested our presence for three years. I know God has spoken. I know I have heard. The adventure is on. On to new waters; new lands and new peoples. I am light hearted and ready.

What a deal this is! How amazing! How privileged I am to watch God's ways so close up. You are amazing, Lord. I am awed at how you work all things together the way You do.

- Time to head to the airport and pick-up Norman, Ramona, Andy, Gary and the Boys. Thank You Lord for the twelve hours just past. Thank You for a clear sense of direction for today...

### *From the Helm – Wednesday, June 17, 2009*

**4:00 AM** – Slept soundly until a bit ago. We came out and anchored in a cove just after dark last night. There was just enough breeze to make sleep easy.

Bruna showed up a few minutes ago with the news Little Charlie has gone missing. Last night about nine, he and his brother-in-law hired out to take a couple of guys to a nearby town. They were to be back by eleven o'clock – still no sign of them. I've sent a couple of our guys out after them. Just have to sit and wait for news...

- It was good to hold my Boys as they came through the gates of the airport yesterday. We've all been looking forward to this reunion. They've each left behind beautiful, sweet ladies to come be with me. I'm grateful to the lady's for loaning them to me for a while.

- No sooner had they boarded the *Beatriz*, Anderson, William and Phillip took off to take care of some business for us. Matthew stayed back to tour a few of our team around the Tropical Hotel. Ron finished up one of the hot water systems and I allowed myself some down time. It was all good.

- Today, the plan is to take on fuel and building materials. We had not purchased any materials for this trip because our project was to be a concrete pour and we'd already sent the cement ahead. With the change in destination, so comes the change in materials. By day's end, we should be heavy and ready for departure.

The stars are still bright and beautiful. The day is about to dawn, bringing yet another one to live. Thank You Lord for making things as they are. Thank You for the grace to see it that way.

**4:40 PM** - We found Little Charlie. Thank God, his "quick run" just turned in to an all-nighter. I have heard of much sadder endings in these parts.

- The day produced a series of little bumps along the way - All seemingly ironed out at this point. Ron has been diligently working on the hot water system. Man, I'm grateful to and for him. I trust this will be a good deal all the way around.

- Stacy, Charlene and Ramona have spent the afternoon out on the town. I'm sure they have about shopped themselves out. The Boys are hanging out at the Mall, checking things out.

- We've had some crew changes due to new restrictions by the Captain of the Port. We will just go with the new configuration and work out any kinks along the way.

- Fueling will have to wait till morning. Just no time left in this day.

I am exhausted. Looking forward to dusk when I'll be able to justify laying down for the night. Thank You Lord for the guidance You've given today. You were with me through it all. Many rapid little fires to put out - You made it easy...

***From the Helm - Thursday, June 18, 2009***

**6:00 AM** - I slept so well last night. Woke up as the sun was rising a bit ago. Relaxing night, indeed.

**9:00 AM** - The water system is a bit screwed up this morning. Always an adjusting period for new ideas. We will have to re-do a number of spots in the system for all to work adequately. It's a case of introducing technology to an archaic, existing system - doesn't always work at first... Ron is tired of messing with it. He's worked nonstop for 3 days. I guess one more won't kill any of us.

- Anderson and the boys are out taking care of the final, “final” list of the pre-trip – Port Authority, anchor, banking and plumbing parts. All that will get done will be done by the time the team arrives at 2 o’clock (or not...).

**5:30 PM** – We’ve just past the meeting of the waters below Manaus – underway at last.

We went to meet the team on schedule. The boys and I sat and waited two hours until the last passenger from Miami had come through the gates. Well, the team waited for us at the opposite end of the airport for the same two hours! They arrived via Sao Paulo on a domestic flight... Good ending regardless of the wait.

**8:00 PM** – Dinner was great, as usual. The stars are beginning to peek through the clouds. The promise of a breathtaking sky seems at hand. People scattered around the Beatriz, playing cards and chatting. I’m bound for the hammock for as long as possible. It’s been an interesting beginning to this venture. God’s hand has been visible each step of the way. I haven’t a clue as to the purpose behind the twist and turns along the way. However, I look forward to being part of it as it unfolds. I love it...

### ***Form the Helm – Friday, June 19, 2009***

**2:30 AM** - What an incredible sky! The Milky Way is painted bright from horizon to horizon, framed by the remaining billion stars filling the sky. What a thing of beauty to wake to. God did it just for me. I’m grateful indeed...

By our position, it seems we’re ahead of schedule. The mouth of the Ramos is only a few hours away. Several passing ships in the night made for occasional rough spots. Otherwise, it’s been smooth sailing. My hot shower felt great this morning – thanks for all the effort, Ron.

**1:00 PM** – We just rendezvoused with Edno and are headed toward Lago Grande.

Filipino, our chef, received a call his son was in the hospital – we prayed for him and sent him back to Manaus. Our prayers are with his family for comfort and strength as the little boy’s diagnosis is being deciphered.

I’ve had a pampered day thus far. Stacy gave me a pedicure and Ramona trimmed my hair. It all felt great. The up side of the deal is if something were to happen to me over the next days, less would have to be done to prepare my body to be thrown overboard!

Our ETA is set for 4:30 PM. No way to verify this except by arriving. None of us have ever been there. It is brand new territory. The kind of thing I live for. The kind of thing God has graced me to be able to do today. I’m filled with gratitude and peace. Having my Boys along makes everything even more complete for this old man. Thank You Lord...

*From the Helm – Saturday, June 20, 2009*

**4:00 AM** - Another beautiful night of stars. My, my, my...

We arrived in Sao Paulo just before dark yesterday. The winding through the narrow passes eventually yielded to a magnificent expanse of black water. We'd have never found it on our own. Even our guide got turned around a time or two.

What a place this is... The people are open and caring – easy to love. A whole new area, before untouched by groups of our kind. Thank You, Lord, for leading in this direction. So sweet of You, indeed...

**9:30 AM** – All teams on location by eight this morning. Construction is closing in a kitchen. Medical, dental, eyes and VBS are in full swing. The day has begun.

**2:00 PM** – Lots of people seen this morning. Small boats from surrounding communities continue to come and go, loaded with families. It's so good to see the concern on their faces turn to smiles as our team's minister. Doubt replaced by hope. The effect it all has on my soul is indescribable – the joy is humbling. It's as if I'm being privileged a glimpse of something far beyond my station in life. Something not intended for me to see. Something made possible only by God's grace and mercy. It is truly beautiful to me...

**6:00 PM** – Just arrive back aboard. Several of us went to visit a community near here we hope to work with in the future. Santa Maria received us openly and cheerfully. They've been shuttling people to Sao Paulo all day for treatment. This region is truly vast. I feel drawn to it in a profound way. As God leads, I will follow. It's all good.

**9:30 PM** – An incredible night on shore. The service was attended by practically all in the community. The leadership of Santa Maria was present as well. Edno presented a simple message. One God used to stir the hearts of 30 young people and adults. They each came forward accepting Christ as their Savior. What a sight to see. What an experience of mercy and grace. How grateful I am for these people. How joyful I am to know they now have the beginnings of the relationship God's so blessed me to live. I pray His protection and nurturing. I pray they continue to seek His comfort and peace... This is what it's all about. This is why God lead us to this place. He led us so that we might have the joy of seeing His marvels – His ways. Thank You, Lord, for allowing me the ride...

*From the Helm- Sunday, June 21, 2009*

Happy Father's Day, Dad. I wasn't aware it was your day until I woke up this morning. Living in two worlds, I sort of lose track of things from time to time.

I've been thinking about you this morning – looking back over the days we've had together. They've been good. I want to thank you for being the man you've been, and continue to be, in my life. The way you've walked through life has been an inspiration to me. Your commitment to live by God's principles without compromise; your care for me, Winston and Mom; your surefootedness in all situations; your overt love and compassion for those around you and the world at large. These things I've only been able to feebly emulate in my own life.

I've often chosen against your good counsel. You've encouraged me and loved me just the same. In times of trouble, you've been the rock I've intuitively turned to. You've never chastised me or lorded over me a deed poorly done or a path wrongly taken. You patiently waited as I meandered awkwardly through this world, praying only that God ultimately be glorified through my life or in my death. To my knowledge, you've never given up on this offspring of yours. You've been the father to me I could only wish to be to my own boys.

Thank you for continuing to pray for me as the days unfold. I'm grateful to be able to speak with you everyday, even from these glorious ends of the earth. I know you follow along as we trudge ahead as God leads. Thank you, Dad, for this life you introduced me to so many, many years ago. I see plainly now how difficult it was when you left your boys behind as you travelled these waters. On the other hand, I see *quite* clearly now why you did it. It is a wonder you came home at all. But, I'm grateful you did...

I love you, Dad. Happy Father's Day to you. We'll catch up with each other over another cup of coffee, soon...

**4:00 PM** – We've just tied off at Sao Pedro. The crew has off-loaded our supplies for an early start in the morning. This little place is in the Sunday afternoon party mood. During my drinking days, the last thing I wanted to happen was a bunch of church people coming around spoiling my drunk. We'll leave it with them and relax at anchor for the night. They will be quite teachable in the morning...

Just before our departure from Sao Paulo, they gathered us up at the pavilion and blessed us with songs and gifts of tapioca, Guarana, Brasil nuts, tucuman, and beiju. It was a beautiful thing to have happened. They shared of what they had. We humbly accepted...

Edno's heart is firmly planted in that place. there is now a church of thirty new Christians for him to coddle. Bless his heart. May God give him the strength and wisdom only He can give. What a deal this all has been. Blessed assurance of His love, mercy and leading, indeed...

***Form the Helm – Monday, June 22, 2009***

Surrendered to my hammock by eight last night. Slept soundly till three this morning – I'm well rested.

- Sao Pedro has a different feel than Sao Paulo. The people here are kind and accommodating enough, however, they are hungry of soul but don't realize it. These are a more worldly and jaded folk. Maybe I'm the only one of the team that sees it like this. It just makes our stop here all the more important to me. We'll see how the day unfolds. I look forward to what is revealed.

- I was asked to do a couple of eyes but talked them out of it until next time we come. I'm going to get hold of Wes and see if he can secure me one of those battery operated eyeball buffing contraptions in the near future. I'd just feel better if I were able to spruce up the brown dot in the middle after removing the tissue...

**11:00 AM** – The morning is moving along smoothly. Construction is closing up a couple of walls on one of the houses. Medical, dental, eyes and VBS are in full swing. The crowds are moderate. We should be able to tend to everyone.

I found a newborn goat out back of the clinic. I waited till his mama was distracted to pick it up. The little thing was so light; so cute. The whole experience only lasted a couple of minutes though. The baby started calling to its mama and mama looked a bit dissatisfied with the arrangements. She was acting like she was going to do some kind of "goat thing" to me; so, I put the baby down pretty quickly. I'm not much of a country boy so I'm wasn't sure what kind of "thing" goats do when they do a "goat thing" and didn't much care to find out. I enjoyed holding the baby for as long as I could though...

- I sent a secondary vessel to Maués earlier this morning. We've had to replace some fan belts on a couple of our engines and got down to no spares. As long as we're this close to town, thought we'd stock up. The kitchen always needs a thing or two as well. So, that list went along as well. They should be back by mid-afternoon.

**3:00 PM** – Well, it's obviously an animal day for me. There's an Anta (taper) named Samira at one of the houses that I'd love to take home. Just a baby weighing about 30 lbs. Eats out of your hand and rolls over and passes out when you scratch its stomach. When grown it's the largest animal in the Valley, weighing in at 600 lbs. Good eating, too. That's why she's here. They were hunting her mother and in the confusion, the baby was left behind. If IBAMA wouldn't take my boat and throw me in jail for it, I'd take her aboard for sure...

**9:00 PM** – What an incredible service this evening. Once again, Edno was used in a mighty way to bring the Simple Truth to these precious people. Seventeen adults came forward accepting Christ as their Savior. One, an older gentleman reduced to crutches, gave a beautiful testimony of his newfound Friend and Companion. He said he'd been, and continues to be, a Catholic. But, now he has been given the peace in his soul he'd always sought. He was grateful we'd come to share with him the Solution to what he'd been missing all these years. The Solution no religion, priest or pastor has ever made clear to him. He is a new man. I understood him, completely...

This has been a day of untold blessing for me and the team. Each has gleaned what was meant for each – each through a different experience God designed just for them. It's beautiful how it all works when our hearts are made teachable through surrender and obedience. Beautiful, indeed...

*From the Helm – Tuesday, June 23, 2009*

**9:00 AM** - Such sweet rest last night. I didn't budge until the sky was graying before the sunrise, bringing forth our last hours on location.

Edno just received word from Sao Paulo to come quickly. A man there wants to give about 8 acres of land on which to build a place of worship. Amazing series of events. Where there was none that truly knew their Lord and Savior just a few days ago, there is now a large group desiring a place where they can meet and give thanks for the new life God's given them. I'm simply in awe of it all. Thank You, Lord, for allowing me these days to watch in wonder. Thank You for the small part you've allowed me to play. Thank You for allowing me to be the fly on the wall, just soaking it all in as You've unfolded the days...

- We're scheduled to depart for Manaus at Noon today. ETA is set for some time tomorrow night, late. We'll see how it goes. I simply refuse to call the shots anymore. Such acts of futility have become acutely laughable... My, my, my. What a ride this has been. What a ride, indeed...