

From The Helm
Mt. Home, Arkansas
July 13-22, 2006

Friday, July 14, 2006

Yesterday was just a long, long day for everybody. The boys, Melissa and I went to the airport at the usual One in the morning to pick up the groups. Well, the airport was closed due to fog... So, to make a very long story and night short, the group flew around between Manaus, Belem and Santarem until it finally landed here at 8 AM!

- It was great to see everyone as they came through the doors at the airport. Charlene was the 1st one through with John Tinkle pulling up the rear, 24 good friends later.

It was particularly great to see an old friend in an entirely new environment, Carmen (Robbie's sister) and her son. I've known Carmen for years – just the first time she has been in my world – It is going to be fun over the next bunch of days.

Just about everyone on both the Beatriz and Veloz are familiar faces. Great to see Mickey, Brent, Nancy, John, Charlene, Carmen – everyone...

- We cruised all afternoon and night. Only stopped once at Wellington's and once at the mouth of the Ramos to pick up a little fish. It is now 4:40 AM. I've had a restful night and Boa Vista do Ramos is in view. We will spend a time here collecting people for the Beatriz, dividing up some final supplies between our two vessels and then separating to our individual destinations.

- Edno was waiting at the docks when we pulled in. Big John went in to town to find fish. He got us some Pirarucu and Surubim – good find!

Just as we were getting ready to pull away Silvio, one of our interps, came up to me and said he felt he might have malaria. So, I sent him up to the hospital to get tested. It seemed like an eternity waiting for the results... They finally came back "negative" and we were underway at 8:30 this morning. ETA for Ponta Alegre is set at 5:00 PM. Lord, be with William and Phillip as they spearhead the Oklahoma team. I feel relaxed and at peace with their ability and capability to take care of things – please keep Your angels around them as they carry on in the next days...

With the new antenna boosters we bought for the cell phones. I surely hope we will be able to speak to each other throughout the trip. I'll try a little later.

- When we arrived just off of Ponta Alegre, the AMOR/Teresa met us in mid-stream. Raimundinho, and about 20 others, were headed to a preaching service in a nearby

community. He will meet up with us later. Guess what, he isn't wearing and burlap bags! Good deal. At least things "appear" to be back to normal...

Had a little surprise birthday party for Carmen after dinner. She seemed truly surprised! It was a good time of cake and conversation. Robbie had called earlier in the day to remind me and to wish her a good one. I'm glad he did – Otherwise, I wouldn't have figured out the right day. She wouldn't tell me!

It is about Nine PM and half the group is out gator hunting. I just spent some time adjusting the cell booster on the roof and was able to reach the Beatriz! Thank God it works!! The *best* news of the conversation with William was that Melissa accepted Christ at the service this evening! Wow, what a deal... Now, the circle is complete. Just waiting for the Holy Spirit to touch little Matthew and the family will be "family" in every sense of the word...

Right now, I am just going to lie down and collapse. The morning will arrive sooner than I need it to – it's time to rest.

Saturday, July 15, 2006

Denilson woke me up at 4:20 this morning – a little later than I like it. The day is going to be everything God wants it to be. I look forward to visiting with Tuisa Amado and Pastor Raimundinho. With Tuisa Mikilis dead now, it will be interesting to see how the new administration is evolving. You know, I will miss that old man. He always used to have a "secret" to talk to me about – it was always a request for a little "pocket change". I always accommodated him with a fifty or a hundred note – he was a cute, funny yet powerful old guy indeed. Unfortunately, unless he made a profession of faith before he died, he is now eternally separated from God and I will never see him again. We preached and spoke of Jesus repeatedly to him over the past several years – he never made a public decision as far as I know...

- It is 5:20 in the morning and the Veloz is waking up. If this crowd is going to get up early like this, I am going to have to get up earlier myself! Otherwise, I won't have enough time to myself...

Lord, please give me wisdom, guidance and patience today. Keep my team healthy and focused on Your will, not a particular task to perform. Give us a good day that we will give you the Glory for. Amen.

- Had a terrific, steady paced day. We only had today here in Ponta Alegre so, we had to abbreviate lunch. We stopped all work at 4:30 this afternoon in time to bag-out and hold a service at 5 o'clock sharp. It all went well.

I ended up translating for Raimundinho to the Team. I think I will continue to do this as long as the Lord keeps me at peace about it. Sometimes it can be distracting for the locals for me to be speaking in English...

Immediately following the service, we got underway to our next destination, Kuata. Arrived at a little past 7 PM. No one interested in anything but rest – no gator hunts tonight...

All-in-all, a very productive day. VBS had a little over 120, twice today. Medical saw around 100 patients and dental plucked 48 teeth on 23 folks – the Lord blessed in every way...

One great final note – Tuisa Mikilis did indeed accept Christ before his death! Praise the Lord!! On the downside, Amado “inherited” his same propensity to ask for money, hospitals, airplanes and food... Oh well. Can’t win ‘em all...

Sunday, July 16, 2006

I didn’t get up when Denilson woke me at 4 this morning – I took another hour. It felt good though.

I was unable to reach the Beatriz last night but will try again this morning. We anchored off Kuata last night and the breeze was great for sleeping. The skies were absolutely gorgeous. A great way to exit the day...

Today is new territory for us. The team is feeling good and we are pumped for another “single day on location” deal. An abbreviated lunch and an early service. I look forward to it all.

- Spoke with the boys this morning. They are having a big time – lots of work being accomplished and 25 public decisions for Christ at last night’s service! The Holy Spirit is *most definitely* moving in their area. A land that 3 weeks ago was **completely** closed to the Gospel, now has over 30 new Christians (so far!)... Thank You Lord for the Harvest.

- Our community of Kuata is small, dirty and depressed. The people here are very kind but are obviously in need of the Hope and assurance of Christ’s salvation. The president, Aluizio, is a fine young man. After speaking with him, it is obvious that he is a man of wisdom and very close to accepting Christ as his Savior. There isn’t so much as a catholic church in this community – Lord, rain You Spirit down on this village, please...

- The work day went hard but well. VBS had every child in the area with them twice today. Medical and dental was busy up to the end. Dental was the last to shut down (as usual). At work this afternoon, a mother and her two daughters came in. These little girls (probably 4 and 6 years old) were precious and about the most beautiful little creatures I have ever seen in these outbacks. We didn’t pull any teeth on them but we did get some pictures! At the end of the day, after the service, the young mother came up and offered the older one to me to take home and raise – my heart melted, of course. I wish I could have. Cida would have been in agreement. Who knows, maybe next year...?

I translated for Raimundinho again this afternoon. He preached on John 1:31-32 where the gates of Paul's prison were opened by the earthquake and the guard became distraught. "Trust in the Lord and you and your household shall be saved..." Great message but the harvest will come another day.

I am very proud of Brent and Carmen. They are working so very well in dental. Brent has become an impressive "jungle dentist". Carmen is a dentist anyway – I just love her no matter what! I am loving being able to work with her. She is a lot of fun and I feel has needed this kind of break and experience. Thanks, Robbie, for helping me push her along to get her down here. Her son, Jay, is fine young man as well. I trust he will glean some good experiences from all of this and that the Lord will touch his heart in a very real and changing way. He has taken Matthew under his wing and I appreciate that very much. Every night, Pastor Raimundinho's boat turns in to a "movie theater" where the kids, interps and crew watch a movie before bedtime. They are all having a blast.

- We were underway to Aiaru at 5:30 PM. ETA is set for 7:45. We won't try to make the church service – today hardly seemed like Sunday. The days just roll together... We'll anchor offshore for the night. I look forward to seeing old friends there tomorrow.

Monday, July 17, 2006

Restful night last night. I woke up on time this morning at 4:00. Gonna be a good day...

Awoke offshore of Aiaru. It all looks the same. I went ashore as soon as devotional was over and visited with Pedrozinha. He has been my 1st stop at this village for as many years as I have been coming here. We had strong, sweet coffee and good conversation for a good while. He has accepted Christ now – something that has been heavy on my heart for many years. He is 84 years old and I want to see him in heaven someday... Carmen came up and joined the fun for a bit before the day got started. Pedrozinha was pleased to meet her, of course.

- We set up clinic and dental down at the church and church kitchen. VBS suffered it out up at the pavilion. I just figure that since the med work lasted all day, it should have the more comfortable accommodations. It was a hard, long day's work indeed... One particular patient of Carmen's had a tooth abscess that would have probably have become septic and killed the child within the next week or two. You never know about these things but the prognosis without the extraction and antibiotics looked pretty bleak in retrospect – I'm just glad God sent us this way...

We finished up the day at around 5 PM and headed straight to the church service at the pavilion. There were a good number in attendance – no public professions of faith but I have to realize that this is basically a Christian community. When we arrived 7 years ago, there were no Christians at all and we were fought (almost to the point of getting physical) very hard *not* to come here and share. By God's insistence and Grace, we remained and the work here is among the strongest on the Andira River today. Persistence in planting the seeds leads to the ultimate harvest in God's timing...

- The crew and kids are downstairs watching a movie. It is a good distraction for them. As for me, I have engaged in some good conversation with some of the group on the aft deck and will now shut this body down. I couldn't reach the Beatriz this evening. Something to look forward to in the morning...

Tuesday, July 18, 2006

Got over "hump day" of the trip in flying colors yesterday. Tinkle and little Hannah aren't completely up to par but I believe it may just be some hormones and heat going on. I trust that today, they will both be back up and running. Other than a couple with loose stools, I believe everyone is still in great shape for the remainder of the war!

Denilson was slow to wake me this morning. I didn't get my first cup of coffee till 4:18. I really need to be up at 4AM! I just need the time to get the day started right in my mind...

Pr. Raimundinho took off to another Indian Reservation yesterday that I was unaware of. He didn't tell me where he was going and what for. I am concerned that he has some "secondary" political agendas going on. I am tired of having a "crisis" with him every time we meet up...

- It's 5:18 AM and the boat is coming alive. I guess it's time to shut down and join the early risers upstairs... Several people really try to wake up as early as I do just to say they are up, I guess. If I didn't need the time to myself, I'd sure be in my hammock a while longer!

- The morning started off with a "bang" for me. The Town Council asked to meet with me just as I was getting to work this morning. I had no idea what it was about. When I got to the school, they had a chair sitting alone in the middle of a room with 4 chairs facing it against the wall. Yep, the chair in the middle by itself was for me... The Council was very kind. They are very appreciative of the work that we do. They are also appreciative of the Gospel presence that we have established in this village over the years. They are even appreciative of Pr. Raimundinho coming and sharing and teaching. There is just one little problem that they have with it all: Raimundinho is becoming very involved with the politics of property re-allocation and other development projects. Not only is he involved with this here, he is also involved with these things in the Satere-Maue Nation – this concerns me deeply...

We are headed to Freguesia after the service this evening. Tomorrow, I will keep my ear to the ground and see if he is involved in such things over there. I have a bad, gut feeling that he is using his "gospel platform" to launch a political activist movement. If this is the case, I will need to take some drastic action – soon...

- The day was long and hard. I scarcely had time to do much other than pull teeth and ponder Raimundinho's situation. We had so many "last minute emergencies" that our

shut-down and bag-out didn't take place until the church service was almost over at about 6 PM. I got to the service in time to be called up for some closing comments.

I took advantage of this opportunity to indirectly hammer on Raimundinho a bit about political involvement. I simply told the audience that if *any* pastor preaching from this pulpit preached *anything* other than gospel of Jesus Christ and if *any* movement arose from within this church body, the village was to no longer listen to their voice – that the purpose of the church and it's pastors is ***solely to preach and teach the Gospel and nothing else!***

Well, the majority of the audience clapped vigorously while Ps. Raimundinho sat and fumed silently in his chair to my left. We will see what transpires over the next couple of days as a result of our conversations...

- Finally got to speak to Phillip n the Beatriz at about 10 this evening. The signal has been so faulty that I was unable to reach them all day. All is well there. From this point on, I should have a strong signal until we meet in the early hours of the 21st on the way home to Manaus. Right now, it is bedtime. Matthew has a low-grade fever and a headache. I've medicated him and he is sleeping in the hammock next to me. I really think he just got hot and dehydrated. The little fella just needs to learn to drink more water...

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

Up at 4 this morning. We arrived in a cove just above Freguesia at some point in the middle of the night. I was out so soundly that I didn't even hear the engine shut down.

Today is the beginning on our final 2-day stretch of the 6 days on location. I have intentionally stayed away from Freguesia for the past several years. It has been a matter of disciplining them for a few things they have done in the past. I look forward to the day indeed. I have a lot of friends here. I just trust their attitude toward the Gospel has changed. When I left the last time, I more or less "wiped the dust from my sandals" and moved on...

- On shore was good this morning. I saw just about everyone I knew. It was a good reunion. I dedicated most of the day to surgery – 4 pyrigms and a fatty tumor of some kind. It was a good change of pace.

Before going ashore, I was able to reach the Beatriz and Cida! Great way to get it all started! The Beatriz team has had the pleasure of seeing over 70 people make public decisions for Christ in their area. What a blessing it is for us all to hear this kind of news – it's what it's all about...

- The service here was relatively well attended. I went ahead and made my little speech about why we quit coming here – lack of interest in hearing the Gospel... I trust they make a better showing tomorrow evening. I would hate to *not* come back again...

The gator hunt was a failure once again this evening. The day is over.

Thursday, July 20, 2006

Wide awake at 4 AM. Went into the bathroom to do my morning chores and when I started to wash my hands, there was a Surucucu snake (3-step) draped across the sink! I didn't even need coffee to get moving! This thing was about 4 feet long. By the time people started coming down and taking pictures, the story had grown to the point that I had seen the beast about 30 yards off the bow of the boat, with my super night vision, jumped in after her, wrestled her in a death roll underwater (giving each other mouth-to-mouth to keep fighting). After about 45 minutes without coming up for air, I finally won out and surfaced with her limp, dead body clenched between my teeth... Kinda like that one better than the "sink" version...

- Long, hard day on shore. I was very proud of everyone. VBS survived through 225 children today. Medical ended up with a total of 608 patients for the trip and dental, I'm guessing, extracted better than 300 teeth all together. It has been a good and successful trip indeed.

For some reason, I got hung up with surgeries yesterday and today. The best one was this morning. I encouraged Carman to take a tumor of a lady's butt – she did great! She is a natural at all this stuff. I hope and pray she will continue coming down. I love her a bunch and she is great fun and I feel the Lord will move in her life in mighty ways if she will allow it to be so.

I am equally proud and impressed with "Breerick"! He has turned in to the tooth extractor I thought he could be. He is cautious, gentle and extremely effective. I now feel comfortable in sending him out alone – I have seen his work and I am impressed...

The church service was packed. I was so pleased that the people of Freguesia finally got the picture. They finally realized that the most important part of my relationship with them was what I had to tell them collectively at the services after the work day. This evening, they sang songs to us and brought me a little buttoner and spoke kind things as we ended the service. It was really moving...

Just got back to the Veloz. Seems Waldemar doesn't want to travel through the channel beside Barreirinha until morning! He changed his mind pretty quickly and decided to do as a ordered (leave at around 2 AM) – not before ripping the convertible top off the T&T as he pulled away from the AMOR/Teresa though.

Friday, July 21, 2006

I got up at 4 this morning just in time to see Barreirinha fading away in the background. We pulled anchor at 2 AM to give us an ETA for Boa Vista and the Beatriz set at around

8 this morning. I slept quite well after the fumes settled over Waldemar's little lapse in memory regarding *who actually* runs this ship when I am onboard...

- It has been a great trip. It is coming to an end now. Another 48 hours and it will be over. I have learned much during the season so far. I have learned that I am *it* when it comes to making all the decisions regarding the work here in the Amazon and AMOR. I have learned that I have to make the calls on practically every level of decision-making there is. I am pretty much alone in this ministry right now – in one way or another, just about everybody else that used to help in these processes of decisions are now gone.

I don't mind having the dramatically increased responsibility. I just wish I could have had a little warning, that's all... Really though, I just need to get busy and stay tuned to the Lord's leading in building our new boat and seeking direction in where and when to go as he leads.

I am extremely proud of my boys. Actually, they are *men* now – weathered seadogs like their old dad. They are blood of my blood and it shows. I don't know that any of them will ever take over my place in this ministry but, it comforts me to realize that any one of them could do it if God called them to do so.

- It is 5:10 in the morning and the early-risers are starting to move about. We will rendezvous with the Beatriz in a matter of a few hours. I'll call the in a few minutes to give them our ETA.

- Well, I'm glad I called the Beatriz! Everybody was sound asleep. We will beat them to Boa Vista by at least 2 hours. No big deal. My team wants to shop and look around a bit anyway. Boa Vista isn't much of a place to shop *or* look around but, it is better than sitting on the boat, I guess...

Abraao was at the docks when we arrived. It was good to see him and his family. He and Edno will wait for us in Urucurituba next Thursday evening. They will go with us to pickup Julio's boat. Edno showed up well ahead of the Beatriz so we were able to visit a bit about the Sallisaw trip to River Castanhal. He is awed by the results – well over 100 public professions of faith and communities now wide open to the gospel that had been previously shut tight against any mention of the subject. Praise God for allowing us both to be attentive to the Lord's leading.

- It was great seeing the boys and Melissa again after 7 days! They look and sound great. Melissa has a whole different glow about her. She sure *did* accept Christ as her Savior!

I spoke with Mickey and a couple other team members on the bow of the Beatriz. They were impressed with William and Phillip's leadership ability and competency. I just beamed with pride.

- After fueling the Veloz enough to get her to “clean” fuel in Itacoatiara, both boats were underway to home port at 10:30 AM. After lunch, I slept for over 2 hours! I never sleep in the afternoon – I am just so very tired...

Saturday, July 22, 2006

I was awakened during a little rainstorm at 2:30 this morning. It was just enough of a rain to get the blood flowing through my veins just fast enough to take away my sleep – I’m wide awake, drinking last night’s coffee...

Later this morning, after breakfast, I will be heading over to the Beatriz to participate in Sallisaw’s share-time. Mt. Home won’t be doing theirs until after lunch. I look forward to it all.

Reflections:

I have been thinking about how this year has unfolded and where and what it might lead to as it comes to an end. It is 3 in the morning and my mind is just waking up but several things seem to be clear to me.

I believe that the groups will continue to grow. I also feel that the groups will fall inline with the need to spread out instead of doubling up as they have done in the past. I am also under the conviction that we need to build a new boat – maybe from the hull, up. So far, nothing out there seems to fit our needs or the requirements of the Captain of the Port. God will have to provide in this area and I pray for boldness to ask for the funds...

I have also come to recognize that William, Phillip and Matthew have this work in their blood. For now, the attraction may be to the water, gator hunts, adventure and the like (these things still attract me after all these years too!). Each of them have dreams of being something else (lawyers, doctors, etc). I will continue to encourage these dreams. I do, however, believe that God will call at least one of them to work by my side and eventually take my place. If this happens, it happens. If not, God has something else in mind that I haven’t a clue about...

This season, I have seen a very clear separation in focus and mission between what AMOR does and what all the others are doing. I feel very strongly that if left to the IMB and similar types, a whole lot of nothing will get done in this great Valley – near “0” growth will be achieved. I don’t want to be misunderstood here. I just want to acknowledge the fact that the “feel good” mission trip organizations are doing a good job at what they do – they are simply not reaching the lost in the remote areas of this tremendous Valley. AMOR has a place that will never be filled by the organizations that are out there right now. We will continue to go deeper and deeper. God will provide us with the vessel we need to be able to do that with – one that will accommodate our teams in areas that have and don’t have mosquitoes. White water or black water. Hammocks or cabins. Whatever it takes, God will provide.

Lord, I am more determined today than ever before that I am in the right place and AMOR is in the right place. I am more determined than ever to see to the work that needs to be done. I am more determined than ever to make sure we have the right men out there doing our Itinerate work. I am more determined than ever to keep doing this right!