

August 31, 1999

*"If we will obey, and do the task that He has placed
closest to us, we will see Him. One of the most
amazing revelations of God comes to us when we learn
that it is in the everyday things of life that we realize
the magnificent deity of Jesus Christ." Oswald Chambers*

*You can run with the big dogs
You can fly with the eagles
You can jump through all the hoops
And climb the ladder to the top
But when it all comes down,
You know it all comes down to the walk.* Steven Curtis Chapman - "The Walk"

Dear friends,

Once again many weeks and many, many miles have passed since my last letter. As I stated in that letter, we have since held clinics in Mexico, driven to Nicaragua and back, and had many blessings and adventures along the way. Let me take a few minutes of your time and bring you up to date.

During the week of July 12th - 17th we were blessed to have Fin and Jan Plett, and Leonard and Leona Gerbrandt and their families join us for six days of medical clinics in the Huasteca region of Mexico. It was a tremendous blessing to have the fellowship as well as their help as we made a thrust into an area that was new for all of us. It was interesting to work where we needed to go through an interpreter into either Naguat or Tenec, the two local indigenous languages. Many of the people spoke no Spanish at all and I had to give medical instructions through someone who was bilingual in Spanish and the local dialects. It all adds a bit of fun to the day.

One of the villages where we held two days of clinics is reached only on foot, or by crawling up the side of a mountain through breath-taking hairpin curves. It is, as one person put it, "half way to Heaven." The views were truly breathtaking, as was the vista straight down the cliff to where the van would have landed if one made even the slightest error in judgment. At the end of our last day there, after quickly packing the van because of a blackening sky threatening to bring a cloud burst which would make the mud road impassable to leaving, we had a last minute emergency to deal with. An eight year old boy from one of the neighboring mountains had walked to the village with his parents. Here he had been swimming and dove into a part of the footbridge tearing open his scalp, leaving a gaping wound down to the skull. Finding him wandering in a daze, we quickly mobilized into emergency action. Although we had no suture equipment with us we cleaned the wound and dressed it. After it was all over and the child was stable, the father picked him up in his arms and prepared to carry him on the two hour walk over the mountain to their own dirt home. We were helpless to do anything else but watch them head off as there is nothing other than foot paths into many of these scattered villages.

God is using our medical outreach for his glory, and as a result of these six days of clinics in the Huasteca and Cd. Valles area thirty nine people made a decision to follow Jesus as their personal Savior. For many of these people this was not an easy or popular decision since these hidden mountain villages remain steeped in animism and witchcraft. Anyone willing to step out and make a public confession of faith in Jesus must be willing to stand alone in an oft times hostile village.

On Monday morning, July 19th, Doc and I headed south for Nicaragua as the Canadian team headed north for Canada. We arrived in Managua on the 26th after having crossed five nerve wracking borders and many, many hundreds of miles. We passed through some truly awesome country with twisting mountain passes and snowcapped peaks, pine forests, and dry, hot deserts. It certainly made me more aware of the geography of Mexico and Central America.

We met up with the rest of the crew on the 28th after they flew in from Georgia. We held nine exhausting days of clinics in northern Nicaragua, seeing over 2,000 patients. It was a joy to work

once again, not only with Dr. Skip and the rest of the American contingent, but with our Nicaraguan friends as well. Many lives were touched, and the love of Jesus was demonstrated in a practical way to many, many people.

While preparing to leave Nicaragua for our grueling trip back to Mexico for another six days of clinics, I noticed that Doc's right leg was showing the beginning signs of necrotizing fasciitis – the flesh eating bacterial infection that has threatened his life on four other occasions. The only recourse for it is extremely heavy doses of antibiotics and prayer. We began both immediately, and headed off on the 2,000 mile trip ahead of us. In a couple of days, somewhere in northern Honduras, it invaded his lungs as it always does, and became pneumonia. We continued on. Finally somewhere in Guatemala the infection began to subside as the antibiotics began to take the upper hand over the bacteria. We drove on.

We arrived back in Cd. Valles, Mexico on Sunday, August 15th and began another six days of clinics from the 16th through the 21st. On Sunday morning, August 22nd, Doc and I made four house calls in as many villages, in order to see patients that needed specific follow up, and then headed north to the US border. Doc had a medical clinic visit for himself on the 24th and continued north to Houston. I, on the other hand, planned to turn around and head straight back to Cd. Valles with a vehicle for Pastor Ezequiel which was to be waiting for me at Donna, Texas. As in all the best of well laid plans of mice and men, I am now in my eighth day of sitting and waiting for the car to be finished so that I can take it south. Patience is never very easy to come by, and flexibility and tolerance things to be desired. The good thing is that the wait has slowed me down enough to enable me to write this letter. Everything has it's purpose.

As Proverbs 16:9 reminds us, we make plans, but God directs our steps. Plans currently are for Doc to have rectal surgery on the 16th of September. Following this he will need to take several months of convalescence. It is my plan to make a trip north during much of this time, allowing me to visit with friends and churches throughout the US and Canada. I hope to be able to see many of you during this time and to speak face to face rather than by letter. Please pray for me as I make plans and set up an itinerary for this time. For anyone who has had the experience of being completely dependent on the gifts of others for their support, you realize that these times of visiting churches and supporting individuals is not a vacation, but rather, often a very stressful time. I pray that I will be the instrument that God desires me to be, not only in Mexico and on the field, but also in your home and church. I desire your prayers, and look forward to spending time with you as the Lord opens the doors.

Thank you for continuing to share in the ministry of Earthen Vessels. Without your prayers and support we could not continue in God's service.

Your missionary,