

# *Heavenly Chuckle*

(Written by Linda Baker, October 2007)



Did you hear it? It happened on Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. A LOUD heavenly chuckle and we heard it loud and clear right here in Paraguay. Here's the story.

We're in the middle of a drought. We haven't had any measurable rain since June, and now it's October, heading straight into a hot summer. What this means for us who have a hand dug well is water is scarce.

We were coming home from working in the "interior" with lots of dirty clothes. Little water means you have to make choices as to what you will do with what you have. We had been gone for about a week, so I was hoping we would have enough water to at least wash my underwear.

We drove up to our house and noticed all our neighbors were carrying their laundry in plastic buckets down to the river for washing. Ed said, "Well, I guess you're not THAT incarnate, start the washer." I hurried out of the car, loaded the washer with all my white underwear, Ed's too, and a few other white things I thought I couldn't live without. Whew – at least that's done. I say a little prayer for the convenience of an electric washing machine.

As I mentioned, we have a hand dug well. Now think about it, you can only "dig" a well until the water is about to your knees, maybe your thighs – so you deepen the well during the dry season. So our well is about 40' deep with about 5' of water on a normal day – today we have only about 1' of water – the bottom of the well is on rock so it can't be deepened.

The logistics of water management can be all consuming. We have an electric float switch inside our tank, but we can't keep this "on" all the time. If we do, the pump in our well will just run without water; eventually burning out our pump. So, we stand outside and listen. We know very well the sound of water running into the tank, the sound of a full tank, and the sound of a dry well. We listen to see where we are in our water management scenario. How much water gets into the tank will determine what we can do – wash dishes, shower, wash clothes?

What adds another wrench to our lives is that there is a small plumbing leak somewhere in our house (we PTL daily that we are only renting)! During normal times, i.e. water aplenty, this isn't a big deal. However, with the drought, this is a problem. If we turn off the pump but leave the valve open for water to enter the house, we still run out of water. We come home and there is no water in the tank. Where is it? We don't know – somewhere. We have fixed several leaks in the house, but this last one seems to allude us. So now our system is to turn off the water as it enters the house, as well as turn off the pump. So much to remember when we go to the grocery store!

Of equal importance is the quality of water we're pumping up to our tank – the tank is on top of the house. As we get into our dry season, the water is

brown, just like the river. Water coming out of the tap in the house is brown, I use it sparingly. Now I'll start washing our fruits and vegetables in bought water, using the water in the tap only for washing stuff like our bodies and dishes.

However, I still need to use the water as if it is precious. I sometimes think I'm playing a game like "Name that Tune" that was on television in the 1950's (show ran 1953-1959), only I say to myself, "I can wash all these plates in just 1 cup of water!"

So – back to the clothes washing – our washing machine takes 3 hours to complete 1 load. I can only do laundry if I'm going to be home for all this time to check to be sure we still have water and the washing machine is not trying to fill without success. Also, I can't do laundry on Sunday, or on a cloudy day. We don't have a dryer, so I time my washing to be able to hang the laundry on the line to dry or hang on a line in my "garage". We can't hang laundry outside at night or when we are not here. They seem to grow legs and "walk away" if no one is home to protect them.

So, I've waited my obligatory 3 hours, opened the washer to retrieve my laundry, and guess what – yes THE HEAVENLY CHUCKLE!!! All my laundry is a spotty brown! It seems in my haste to do laundry I forgot the rule about the dirty water – always check the water coming from the tap before putting laundry in the washer, especially whites! I think Jesus just gets a kick out of our living a more incarnate life here in Paraguay.

Now my Mother maybe a bit disappointed that when they wheel me into the hospital emergency room I won't have on clean, white under drawers like she always suggested. But, maybe, someone will look at me and say, "Now look at that sweet incarnate soul, she's been washing her underwear down at the river."