

MRS FLOWERS EXCELLENT ADVENTURE # 12

APRIL, 2011

Another year in Mrs. Flowers' excellent adventure has passed with the usual El Porvenir soap opera containing episodes including "mysterious car headlight syndrome"...lights that turn on in the middle of the night resulting in morning dead battery, a lonely bat trying to crawl into bed with Mrs. Flowers, the three Ledford dogs who believe that as attendees of Sunday morning church services they are entitled to sit on the pew seats and become quite huffy if they are displaced by a human bottom, the ever pesky woodpecker dedicated to breaking Mrs Flowers' mirrored windows and the list goes on!!!

However, in spite of these dramas much was accomplished in our six month stay which began in October with the Project Honduras Conference in Copan. Attended by international NGO's ,(including Honduran President Pepe Lobo,) the conference always provides an opportunity to make valuable connections. This year I was a speaker and presented our programs sparking some interest which resulted in expansion of the Healthy Living school education program to include children in several other areas of Honduras.

Then it was back home to El Porvenir to see if my house had weathered a summer with several volunteers in residence. It had survived, not unscathed, but "intact"!

THE WORK

Porvenir English Program (known as PEP)

My immediate challenge was to work with Iris to pull together a cohesive curriculum that would transition well between volunteer teachers. Under her capable direction, the program, although suffering many growing pains since its inception last April, is developing and evolving into a beneficial contribution to life in El Porvenir. Six classes (composed of students grades 1-6) are held daily, five days a week. We have been blessed with the acquisition of a "school" consisting of two classrooms in a house adjacent to VH1 (the volunteer's residence) Generously provided by Melissa Juarez in memory of her late mother Prof Nieve, a retired teacher, this facility is "perfect"!!! Since we are now totally separate from the government school

system we are not affected by the frequent and ongoing school strikes which have plagued Honduras this year. Our diverse group of volunteer teachers have included folks from Scotland, England, Poland, Denmark, Ireland, and of course, Canada and the US. Although mostly young people, we were joined by a couple of “young at heart” retired teachers who have been invaluable to program development. PEP students are often encountered around town practising their newly acquired English phrases of the week on anyone who will listen!!!

A note about VH1, which WAS originally a dismally depressing house,.... Mrs Flowers “ seized the opportunity” to renovate and decorate....of course you all know that she requires no encouragement to enter into this type of venture....any excuse will do!!!! The project included turning a vacant apartment (translation “shed”) attached to the house and inhabited by rats, bats and other creepy crawlers for the past twenty years into a Honduran “pied a terre”.

The Healthy Living Education Program:

In spite of the many teacher strikes, we were able to cover some of the schools in the program by utilizing local citizens, visitors,Emily Mangat, a Toronto first year student at University of Western Ontario, and Porvenir volunteers (from Belgium Heide, plus Americans Natelie and Jasmine)as puppeteers. The seven year old program which I started in El Progreso is now not only being presented (complete with new puppets) in far reaching rural areas of Honduras but also includes larger cities like Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. I am told that an initial effort to replicate Grandpa Gums resembled a really scary ET and was subsequently discarded in favor of a “store bought puppet”.

This summer, in a collaborative effort between Duke University, Virginia Tech and Dra Ana Monroy (Porvenir’s Centro de Salud doctor), the HIV program is being extended in the elementary schools and a new project started in our local collegio (high school.).

Participation in our education programs by seniors at our local high school included the presentation of environmental “charlas” during the school dental brigade....and I understand that they are working on the production of an “environmental RAP musical skit” that will be introduced to Grades 1-6 this summer. They have promised to send me a video!!! Unfortunately because my six months in Honduras includes just 3 months of the “so

called” school year (February– November), I can only participate in the initial planning but not the actual implementation of the new programs.

School Dental Program, Grades 4-6

Now in its third year, this program is staffed by our wonderful Canadian team of hygienists, led by Lisa Stoughten, and Dentist Dr. Bill Kerr. They had yet another successful trip and as hoped for when we began the program....results are now showing in the kids who have had three years of dental attention. This year all 352 children were seen by hygienists and the most serious cases by Dr Bill and Dr Juan Carlos (El Porvenir Centro de Salud dentist) Children from our Porvenir school, David Ashby’s orphanage and Monica and Jeffrey Carlson’s school in Bonitillo received cleanings, fillings, root canals and extractions in record numbers.....treatments that would be unavailable to these children without our help. Porvenir’s mayor again made the municipal office meeting room available to the four hygienists and the high school students kept the waiting patients occupied while four at a time reclined in Mrs Flowers’ newly constructed “dental chaises” each with an I Pod playing their choice of music!!!

The New Dental Clinic:

The opening of a “real” dental clinic at our town’s government health center (Centro de Salud) eliminated Mrs Flowers having to repeat last year’s scary after dark trips down from Salud Total’s clinic (I think the record was 12 in Mrs F’s 93 Nissan) to the unfamiliar corners of El Porvenir. As many of you know, my aunt Eleanor’s long time best friend Helen Anderson, right arm to one time Premier Bill Davis and my “Aunt Helen”died this past summer. Her legacy has allowed me to establish El Porvenir’s first complete clinic which is named in her honor. The clinic is totally equipped including two full chair setups plus an X-ray machine ...and is capably staffed by Dr Juan Carlos Zepeda. During the week long dental brigade he worked tirelessly along side Dr Bill , our wonderful dental assistants and translator Iris Carrenza. Cristine Marsh, a restorative hygienist, divided her time between the clinic and cleaning teeth at the muni. Many, many supplies were donated to the clinic by Dr Kerr and his team. Students (116), whose identified dental problems could not be treated during the team’s week in Honduras will be followed up by Dr Juan Carlos over the next few months. There are still some “upgrades” of plumbing, wiring and pressure issues to contend with so I have once again recruited back into action contractor extraordinaire/construction/problem solver “guru” Walter Bush (the builder of my house). Between Dr Bill’s drawings, Dr Juan Carlos’ input and

Walter's expertise.....I have every confidence that the clinic will be at 100% very soon

Eye/Medical Brigade

My friends ophthalmologist Lou Scallon, and his physician wife Cosette., held a two day brigade at different locations in Porvenir (read three ring circus!!!) Assisted by their medical student son Greg, high school senior Nick, and community volunteers, they saw over 200 patients. There were a number of "over the top" blood sugars who have since been referred to Dra Ana Monroy at C de S for further follow up Dr Lou diagnosed four eye surgical candidates who he then transported to the clinic in El Progreso, did the surgery and sent them back to Porvenir complete with a private driver. I'm not sure what impressed the patients more.....the surgery or the transportation and overnight stay in Progreso! Again, these people would have had no chance of receiving the needed treatment if it had not been for Lou's generosity.

Standard Fruit Eye Screening Brigade:

David Pruesner and his Dallas team once again made many field and plant workers (with no hope of ever having their eyes checked) happy by providing an eye exam and "on the spot" prescription eye glasses. A man referred by David to Dr Lou for follow up was one of the four patients that went to El Progreso for surgery

Other Projects/Accomplishments this year:

- El Porvenir now has weekly garbage collection. No, this doesn't mean that the dogs, pigs, horses, chickens and cows don't receive the benefit of Mrs Flowers' personal food recycling program! I am told that the input given by our volunteers' "brainstorming" session helped to "stimulate" interest in the project and the end result!
- An expanded Bee Bag market with more bags sold ... providing more employment opportunities and a little more money for our programs
- The high school library has officially been named the Dr Dean Harms Library with a very impressive sign and dedication. Mary Harms, and friends, donated additional money in Dean's name that enabled us to buy 5 more computers, a photocopier and other smaller pieces of office equipment for the library
- Mrs Flowers was the official honorary "madrina" of this year's high school graduating class.

- Sponsorship of a young man to return and finish high school hopefully allowing him to find a better job (he is currently a field worker for Standard Fruit)

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

- After Easter, we will be starting to teach adult English classes two nights a week.
- To more fully involve the high school students in the Healthy Living presentations
- To ultimately expand the PEP program to the high school and to utilize these students as English teachers to the younger children in the program. They would receive community service points (needed to graduate) for this job.

I am looking forward to returning to Canada at the end of April (when as daughter Elizabeth says....she can remind me that I am retired), a long hot summer spent on the cottage dock (with friends and family) with a glass or two of wine and a variety of “fruity beverages”, playing some golf, but most of all to seeing my kids, my grandson Tristan, grand dogs Forest and Goblin..... AND to welcoming a new grandchild in August (Chris and Cristina’s first)

Thank you for all your emails and words of support.....they really do help to keep me going.

Happy Easter to everyone,

Anne

.....Many thanks to the following:.....

PEP volunteers this year:

Caroline Dyer
 Shauna Nelson
 Aaron Lavender
 Anna Jones
 Martyn Gillan
 Carol Mayer

Flo and Gary Green
Martin Hemens
Ben Cohen
Woiciech Miocsvnski
Stephanie Martin

Visitor: Emily Mangat

Volunteer extraordinaire: Rikke Soendergaard from Denmark

Dental Team:

Dr Bill Kerr, Lisa and Loretta Kerr
Lisa Stoughten
Brenda Nicholson
Cathy Johnston
Helen Dodsworth
Cristine Marsh

Medical Team:

Dr Lou Scallon
Dr Cosette Scallon
Greg and Nick Scallon

Program Supporters:

Julie Gray
St. Pauls Church
St. Georges Church
Pam Lavender
Drs Lou and Cosette Scallon
Dr. Bill Kerr