

From the Helm

Memorial Baptist **May 22-30, 2006**

Sunday, May 21, 2006

Well, tomorrow the group arrives. Today Tommy and Tubby took me out to the Beatriz to make sure all is ready – she is beautiful and ready to travel!

It has been a rollercoaster ride getting to this point. We are almost 100% over budget because of the unauthorized repairs made to the Beatriz by Diorlando. There is nothing I can do about it now but pray God's provision for it all.

The week has been very hectic. I have shared about the events in other documents – no need to repeat it all here. I am just ready to get away from port tomorrow and do what God has for us to do.

Monday, May 22, 2006

The morning was filled with last minute activity. God answered many prayers and performed several miracles. It was awesome to see Him work! I was running practically on zero financially to prepare for the next two trips. It has been weighing heavily on my heart and mind for days now. I prayed this morning and then called Waldique (Mineiro), our “dollar” man and presented the situation to him. I asked if he would front me the funds to get the boats ready to travel when I get back on the 30th. He simply said, “just tell me when and how much you need and I will take care of it”... Wow Lord, You amaze me. I promised to pray for him and will. It would be a beautiful thing to watch him come to You, Lord, as his Savior. - Well, when I got to the airport, I was at total peace and filled with joy that the group was arriving. Despite the financial drama, etc, I was ready!

The group actually arrived 10 minutes early! It was great to see them all! They had absolutely no problems in Sao Paulo Customs and arrived in Manaus in great spirits.

While the team was visiting a bit with Tommy and Tubby on the boat, I was correcting some payroll issues with the crew and interpreters. It seems they duped Diorlando in to a 15% raise in salary. Well, I quickly “undid” the raise and got things back on course. I don't blame these guys for trying to get better for themselves but we are already far over-budget. So I just told them to take what we had originally offered or pack their bags – nobody packed their bags and everybody is happy...

Finally underway at 4 PM. Everybody is tired. I got to visit with Kenny and several others. Then dinner was served and the hammocks were put to use! ETA for Foz do Canuma is set for 10 AM.

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

Up at 4 this morning. Had a couple of storms during the night that slowed us down considerably. Still pretty much on schedule though. I look forward to the day.

Arrived in Foz do Canuma at 9 this morning. Pastor Abraham and his “crew” were waiting – right on schedule. I am very proud of the pastor – he has it all together for our team this year.

As soon as he arrived, he brought us Luis (his youngest son) who broke his arm 31 days ago and the doctors in Manaus simply refused to set it. Abraham and his wife have been praying and awaiting our arrival, depending on our team to re-break and set his arm correctly. None of our team has ever done

anything like this before. Jeff, me and the rest of the team are going to pray real hard about this matter. Abraham really has no other recourse out here...

Another situation that was brought to my attention is the Darc's (a young girl that has been helping Abraham and us do our work since about 2000) step-father had an accident at the sawmill where he works – he is in the hospital in Manaus, paralyzed from the waist down. Abraham asked if we could take her to her mother in Manaus – we will, of course.

Got underway to our first destination by 10:30 this morning. The cruising was slow because we have the AMOR/Blough in toe. The family rode with us. It is all a part of a new conviction the Lord has placed on my heart – the pastors are my family. So, they eat with us and come onboard at will. I can't believe I've spent all of these years allowing them to be "separate" in their own vessels – I am ashamed...

Arrived I Aru at 3 PM sharp. By the time my crew got the dock built for our team to disembark, their little time for anything other than unloading our meds before church. It has been pouring rain most of the afternoon – the village turf is slick as okra!

Had a beautiful service this evening. The Beatriz had to provide power to the village. My mechanics will attempt to fix the town's generator in the morning. There were no public decisions for Christ but I know the Holy Spirit touched many hearts here this evening...

After the service, Jeff, Emily and I saw a couple of patients and then boarded.

A few minutes ago, Bro. Jim came up to me and asked if I would mind him anointing the Beatriz for service anew after her re-fit. I was overwhelmed – Yes, Yes! And so it was as we prayed on the bow and he anointed the Beatriz with water. Thank you Lord for such wisdom and sensitivity to the leading of Your Spirit...

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

Slept soundly but just couldn't manage to sleep past 4 this morning. I woke up with little Luis on my mind. I prayed for Cida and the boys and then the setting of the arm. I feel at peace about it all – just TOTALLY dependant on the Lord using Jeff's touch and God providing the mercy that this child's arm will be corrected. A crooked arm on a 12 year old child could have terrible affects on his self-esteem and ability to function as a well adjusted adult. Lord, give us wisdom; give us touch; have mercy on both our team and little Luis, I pray...

- At 9:05 this morning, we began work on little Luis. I had given him a xanax at 7:00 AM so he was pretty well looped. The IV was started and more sedative injected. Within an hour it was all over. Praise God!! The arm is straight!!!!

What a humbling experience to be a part of. While I pulled and re-broke his arm in both places, Jeff manipulated the bones back in to position. The snap of bone never sounded so sweet... Thank you Lord. It was all You...

- We didn't get started in the clinic until after lunch. There is simply so much medicine to sort that it took forever. Plus Luis's deal took most of the staff away from set-up. In the end though, the day was perfect. More or less 70 patients were seen and I was able to pull some teeth. VBS was strong, as usual and construction built a new generator hut for the villa.

The service this evening was grand. No public decisions but it is obvious that the Lord is moving in the hearts of this people. The fruit may not be ours to see. I'm just glad to be a part of it all.

I am worn out this evening. It has been a day filled with victory and emotion. It is time to rest this weary body and mind.

We are set to start early in the morning so that we may move on to our next destination, Fronteira, by late afternoon. We will see how it goes...

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Up at 2 AM with rain pouring in on me in my hammock! I don't know what happened but the crew was slow to act. After getting me another hammock and drying the deck around me, I never got fully back to sleep. Not a good start for this fine Thursday... I know it is just Satan trying to put a damper on God's good work yesterday. So, I'll just let it ride.

Everyone was pretty much on location by 7:30 this morning. Lots of people to see if we are to leave at the end of the afternoon.

- The morning went well. We have 3 team members down this morning. We went ahead and put Bryan on an IV to get his fluids back up. The other two ladies seem to be on the rebound. Lord, please heal my team and keep us moving in the direction You desire.

- The day ended up good and blessed! We saw everyone in medical and I treated 13 patients in dental. We were completely done and bagged-out by 2:45PM.

As soon as we got everything squared away on the Beatriz, we had a brief service on shore. Bro. Jim brought a great message about the "hands of Jesus". When I gave the invitation, 6 people came forward to receive Christ! From there, we went in to the waters and baptized 6 others! What a terrific ending for our visit to Aru. Lord, It is all for You. Thank you for your guidance, protection and the grace to allow us to see the fruit!

- It is 5:30 and Fronteira is in view. We are scheduled to have services here in another couple of hours. Lord, thank you again for the day...

Right at the very beginning of the service this evening, one of the young girls that travel with Abraham to help with the work, suddenly collapsed after singing a praise song up front with their little group. By the time I got to the boat to get her something sweet, thinking maybe it was low blood sugar, Jeff and Emily were bringing her unconscious in their arms. My heart sank...

Right when everyone on our team seems to be getting back on their feet, down goes Mara.

Emily and Jeff and I tried to get answers out of her during her sporadic, waking moments. Finally, Jeff determined that it was a classic migraine headache. He hit it on the money. We medicated her and she began to settle down somewhat.

The service was over by the time I went ashore to help with translation, etc. It was like a strong awakening for me to find that in my absence from the service, two adults accepted Christ as their savior. One of them is the Tuchaua of Fronteira who just happens to be Grand Tuchaua Manuel's brother! Maybe I should stay home more often. This all just goes to re-enforce that vivid fact that this is God's work and that ALL are dispensable – He doesn't need any one personality to fulfill His plan! Praise You Lord for the lesson...

Friday, May 26, 2006

Was up and down most of the night checking on Mara. We decided to make her sleep on the Beatriz along with Abraham's daughter and Darc so that we could keep an eye on her. Well, that put me out of my hammock spot! So, I hung one in the pilot house and just made it work.

Finally quit trying to sleep at 4 this morning. Mara seems to be well. She only had a couple of crisis with pain in the night. She has been up smiling a bit and talking bit. Bryan seems to be feeling much better as well. Thank you Lord for your mercies...

Have a single, big day planned today here at Fronteira. I look forward to seeing God work His beautiful work through the touch of our team today – I am excited and humbled...

- The day went well. The people of Fronteira all wanted to go to VBS. So, even though medical was ready to work at 8 AM, nobody showed up until 10:30!

We worked hard all day. It was profitable for the villagers. Kenney and Mary Beth came under conviction to take a bag of clothing back to a young mother in Aru. So, they did. It was a blessing they will not soon forget. Thank You Lord for your leadership and our willingness to follow.

- The service this evening was attended more by the children than the adults. Fronteira has been one of the more difficult places to reach. There are about a dozen converts here but they were not easily won – it was the work of the Holy Spirit – nothing we personally could have done.

We left Fronteira headed for Kuata after the service. Just arrived a few minutes ago. It is 10:00 PM and the day is over...

Saturday, May 27, 2006

Awoke this morning to a great deal of surprise. I went down to get my shower at about 5:00. Sarah was in my bathroom with diarrhea and vomiting along with 3 others in the room. Lord, I know it is not coming from this vessel of yours. Please heal these that are down and eliminate this 24 hour virus that is plaguing our team – please...

- Very trying day today. This is the “Capital” of the Mundurucu Nation and it shows. It is the place where most is asked for by the ones of the Nation that need the least...

I met early on with Grand Tuchaua Manuel to handle the formalities. Had a great reunion with Mama Ester as well. She is the sweet, 87 year-old mother of the Grand Chief.

- They have a full-time doctor here now. So I was really reluctant to invest the resources involved in spending a day with our team here. The Chief asked, so we stayed. The Health Council even asked me to pull some “emergency” teeth – I did so. I was really looking forward to a day of “floating”. The Lord had other plans and I simply followed. He blessed – all went well.

We still have 5 down on-board. I pray this is the end of this entire ordeal. Satan is truly trying to mess things up – he will not succeed.

I have a meeting with the National Council after church this evening. They want us to go deeper in to the Nation to reach more people – This is what I live for. I trust I will have a group when the time comes – God will provide.

Sunday, May 28, 2006

It is 4 in the morning. The generator just went down. The boys resolved the fuel “problem” in short order and then we were up and powered again.

I slept very little during the night. People have been in and out of the toilets – If God would only allow me to get severely ill in all of their stead, I would welcome the ordeal. I have not felt well myself for the past several days but mine is just due to the elements – something try settle down in to my lungs. I have done my very best to cover it up. I need to remain well for the team...

Just as the service began last night, an incredible storm rose from the west. I could feel the wind surging. I had a radio with me and called for the Beatriz to head for safe-harbor in a cove near by. Pastor Abraham and I went to the AMOR Blough but it was too late to pull her away from shore. So, we just held the ropes and fought the wind and rain until it was over. The whole thing lasted about a half hour to 45 minutes. No sooner had the wind died down, the Beatriz calls me to say that Mary Beth had all but crashed. Her BP had bottomed out and her pulse was thready.

Jeff, Kenney, Bob and I went out in the Wilphimat. My heart was racing and my mind was bouncing around a million thoughts all at once... When we got there, Bryan and Emily had managed to stabilize her. Praise you Lord...

- I have made a resolute determination that Satan is most definitely on the attack. We are dealing with a pagan Nation that is coming to accept Christ at an alarming rate. In just two years, there are some 70 baptized Christians where there was only one when we arrived.

There is most definitely a spiritual battle going on here that needs to be understood and addressed by our team. I spoke with Bro. Jim and this morning during our devotional time, we are going to concentrate on this subject. There is absolutely NO other explanation for what is taking place with the sickness on this vessel...The hygiene in the kitchen and bathrooms has been impeccable. The team has been staying hydrated for the most part – then, the plague comes anyway. Lord, give us insight in to your Word so that we may better understand how to fight in the spiritual realm...

It is 5:20 AM and I just sent Filipino back to Manaus to help Diorlando prepare for our next trip. It is going to be a challenge as well – even more so due to two vessels and two destinations. I pray God's speed and protection on them both.

- Bro. Jim gave a good devotional on Spiritual warfare. Much of it was based on Dad's teachings some ten years ago – it was all good.

I truly came under conviction to confess my sins before the Lord and lead the way in binding Satan from the perimeters of my life. I feel strongly that the circle of sickness on this vessel is broken – I praise you Lord Jesus and thank you for your unwavering grace, mercy, guidance and protection!

The service yielded two adult ladies for the Kingdom this evening! How beautiful it is to experience it all!!!

About everyone on the Beatriz went gator hunting after the service. I am just going to lay in a coma in my hammock till morning. Thank You, Lord, for a day well worked among a gentle spirited people. Thank you for rising up my team from their sick beds. Just thank You for the day...

May 29, 2006

Woke up fit and ready at 5:30 this morning. We headed for Sauru to spend our last half-day on location. Every one on our team is Up and running! Praise my mighty God!!

As the clinic was getting started, Kenny and I went shopping for land. We have been offered a piece of property but, it is a little too far away from the general population. So, we went after something closer.

Right in what could be considered the center of the community, we found a house that was under construction. It is covered and floored with one of the most beautiful views of the Canuma River that I have ever seen. We've made an offer. Now we will wait for the Lord to deliver the land into our hands to be named "The Mt. Sinai Evangelical Baptist Church"...

- We said our goodbyes at around 2 PM. Abraham has asked for a little extra help with his fuel bill – I will pass that on to Bro Rickey via Kenny.

We are now underway for Manaus. The meds have been sorted; Dinner has been served; the group is visiting and watching the stars in small groups all over the boat. Satan has been DEFEATED! Thank You Lord Jesus...

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

It is 4:30 in the morning and Manaus is well in view. We made remarkable time on this trip home. Fuel is high, we are broke but, we have a schedule to keep. We slowed briefly in the Parana da Eva to pick up Wellington at his farm. He has graciously agreed to help Diorlando prepare for the double trip that arrives in just two days. We desperately need to reduce our costs and he is the one I believe god has sent our way to do it. Diorlando simply bought all the right stuff at the wrong places. Wellington will work all of this out – Thank You Lord for good and trusted friends...

- Today promises to be a long one. Lord, give me the strength, patience and gentleness of spirit that you expect from me. Keep me safe from the attacks that I know Satan has in waiting for me.

I called Tubby yesterday as we were leaving Foz do Canuma. She told me that the group that had contracted me for the June 28 trip to Tefe, has cancelled. I was really depending on this trip to at least introduce our ministry to a new group of people and help maybe just a little bit with our finance. The Lord just has something else in mind. I am eager to see how He has it all worked out. I am supposed to meet with the IMB boss some time today. I pray this meeting goes well and new relationships may be established. It is entirely up to you, Lord Jesus. I am a willing servant.

Reflections:

This has been one of the most intriguing adventures in the Lord of my 20 years of serving in the Valley. We experienced some of the sharpest, most distinct attacks from the dark side that I have seen in a long time.

I witnessed the Principalities and Dark forces literally sap the life out of a number of my team. I saw them violently interrupt church services with illness and horrific storms.

On the other hand, I witnessed victory in the Heavens. Our team got back on their feet; through it all, moral remained high and the Lord reached his mighty hand out to touch 16 adults who accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior – Two of these are Tuchaus. Remarkable to me – a simple touch of power and Grace for the Lord...

God allowed me to rekindle old friendships from the past and reinforce current friendships and relationships.

The Simmons Family are perfect. I appreciate the sacrifice they made to be together on this trip as a family. Emily provided exceptional leadership and professionalism. I am so proud of her. The Lord will use her throughout her life – she is a willing servant.

Jeff... Well, it is hard to describe my feelings for him. He is a brother, a friend and a true worrier for the Lord. I look forward to a long relationship with him and his family. I never want to lose touch again. The friendship is far too meaningful to me...

Kenny and Mary Beth: Words simply cannot describe my love for them. So, I won't even try... I am just proud they are a part of my life and this ministry. Thank you Kenny and Mary Beth for just being on this earth following as God leads you...

I must confess that every individual on this team has impacted my life. At some point, as the Lord leads, I will put these thoughts on paper. For now, I will just thank God for them collectively... The trip is over. We got beat up pretty good in the fight but Satan lost! So good to see it happen...