

## **MOUNTAIN MILESTONES**

*News from Bill and Linda Brierly in Guatemala*

### **Fly on the Wall - October 2009**

"I wish I could be a fly on the wall; capture the moment first hand!"

In our desire to soak up an experience fully but unobtrusively, I bet each of us has said that at least once in our life. Well, now I invite each of you to be that "FLY" on the wall of the HIGHLIGHT of our life and ministry over the past few months....

"Clausura" of the Pampacche Women's Program

6:45am...Public market in San Cristobal...I sat on a little plastic stool inside the dark interior looking at a giant, freshly butchered cow's tongue sitting on the cement ledge in front of me. Dolores and I watched as the man swung a big axe on a giant meat-smearred tree stump which served as his chopping block, cutting the big slab of red flesh into 25 lbs. of small pieces of beef for us.

And so began the day of the Grand Finale of the 4 years of health and Bible teaching with the 80 women of Pampacche that had been faithfully attending. Over the 4 years, the women had grown into a close-knit group and wanted to celebrate with a slam-bang meal. So with the few quetzales that each woman had put aside little by little over the year, Glenda, Dolores, and Consuelo bought the food and prepared a banquet for the women - a delicious, nutritious beef-vegetable soup.

8:00am...Dona Victoria's house in Pampacche, an hour's drive over a dirt road...Happy faces and happy chatter as the women peeled, sliced and chopped the tomatoes, onions, potatoes, guisquiles, and garlic for the soup. Meanwhile the meat was bubbling away on two open wood fires, belching smoke in the kitchen. Then contented concentration as they all sat down and colored in pictures of Jesus carrying His cross, followed by Consuelo's animated teaching of how Jesus can be depended on to always help us. After that, laughter during the games and then quiet pleasure as the women who had had the best attendance and punctuality over the year, received their prizes.

Words are not big enough to adequately tell you what happened next. I had just stood up to head into the kitchen to begin serving the meal. At the same moment one of the women stood up and began speaking earnestly in Pokomchi. Then she came over to me, hugged me, and presented me with a lovely hand-woven placemat. Another woman stood up, came over to me, hugged me passionately and started to cry on my shoulder. Then another and another and another. One woman, while she was speaking to me and hugging me pressed 20 quetzales (\$2.50) into my hand. The average family income in the mountain villages is about \$25/month. Another woman stood by my side, her hand on my arm and led the rest in a

long, heartfelt prayer for Bill and me and all of ASOSAP. And lastly, Grandmother Petrona, who is so arthritic that she has trouble walking, presented me with a big bag of fresh shucked corn. She had painstakingly walked the long distance back to her house to get it and returned to give it to me.

What was the message that they each so lovingly and passionately spoke to me? In essence, they said....

"Thank you for all you have done for us and our village. May God bless and keep you always. We will never forget your goodness to us. We thank God that He sent you to us. We know that it is now up to us to keep living out all that you have taught us."

As I was touched deeply by the joy of this moment, I thought briefly of all the turbulent, trying moments of the past 10 years, and a quote by Alicia Britt Chole came to mind...

*"If our tears are to produce fruit, we must sow - in the midst of pain, we are to give; in the midst of heartache, we are to serve."*

In this moment, God allowed me a brief glimpse of the rich harvest in the lives of these village women.

### Other High Lights in Brief (how about "Fly Lights"?!)

#### Latrine Party

The 36 families in the village of Pampacche who received their latrines this year put on a great meal for all of us of ASOSAP, with lots of touching speeches of appreciation to us and thanksgiving to God. They were able to receive their latrines, thanks to the teams who generously sent the funds even though they didn't come themselves.

#### Team Sabbatical Ends

This year was a bit sad for us without all the smiling faces of you team folks joining us. In fact, Nicolas said that was what he missed most about this year - no teams. However, we are planning to receive teams starting next year again. And we are thrilled that 3 teams have already signed up for next year!

#### Green Medicine

It's happening! In the July newsletter I mentioned the dream of having a community-led medicinal plant garden at the Health Post, and a health teaching video in Pokomchi. In coordination with us of ASOSAP, the National School of Nursing in Coban, and Tula Foundation of Canada, a group of villagers has planted a lovely garden at the health post complete with bright purple wooden signs giving the name of each plant. The teaching video on the medicinal plants is partly made. In fact 2 weeks ago we of ASOSAP, plus a video

technician from Coban spent a 12-hour day in the village interviewing and filming the village practitioners in their homes as they demonstrated the preparation of the plant remedies. The majority of the practitioners are village midwives.

#### Sad Students

Our 10 middle school students will be graduating in a few weeks, with very good grades. However, only one of them has a scholarship to carry on next year studying a career - Forestry Technician. In spite of all our efforts we have been unable to find funding for the other 9. Their efforts and personal sacrifice to reach the point they are now, have been unimaginably challenging! Our hope is to try again in 2010 to find funds so that they can renew their studies in 2011. Our BIG DREAM is to be able to have the funds to have continuous cycles of 6<sup>th</sup> graders enrolling for 3 years, and then moving on to a career track.

#### Sagerts Full Steam Ahead

After a relaxing, rejuvenating summer at home in Canada, Shawn, Natalie and their 3 children are very actively preparing to come and join us. Their enthusiastic emails are very heartening for us! They are hoping to be able to arrive next month, but that is not confirmed.

#### Rachael and Les

We had a brief but wonderful visit from Rachael Needham. She is our dearly beloved intern who lived and worked with us for almost 2 years. She went back home to study nursing and has just graduated as a nurse. We are so proud of her!

Les, a good friend from our home village of Clearwater, BC, just arrived to visit with us for 2 weeks. He and his wife, Betty Ann, have been friends for many years. It is such a thrill to have Les with us!

#### God's Story Steady On

Due to overwhelming time commitments of the local pastors, we have had to reshape our implementation plan. We of ASOSAP are now the Central Committee, doing the detailed planning and supervision of the project. We have made lots of steady progress....

- We have 200 DVDs in Pokomchi, and 250 DVDs in Spanish
- We have 4 solar powered audio "Mega Voices"
- We have 4 portable DVD players
- The radio script is now translated into Spanish
- We have identified the most effective implementation system - 3 volunteer Pokomchi "evangelists", supervised by ASOSAP, who will promote and teach God's Story in the villages and towns. The evangelists will receive a monthly financial stipend.
- God's Story will be shown in 8 sessions, with a Bible Study following each of the 8 viewings

One of the evangelists is already identified. We are praying that God will reveal to us who He wants the other two to be. We are also praying for the funds for their stipends. We anticipate starting early in 2010.

**We are Praying!**

And we ask each of you to please join your prayers to ours. Due to a long-time supporter withdrawing significant monthly support, we will not be able to meet our basic monthly operating expenses next year. We need U.S.\$10,000 to be able to keep the ministry open and functioning for 2010. We know and believe that God is a Faithful Provider. He has never failed us yet. But He responds to the earnest, humble prayers of His people. Please help us meet this most urgent need!

When the excitement is over, a fly on the wall simply flies away, without a care in the world. We hope that each of you will stick with us as you have in the past. We need and value your interest and support for this ministry.

Flying High with the Lord,  
*Bill and Linda*

For financial gifts, please mail your checks to the following:

In Canada

Hope of the Pokomchi  
Box 1817 RR#1  
Clearwater, BC V0E-1N0

In U.S.A.

PRISM Foundation  
6831 Cottage Hill Lane  
Celina, TX 75009

Make check out to:

Clearwater Christian Church

PRISM Foundation

In lower left of check, write: Hope of the Pokomchi -(either) Brierly Support (or) Project