



News from Poptun



The Mission Team

Waiting in Miami for our flight to Belize City

DAY 1 - SATURDAY: CAN WE GET THERE FROM HERE?

For the 2nd day in the row, my alarm goes off at 4 a.m., not a normal occurrence at our house, and probably not for the other members of our mission team either! We had all met on Friday at 5 a.m. at Orlando International Airport, only to find out that our connecting flight from Miami to Guatemala City had been canceled due to a volcano. Volcano Pacaya (located 15 miles south of the city & last erupting in 1998) spread 2-4 inches of ash over the city, closing down the airport and most other transportation.

After multiple phone calls and conversations, we agreed to talk that afternoon via phone, and most likely fly out the following day. Later on that morning we were able to get our flight moved to Belize City on Saturday, still about a 6-hour bus ride from our destination, and requiring us to cross the Belize/Guatemala border via bus. Our original bus driver was supposed to meet us in Guatemala City, and didn't have a passport to get to Guatemala, but would be able to drive overnight and meet us the next day at the border.

God's Helping Hands

(Manos Ayudadoras)

The clinic we are helping is called Manos Ayudadoras. This is a dream project of Dr. Elden Lopez, who was born in Guatemala and currently resides in Loma Linda, CA.

Dr Lopez started the non-profit foundation God's Helping Hands to help the people of Guatemala that can't afford or access healthcare. The clinic is located in the hill country of the Peten region, where the local Mayan people make a daily wage equivalent to \$1 US.

When open, the clinic will provide the following services: Emergency, Surgery, X-ray, Lab, Dental, and Health education.

An unsolicited (answer to prayer) email arrived on Friday as well, letting me know a completely different mission in Belize had a bus available with Junior the driver to transport mission members from airport to border if needed. Praise God! So by Friday evening we had our flight and bus arrangements locked in, and all we could do was hope that all the connections would work out. Our mission team was more excited than ever to make this special trip a reality.



DAY 1 - SATURDAY (CONTINUED):

So here we are at the airport again at 5 a.m. Saturday, ready for Poptun! Check-in goes great (the operator of the carry-on luggage scanner had a puzzled look on his face as the screen showed him a couple of microscopes, 500 kid's straws, and a few hundred Max & Buddy buttons!)

We



The logo on our team t-shirts

arrive at our layover in Miami, only to find out that our flight to Belize City had been delayed. First 1 hour, then 2 hours, we are getting concerned about our connections in country and traveling after dark. Finally, 2.5 hours later, we are in the air!

Our flight touches down in Belize City after a 2-hour flight, and we head to baggage claim. As we leave with our bags through customs, the officer decides that with all the bags we have we must have something to declare, so sends us through that line. I send up a prayer that we can continue on through, and after a few questions ("Why did you come here instead of Guatemala City? There was a volcano



Waiting for the bus in Belize



Our bus driver Junior!

yesterday? Why are you leaving Belize so soon?") we left with all of our materials and equipment. Yeah!!

Junior (our driver) is waiting with a yellow school bus to load up all of our luggage, and take us to the border. It lightly drizzles for the 2 hour ride (this is rainy season in Guatemala) and we finally arrive at the border around 3:30 p.m., and go through the luggage drill. All bags off the bus, drag to the border, pay the \$15 exit tax, and then put them on the other bus! Dr Lopez was very glad to see us (and we were even more happy to see a familiar face at the border!) as he had been waiting



Unloading the bus to cross the border.

for a few hours due to our flight delay. This time it is a mini-van and a pick-up truck for transportation, and we pack in like sardines and head off to Poptun! We finally arrive around 10:30 p.m. local time (we are 2 hours behind EST), and find a bunk bed, and doze off to rain dancing on the tin roof overhead.



DAY 2 - SUNDAY: RAIN OR SHINE

We wake up our first day at the clinic to rain, rain, and more rain! It was raining all night, and we aren't sure when it is going to stop. We find out that morning that tropical storm Agatha had hit the other side of Guatemala, leaving at least 120 people dead. Tough times for people near Guatemala City, having been hit by volcano then tropical storm on consecutive days. One more reason our detour through Belize seemed meant to be, as we missed the majority of the rain and wind by coming the

been donated from FH Orlando, Waterman, and other locations, and we need to find out what works, what doesn't, and what is still missing.



Our living, family, and dining rooms

revised way...

We start the day with breakfast at 7:30a in an open air/thatched roof kitchen/dining area, followed by a little team time. Chaplain Joseph Wamack created a great inspirational booklet for each of us around the fruits of the spirit, so the "word of the day" is Love!



Yvonne and Jan in one of the patient rooms

We also took a few minutes to visit the chicken coop on site, where 1,600 chickens lay eggs each day that are sold at the local market to help with the clinic operational costs. When Mike and I had a site visit in October, they were all brand-new chicks, so it's amazing to see all of them now as "productive adults"!



Is that a road? Rainy season in Poptun.



Trini gathers eggs at the chicken coop

After team time, we walk over to the clinic, and start the work on organizing, cleaning, cataloguing, and whatever else needs to be done to get the clinic open soon. A lot of equipment and supplies have

Lunch comes at 12:30 p.m., followed by more work at the clinic. The rain finally stops, and it starts to clear up a little. Dinner is at 5:30 p.m., followed by a wrap-up of the day. Sun goes down around 6:30p, and it is time for showers and wind-down.



DAY 3 - MONDAY: ANKLE AND ANGEL

Another bright and early wake-up day! The sun comes up at 5 a.m. every morning, and the roosters outside our windows let us know it too! Looks like no rain this morning. Our “word of the day” is Joy. Mike Thompson is helping around the breakfast area again (he did a great job yesterday!) and slipped on one of the concrete blocks used for stairs. But a twisted ankle won’t keep him down! Lauren (one of our nurses on the trip) does a great job wrapping the ankle, and Mike finds that the moped at the clinic will get him around very effectively without having to walk on it too much. Let the work continue!



Carolina with some lab chemicals from town.

In the afternoon we head into town to see Poptun and the people. Trinidad “Trini” is the main foreman on site, and his wife and 3 children ask to ride in with us to do some errands. Angel (4 years old and the youngest one) rides in the very back of the van with me, sitting on the floor. His big smile and gleeful laugh every time we go over a bump let me know he is having a blast on this trip! The kids



Mike and Norberto finish hanging the projector

here have so little, yet are so happy! Says a lot about what really matters in life, and we don’t need much for contentment and joy!

No rain the rest of the day, so the sun is really hot! We decide to work some more after dinner, since it is slightly cooler. We get several rooms organized, and Mike and Norberto get the projector mounted in the education room.

At night, we realize that without the rain it takes several hours for the sleeping area to cool down. Cold showers are in order, while fending off the critters that also enjoy the bathroom area. Who knew that frogs and beetles could get so big!



Joseph found the gym!