

May 1999

Dear friends,

So much has happened over the past while that I want to bring you up to date on, however, before I go any further, I want to give a sincere and heartfelt thanks to each one of you who responded so sacrificially to the needs expressed in my last letter. As I expressed then, I truly believe that God will bless you for your faithfulness in giving and in prayer. Thank you, and may you be richly blessed.

There was a very exciting, and personally challenging, turn of events for me in the beginning of March. As I had indicated in my itinerary, it was our intention to hold two weeks of clinics in the Cd. Valles area during the first two weeks of March. Just before we crossed over into Mexico, Dr. Heinlein called his daughter in Indiana to see how she and her husband were doing. We had just left there days before after a quick visit because Marvin, Doc's son-in-law, was very sick with advanced cancer. Upon calling at this time, Doc was told that Marvin had passed away only minutes before the call. After we quickly discussed the situation, it was decided that it was important for Doc to head back up to Indiana in order to be there for his daughter and her family, and that I would head down to hold the clinics as was originally planned.

I had a wonderful team to work with me - Mitch and Kathleen, who have been to Mexico many times, and Jennifer, for whom this was a new experience, as well as Javier, a pastor-in-training from the local church in Valles, and Veronica, the pastor's wife. Both Kathleen and Jennifer are nurses and assisted in seeing patients and running the pharmacy. Mitch, with his facility in Spanish, was indispensable in his role of triage and history taking. Javier faithfully took care of the spiritual needs of each patient as they waited to be seen (I believe that this is the true heart of what our work is all about). Veronica carefully worked with the pharmacy to explain each medication regimen with the patients, as well as making sure that spiritual needs were not missed. We were able to see six hundred patients during our nine days of clinics, and we were blessed to be able to see lives changed, and not only physical suffering relieved, but the Light of the Gospel shine into the lives of those sitting in darkness. What a joy it is to see tears of thankfulness and appreciation brimming up in the eyes of an old man as you sit beside him and dispense, not only the medications necessary for his health, but also pray for God's healing and blessing in his life. What a wonderful privilege it is to sit in the dank and filthy hovel of an old lady as she joyfully tells you that since she is taking the medications that you have prescribed she has more energy than she has had for years, and feels like a "young girl" again. The love and thankfulness are real, tangible, and freely expressed.

Despite the fact that we all missed Dr. Heinlein's expertise and wisdom, it was good to be able to "spread my wings" and know that the training that he has given me over the past months is beginning to bear fruit, and that I am able to more, and more, shoulder the load of running the medical work on my own. I wish to express once again how grateful I am to Doc for his excellent, and willing teaching, without which, none of this would be possible for me.

After returning from Mexico, I quickly headed to Florida where I met with Doc. Here we had a day to prepare, and pack medicines for a week of clinics in Haiti. We spent the week of March 22nd through 27th bouncing down the almost impassable, and certainly unbelievably bad, roads of Haiti, holding clinics in very far-flung, and outlying regions of the country. The needs, as always, were very great, and it was a blessing to be able to strengthen and support local, fledgling churches.

After a very quick trip back to Houston from Florida, Doc was able to meet for his follow-up visits at the Hospital. Thank God for a continued clean bill of health for him.

We all know that he still has much to do before he can hand in his retirement papers. God has been very faithful in Doc's health, despite the odds.

April, thank God, has been a busy time of getting things ready in Cd. Valles for us to make our permanent residency there. Praise God, we have finally accomplished it, and are moved in! We were blessed to be able to take two loads of personal affects down, including many beautiful kitchen cabinets that were donated by David and Nicole Domnick from Florida. Indeed, we have been blessed by such abundance, that we, in turn, will be able to pass the blessing around. I am excited, not only to have a place to live, and a roof over my head, but more importantly, we now have a base to begin intensive work in the Cd. Valles area, and a place for you to come and stay when you visit us.

The next phase for me is to "dig in" and begin the tedious process of learning the language and culture. I will continue in medical outreach, specifically in home visitation with Pastor Ezequel as he visits the sick in the area, but feel that I must concentrate the greatest part of my energy for the next months in language study. This, unfortunately, is not a glamorous but a necessary part of mission work.

What a blessing it is to us to already have two teams scheduled to come down to assist in the work. We, along with Pastor Ezequel, are excited to see the beginning of what I believe will be an ongoing blessing. Remember that "mi casa es su casa", and you are more than welcome to bring your talents and come and assist us in meeting the needs here in Mexico. We are in need, not only of medical people, but of carpenters, mechanics, and others who can help (for example, there are now fifteen mission churches, most of which do not have a church building to meet in. What a worthy project for your church to get involved in - to raise the finances needed [\$3,000.00 US], and to build a building where these fledgling groups can meet).

Please remember the following needs in your prayers:

- open hearts to the Gospel,
- finances to continue to purchase medicines for the work,
- a keen and ready mind as I begin the process of learning Spanish,
- for me to be able to acquire a visa (Doc was able to get a residency visa),
- faithful, and committed friends who will continue to supply financial needs,
- teams who will be able and willing to come and support the work,
- Dr. Heinlein in his need for surgery later this summer.

May God bless each one of you richly. I remind you once again, you are very much a partner in what God is doing through us at Earthen Vessels.

Your Missionary,