

From The Helm

Boyd Walker

Team Mountain Home

Monday, June 18, 2007

The team has arrived! They stepped out of the airport 6 hours late but in good spirits. Brazilian Customs went through EVERY action packer. As with the Murray group, all the eyeglasses were confiscated. You know what though? We have all we will need to do what God has for us to do in the next 10 days – it is His trip and His ministry to His people. I have every reason to believe He knows just why He sent us and just what needs to be done.

The days leading up to the team's arrival were full, tiring and blessed. Now, it is time to follow as God directs over the next days, starting with today. We are now cruising through the meeting of the waters (the joining of the Solimoes and Negro Rivers to form the Amazon). We will travel all day and night, arriving at the Mouth of the Maues River sometime in the wee hours tomorrow. I have to make a run to Maues while the group sleeps. Then, underway to Barreirinha. ETA, Andira River, is set for 2:00 PM on Tuesday.

I am excited about what lies ahead. Mountain Home is a great, flexible team. It is in this flexibility that God is able to use us. It is when we trust in His ways, we are able to accomplish incredible things – even if that “thing” is just to rest in His comfort and care.

The journey begins. Our hearts are open to share and to receive. We are honored to be in the mix at all... Thank You Lord, Thank You.

Tuesday, June 19, 2007

We traveled through a few wind storms yesterday afternoon and evening. By the time we got to the Parana do Ramos, it was smooth sailing. At around midnight, we anchored the Beatriz at the mouth of the Araria River and Big John and I took one of our secondary vessels to Maues to meet with Pastor Moises from the Satere Indian Nation.

There was no moon at all, therefore any light by which to navigate. Big John and I ran through the channels in the dark, following the outline of the trees on the banks. In little more than an hour, the lights of Maues appeared through the trees on the horizon – a welcomed sight indeed. We quickly found the AMOR/Patrice moored to the shore. Pastor Moises woke up and we sat on the bow of the Patrice and visited about his ministry. It was a good. Many times, quick meetings in the middle of the night are the only quality times I have with the pastors in the field – it is worth every minute of it though. It keep us all grounded in what God has called us each to do.

By 3:00 AM, I was back aboard the Beatriz and we were underway.

Arrived in Barreirinha this morning at 7 o'clock. There is a channel that cuts from the Amazon to the Andira River. Due to some dredging to widen and deepen the channel, we had to wait until Noon for our turn to pass through. Pastor Edno met me in Barreirinha to pick up a tail-dragger engine and 50 gallons of gasoline donated to Ps. Teudorico in Arrozal by Walnut Street Baptist last week. We had a great time visiting, drinking coffee and chatting about this and that. While we chatted, our team was out shopping and seeing the grand sites of Barreirinha. They were probably just relieved to touch dry land after 23 hours onboard...

We set into the channel at Noon, sharp. There was a tight turn to the port side that forced us into some tree limbs, narrowly missing one of our A/C units and the sat phone antenna – thank You Lord!

It is 2:46 PM. We are just throwing anchor off Ariau. We look forward to a great reunion here over the next day or two. The Lord seems to have called us to this area to encourage the region after a year of unrest due to one of the pastors in the area going a little astray. We will do as God shows us to do in each situation, as it arises. If nothing else, we will show love to these people through the touch of our hands, not just the words of our mouth. It is a good day to be alive and in the care of our Creator.

1. Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Last night, we had a beautiful service. That is about all we had time for after we arrived on location. It was good to see friends here that we have made over the years of ministry to Ariau.

Eight years ago, we arrived here for the first time. We were not welcomed at all but during the course of a day or two of service to the community, the walls of resistance begun to buckle. Today, this is considered to be a “Christian” community. God has done a wonderful work here through the obedience of our teams. It is a testimony of the power of the Holy Spirit working through His children to reach yet more of His children.

The day was lengthy. Much work was done; many children at both VBS sessions; dental extracted dozens of teeth and medical treated everything from worms to minor surgeries. What a great day this has been! Many of the children and patients I have literally watched grow in to adulthood over the years. They are kinda like my own. Very humbling indeed...

I met up with Pastor Raimundinho this afternoon. We visited for a good long while. Much was discussed – much was understood between us. He is a good, Godly man. God will continue to minister through him. He is a dear friend of our family and this team from Mt. Home.

I also met with the church during our lunch break. They are excited to have us here. They are excited to be a thriving gospel carrying church! There is not a single member with more than 7 years as a Christian. The Pastor himself has only been a Christian for 4 years. God does miraculous things through open hearts and minds. Again, I was humbled to be in the presence of these dedicated believers. They have asked for us to help them brick their building and also help them with a tail-dragger engine for their outreach efforts. I will make sure the team knows about these requests.

We decided to hold services at the close of the work day. A good crowd attended. Mark Books brought the message. It was good. The folks were attentive. Mark is also leading us in our onboard devotional. The theme is “knowing and remembering” ‘who we are’. It has been good to be reminded that God is God, and I am His child. That is the way it is – that is the way it works. He loves me; cares for me and knows what is best for me. So, why should I try to run things at all? He knows and wants the best for each of us...

We just had a fabulous meal of stuffed Pirarucu, grilled chicken breast and all the trimmings. It is 7:49 PM and we are settling in for a night of gator hunting, visiting and restful sleep. Today went just the way it was supposed to. I now look forward to rest, followed by whatever God has for us tomorrow...

Thursday, June 21, 2007

We have just pulled away from Ariau. This second day here was packed with activity and blessings. So many, many people were seen by medical, dental and VBS. So many left behind without being treated completely.

We rest in the fact that our God is great, faithful and compassionate. We know, without a doubt, that those who needed physical help the most, were indeed treated. We also know that beyond the temporal help for the flesh, this entire community heard the healing gospel of Jesus Christ!

I have been proud of all our teams. I have watched as Brent, Rita and Steve have extracted countless teeth. Nancy, Judy, Barb and Marge have seen to the needs of family after family until there was no more time or energy left in the day. Brenda, Mark, Renee and Sarah taught and played with the kids all day long. Pam has taken care of the “photo” ministry, taking a photo of each child, laminating it and giving it back to each one – what a deal! John Tinkle started this years ago – it remains a very effective ministry indeed.

We are now headed to Ponta Alegre. This is the Capital city of the Satere-Maue Indian Nation on the Andira side. Since I was last here, Tuchaua Mikilis has passed away. I look forward to meeting the new Grand Chief. I believe it is still my friend, Amado. If not, I guess it will be who it is... I look forward to God showing us new things as we minister in yet another language. It is humbling for me to depend on an interpreter in order to communicate. It is a big help for me to identify with the rest of my team in this way!

The day has been blessed. The night is welcomed. We are about to have a surprise cake for Steve’s 47th Birthday! There will be balloons, cake and sodas for all. We are trying to keep him distracted on the upper deck while the Chef prepares the treat. Rest in the hammock will follow shortly after - for me anyway...

Saturday, June 23, 2007

It is 3:30 AM and we are anchored off the shores of Kuata. When my eyes opened this morning, the stars were unbelievably beautiful. As I lay in the hammock, gazing, I couldn’t tell where the sky ended and the reflection on the water began. It was like a sea of stars all around the Beatriz. Hard to fully describe the sight – truly breathtaking...

Yesterday in Ponta Alegre was unique. There had been an all-night party the night before welcoming the students’ home for the holidays. I was a bit tentative about working here. Usually, we pass up “hung-over” villages and come back another day. This time we stayed.

We worked on the back side of the village, in the local health clinic and pavilion. All were busy as usual. The Satere-Maue is a gentle, kind people today, unlike their heritage. In the past, they were aggressive and violent toward any threat, real or perceived. Today, they are docile and dependant. It is sad to see such a proud nation reduced to complacency. The unfortunate thing about it all is that the “progress” that was sought in destroying these cultures is non-existent. In retrospect, it benefited no one at all...

Mark and his bunch went door-to-door, visiting and inviting folks to the service in the afternoon. The “photo” ministry was a BIG hit as well. Here, where photos were forbidden a couple of years ago, photographs are one of the most sought-after commodities of all! I walked in to the Tuchauas hut when we first arrived and found the walls covered with photos of our past trips. I had William take a picture of all the pictures! Pretty neat.

The turnout for the service was weak. Pastor Raimundo preached a moving sermon on the readiness of the heart and soul. Just not many on hand to hear it. I have thought much about communities that respond heavily to the “physical” part of our ministry but seem to be weak and apathetic toward the “spiritual” aspect. In some cases, maybe our absence for awhile, skipping a year or two, might be prudent. Not “brushing the dust off our sandals”, just going other places for awhile.

Our team is in great health and spirits! We have two more days on location. The plan is to be here in Kuata today then on to Freguesia on Sunday. We will just see how it all works out...

Saturday, June 23, 2007

Kuata was simply awesome today. We went in early. I was excited to be here again.

Last year, we came unannounced and knew absolutely nothing about this quiet little community. It stole my heart in a matter of hours. The people are humble and loving. Our whole team had been looking forward to revisiting here.

When we got to shore, one mother came proudly holding photos that were taken of her daughters with Carmen and me. These were the two little girls I was asked to take home with me last year. They are more precious and beautiful today than a year ago. My heart quietly melted when I saw them again.

Our day here was mellow. Many children at VBS accepted Christ. These decisions are huge milestones for this community. There are a number of Christians here but they seem to have alienated themselves from the rest of the community by drawing distinctions. This is always sad for me to see. This is the reason that we go where we go ONLY is Christ’s name – nothing else departs from our lips or is revealed by our actions. I but want for them what Christ has done for me – a life here on earth filled with peace, grace and the simplicity of His will for me, coupled with eternal life. Wow, what a deal...

The service at the end of the day was accented by the setting sun in the background. It was good to be back. It was good to see all the faces once again. Our team worked hard. I just puttered around between dental and the clinic.

It was good to be able to visit with some of the folks. I met an 81 year old man. We sat and talked for over an hour. What wisdom from one who has never been to school, town, a doctor or a hospital. Tell you what though, he has it all figured out. He is a simple man. He knows Christ as his savior. Loves the land. Just wanted to sit and talk awhile. I was blessed...

We have just pulled into a safe harbor below Freguesia. Tomorrow is our last day on location. I look forward to it very much.

All are well. It is time for some rest...

Sunday, June 24, 2007

Wow, what a day... Freguesia has been an unusual child for me over 10 or 11 years now. We first came here in 1996 – God just led us from Barreirinha on the last day of a trip to that city. The rest is a love story between me, various teams and the folks of this community of around 1,200.

When we first arrived a decade ago, the thing that most caught our attention was the sheer number of children in this place! Many, many children. The ministry then was based more on Sunday School and VBS – reaching the children. Well, today, those children now have children of their own. This new crop is being reach is much the same way as their parents were reached – what a deal!

Freguesia is of the character that no matter how many days we stay here, the task at hand never seems to end. We just pick up where we left off last time and stop at a stopping place this time...

The medical team was very busy and managed to just about deplete what remained of our medical supplies. Lots and lots of people... My activities here are pretty special to me as well. Many, many house calls. That's just the way it started years ago – that's the way it is today. The elderly, terminally ill and just folks who need to have somebody sit and listen to them for awhile. By the end of the day, I am drained but at peace.

VBS had monumental turnouts! The kids here love us and trust us just as their parents did when they were children as well. It is a neat deal! The service this afternoon saw a packed house. Everyone was attentive. One elderly lady accepted Christ! The perfect end to a perfect trip to the Andira River Basin...

Right now, it is 3:30 in the morning, Monday the 24th. In a couple of hours, we will begin our trek back to Manaus. What God had for us to do here, is done. The results of what was done, is His business. The Joy of having had a part in it is our recompense.

As I look back over these past days, I see where God has mended relationships; created new relationships; begun new works; closed unfruitful doors. How privileged I have been to see all this. To see and feel Gods presence in such moving ways. To watch as He touched us and the people to whom we've ministered in ways that we could never do ourselves, under our own wisdom and power. God is faithful to His sheep that simply follow as He leads. The pastures we are made to lay down in are truly peaceful and green...

Monday, June 25, 2007

We were underway before dawn this morning. I took a secondary vessel in to meet briefly with Pastor Raimundinho at 5:30 as the Beatriz made its way through the narrow channel to the Amazon River.

Half the boat was still asleep. All are well deserving of a day of rest! We are headed home. ETA, Manaus, is set for Noon tomorrow (Tuesday) where the team plans to shop and sightsee a bit.

The team is in great health and spirits. God has been gracious and faithful to keep us all. Today will be a day for reflecting, visiting and resting. It has been another fascinating adventure in the Lord.

I thank all who have kept up with us during these days. I thank you for your prayers and continued support. May God bless you this day. It is the day that He has made for each of us – it is the one we have in hand. So, take advantage of all He fills it with!