

From The Helm
River Nhamunda
Spring Hill Baptist Church

July 27-August 05, 2006

Thursday, July 27, 2006

Happy Birthday my dear. You are 40 today and I am very proud of you.

Friday, July 28, 2006

Yesterday was a long, long day. The group arrived pretty much on time but without a single suitcase or action packer. So we waited all day. I didn't get a wink of sleep. My mind was reeling a bit about home, the trip, family, etc. I just stayed up until it was time to go and see if the bags came in at 1:30 this morning – they did indeed arrive! We sat around for several hours at the airport waiting for Customs to clear everybody. Then, we went in and got our 41 pieces.

Before we went to the airport, Mike and I sat and talked for a couple of hours about this and that. He is a great man. Thanks again, Lord, for sending him down here.

I called Dad at 4:15 this morning to let him know the bags had arrived. He had been praying hard – his prayers go high...

- It is 8:15 AM and most of the Beatriz is asleep. I just talked with Cida – She sounded good. I hope she has a good “1st day of being 40 years old”!

The sun is hot this morning but the breeze is cool. It seems like it will be a good day for cruising. Phillip got the AMOR/Phillip out of the shop yesterday, late. The throttle control had broken so he decided to just put in the best one available (a Morse Control). He is excited about using it, I'm sure. He will have plenty of opportunity this trip. I really want the boys to have a great time on their last trip of the year. As for me, I just have one more. Then, I can head on home for a bit before going to Houston, Minnesota, Murray and, ultimately, Birmingham.

- I got confirmation from Tory that the trip with the IMB is definitely still on. I look forward to working with them in a few weeks. In the meantime, there is a man about my age (a friend of some close friends) that is coming in on the August 10th to get some help with his addiction problems. That ought to be quite interesting. I look forward to it and I feel it will be good for both of us.

- It is 3:50 PM and we are approaching Itacoatiara. Just got a call from Edno in Urucurituba. There is a man there that some eye surgery was done on that ulcerated. I am going to have to re-do the surgeries on both eyes. I just hope he travels with us so that we don't lose time. Whatever the situation, I will have to do the surgery... I know exactly what happened though. He went back to work and lifted some kind of heavy weight in the process. I just wish these people would obey the post-op orders...

In the meantime, Matthew and several of the crew went in to Itacoatiara aboard the AMOR/T&T to pick up some things for the kitchen. Matthew wanted to look for some DVD's to watch on these long hauls to and from destinations. Bless his heart; he is so bored when he has to cruise for 2 days to get to work! He is just like me...

- A huge storm just brewed. After a pretty good struggle against the wind and rain, we made it to shore and tied off. I was lying down at the time it all started. When I got up, I realized that my "wonderful" crew simply waited too long to seek safe-harbor. I have instructed them that the *first sign* of a wind building, they are to dock immediately. They will learn soon that I mean what I say.

- It is 6:34 PM and we just got underway after *another* storm brewed. This time the crew pulled over at the very sight of the oncoming situation. That's the way I like it to be.

I sent Nonato and Silvio out to look for some fish to buy. They found 2 Surubim that weighed right at 35 pounds apiece – going to be good eating for sure. Everyone has just had dinner. I want to hurry up and get to Urucurituba so I can do the surgery on this guy's eyes and get underway again. We are taking a very long time to get there. I would just love to get to the Nhamunda cut-off by sunrise. It would make me feel we have made up a little bit of time....

Saturday, July 29, 2006

5:24 AM and we just entered the 'pass' 30 minutes ago. The crew forgot to wake me up on time but I made it on my own at 4:30. This is another "early riser" group. So, it is going to be important that my boys not forget to wake me.

- The water is much lower now than it was a few weeks ago. We have already run aground once but pulled ourselves off with no problem. I trust the levels will hold until we come out next week...

- My eye patient bailed on me last night. He re-scheduled for Maues when I come back through in mid-August. I hate that he did that but I was very tired any way.

My boys are up with me right now. It is a sign of how the future might look. Now I can finally share in how my own father must have felt through the years as Winston and I traveled with him through the lakes and rivers of this great Valley. Wow...

- Picked up Edno, Abraao and his wife, Val, in Urucurituba. It was good seeing them. ETA is set for Nhamunda at 9 AM. I look forward to the days ahead...

- Arrived in Nhamunda on schedule but went straight to Jurua to pick up Julio. He was not there... We waited out a storm, then took out toward Portuguese I simply cannot understand a man like Julio. He NEVER does what is asked of him. He always puts on a good show that breaks everybody's heart – but, it is a smokescreen in my eyes. I have had enough...

I have been extremely anxious today. Mobile is the *only* group that I have any problems *at all* with the Itinerate Pastor on the field. They do not deserve this and neither do I. I've wanted to make changes on the Nhamunda for two years – now, it must be done.

We arrived in Portuguese at 4 this afternoon. The adults and children were in true, beautiful form. They came down the hill with banners and signs, singing and cheering! These people are the best – I love them dearly.

As soon as the gangplank was halfway in place, I went down and found Julio in the crowd and we took a walk. Same excuses as ever – we were late, he was concerned. So, he grabbed his family and came up here yesterday. I was very controlled (I know people were praying for me) but blunt and angry. I informed him that his boat and family would be taken back to Jurua and Edno and Abraao would take the boat from there, tomorrow. He, of course, said that would be fine. He would continue the trip with us on the Beatriz.

This has all been very difficult for me these past days and weeks. I was the king of lies and smooth talk for many years – I can spot one with no problem at all. Julio is pathological in this area. Lord, give me strength to stand firm with my decisions. It is better to have no one at all in this area rather than have this man here. Lord, provide someone new, soon – please.

- Got most everything up on location this afternoon. Visited with Mr. Luis and Socorro for a bit then pulled out to anchor. I had a hard time with dinner. I ate but my stomach was in knots. Mike came and spoke with me a bit and helped with some advice. He is such a fine man. I owe him in a big way. I just trust I can repay him someday.

Went back to shore at 7 PM for the church service. There were so many people that we had to move to an outdoor setting in the middle of town. It was a great evening. Many presentations by the children and adult groups. I was very much moved. A good ending to a very hard day.

Sunday, July 30, 2006

Nonato got me up at 4 AM with my coffee. Today will be a big day – the only day here in Portuguese. I slept well but am not rested.

Last night, when we all got back to the boat, Edno and Abraao came to me and were very emotional in a request for me *not* to take Julio's boat away from him. Julio definitely got to them – they fell right in to his emotional trap. I was very tired and it was quite late but, I gave them Julio's history and the *real* story of what was going on. They then agreed with me. Julio actually lied to them yesterday afternoon right after I had spoken to him. He told them he knew *nothing* about them taking the boat today – I had confirmed this with him just a couple of hours prior to that. Today is going to be a “day” for sure. I just need to get all of it done as quietly as possible. Everybody on the Beatriz loves Julio (including me). But, he needs to be handled – *today*...

My coffee doesn't taste right and I don't feel chipper at all. I have to handle all of these situations ASAP in order to feel right. It is 5:15 and I can't wait to get on shore – I have to get all of this done and right or I can't be what I need and want to be to everyone that needs me today. I need to be free of this deal right away, for my own sake.

- The Beatriz is coming alive – it's 5:25. I'm not sure if I need to go on to shore at sunrise, or wait till the Beatriz goes in at 7:00. I'll just wait and see. I just got the boys up. I am going to miss them terribly when they leave. I need to keep that fact in my mind and heart.

Observation: William spoke with Nonato yesterday. The conversation was regarding the superstructure of the Beatriz. With all the weight we have carried up-top over the years, she probably only has 2 more useful, safe years of life left, according to the marine engineer that looked her over during the re-fit. If the Lord wants us to continue this work, He will have to supply a new vessel within the next two years – it is as simple as that... At least that makes my job easier – either the Lord provides, or He has other plans. It is entirely off my plate for now...

- As soon as we came ashore at 6:45, I took Julio on another walk to settle things. I took Abraao with me to make sure I had a witness to what took place. Well, I went straight to the point regarding our conversations of the night before, etc. Julio simply lied to me again, saying he must have misunderstood me. Abraao was flabbergasted – he couldn't believe what he was hearing! To make a *long* story *very* short, the boat will leave when I decide it will leave and that will probably be tomorrow from Sao Francisco...

Enough of this saga. Now on to the day...

All teams were very busy today. Construction had an insurmountable task to perform (as we well knew they would). They laid a very wide footer around the 3 principle sides of the church building. The rains had washed out and undermined the foundation. In doing this, the team actually completed the most critical part of the entire wall raising. All the locals will need do is come up with the walls on top of the footer. A fantastic day's work for our team!

Dental and medical were very steady all day. Dental had a couple of challenges and medical performed a couple of emergency procedures. VBS did a GREAT job dealing

with the huge number of children! Eye glasses were also given out by the dozens and dozens. We also did the “Lady’s Ministry”. I always love doing this! All the women get a kick out of me being the only man in the room and translating in the 1st person as if I were a woman also... We all have a great time with this each year. It is a vital ministry to these lovely women and I am very pleased that Spring Hill (Judy) does it!

- I am grateful to Doc Mark. We needed an extra interp in medical all day. He accepted Matthew! He was so patient and kind. I was proud of Matthew for stepping up to bat in such a dramatically different way for him. He fit the bill though. If Mark will allow, I will keep Matthew there the rest of the trip if need be. It is a joy to see my boys developing in such fantastic ways. Few fathers that I know have such a privilege. Thank You Lord! Thank You...

- I tried to call Nana this morning. It was her 73rd Birthday yesterday and I had so much going on that I remembered it but, just didn’t have time to call when I thought of it! I finally just left a message on their answer machine – Dad must have taken her away for the day. Happy Birthday Mom!

By 5:00 PM, we had packed up and bagged out. The group and community gathered together out in front of the village to say our good-byes. It was a teary, touching experience. Socorro and a couple of other ladies gave gifts to the individual work teams and made some beautiful remarks. Every one in the Amazon Valley knows that I love tucupi (manioc hot sauce). Well, I was given enough fantastic and fresh tucupi today (about 6 liters) that I won’t need any more for the rest of the year! It was a good ending to our time here. I hope to come back again some day...

- Underway for Sao Francisco at 5:45. ETA is set for 7:30 PM.

Monday, July 31, 2006

Up at 4 AM. Feeling very good this morning. We are anchored offshore of Sao Francisco. I feel good about this day. The Lord has a number of special things awaiting us – I can sense it in my soul.

- All groups ashore by 8 this morning. It was a rough morning – not what I had expected at all when the day started. There seemed to be strife everywhere. Julio’s wife cursed me for taking their boat away from them. Evidently, Julio lies to her as well – I just told her she needed to work the reasons out with her husband – he has known them for a long time now...

The AMOR/Sandy left port for Boa Vista do Ramos at about 2 this afternoon. It is somewhat of a relief. I just hate all of this stuff I have to do. I know it is part of my job; I will always hate it though...

Sao Francisco is a different kind of place. The people of this community are poor and somewhat lethargic. They, themselves, are a sweet people. The communities around

them I have found to be evil, at best. I do not believe I have ever felt as oppressed in such a short period of time as I did today. I was badgered and lied to by practically everyone I came in contact with. They wanted “things” – anything we had. I was so angry and depressed by the end of the day, I wanted to scream but didn’t have the strength to do so.

We had a short service at the end of the day. When it began, I confess I didn’t want to even be up front speaking to the people. But, God blessed as Terry preached. One man came forward accepting Christ and another came forward for prayer. Thank you Lord for calling one more to Your side...

A man from Faro, Mr. Raimundo, purchased and then gave a beautiful piece of riverfront property to us for a church building! His wife is one of the adults saved when we passed through for a few hours last year. He later accepted Christ through her witness and felt moved to make this donation. The property is 200 feet wide and one mile deep, right on the beach. God will truly bless him for this... He is also a small boat builder. I feel certain I will be doing business with him in the future...

- We left Sao Francisco just before 6 PM. A small boat was dead in the water out by our anchor position. He had gotten tangled up in our anchor line and messed up his water intake and prop, as well as near severing our line. We toed the boat to its home (about an hour), fed the 12 that were onboard and got back on track for Aibi by 7:00. Lord, please end this day. I have had more than enough.

Tuesday, August 01, 2006

It is 3:15 AM. I can’t sleep anymore. I was in bed by 8:30 last night. I have had enough rest I guess. I just wanted to get up and be alone for awhile. I will try and call Cida and Dad this morning. I just need to here their voices...

Yesterday took a lot out of me – dealing with Julio, his wife, the people, etc. It is the kind of day when I question many things in my heart and mind (mainly my mind). I try to turn things over to the Lord but I fail miserably. Well, today is another day. A day that I will determine to abide in the Lord and let him move through me.

I try so hard to show my boys how to be good leaders though my example. Days like yesterday, I simply chalk up to “bad” lesson days for them. I guess it is important they learn that “bad days” do indeed come up.

On a funny note, from the beginning of the trip, there has been one of our team members that literally *everyone* has complained about. This person snores so badly that no one around her seems to get any sleep. So, we moved everybody around and put her up in my place and I stretched my hammock behind her. I slept all night. She *did* actually wake me up but not by her snoring – she woke me up to ask me if I was the one she heard coughing! My, my.....

- I pray this morning, Lord that You just keep me level headed. Remove the anger from yesterday and re-light the joy of Your salvation in me anew for today. I know this is something that I must ask for everyday. Most days I just forget to start by rededicating all things to You.

Today will be a good day. I will not allow it to be any other way. With Your help and permission, Lord, we can make this day bright and alive. I pray for Bill Kinnard – make him well. And for my other sister that is down, get her up. And for the rest of my team, keep them healthy and without strife. Today will be a good day! A new start for our trip as each new day should be!

It is 5:08 AM. The Beatriz will begin to come alive any minute now. I guess it is time to shut down for now. Boyd, just be positive today – no matter what happens...

- Aibi had a great reception for us as we came; children singing and holding up posters, etc. A very lightening thing for a heavy heart.

No sooner had a reached the shore and begun to see how our stations were set up, Julio asked if we could have coffee back at the boat – I was in agreement, of course. We spoke bluntly about his ministry and the direction it might take. He mentioned a new business venture involving a Jet Boat service between Terra Santa and various other large towns. I encouraged him vigorously. I further advised him that any other activity would mean becoming divorced from AMOR in every way but, would still help him by selling him the 85 hp Mercedes back at our dock – He understood. Now, we just wait for him to visit with Cristina about it...

Aibi was a fantastic day! The work went smoothly and we had everything done by 4:30 PM. Every team worked steady and hard. Then, we had the service. What a fantastic Worship Service! There was singing, scripture reading and then a message by Terry on the “two gates” by which to enter.

At the end of Terry’s message, I felt compelled to give a strong invitation – I needed one myself... The Lord touched the hearts of 6 adults! Thank you Lord for the anointing of Bro. Terry. So far this trip, 8 have been added to the Kingdom!

At the end of it all, D. Rosa gave a few small gifts to each of the team leaders as a token of her appreciation. She also donated a very large and beautiful piece of riverfront land for a church building – Much like Portuguese, this is my kind of town...

I called Cida this afternoon just to say hey and to find out about the Tropical Hotel reservations for this group. She has been working on the reservations and thinks all is well. The rest of the conversation was ridiculous. I won’t even go in to details because they are null and void anyhow... I called Mom and Dad just to see how they were making it. It was good to hear them! I need to get home to be with them for awhile. I appreciate Cida being there for them. I miss them and need to be around them as much as possible too though.

Pulled offshore and anchored at 6 PM sharp. I'm not going to wait up for the snack. Just want to lie down. The day has been fruitful in many, many ways...

Wednesday, August 02, 2006

Nonato delivered my coffee to me at exactly 4 this morning. It was a cool night but I managed to sleep quite well. No interruptions at all.

Today, we work in the village of Gaivota. It is our next-to-last day on location. Terry and I decided to go against the grain of what Julio had planned for us and go ahead and introduce ourselves to two new villages. We both feel that our mission is to establish *new work* in an area until *all* work has been established in the entire area – we are on the same page.

- Well, it is 5:05 and I am going to get Mike up for coffee. Start the day...

- I went up just before the group at about 7:30 this morning. I met with the president of the community, the Catechist of the Catholic Church and about 10 other interested folks about what were here to do. All seemed fine with them and they were delighted to have us. I looked around for the couple from Sao Francisco and found that they did not live there. So, I hired a rabetta to go to where they live, find them and bring them to me. It is just *too* important that I see them...

The day went extremely well. The construction team literally built a house from the ground, up! By 5:15 PM, it was up and covered – unbelievable feat! VBS had a small group as did the Lady's ministry. The village is small... However, by day's end, everyone had been treated and ministered to. The couple I mentioned earlier finally arrived around noon. The tail of the tail-dragger that I hired to pick them up snapped its stem. So, I just gave him the one I had here onboard... turned out to be quite an expensive apology indeed. It just had to be done though.

The church service started right at 5:30. What a blessing it was! Bro. Terry preached on the two gates again this evening. His voice is gone. I hope it is just superficial and not an indication of any kind of deeper throat problems.

When the invitation time came around, I just carried it along as the Spirit led – as always. Well, people began to respond to the Holy Spirit. They began to come forward. Then, the Catechist came forward and the president of the community objected from where he was sitting in the audience. He proclaimed that "...we are all Catholics here and we already know God." He wanted me to shut up right then and there! I walked closer to him and stated that these people were accepting Christ as their savior and not committing to change "religions" (however, I know in my heart they will leave the Catholic Church a

soon as the Spirit leads). He quieted down and people continued to come forward – 8 or 9 in all! We also had a dozen or so come up for prayer for unspoken needs and concerns.

What an evening to remember. It was reminiscent of our spontaneous visit to Sao Francisco last year when we stopped under conviction and 6 adults accepted Christ – The Spirit burdens those who will listen and act. I trust we will always listen and act upon His leadership – there is always a reason behind it all...

Underway to Nhamunda to refuel and sleep for the night. Have no idea about an ETA and really don't care...

Thursday, August 03, 2006

Got up at 3:15 this morning. I am well and rested.

Last night, I woke up as we were fueling the Beatriz and buying a canoe for our tail-dragger. I look forward to this last day on location. We will be in St. Maria – new territory for the second time this trip. I love it. We will arrive unannounced. I love that too...

It is 4:45 and I just woke up my captain to get us underway by 5:30 AM. Should be a nice 2-3 hour cruise...

You know, it is amazing how this trip has developed. We started out a day late and still got 5 full days on location with two brand new ones to boot! God is truly good...

- After Julio *not* being where he was supposed to be as we had agreed, we finally showed up on location at 10:30 this morning. After a brief lunch, we were all working by 11:30 – work till we're done.

Santa Maria is a unique community. It is large (about 60 families) and it became obvious to me, quickly, that it is a community mainly made up of prostitutes and the like. They make their living off of the folks that come to party on the weekends, etc. A very lively yet depressed bunch of people.

As we went through the afternoon's activities, I could feel that the Holy Spirit was going to act amidst the desperation all around me. I just felt a strange comfort in the fact that we were actually in the right place. I have never been here and neither had Julio and his bunch. *No One* at all has been here to share the gospel with these people, *ever*...

- We finally started the closing service around 5:30 PM. Bro. Terry is completely gone and is not feeling well at all. Bobby did the preaching. He did a great job using the same texts that Terry has used over the past couple of days. When it was turned over to me for the invitation, I looked out over the crowd and could see little or no hope in the eyes of the people gazing back at me. So, I began to speak of my own battles with hopelessness and lack of guidance over the years – troubles and losses that have come my way. By the

time I gave the invitation, the Holy Spirit had convicted 8 souls to come forward and publicly profess Christ as their Savior! Anything I have been through or continue to go through that helps 8 souls come to know my Christ is well worth it – one in exchange for eight. The math works...

After the services, it was time to make final arrangements with Julio. It was a time when, quit frankly, I had limited compassion. However, I did more than I had originally planned to do. I gave him the Mercedes to start his business with and also agreed to pay him a month and a half's salary to get his children back in school. I know that I have made some people from our team pretty upset by letting him go. I'm sorry it had to happen right now, while they were all here – it just couldn't wait another day. All will be ok...

Friday, August 04, 2006

We got underway last night a little after 7 PM.

- Just after midnight this morning, the Beatriz ran aground. I woke up immediately and commanded the freeing of her. I have a good crew but I have run aground more times than they combined! So, I put the Jon boats in action in proper positions and we were free within about an hour. In the meantime, Loren was taken to sick-bay. She went down yesterday afternoon from over heating and hasn't been drinking hardly anything. Mark is going to give her until later this morning to start doing things right or he will hook her up to an IV for good measure. Fortunately, everyone else seems to be on the mend...

It is now 3:20 in the morning. After the "running aground deal", I was unable to go back to sleep. There should be time for a catnap later in the day if I need one... Right now, I thought I'd do some reflections on the trip and things in general.

I was able to visit quite a bit with several of the team members. I spoke rather extensively with Mike about the tasks ahead; the various shoes that need to be filled all around. He has been very helpful in helping me prioritize these actions. I must first finish the year with the IMB trip. Then, go to Houston on my way home to check out what is going on with my health. Finally, begin the process of family, staff, AMOR, vessel and sabbatical.

I have several key trips to make as soon as I hit home. I need to go to Louisville, Minnesota, Florida, Murray and Birmingham. All of this within a month or two of my arrival. Plus, I need to formalize a new, extended Board of Directors for us. My plate is pretty full...

Saturday, August 05, 2006

It's 3:15 and the night is over for me. We just picked up Wellington in the Eva and are about 5 hours away from Januari Landia.

I called Cida a final time yesterday morning just to confirm the group's reservations – all is well. I need to go to the airport this afternoon to make sure of the exact departure time for the group on Sunday. The tickets all say the plane leaves at 2 in the afternoon. In reality, the planes have been taking off for Miami at around Noon... I also need to check on a couple of bags that never made it. Should be a fun way to spend the day...

While I'm at the airport, I will make sure my boys are good to go. Very bitter-sweet. I know their mother needs to see them and misses them terribly but, I love having them here too. I guess I had my time... Now it's Cida's turn to enjoy.

Reflections:

This has been a very unique trip. Each trip is, however, this one had more emotional undertones going on in my life than usual. It is the last trip of the regular season. It was one of the most difficult for me. Many changes have had to be made that have been unpleasant, to say the least. Things that few people understand right now but hopefully will in the future. Undoubtedly though, this has been one of the most successful trips of the season.

In my personal life, some big new realities have come to light as well. Winston's absence, Dad's absence and the location my family will live, have placed new and heavy challenges on me and AMOR – Challenges that are just a sign of change and growth that need to be handle immediately.

The realization that I need to take a month to six weeks off for a solitary sabbatical is presenting challenges as well but is necessary for getting a good grip on what lies ahead.

*The fact the AMOR/Beatriz will no longer structurally serve us within the next two years has added a bit of urgency to arranging for a new vessel as soon as possible. This will take place – I just need to get home so that God can show me **how** this is going to take place.*

I need help back in the USA in coordinating everything from fielding questions, accounting to keeping the website current.

I need to take a big role in RBBI very soon. AMOR is going to have to make decisions this year about my role in the overall administration of the organization. The time is fast drawing near that changes in this area will necessarily need to take place.

Overall, the year has been abundantly fruitful. It has produced more than I had ever dreamed. True revival seems to be taking place a couple of areas – particularly River Castanhal and the Nhamunda. It has been marvelous to watch. The year has been, once again, a full reassurance that we are doing the right thing at the right time and in the right places.

I really do not know what tomorrow holds. I just know that God's work will continue to grow and that what ever happens in my own personal life will be reassuring as well – no matter what...

***Boyd Walker - Director
AMOR TRIP DIVISION
August 4th, 2006***