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THE KNOTTY PINE POST

Special Edition: Guatemala Trip 2008

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Thanksgiving Preparations

The stage for performances was in pieces when we arrived. Our guys put it together, replaced broken parts, and built stairs for both sides. Then we cleaned and spray painted it (above pictures). Sue and Joan (below right) helped alter dresses for the quinceaneras girls and those graduating from high school and college, and sewed cumber bunds and bowties for the little kids who were going to perform.



Back Row: Sue and John (AZ), John Corley (OH), Jared (OH), Joel Corley (team leader, OH), Becky
Front Row: Mikkel (OH), Luke (OH), Dustin (OH), Carey (MO), and me from good 'ole MI

Dear Friends and Family,
Thank you so much for praying for me before and during my recent trip to Guatemala. I am happy to report that the Lord blessed us with the needed finances, safe travels and profitable service. It was very exciting for me to see the Lord provide all the money I needed to pay my way, plus an additional \$500 which was used to buy materials for the various projects. As I mentioned in the e-mail I sent while we were there, our team truly enjoyed each other and worked well together. We spent most of our time helping out at the orphanage, but did make a few short trips to experience a bit more Guatemalan culture. My overall reaction to the trip can be summed up in this: I loved it, and can't wait to go back! A piece of my heart is definitely still there. I am so thankful for the opportunity to go outside the USA and actually see and participate in God's work in another country and culture. Not to mention finally fulfilling my life-long dream of going on an overseas mission trip. Lord-willing it won't be the only time. I am praying He works it out for me to return next fall, especially because our 2009 summer mission project here at Barakel will be to raise money for Casa Bernabe! (Guess who will probably be doing the weekly presentation to the kids in chapel?! Pray for me as I work on this!) Well, without further delay, here is my summary newsletter....



Other projects the guys did: helped a team from Colorado dig a ditch for telephone conduit (above left); dug & poured cement for a new rainwater ditch (above right); built two ramps along the sidewalks so one person can push a wheelbarrow all the way up the hill without needed assistance to get over the sidewalks (below left); fixed loose doorknobs and leaky faucets & toilets (above middle), repaired broken windows, and other "little" things that needed attention but haven't been priority projects. A LOT was accomplished!





#1 La Casa de Los Angelitos

(In English: The House of Little Angels) "The Baby House," as it's usually called, was definitely my favorite place to spend time. There were 17 little ones ranging in age from about 2-3 yrs old, down to baby Karen who

was less than 2 months old (that's her in the pink blanket at left). There are a few older teen girls who live in the house and help the house parents care for the kids. Each of us ladies spent at least a couple days helping

them with the normal routine and loving on the kids. If I didn't have anything else to do and it wasn't naptime, often where be found.



#6 The Main Building

It's the center of much activity! It houses 4 dorm rooms with bathrooms for visiting teams (upper left), apartments, the orphanage kitchen (lower right) which cooks lunch and supper for all 180+ people each day (No GFS or Costco here! It's all from scratch!), the dining room where we ate most of our meals (upper right), the multi-purpose room where church is held each Sunday (lower left), offices, the salon where they train girls in cosmetology, and La Casa de David which is for kids about ages 3-6.



Tony, a native of Wisconsin and now one of the orphanage staff men, started this **garden (#5)** with



hope that one day they may be able to grow a lot of produce instead of buying so much at the farmers' market. It also gives Tony opportunity to build relationships with kids as a positive father-figure to them while teaching them a new skill.



#2 The Metal Shed

The building where a lot of tools and maintenance stuff is kept. Our guys replaced the tree-damaged roof, poured a cement gutter alongside it, and erected a new fence to keep kids from running on it (above). Then we all helped clean out the storage room and load the junk (below left) in the box truck for hauling to the Dump. Shelves were built, and the stuff we kept was organized and stored.



#4 Casa Bernabe's school-The kids were on break while we were there, but in Casa Samuel (7-10yrs) they did schoolwork for an hour before supper.

#3 The basketball/soccer court-This is the happenin' place when the kids are playing outside. It's where they hang out together, and also where they held the Thanksgiving performances.



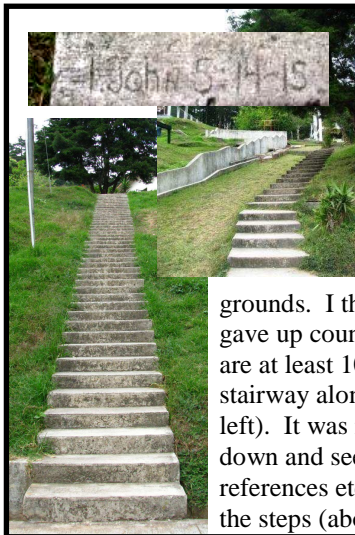
A typical day.....Thanksgiving Day!



A little about the food...

The teens, even the guys, take turns helping out in the kitchen (above right). The staff sort HUGE piles of dry beans before they're cooked (imagine enough for 200 or so people!) and chop/dice everything by hand with large knives. We had lots of fresh fruit (pineapple, cantaloupe, and papaya), salsa, cilantro, and a lot of things that had been put through the blender. Two of the teen guys make amazing bread fit for any bakery (above left)! And when turkeys were roasted for Thanksgiving, I was told they were cooked in wine and brown sugar. Also to my surprise, our first full day there they were having "bake day," making dozens of cardamom spritz cookies and cut-out sugar cookies to freeze for Christmas (above center)! ☺ I also got to see the pig-butchering process up close and personal (below) when I was asked to help carry papaya drinks to all the guys working to cut up the meat for the big Thanksgiving meal. Fortunately it didn't look much like a pig by that time.

In addition to helping the guys and playing with kids, the ladies on our team did a lot of dishes, cleaning, and laundry. The most unusual thing Carey and I did, and could honestly say we'd never done before: we hand-washed several hundred empty eggshells. (Yes, you read that correctly-see pic below.) One end of each egg was broken, and they're harder eggshells than our typical store-bought eggs here. So they didn't break when we dropped them in the sink. That's how we were able to wash them out. Why did they need washing? Well, I heard a couple different explanations, but from what I gathered they are used for art projects and then sold at the market...or something like that.



Casa Bernabe is on the side of a mountain, so there are A LOT of steps going from top to bottom and connecting different areas of the orphanage grounds. I think eventually we gave up counting steps, but there are at least 108 on the main stairway along the houses (at left). It was neat to walk up and down and see Scripture references etched into many of the steps (above).



#7 The Tortilla Hut
This is where the petite little "Tortilla Lady" completely hand-makes all the tortillas for the whole orphanage every day-usually for both lunch and supper! Every time I'd say hello to her, she'd greet me with "Hola nina", which in English means "hello child" (or little girl).



A traditional Guatemalan meal: fried plantains, cheese (it tasted like rotten milk with salt) and black beans



New Friends ☺

1) Edgar, the director's assistant, and his wife Sara met while she was at Casa Bernabe with a group led by Joel! 2) Tony shared with us his testimony and great love for the Lord and the kids of Casa Bernabe. He has become a good friend and one of my prayer warriors; 3) My teammate Carey became a dear friend and sister in Christ who encouraged me greatly. We continue to keep in touch and pray for each other.



The Farmers' Market



Every Wednesday someone from the orphanage takes the “box truck” and goes to the huge farmers’ market to pick up all the produce needed for the next week. The second week of our stay, our whole team piled in the van at 5:00 am for the trip across town. I’ve never seen so much produce in all my life!

Probably my favorite parts were seeing more of the traditional Guatemalan dress, eating fresh pineapple, and seeing all the different things you could buy to make herbal tea remedies. There was something for pretty much every type of ache or pain, high blood pressure, diabetes, digestive ailments...you name it! Oh, and did I mention the giant carrots we saw? I think they were the size of small logs...no kidding (below left). And to top it off, the fruit stand lady (above right) gave me a free tomato and a hug and kiss for taking her picture!



Around The City...

Guatemala City (above), stretches as far as you can see in both directions, at the foot of a mountain range. The city taxi system is made up of these colorful busses (upper right). The Dump (lower right and below) is Guatemala City’s landfill community, where each family is assigned by the government to pick through the trash and find a specific type of item. Lower left-the USA “foreign food” section of Walmart (upper left), or Hiper Paiz as it’s called there.



The Scenery



Antigua

On our American Thanksgiving Day, our team got away from the orphanage for awhile and went to Antigua, the oldest city in Guatemala. It’s a beautiful ancient town with gorgeous architecture, narrow stone streets, and color everywhere-the buildings, the flowers the markets! We spent several hours bartering at the Artisans Market, where they’re friendly to mission groups (a sign says “Compania de Jesus”) for things to take home with us. Guatemala is known for its colorful textiles. The colors and patterns are almost overwhelming! As for the town, I could have spent days just taking pictures. That was one Thanksgiving Day I won’t forget!

