

From the Helm – Saturday, July 25, 2009

3:00 PM - Thank You, Lord, for the good day you've given me. You've helped me in many ways I'd not expected. You've given me peace where there was a shade of unrest. You've given me health where it's been failing a bit. I thank You for your consideration of me...

I was able to work the remainder of yesterday after getting our team off to the airport at Noon. The Boys had traveled South at 2 AM, arriving in Minas about the time Orlando left for home. It was a full day indeed but, most of the purchasing was accomplished and delivered by days' end – a good feeling to rest on.

After a couple of nights with some breathing and sinus difficulty, last night yielded a full 7 hours, uninterrupted sleep. It sure has made a difference today. Good to be close to normal once again.

- Over the past days, I've been in contact with Melanie at our bank regarding payments and receipts. It's become obvious that with one less trip this year, our finances will be more of a challenge than in years past.

As I lay in bed last night, I simply asked God to show me what I should do first. By morning, He'd made clear two things: *First*, that I'm not imperative to anything He has going on here in the *Valley* and that I need but be willing to follow Him *anywhere* He has for me to serve, whether here in the *Valley* or in a job of some kind back home. Wherever He leads is just the place I'll desire to be. *Second*, He made clear that I should write a letter to a few people I know, expressing our financial need. This too, I did. Then, having done what He'd shown to do along these lines, I went on to the city with the day's list of business. It will all be just as God desires it to be. Not a bit more or less...

So, here I sit in my room. Thank You Lord for the night's rest and this day of work You've allowed me. It's been good to spend time with You. I appreciate Your reassurances and calming care for me. I don't know how I'd make it without Your tenderness and light – then again, without it, I'd not make it at all...

Tomorrow, I have but one morning meeting. I look forward to a day in Your leisure. I look forward to what You may have for me to see and live. It is truly beautiful the way You care for me. Truly beautiful, indeed...

From the Helm – Sunday, July 26, 2009

7:00 PM - Had a good meeting this morning. Also, received word from the *Beatriz* that she and the *Lori* are ready to travel. We fueled them both on Friday. All that we know to do has been done.

- The plan for in the morning is to go down and be reassured we are cleared for sailing with the *Captain of the Port*. We never know till you know. Actually, we never know

till they stop us underway and make the decision on the spot, regardless of prior approval... With the new Commander in charge, the rules seem to be changing once again. The “*re-categorizing*” requirement for the *Beatriz* leaves many questions in the air. I hope to know the scope of these when I meet with the dispatcher in the morning.

- A touch of “pre-trip” adrenaline is fighting against the calm. It’s normal for me but, seems to intensify as the trip season progresses. It will be good to just get underway. I long for the *River* when I’m here in the city. Many times, the only good I see in being here is the discipline of being where I’d rather not be – good enough.

- This afternoon, I received an email from a dear friend of mine. Its contents were among the most reassuring and humbling I’ve ever received. It reminded me of who I am and from whence I’ve come. It reminded me that I’ve never done well with an abundance of most anything – complacency and arrogance have always robbed me of any joy that might have come with having more than I need. It reminded me of a few questions I must ask myself from time-to-time: *Would I continue to minister here in the Valley if I had to do it alone and unnoticed? Would I continue to seek God’s will if no one were around to see the result of the seeking? Would I continue to trust if I actually received all those things I tend to dream of? Would I continue to share my thoughts even if I knew they might not be well received by some? In other words, would I continue in faith, dependence, gratitude and willingness to serve even in the absence of tangible, supportive results?*

I ask myself variations of these questions every day. It’s part of how I begin each day. Meditating before the Lord regarding *false-motives, selfish-ambition, lust, pride* and the like, is the only way I’m able to survive the daily attraction of such destructive thought processes. In confession of such things, I realize my powerlessness over them – thus, the necessity of God’s protection and guidance through them. Whatever thoughts I leave unaddressed before my God, are those I’m likely to succumb to during the day’s unfolding. These are the things that block me from His presence.

So, on a day my answer to any of the above questions is “no” (and some days it is), it’s a day I’d best remain isolated and alone til the answer changes – of this, I am certain...

- This has been a good day You’ve given me. Thank You for friends. Thank You for family. Thank You for the joys of each...

From the Helm – Monday, July 27, 2009

5:00 AM - Thank You, Lord Jesus, Thank You... Your Grace and Provision never cease to awe and astound me. Thank You for Your kindness and faithfulness. Thank You for those who have chosen to be touched by Your call to help and serve. I know with all that I am, You will bless these far beyond their scope of imagination...

I slept soundly and fitfully through the night. Thank You for allowing me time to sit with You this early morning. We discussed it all and all is settled in my heart. I love You and

am entirely Yours to build and do with as You will. Thank You for the privilege of walking in Your gentle embrace...

- ***Just a note of explanation of From the Helm...*** *These writings are nothing more, really, than my diary. During trip progression, they deal with trip specifics and observations from location. Between the trips and while I am away from the Valley, they are of a more personal nature. If you do not wish to be encumbered by such non-trip-related thoughts and meanderings, please disregard them unless the "subject" line reflects a **specific or urgent** matter. Thanks for your consideration, prayers and support of our work in the Valley.*

5:00 PM – The team has arrived and we are about to set sail. All are well and as ready as I am to see what the Lord has in store. So good to see all the familiar faces along with the new ones. It's all good, indeed...

Our ETA and rendezvous with Tereza in Maues is set for 2 PM, tomorrow. My, my, it's great to be back on the River...

From the Helm – Tuesday, July 28, 2009

3:40 AM – We've been granted smooth sailing throughout the night. The stars have been so bright and well defined; our pilots have scarcely used the spots. The Star of Dalva reflecting a path on the water from the horizon to our bow. It took me awhile to finally close my eyes and sleep – so beautiful.

We were finally underway at 7 last night. We chose to wait out the roughness of the *Negro* – she was unusually irritated til darkness brought her calm. It's been a while since our teams have departed after sunset. It was a good to see the city lights for a change.

- The *Lori* is about 100 yards off our starboard side right now. She's a beautiful vessel, all lit up in the night. Eight of our team members are bunking aboard her, making the *Beatriz* a little less crowded. It's good to have the *Lori* – she adds to our flexibility during trip with multiple destinations like this one.

- Lord, I want to thank You for all that has transpired over these past days. As I lay in my hammock last night, I found it difficult to focus on any one event long enough to express my gratitude for Your presence, provision and grace in my life and work. It was frustrating for a bit. Then I realized there'd occurred such a myriad of things - my mind was just too tired to hold a complete thought. Thank You for simply resting me through the night. I needed it more than I'd thought.

5:40 AM - Just past Itacoatiara off the Port side. The *Lori*'s tied off to us for as long as the waters permit. For now, it's real smooth. The sun is rising. A new day has begun...

12:20 PM – Well, we are quite a bit slower than usual with the *Lori* in tow. Our new ETA is set for more like 4 this afternoon. So, we cruise and cruise...

The team spent the morning sorting through all the bags. After about 3 hours, it was all done. Very organized bunch. It's been good to sit around and visit with several throughout the morning. A time to catch up on our separate events during the year. These are wonderful people. Ray and Eugene are as sweet as ever. It's good to have Kristina, Scott and Todd back. Deborah and Audrey are a special treat as well...

4:45 PM – Just pulled away from Maues with Tereza aboard. Have no clue where we're going yet. Just know we're headed there as I write. Thank You, Lord, for safe passage. Thank You for all You have in store for us as the days unfold. It's a privilege to be here in Your care...

From the Helm – Wednesday, July 29, 2009

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MOM!!!!!!!!!!!! I Love you, miss you and look forward to seeing you next weekend!

5:00 AM – We cruised to a cove off Santa Maria last night, arriving just after 9 PM. Sleep was good. The weather was accommodating.

While in Maues I was able to visit with both Moises and Edno. Moises' boat is already pulled ashore with the refitting work in progress. The *AMOR/Patrice* will be brand new in about a month. Thank You, Lord...

- Edno just wanted to say "hey". He's returned on Sunday from *Lago Grande* where construction has begun on the place of worship in Sao Paulo. He baptized the first two of the 81 new Christians in that region. What an amazingly, beautiful thing! A place I'd never heard of just two months ago. A place I'd no immediate plans of visiting. God closed the doors to the Wai-Wai Nation, sending us to experience His Power and Saving Grace amongst a people that stole my heart from the very first day. Only God could design such a scenario. Only God could bless in such a way. My spirit tingles within me at the remembrance of such kindness on His part...

- Tereza came up and shared with us for a good little bit before departure, yesterday. We are blessed with being able to visit three communities this year who have rejected our presence in the past. The overbearing problem has been the Catholic Diocese in Maues. No matter how we attempt to explain the deal, the Church is adamant that the communities resist our presence. We pray often that God soften the hearts of the leadership to allow us to present His Saving Grace. As usual, He has accommodated. We never come to "convert" from one religion to another. We come to share the Christ *all* people seek deep within their souls. Nothing more; nothing less...

10:00 AM – All teams were ashore and busy by 8 o'clock. Medical has a steady flow. Construction is putting a new roof on the community generator house. Evangelism is meeting in small group all over the village. Dental is out for the day. It seems that during the rush and excitement of leaving Boas Novas in the Satere Nation last week, my

“box” of instruments and supplies was left behind. So, Moises, Seraphim and Artuzinho have taken off to retrieve it. Maybe get to pull a tooth or two this afternoon...

- Santa Maria is a large, clean community. Tereza was sharing with us that the people are grateful we are here but are fearful of retaliation on the part of their church leaders in Maues. Unbeknownst to these precious ones, we've come to alleviate *all* fear through offering a personal relationship with Christ. It'll be a beautiful deal to watch as many come to know Him as I've been so blessed to Know Him.

Noon – At anchor for lunch and a swim. The morning was good. Unusually hot out today. I pray everyone continues to drink liquids. So *very* important out here.

- Several decisions this morning during the Bible studies and visits to the homes. The people here are very open to receive what is being offered them. There doesn't seem to be any more interest in medical than there is in the studies. How good to see the hunger for Truth.

God's Truth truly set *this* man free. *All* other avenues gave me wings to fly and then, took away the sky...

3:00 PM – Well, the day continues. All activities in full swing. I got to sit in on some of VBS – what a deal that always is! My tools still haven't arrived. As a matter of fact, word is, one of the health agents of the tribe sent the box straight to Maues this morning via their medical boat. I guess I'm just supposed to continue taking in all there is to see in Santa Maria. I'm grateful for the extended reprieve...

All are well and in good spirits. A service will be held at the close of the afternoon, around 5 o'clock. I look forward to it all, indeed...

From the Helm – Thursday, July 30, 2009

3:00 AM - What a great service last evening. The house was full and many others stood within hearing range. Seven adult men came forward accepting Christ as their Savior. What an awesome thing for me to witness. Very moving.

- My instruments arrived about the time we were shutting things down for the day. There is very little anesthetic among our supplies. I forgot to restock. I guess we'll have just enough to work til it's all gone. Should be enough to get through the trip.

Thank You, Lord, for hanging the Milky Way so low and proud this morning. Being the only one up to see it, I assume You hung it just for me. Thank You, indeed...

- I want to also thank You for Your provision. I have asked for Your help through the touching of specific lives to give to Your work here in the *Valley*. Through them, you are providing – I am humbled before You in gratitude for those few who have already answered the call to give selflessly. I pray your continued peace and provision in their

lives and the lives of those who are still considering their response to the request. Protect them, bless and encourage them of Your light and comfort. Bless each one as they seek Your will during the course of this day. May they feel Your presence as they go about the duties laid before them. I dearly love each one, regardless of response...

7:00 AM – This day has begun. I look forward to it all. There will certainly be new marvels to experience as the hours unfold...

Thursday, July 30, 2009 (cont...)

3:40 PM – The morning and early afternoon ended up being full. Medical and dental both worked til all was finished around 3 o'clock. In dental, we managed to thin the line out when a young woman came close to fainting after a prolonged visit to the chair (the things we'll do to enjoy an early cup of coffee...). Bless her heart, she's fine. She had just begun her period and an hour in the chair was about an hour too long to begin with.

The children here are well behaved. Cindy made the comment that they know less about Bible stories and choruses than any she visited over the years. We've notice the adults are much the same way. There's a hunger for learning that matches our hunger to share. God has moved powerfully in Santa Maria over the past 48 hours. How sweet to see...

Our construction team has done a wonderful thing today. They've built a small house for a young couple having trouble getting on their feet. They've been living in a 6X9 room off the back of his parent's house. Tonight, they'll be the proud owners of a 10X12 home. I kidded with the kid telling him he'd better get in shape – he's got a bigger area to have to keep up with his wife in. He beamed me a big smile – she just blushed a bit, cute as can be...

Ray and Eugene's teams took to the waters this afternoon to visit the villages we worked in last year. I look forward to hearing from them later this evening. I'm certain they'll have stories to tell. Growth is inevitable when the Holy Spirit moves among a people as He has in the region. Year after year, we see the evidence of His continued presence and workings. God isn't obligated to reassure us in this way. I'm grateful He chooses to do so, so much of the time. Grateful, indeed...

From the Helm – Friday, July 31, 2009

5:00 AM – The dawn is simply beautiful. The Star of Dalva is bright next to Orion's Belt. Even amidst the hum of the generator, the peacefulness of the scene is complete. The night yielded good rest and sleep.

At the end of the day, yesterday, we had a brief service of thanksgiving. Jose, the President of Santa Maria, delivered a message of gratitude on behalf of the community. He thanked the team for all they'd done, emphasizing the teaching of the Bible. Without a doubt, the message of God's grace and salvation has been firmly planted here.

On my way to the *Beatriz* to board, I met up with Francisco. This is a young man who's been very involved with all we've done in this place. He's been present and helped with VBS, construction and even the Bible studies. I was impressed by his eagerness to participate. I'd assumed him to be one of the young teachers of the school. To my surprise, he informed me he was the Catechist of the Catholic Church. For a moment, I had no words. This is a young man our team befriended almost instantly. One that seemed the most intrigued with all we'd come to do. He, come to find out, is the very man charged by the Diosis to forbid our access to Santa Maria. The end result – God moved in his heart to not only welcome us but to also help us through it all. God has begun a work only He is capable of starting – a work in Francisco's heart and mind. I'll pray for him as often as he comes to mind. My, my, my. What a deal to witness...

9:00 AM – The day is underway. Ray has taken off to Perpetual Socorro to warn them of our arrival tomorrow afternoon. The way the schedule looks now, we'll spend today and tomorrow (until Noon) here in Santo Antonio. Then, move on to Socorro for the final two days of our time on location. That's the plan, as plans go here in the *Valley*. It'll be interesting to see how it actually unfolds...

1:00 PM – An emotional morning ashore. We had a difficult patient in dental but, that's just part of the deal. What moved me was the story told me by the young President of the community. During yesterday's storm, he and his 4 children, the younger two being 4 and 2 years of age, were caught in the middle of the river, in their canoe, when the winds came up. The storms here in the bays of Maues are among the most wicked I've seen anywhere. Their canoe capsized, throwing him and the children to the waves. He spent more than an hour at sea holding up his two youngest until he was finally able to reach the shore. No loss of life.

Today, this young man is rattled to the core. He's confused, grateful, angry and helpless. He's lost his canoe, provisions and tail-dragger engine. In the midst of it all though, he doesn't yet realize he's been given a new chance at life. I've asked that God give me time this afternoon to sit and hear his story. If He so ordains, I'll share the Solution he's searching for and needs at this time. As for his physical needs, we'll gladly meet them all from the abundance God's given us. Lord, make his heart ready to hear of You...

- All teams have had a great morning. Santo Antonio is a smaller community than Santa Maria. One easier to get to know. Those who've made it to the clinic or in to mine or Kristina's chairs have been sweet and friendly. It's been a joy to serve them. Construction is raising up a structure that will serve as a health outpost. VBS was the usual blessing to all involved. Evangelism visited in homes and held Bible studies. Ray made it back – Socorro is on alert for tomorrow afternoon. It's been like a whole day wrapped up in a single morning. It's good to be here, indeed...

5:00 PM – A storm just past. We're in a safe-harbor as it is. So, all went smoothly. We've just finished our work for the day and are about to head up and hold a service. Our team is all well. Everyone has an opportunity too share in the evenings before bed.

All are receiving something a little different from their varied experiences ashore. I enjoy listening. It's good to hear how God is dealing in each life. It's all good...

- I had an opportunity to speak at length with the young man from the near drowning. He is also the Catechist here in Santo Antonio. There's some ice that needs to melt in order for him to understand the simplicity of the Christ he proclaims to serve. Hopefully, we'll have a bit more time together before we part ways, tomorrow afternoon. I believe we will...

From the Helm – Saturday, August 01, 2009

3:30 AM – Got up a bit ago, well rested, feeling grateful for many things in my life. I think sitting and holding the two-year-old girl who almost drowned the other day has a great deal to do with the gratitude in my heart. She's so affectionate. As I sat, visiting with her father, she was in my lap playing with my watch and beard for more than half an hour. Such a beautiful, innocent creation. So grateful she's still here for me to hold.

Her father is still struggling with matters of logic and self-sufficiency. It's sad to see a person in such straits. The team and I continue to pray for his surrender to Christ. Last night, everyone pitched in and raised a thousand dollars to help replace the motor and canoe he lost – It will more than take care of the whole deal. My crew pulled together as well, donating items of their own clothing to the family. All unsolicited acts of kindness that humbled my heart. I'm in good company, indeed...

- Our plan is to work through the morning and depart for Perpetual Socorro over lunch. The service last night touched the lives of two men of Santo Antonio. It's worth it all to see lives changed – wherever the place may be; whatever the cost. My heart is subdued by the magnitude of God's workings and grace.

11:40 AM – The morning worked out better than I could have ever planned. As soon as we hit shore, at seven o'clock, Denilson negotiated a new canoe and tail dragger for our little family. At around 10:30, we gifted it to the family along with some "AMOR/Beatriz" life rings, gasoline and lots of clothing. In the midst of it all, I came to find the young man had accepted Christ as his Savior just an hour before. Lord, thank You for answering our prayers. Thank You for giving new life to this young family. Thank You for allowing me to witness it all. You are truly beautiful to me...

- We're now underway, headed to Perpetual Socorro. I have no idea how long it will take. Still a number of hours left in the day. I'm grateful for few that already past – I look forward to any that may remain...

From the Helm – Sunday, August 02, 2009

5:00 AM – It's the dawn of our final day on location. Yesterday was a blessing, despite the sullen heat. There wasn't so much as a breeze and the gnats plagued us in medical. Even a huge family of bats hung above us, quivering as we worked beneath them. I'm

grateful for the fans from the *Beatriz* – helped immensely through our chores. Medical saw many people and dental was steady. I was even able to do an eye on a lady. I'm assuming bat droppings will help in her recovery process...

- Perpetual Socorro is the smallest of the three villages along our way. It is also the most ridged in allegiance to the Catechism of the church. I look forward to seeing that loyalty yield considerably today, as God's Truth takes the place of man's dictates. It's what needs to take place for any kind of joy to prevail. It is necessary to life itself...

1:00 PM – Back aboard for lunch. The morning's activities went smoothly. Had to set up my drill to split a tooth. Served to make things a little more interesting. Glad you provided it for us, David...

- Construction is building an outhouse in back of the school. Like back home, they tend to wonder off on a bathroom break and not come back. This'll keep them a bit more visible, for what it's worth. VBS had another full house. Tey, in medical, spent a good bit of the morning caring for a 19-month-old about the size of a 3-month-old. She is severely atrophied in the arms from lack of muscle tone due to mal-nutrition. Hopefully, with prayer and therapy by the mom, she'll begin to develop. She is precious. Difficult to look upon the way she is today. I pray the little mother will follow through with the instructions given...

- Our Evangelism teams have been out and about, visiting the nearby villages form years past. I've heard of the wonderful reunions that have taken place. This team has reached the point in their ministry where relationships have developed, not just acquaintances. So good to see this happen time and again over several years of returning to a particular region. I've seen it with the Satere's, Mundurucu's, Lago Preto, Mamuru (just to mention a few) and now, here along the Maues Acu. Trust develops over time. No other way I know of it happening. Persistence and patience...

- The plan for the remainder of the day is to do more of the same until we've run out of time. Tonight, we've scheduled a closing service for 7 o'clock. I look forward to it, indeed.

Tomorrow, we'll sail at dawn for Maues and beyond. Our hours together are numbering less and less. It's been a good journey. All are well. All are grateful to be right where God's placed them for these days. Sweet spirits all around.

- Spoke with Dad this morning. Seems like all is set for someone to pick me and the family up in Little Rock on Thursday afternoon. Wow, the days, weeks and months have passed so quickly. I guess I can now consider it about time to go to my other home for awhile. See how life's been happening across the waters during my absence. I imagine it's made it just fine without me...

From the Helm – Monday, August 03, 2009

5:30 AM – The engines of the *Beatriz* and *Lori* just fired up. We're underway toward home. After a quick stop in Maues to drop Tereza off, we'll set out course for Manaus. ETA is set for around Noon, tomorrow.

I look forward to the journey up-stream. The conversation is always good...

From the Helm will continue as thoughts and events warrant. Otherwise, not...

From the Helm – Monday, August 03, 2009 (cont...)

3:00 PM – Well, it's been an eventful cruise thus far. We left Maues on schedule. My meeting with Edno and Abraao went well. They are set, fueled and cashed up for the September trip.

- The younger girls have been laying out upstairs. All our single crewmen have been unusually attentive to their needs and safety. Such concern for human life...

- I had my nails done for the trip home – feels so very good. The guys back in the USA have no idea what they're missing by passing up such a treatment. Truly feels good to be pampered on occasion.

- A few minutes ago, Amadeu cut his finger quite badly in the kitchen. Scott is sewing him up in the pharmacy. Looks like a tendon and artery were both severed. God will see them through the deal. I'm grateful I'm not the only one here. This is best left for someone who's better up for the task. I'm grateful Scott's here, indeed...

5:00 PM - The *Lori* just pulled up along side for tow. She's getting air and vapor locks in her the main engine. It's time to re-vamp her for further service – aluminum fuel tanks, pre-filter system, etc. She's a doll. Like any lady, she just needs some long overdue TLC...

From the Helm – Tuesday, August 04, 2009

2:00 PM – We just arrived at the Floating Mall across from Manaus. The group is out shopping till they drop. Then, off on a little jungle tour to cap off the day. They're all planning to spend the evening at the Mall in Manaus after dinner. I'll just stay put on the *Beatriz*.

- We travel tomorrow afternoon for Miami. Just one more night aboard my baby, *Beatriz*.

- It's time to go home. It's been a truly beautiful season. God has blessed beyond measure in every imaginable way. He has been faithful through His providence, grace, mercy and guidance. I know He will continue to reveal to me things I've missed along

the way as the days back home unfold. I look forward to every morsel He may have for me – every one, for sure...

- I'm exhausted right now. Just feel spent. I know it's my body and mind reminding me to breathe a bit. I believe I'll adhere to the plea. Yes, indeed...