

# *December 2003*

## *Adventures*

Hot weather, no Christmas lights, driving all over the country, no Christmas rush, no crowded malls, no stress – can this really be December? It's has been nice to enjoy this month and think about our Lord's birthday without the usual North American hectic-ness! But, busy we



were!

We picked up a good Georgian group (from Hiram, GA) on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. These 4 men were here checking out possible well sites. They got off the plane, after their 15 hour flight, and we carted them to our town of Santaní. We spent 4 days checking out sites here in the Northern District. Then, we visited Iguazu Falls in Brazil. This trip always keeps the teams coming back for more!

These guys had the opportunity to share a very exciting experience with us. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, many things happen here in Paraguay. This is the Day of the Virgen of Caacupe, which is a typical Catholic holiday celebrated by all the Catholics crawling on their knees to visit the Virgin, located in Caacupe. The Methodist church of Paraguay has modified this tradition, and we now have a celebration of baptisms that day. We had over 100 people meet at our camp site for singing, hearing testimonials, visiting, picnicking, and baptizing. Baptisms are mostly by emersion in a local river, as we mentioned in November's Adventures. At the camp, we baptized over 30 people, young and old, from 6 different churches. Almost all of the participants wear long white robes. It's a blessing to see each person receive their baptism from their individual pastor. When they rise out of the water, everyone is singing and clapping. This is also the birthday of our President, Pastor Pablo. Birthday cake was had by all as the day continued with many celebrations.



The day after we said good-bye to our Georgia Boys, we were headed to Londrina, Brazil. This is the home of a seminary and is also the home of our former Mobil Medical Clinic leader, Norival Trinidad, Junior, his wife Cristina; and the founder of the Methodist Church of Paraguay, Norival Senior, and his wife Ruth. The story – Alcides is a young man from Santa Rosa, the barrio where we first served. This is a barrio in a very deprived slum area. Alcides' parents abandoned him when he was an infant, and he was raised by his sister. As an child, he attended the Methodist day care center in Santa Rosa, the Mary Jo Phillips Guardaria. He completed high school, which is not common in his neighborhood. He felt the call of God on



his life, and spent 3 years attending our Bible Institute. He was a star student, and received a full scholarship from our National Methodist Church to attend the four year seminary in Londrina. We were honored to attend his graduation on December 12<sup>th</sup>, where he was the only student to graduate with honors. He is the first Paraguayan to ever attend this seminary, and the only pastor in the Methodist church of Paraguay to receive a full seminary education. His degree is equivalent to a Masters in Divinity from the United States. He is pictured here with his girlfriend, Fátima. She joined us in the 12 hour (one-way) drive to Londrina along with his sister who raised him.

We ended the month by flying back to Atlanta to spend Christmas with our daughters in Atlanta, Georgia. We enjoyed the cooler weather, Christmas lights, and no driving (except a short trip to visit with family in Hilton Head) – but we did **not** get caught up in the Christmas rush and malls. We had a simpler Christmas with the love of family and friends around us. For those we got to visit, thank you for sharing your time with us. For those we missed, please forgive us, our time in

the states was very short. We are now back in Paraguay, preparing to start drilling again.

We hope each of you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year's and felt the love of Jesus Christ, family, and friends.

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