

From the Helm

Walnut Street, Louisville

June 02-10, 2006

Friday, June 02, 2006

Both Walnut Street and Wes' group arrived right on schedule. Only they were about 13 hours apart...

It has been a hectic and frustrating couple of days of preparation for these two groups. We have had no dollars to sell and even if we had, there have been no Reais on the market either. It has been a strange thing that God has used to teach me several lessons.

God showed me that I have good friends to help pull me through. He showed me that I have good credit with the dollar dealers in town. He has taught me that even with all of these resources, I must still *totally* depend on Him for sustenance, wisdom and peace.

- All that has taken place has also allowed me to bring home HARD to Diorlando that he has to be smart in his job. He cannot make decisions to spend large quantities of money without consulting me. That he needs to understand deadlines and restrictions. I trust he doesn't fail to learn from all of this...

The Group from Louisville got here yesterday in the mid-afternoon. I was able to use the meds money and a couple of thousand more from Todd to cover the rest of the purchases for the trips. The lumber and I showed up at the docks at about the same time. After a few disgruntled words from me about his not unloading my wood and roofing until I paid him, the truck driver quickly got his men busy.

The team had to wait for the Oklahoma group to arrive this morning so that I was able to meet them at the airport.

After taking care of a good portion of my bills, both boats departed the Rio Belo docks headed down-river.

It is great to have Dad and all three boys with me here!! Matthew is with me on the Veloz. William and Phillip are with Dad on the Beatriz. I called Cida the minute we got to the boat. She seemed very tired and fatigued. I trust God will keep her focused.

- It is 4 PM and the Beatriz just continued downstream as we headed across to the Parana do Ramos. Well Lady Beatriz, God's speed to you and yours over the next days. Trust in the Lord and He will make all your paths straight!

- At about 7 PM, Matthew had had enough and lay down. Bless his little heart – he is absolutely worn out! I'm headed the same direction soon...

Saturday, June 03, 2006

God Lord, did I ever sleep! I remember looking at my watch at 7:45 last evening and getting an ETA for meeting up with Pastor Edno. Then, the next thing I know, it is 4 AM!

We rendezvoused with Edno at around midnight. I am sitting here fighting the bugs attracted to my laptop. I look forward to this day. I will miss Rusty very much this time around but, he has sent a marvelous "Timothy" in his place – Todd is a very special young man indeed.

It is almost the dawn of this new day. I am rested, ready and excited. Lord, send your angels to protect the team and those to whom we will minister. Lord, be with me in a special way as well. I have a number of eye surgeries scheduled and depend on that special touch of anointing you are always gracious to provide. I love You Lord. I turn the day over to Your guidance and leadership...

- Went ashore right at 7:30. I could barely believe the tremendous amount of work that has been done on the building! Edno and the community have done an outstanding job! All our team will need to do is raise the walls. It is no wonder Winston admired and respected Edno so much...

Medical did a couple of house calls as soon as they got off the boat. A couple of situations that don't look medically positive. One is the man who sold us the land for the church, Mr. Fernando. The other is the man, Mr. Barata (cock roach), we put the roof on for last year. They are both just old with multiple problems that make it difficult to treat them. Our docs will do the best they can and God will heal as His perfect Will sees fit.

They day flew by. Everyone was busy. I did 5 pterygium surgeries and have only a couple more for tomorrow morning. All went well today – zero complications.

Little Matthew has been a trooper. He interpreted and held the light for David, the dentist, pretty much all day before "retiring" to the Veloz. I'm proud of him. I'm so glad he's with me. Thank you Lord for these fantastic boys of mine...

- The service this evening went well. Abraham was the invited speaker. He came up with 12 on the AMOR Blough! They spent the day working along side us in all areas of ministry. He will be here until noon tomorrow. It is when the memorial funeral for Winston will occur here in Sagrado. My, my... this is going to be the closure that I have needed. I need to lay my brother to rest in my mind and heart...

Sunday, June 04, 2006

The Lord gave me a wonderful night of rest. I woke up feeling fit and energetic. The day started out with the promise of being good. The team is all in good shape and peaking with energy. Unfortunately, that is when we need to watch them most.

We were all on location by 8:00 AM. By Noon, the church was all the way to the top of the windows in brick! Medical, VBS and Dental were all fruitful, to say the least.

I conferred with Mr. Fernando's family about the options for his treatment – there are few. So, I left the decision up to them as to whether we medivac him to Maues or let him die at home. I should have an answer soon.

- After everyone shut down we held a simple, memorial burial memorial for Winston out on the church property. It was extremely important to me for this to happen. I have not grieved or had any closure concerning his death – I have been hurting more than I realize. Abraham, Big John and Edno built a small coffin about 3 ft long. We placed Winston's cap, shirt, glasses and hammock inside. Abraham even made it all look like a little body all dressed up – Winston would have been humored and delighted by it all. I said some words that I don't even remember now. So did Abraham and Edno – it was all so surreal...

The entire team and most of the village was there. Edno made the statement that if it were not for Winston coming in to his life we would not be here at this place today, building a church. It was Winston that spied out this lake and determined to move in with the Gospel, regardless of the resistance. I am proud of you, my brother. I love you and miss you but will see you again soon on the better side of this journey...

- The decision was made to take Fernando to Maues. It is 4 PM and will be a long trek for Big John and the Wilphilmat. God's speed to them and a safe return – that is my prayer...

The service was good this evening. Todd did a great job. No public decisions but, the Holy Spirit is moving here in this place. The seeds planted will fall to the fertile soil. God has great plans for this community – I look forward to seeing how He will work here in this region through the church here in Sagrado.

- Once again, I was proud of Matthew. He worked all day and even attended the memorial service (a setting that is truly about *last* on his list of places he likes to be!). I love this child. He is special indeed.

Monday, June 05, 2006

Woke up a little after one this morning. I slept restlessly up to that point anyway – Big John wasn't back yet. I went on back to my hammock and lay down again. I finally gave up at 4 AM and got up. Within a few minutes after I brushed my teeth and washed my

face, I saw the lights on the Wilphimat arriving! Thank You Lord! I was just about to send a rabetta after him.

About halfway to Maues, the lower end of the engine stripped a bearing and the forward propelling gear. They made the rest of the trip in reverse. The old man was taken to the hospital while John tracked down a sober mechanic – not an easy thing to do on a Sunday afternoon in Maues...

After a couple of hours of work and right at US\$ 600.00, the lower end was re-built and John and Fernando's son were on their way home. God is faithful to provide under these circumstances – only cost me a lower-end and a night's sleep! Small price to pay for all that was accomplished though.

- Today is our last day in Sagrado. It is 4:53 in the morning and I am ready to get going! I have two post-ops to do then I plan on pulling teeth all day with David. I look forward to it! First, I need to know how the team is doing physically – Lord, keep everyone healthy and productive. This is my petition. Be with Dad, William, Phillip and the team over on the Trombetas. Be with Cida back home. Lord, just keep us wrapped tightly in Your arms of protection this day...

- We had a great devotional time. Todd is anointed by the Holy Spirit in a very special way. His words each morning serve as both teaching and blessings for me – he edifies this little church we have on board the Beatriz.

Todd spoke today about what came to mind during Winston's memorial yesterday. He brought the fact to light that when Abraham and Edno spoke of Winston, they spoke of him as a person and brother that was there for them. A man that poured himself into their lives, Winston never had, or even wanted, the goods of this world for himself or even enough left over to really share a great deal. However, what these men loved him for and now miss him for was the way he stood by them and lived with them and shared in their pain and joy – That is how they remember my dear brother. Wow, what a legacy...

- The day was a true success. All teams finished their work by about 4 PM. The building looks great. Medical and dental left no one without treatment. Evangelism saw 5 come to Christ as their Savior. All of my post-ops looked remarkably good. If the patients just follow the post-op instructions, all should be well... The young man that I did the lip and forehead on, showed up at the boat with 200 oranges! Bless his heart, he is just so proud to be rid of the little flaws in his appearance that caused him some self-esteem problems. I was just glad I was able to help.

- This evening's service was tremendous. It was the "Good-bye" that now has become a tradition for Sagrado. They gave us the best that they had of the fruits of their labor. The team was given fruit, Brazil nuts, cupuacu, tapioca, acai, oranges and pure honey. Practically the entire leadership had a word of thanks for us. They even presented me with a huge cupuacu cake! We were all honored. It was a great ending to a great 3 days. Thank You Lord for making it all happen; for paving the road that we traveled; for

keeping us safely hedged from the evil powers that surround us constantly. Thank you Lord.

Tuesday, June 06, 2006

We arrived in Sao Jose do Cucui at about 11 last night. The river is narrow here and the current is extremely strong – the headwaters are nearby. I woke up at 5, sharp. I am rested.

The only team member down is Josh. He just got extremely hot and needs to regain his fluids and strength.

- Just returned from the village to get things arranged for our two days here. Edno has had a hard time entering here with the Gospel. The priest back in Boa Vista and the local catechist have been huge barriers. With the promise of medicine, the door was cracked open.

Edno has been witnessing to the catechist over the past weeks and feels that the Holy Spirit is moving in his life. We will just pray that he comes to know the Lord in time to lead the new church here that is sure to immerge!

- The day went well. We have a couple of team members down but they are bouncing back. This is nothing like what took place with Memorial. This is not an “attack”. This is simple exhaustion but, we must remain alert to the spiritual resistance that is present and at work in the heavenlies.

All teams were busy. Lots of patients, roofing, teeth and children. The service yielded a new convert to the gospel. The lady seems to have a rather wild past. When she accepted Christ, several people in the congregation clapped their hands – it was a good evening indeed.

Wednesday, June 07, 2006

I first woke up this morning at one o'clock. I put up my hammock and was ready to start the day. When I got downstairs, I glanced at my watch and saw the error in my ways – just turned around and went back to my hammock...

It is 4:23 AM and Pat and I just finished seeing a young lady that was brought to us from about 2 ½ hours from here suffering from abdominal pain. She evidently has an intestinal obstruction. After examining her, Pat gave her some laxatives I happened to find in my shaving kit and we went her and the family on to the village with two

hammocks that Waldemar donated to the cause. We will see her in a few hours to see if she was able to at least pass some gas.

- I had a little surprise this morning when I went to get my laptop out of the room. Matthew got a new pet yesterday. As the construction team was pulling off the thatch of the roof they were going to replace, they found a tarantula. Well, Matthew decided he would keep it as a pet. He put it in a 2 liter coke bottle with a rather large, gapping hole for the beast to be able to get some fresh air and put it in our cabin.

When I went to get my computer, I reached in my case and the spider came cruising up my arm. Mind you, I'm not the excitable type of individual that freaks out over just any little occurrence. However, in this instance, I was VERY quick to shake this dude off of me, back in to the case! Big John will remove the creature at dawn and I will strongly suggest to Matthew that he release him back in to the wild... I think he was already planning to do this. Matthew has a heart of diamonds. He seems to like the "idea" of this kind of stuff more than the reality of it all – it hurts him to see animals away from their natural homes. He is a good boy. I'm proud to be his dad.

- It is 5:06 and the Veloz will come alive in less than an hour. I've been sitting here pondering the finances of the trips this year and the significant blow that Diorlando caused us with the Beatriz. I know that the Lord has it all worked out – I just wish I could get a glimpse at how He is going to do it.

I have been thing about the other team at work on the Trombetas River right now, being led by William and Phillip under Grandpa's watchful eye. I trust all is well there. We have no way of contacting each other. I know that they will need to start their journey home tonight after the service in order to be in Manaus on the morning of the 9th. Lord, give them safe passage and tranquil waters for the 52 hour journey ahead of them...

- It has been a very busy day. I had a couple of serious patients. I know they will be in considerable pain tonight. I went ahead and gave them ample quantities of Ultracet to make sure they will be as comfortable as possible.

Construction finished not only the roof and siding on the house they were re-doing, they also built a house for Matthew's "new" pet, Shmango! Shmango is a very young parrot that was given to us at dental. In about a month, he will have all of his feathers and will probably be a beautiful thing – for now, he is just a *thing*... I love pets. The only problem with Shmango is that he will live to be 75-80 years of age. What do you do with a pet that will most definitely outlive you!?!?! Oh well...

All teams were bagged out and on the Veloz by 5:45 PM. Not bad at all for a last day. The meds are running selectively low in some items. This has been about the best med-pack kit put together so far. With a couple of minor "tweaks" we should finally have a consistent buy list. It is about time after all these years...

- The team seems to be all back on their feet. Christopher got a little down this morning. He should be the end of this cycle of stuff going around... Lord, it is almost time to head for home. Please allow everyone to enjoy these last few days.

- The service tonight was a miracle of God. It was a true show of the powerful moving of the Holy Spirit over a community. What we have prayed for, the Lord has provided. Both the Catechist and the vice-catechist publicly accepted Christ tonight along with one of the teachers and 3 other adults of the area. How amazing! Thank You Lord!! I almost feel sorry for the death of the Catholic Church here. I mean, really, who is going to preside over Sunday Mass in a couple of days!?!?! I do believe the priest in Boa Vista has a little problem on his hands up in these back-waters. He is going to be ticked when he finds out about all this...

- Another surprise was that Cilene, her husband and 9 more came up from Sagrado for the service this evening! So good to see them. They are becoming such good friends – God, please bless them beyond measure...

Thursday, June 08, 2006

I slept incredibly well last night. It is 4 in the morning and I have no clue where we are anchored. Just know that after looking at the date on my watch, we need to head home tonight after a round or two of gator hunting. I need to allow us 30 hours to make it back to Manaus by early morning on the 10th.

In a couple of hours the Veloz will be awake and I will know how everyone is doing. I look forward to this day and all that God is going to show me. I continue to pray for the Beatriz as she cruises to home-port in Manaus. She should arrive tomorrow morning at about dawn. Hopefully I will be able to reach her by cell phone tomorrow morning.

- The day has begun. It is 5:40 and Todd is not feeling well. He is the 6th to go down. All I can do is make sure it is not coming from the boat. It is not. Hygiene is at a high level in the kitchen, as usual. It is just heat, exhaustion and fatigue. It is time for the trip to end. 6 days on location is almost too much for groups that won't slow down until they drop. This is not a complaint on my part. Just a confirmation of a trend that I have seen as a pattern in some groups over the past 20 years. Each team is unique – they each require special adjustments in the way I care for them. It is just part of the deal...

- St. Antonio is a different kind of place. It is the nearest village to Boa Vista do Ramos. It has always rejected the preaching of the Gospel. The people here are worse off physically and lack the personal hygiene that we have seen in both Sagrado and Cucui. I see a direct relationship between the fact of a community being Christian and the way that its population cares for itself. I have made this observation many times over the years but, it seems particularly evident and obvious here in Lago Preto.

- The day flew by. The construction team put a roof on a house; VBS was active; Medical was swamped and dental was hopelessly overwhelmed. All teams were bagged

out and onboard with dental pulling up the rear at 6:00 PM. It has been a rough day. But it has been the *last* day as well.

Todd is still down Josh (who has been working with VBS with his wife) has been vomiting violently this evening. His situation doesn't seem to match that of the other 8 that have gotten down. We are watching him closely this evening and have given him IV Levaquin to make sure our bases are covered.

We all enjoyed the service this evening. The house was packed and Ps. Ronaldo preached. There were no public decisions for Christ. At the end of it all, the community presented us with a document of donation to a parcel of riverfront property (100' x 100') for the purpose of building a house of worship in the future. They also presented us with fruits and macacheira. It was moving because of the fact these people have never allowed us to even dock at their port in the past....

Friday, June 09, 2006

We were underway at 5 this morning. Josh seems to be settling down a bit. He hasn't vomited since 3:30 this morning. I feel the fenagren and Levaquin is finally taking affect. Todd was just sitting down with me visiting. He feels well but weak. His ordeal is finished...

- Last night, after church, Edno, and his wife along with Ronaldo, came aboard to say their goodbye to the group and stayed for over an hour. It was a good time of sharing. While they were sharing, 3 groups of eager "gator hunters" were out doing their thing – all had success! There were more gators on this boat than people for awhile! Matthew headed up the expeditions – I'm glad everybody had fun.

I didn't get much sleep but feel rested. The AMOR/Beatriz should be arriving in Januari Landia right about now (6:30 AM). As soon as I get a good signal on my cell phone, I will call to make sure all is well with them. I can't wait to see them all. The Veloz ETA for Manaus is set for 5 AM tomorrow. I will take the Wilphimat and rendezvous at dawn at the Tropical Hotel.

Well, the kitchen has just served me breakfast. I guess I'd better eat it before they start bugging me about it. They really try to keep me eating regularly...

- Dr. Pat started a prophylactic dose of Cipro on everyone today. I think it is a good idea. If I could just get all the groups to do this, I believe the overall health of the team would be better protected. The Lord will just have to deal with each team leader on this. Not all docs agree on the issue of prophylactic medicine. I have never taken anything for myself but for short-term individuals, I am *all* for it.

- The team seems to be "mended" now – Praise God! Everyone is on their feet and I am ready to go to bed. I have been waiting for 8:00 PM to role around so that I don't feel like such an old man when I slide in to my hammock...

Saturday, June 10, 2006

Arrived in Janauari Landia at 5:20 this morning. Right on schedule. After breakfast, I will be heading to Manaus in the Jon Boat to meet up with the Oklahoma/Dallas group and my boys!! I will leave this team in the capable hands of Matthew...

This has been a beautiful adventure. We've seen fruit produced as well as seeds being planted. I believe in my heart that we've accomplished all that God had for us to do and much more than *any of us* had anticipated. God has been faithful, as always. I look forward to hearing from Edno during the year to see how God will continue to work in the great region of Lago Preto...

Boyd Walker – June 10th, 2006 – 6:14 AM