

It Was Only Two Weeks???

Before we begin this saga, let us give a little bit of back ground information. We left the US and arrived back in Paraguay on Tuesday, February 4, 2003. On Friday of that same week, February 7, 2003, Harry Westmoreland came to Paraguay from Houston, Texas. He is the person who invented and built our drill rig. Our mission during Harry's two weeks was: 1) return to Yrybucua to repair their pump, 2) return to Quinta Linea to replace a lost control box, and 3) travel to Colonia Guaraní to drill their well. Our only team member, Estaben Mora, joined us on this expedition. We begin this saga on Friday afternoon....

We picked up Harry from the airport early afternoon. We did a quick tour of the new school in Lambaré; met some of the other missionaries serving here in Paraguay; went to pick up the church's big 6 ton truck (named Mission Calvario) we use to carry materials; Ed & Harry headed to our local driller's store and ordered pipes, visited, and talked drilling. Meanwhile after getting Mission Calvario, Linda headed to the market to buy food to take on our journey. We all met back at our house and enjoyed a nice evening with other missionaries – it all sounds so easy!

We woke up early Saturday and our goal was to return to our local driller's to get all the stuff needed, and then head out. Estaben came to our house early to get started, and the guys headed out to get the rest of our things. Linda stayed home to get things ready to leave – we have to take everything needed for the kitchen as well as all linens, in addition to all our drilling supplies. The day begins with a dead battery and a bad tire in Mission Calvario. By the time the new battery is bought and installed, the tire is fixed and all the project items are bought and loaded, it started raining. Nothing happens in Paraguay when it rains! There is a reason for this – the streets flood, and we have no storm water drainage system. We bundle up and spend another night in Asunción.

We woke up Sunday morning and did get an early start. The initial drive to the dirt cut off road into Yrybucua is 125 miles and takes about 4 hours. Then the dirt road is only 30 miles, and **usually** takes from 0-5 hours: 0=it has rained, so get a good book cause you aren't going anywhere; and 5=there has been rain, use 4-wheel drive and push on slowly. Linda drove our Toyota Hilux and Ed drove Mission Calvario. Mission Calvario has 4-wheel drive capacity, but it has to be manually installed before it is operational. This takes about 1 hour, on a good day, and involves climbing under the truck and installing an 18" drive shaft that extends from the transmission to the front axle. It takes 8 bolts to install the drive shaft.

We all get to the dirt road without problems, even though there has been rain in the area. We've installed a VHF radio in the Toyota truck, and Ed is using the hand held portable radio, so both trucks are in communication. Ed does not install the 4-wheel drive in Mission Calvario, but Linda uses 4-wheel drive and

drives most of the route in high 4; which means the roads are passable, but not in very good shape. We make the trip in about 3 1/2 hours. We unload all our stuff and get to work.

The pump for Yrybucua still does not work - hmmm. This will mean another trip back to Asuncion, but we save this project for another day. We install the control box in Quinta Linea. The family is so excited! They have fresh water under good pressure, so now have a bathroom! All is going well except Tuesday we have heavy rain – which delays our departure for Colonia Guaraní. We wake up early Wednesday morning, with clouds in the sky, but leave early and hope to make it to the paved road before we get more rain. **Good idea?**

We are out of Yrybucua for about 30 minutes before it starts raining – **HARD!** Harry is driving the Toyota as we now have our trailer with the drill rig, which weighs about a ton. The Toyota is still in 4-wheel drive, so Harry is doing okay. Ed and Estaben decide they need the 4-wheel drive in Mission Calvario. They spread a tarp, in the rain & mud, crawl under the 6 ton truck (did we mention the emergency brake doesn't work?) and begin the 1 hour process of installing the drive shaft – this day this process stretched to about 1 1/2 hours. Ed says he had hot water from the transmission dripping on top of him while cold rain is running in his ears! Someone had switched the bolts for the drive shaft, and all we had were small ones, but the project was finally completed and we begin again.

The rain lets up for a little while, but Harry and Linda notice something hanging from the bottom of Mission Calvario – not a good sign! Ed and Estaben heard noises so are stopping. What is loose is the newly installed 4-wheel drive shaft, which sheared the undersized bolts and in coming loose knocks a hole in the transmission case. Did we mention the need of 8 bolts to install the drive shaft? Well, we don't have 8 bolts so use what we have, which is why the drive shaft came off. So, we scavenge around both trucks, taking bolts from unneeded places and again reinstall the drive shaft. The hole in the transmission case is not a problem; just fill the case with bearing grease. How creative one can be when living in a third world!

We continue on, but come to a long decline, with a sharp slope going up on the other side. It is now pouring rain, and we see there are 2 large trucks on the upward slope stuck in the mud. Hmmm, can we make it? Ed walks down and up for an inspection. Ed decides to try it with Mission Calvario. Harry and Linda wait in the Toyota for a sign that Mission Calvario is safely on the other side of the hill and other side of the stuck trucks. Then, Harry and Linda notice Ed walking back to the Toyota. He didn't make it and now Mission Calvario is stuck with the other trucks on the uphill side of the slope.

Harry and Linda begin with the Toyota and drive carefully down and then up the slope. They make it without problems! Gracias a Dios! The Toyota waits on a clear patch of road for Mission Calvario to get unstuck. In trying to get Mission

Calvario out of the mud, the clutch burns out. Again, Harry and Linda see Ed walking up to the Toyota, now with the news that Mission Calvario is dead. But, Estaben says: no problem, there is a mechanic just where the paved road begins that knows this truck. He will come and get it out of the mud and fix it. Now, when you are in a third world and there are mechanics who “know your truck” all over the country – what does this tell you? – Yes, the truck breaks down a lot!

Harry, Ed, and Linda drive out to the paved road. This 30 mile trip has now lasted for 7 ½ hours! We do find the mechanic, who sends out a tractor to get Mission Calvario back into town. Estaben’s 30 mile trip lasted 13 hours! We settle down for a night at a hotel in Santaní. This is the town we will probably be moving to this year, so we do have some knowledge of the town.

We wake up Thursday morning, and head to the mechanic. Mechanics in Paraguay do not have parts, you have to stop by the shop periodically and get a supply shopping list. Knowing the mechanic couldn’t repair anything till we get there to buy parts, we headed out early. However, the Toyota has **NO** acceleration. We discover that the fuel we purchased the night before had a lot of water in it. We only use diesel, so this is a problem having water in a diesel motor. We limp along, and finally get to the mechanic. We replace the fuel filter in the Toyota, buy a new clutch, epoxy to patch the hole in the transmission case and oil for Mission Calvario, and are finally on our way to Colonia Guaraní by mid afternoon, both trucks running. However, the water in the fuel destroyed the fuel injectors in the Toyota, so the Toyota has very little power, but we do okay.

Our next stop is only 5 hours away in Ciudad del Este. We arrive there and spend Thursday night with Ben and Jenny Reyes, other missionaries with the Mission Society. Friday, we decide we need a day of R&R, so we relax and take Harry to see Falls de Iguazú. We have a good and restful Friday.

Saturday we continue up to Colonia Guaraní, which is supposed to be only a 3 hour drive. Again, the last part of the trip is on a dirt road, and again we’ve had rain. This road doesn’t have the same problems as the Yrybucua road; it is a very hard clay – which when wet is like ice. Mission Calvario is not in 4-wheel drive. We encounter a long downhill slope. Ben’s SUV is in the lead, and makes it okay, slipping along the way. The Toyota is behind Ben, and as Ben slows down for his slides, the Toyota has to slow down too. However, the trailer doesn’t get the message to slow down, so Harry and Linda end up coming down the slope jack knifed, turning a 180° and ending up in the ditch. Harry did a superb job is keeping the Toyota and trailer upright. No damage was done to the Toyota or trailer, just shaken nerves. Harry is able to drive out of the ditch without problems.

Watching all this, Ed decides to put the 4-wheel drive shaft back on Mission Calvario. Another wait of 1 ½ hours, this time lying under the truck on top of wet,

slippery clay in the rain. Mission Calvario makes it down the slope without problems – again, Gracias a Dios!

We finally slip and slide our way into Colonia Guaraní. We unload our stuff and set up camp. Here, we sleep in tents. There is no running water, but the next door neighbor has a well, which we are able to use. “Baths” are taken with buckets of water in the future bathroom of the pastor’s house. It’s interesting to get water from the neighbors. Their well has a very healthy crop of ferns growing inside. So, when you draw up a bucket of water, it passes through the ferns, with all sorts of insects dropping in the water. We use this for our bathing only. However, the family uses this for everything – bathing, drinking, washing dishes, washing clothes. We have access to another, cleaner well we use for drinking. However, we have a portable water filtration system we pour the well water through before drinking. This was good as we noticed little round worms in the water before it was filtered.

Luckily, none of us North Americans got sick. This is a true blessing, because with no water there is no bathroom, so we only have an outhouse. With the heat we’ve been having, the outhouse is not your favorite place to be, but the flies seem to enjoy it.

By the following Tuesday (February 18th), we complete the well. We were only able to drill to 72’, due to hitting basalt rock. We set the PVC pipe, and had to leave while the family continued to clear the drilling mud from the well.

We return to Asuncion on Wednesday. It was a full 9 hour drive from Colonia Guaraní directly to Asuncion, but thank the Lord without rain or problems. We get in tired, but satisfied with our journey. Thursday, we take Harry shopping for native stuff, and he heads back to Texas.

All this in just 2 weeks? Incredible! If in the reading of this story any of you have used that 3 letter word **w-h-y**; your penance is to go to the Bible and read Romans 10:14-15.

Follow up – We have made it back to Yrybucua, and replaced the pump. At last report, it is working great.

We will leave soon to install the pump and finish the plumbing at Colonia Guaraní. Hopefully, we will have a real bathroom for the family as well as for our use very soon.