

Trip Report Oct 14 - Nov 1  
Anne Ruch

Flight uncomplicated. Arrived in evening of Oct 14th. Stayed at Radisson Hotel in Guatemala City.

**Morning of Oct 15** - was supposed to have meeting with Dr. Alvarez from the Ministry of Health to discuss cervical cancer prevention program, which had been set up for 3 months. He insisted on the meeting and confirmed it with me right before I left. There were 2 other doctors there from the MOH but when they called him, he said he couldn't make it. They seemed irritated and said it is typical of him.

Dr. Marco Antonio González Castellanos - 5790-3453

They listened intently to my presentation and took a copy of my preliminary paper and copy of powerpoint. Alvarez had wanted to know who the Guatemalan doctor here was that I would "under" so I said Dr. Lucky Hernandez. They seemed happy with that. They both were clearly against VIA and they were in complete agreement with the data. They laughed about what a bully that Alvarez is.

They want Lucky to call them so we can set up a proposal for how to move forward.

Lucky is disgusted with the Ministry of Health and has no interest in working with them.

Funny observation - there was a metal detector that everyone had to go through to get into Ministry of Health. It went off every time any one went through it and of course, no one checked!

**Afternoon** - met with Isabel/Lucky/Tita and other members of Santa Caterina project. The mayor is continuing to block Isabel's group from getting the hospital. The group has decided to continue to "organization" with the purpose of addressing issues of cervical cancer and breast cancer prevention but forego the building. I was honestly relieved as I felt the building was far too big for anything we could use it for with far too much overhead. There was an engineer at the meeting and I had Jonathan's plans with me. He was delighted to look at them and he does a lot of construction work in Guatemala and had many good ideas. He said he also has a contact in Peten whom he will get Ismael in touch with. He was very impressed with the quality of the plans as were the other women in the group and I think it made our organization seem very much more real and significant to them. Here were some of his comments/ suggestions:

1. First, he was clearly impressed and took the plans very seriously
2. When I talked to him about a "security" wall around the whole project, he said that it would be much better to put the money into making the buildings incredibly secure. Putting a wall around the whole area would be incredibly expensive (probably close to the cost of the building the clinic). He has worked with many Mormon groups who build church facilities here and they have become experts at figuring this out. I'll list some examples below.
3. There is a product called "cindu" that apparently is used here quite a bit. He thought it would be the best option for the roof. It is cheap, very light and energy efficient.
4. For security purposes, he said they often put some kind of reinforcement under the roof (metal with mesh?) so that an intruder would literally have to drill to get through the roof.
5. He strongly recommended that we use solar panels. He said they do this often here and it is very cheap and potentially energy saving in the long run. Also, in alignment with our wish to be "green" it would be a great idea and we could potentially find more grants for our project for this. He said we should put at least 4-6 panels in with 1 battery.

6. He was very excited about the idea of having vegetable gardens amidst the buildings. He talked about having some kind of drainage pipes from the septic system to the gardens to "fertilize" them. This was definitely news to me! Seriously, you can hook it up so that your personal waste can go to enhance your food production???? He seemed to think it was old news here in Guatemala!!
7. I asked him for an estimated cost for building the clinic and he was pretty much in line with your estimate. He thought about \$65,000
8. He suggested not having windows that could be closed. In reality, he asked, when are you going to close them? With the overhangs that you have built into the construction, no water is going to enter the buildings when it is raining and it never gets cold enough there that we have to worry about that. He said that there are "windows" that are made of concrete or bars that have very small openings between the cracks so that air can enter easily but no one can break in). He is right - we just need the air flow- not the ability to close the windows.
9. There is a system called "electromalla" where you put a reinforcement into the walls and roof - he said it is commonly used here and would be a great system of security and insulation.
10. He recommended that we hire a construction company to do the work. While it might cost a little bit more, it will their problem if things are stolen during the construction and they will have to find workers that are reliable. He has a friend who does a lot of work in Rio Dulces in Peten and he was going to contact him. I will talk to Ismael about what he thinks about this. Ultimately, I think that Ismael has a good handle on this issue so it will be his decision.

After the meeting, Tita brought me to several stores to price autoclaves and other potential equipment for the clinic - looked expensive and I think we can do better bringing stuff from the U.S. She donated a small autoclave from her laboratory (pretty old but supposedly functions)

### **Wednesday, Oct 16**

Found out that Isabel is sick (pneumonia) so we can't fly up on her plane as had been planned - they were going to visit our clinic and also, sign all the documents for our Association status.

It was too late to get the TACA flight that morning so I took the 10 hour bus ride up there on Linea Dorado - it was slow and "wasted" a day but I got to see a lot of the countryside that I haven't seen before taking the bus at night.

Long day on the bus. Pretty uneventful - broken up by a 12 year old boy named Diego Gonzalez. He was interested in my photos and then we got talking. He wants to be a doctor. He goes to Catholic school - on vacation - they stop early October! He could read but didn't know how to read a map. He lives in Santa Rosa.

### **Thursday, Oct 17th**

Clinic in Santa Ana - saw 60 patients - mostly prenatal and paps. A busload came from Mango

### **Friday, Oct 18th**

Clinic in La Libertad. Same story as always. They always act like they are surprised that we have arrived. We set ourselves up in a back room and somehow make it work. Then we are

inundated with patients and the same people who are not terribly welcoming all line up for pap smear also! There is always a large number of cervical abnormalities here.

### **Saturday, Oct 19th**

Clinic in Sayaxche

USN came yesterday with Holly Little - wouldn't even turn on. I felt like the guy in Christmas Vacation when he plugged in the lights and they wouldn't turn on! Then, today at the clinic in Sayaxche, Anita's husband, her son and Ismael fixed it!! The wires weren't even attached!!

Good day. Saw 50 patients. Lauren also joined us this morning. She rode the bus all night - but was a good sport about not being too tired.

Van broke down - alternator down. We have to buy the new vehicle. For now, we're renting a van for the week.

### **Sunday, Oct 20**

See my long email from this morning about the patient with cervical cancer. We've had 4 invasive cervical cancers this week who presented to the clinic just this week alone.

### **Monday, Oct 21**

Clinic in Santa Ana. A pretty steady stream of patients. A few came for cryo and follow up of previous abnormalities. Some diabetics. Ultrasound working like a charm as well as the EMR. Feels so professional! We've come a long way. The little trifolds that we made are also a big hit. Feels good to have them leave with all their information so they can have evidence of what we did.

Ultrasound was great for confirming dates; documenting breech, etc

In the evening, the Director of the school in Santa Ana and the parent who is the head of their PTO came to Ismael's house. They are very eager to work with us which was a great step in the right direction - no longer are we begging to help! They really see the value in technology and want to have computers. We talked about having a pilot project for 4-5 months using the SOLES concept - they could use it in one class 4-5 times a day.

We're each going to make up a written plan for what the expectations are. It was really amiable and I can actually see a vision for the first time with the education program.

Orfe and I have been making dinners - mostly Orfe. She is such a lovely person - we get along really well and laugh an awful lot. Ismael too! He is super looking forward to Randy coming.

Lauren and Holly went to visit Nieves - baby was lying on the floor tied up like a dog. How much more heartbreaking can it get?

### **Tuesday, Oct 22**

Went to Poptun. The usual nonsense there. Hardly any patients until Orfe went out with the megaphone! Then we ended up with about 35.

They acted like they didn't know we were coming. Veronica is less than useless. She shows up at 10AM; leaves shortly thereafter for lunch and then complains that she is so busy. She

never even bothered to get the patients for cryo and colposcopy. As usual, they don't bother to get any phone numbers from anyone.

We got back around 6. Ate dinner - early night to bed after emails and such

### **Wednesday, Oct 23**

Ran 7 miles at 5:30. It was so beautiful - ran by our new property. It is really in a nice spot with a beautiful view.

Then Ismael and I went to get the factura for me (so now I'm an official Guatemalan resident and I could buy the car) and then send the documents to the Toyota place in Guatemala City. What should have taken 30 minutes took 5 hours - long story.

Looks like the Toyota guy finally has all the documents. Hope is to have the car available so that Randy and Ismael can drive it up here Saturday. Final cost is Q211,000 - we paid a bit more to get the roof rack and tinted windows - but they seemed a necessity. We saved about Q40,000 because of the contact from Sr. Pam - ended up costing us about the same as what the Nissan would have and it has a much more powerful engine which Ismael was really happy about.

Packed up the van and now we are on the way to San Cristobal for surgeries. 3 patients from Peten are coming for hysterectomies (they all had carcinoma-in-situ which was recurrent after treatment)

Sr. Pam came with us.

### **Thursday, Oct 24- Saturday - Oct 26**

Arrived in San Cristobal late last night.

The three ladies from Peten arrived today in the afternoon. It was too late to operate on them today so we will do it tomorrow. There were supposedly 5 more that Rudy had lined up but I felt their ailments could much more easily be treated with medications (and one had a cervical cancer that was too advanced) so we cancelled them.

### **Friday, Oct 25**

Randy arrived in Guatemala City. He and Ismael spent the night at Hostal Los Lagos. We tried and tried to get everything in order so that Ismael could get the car but the money couldn't get through the bank. I was so tied up in surgery that I couldn't get to the bank. So, Ismael went all that way and ended up not being able to get the van.

The very sad news was that as we were getting things ready for the surgeries, I asked Rudy for the box I left with him last February with all the drugs in it. I had emailed him last week to make sure he had everything and he assured me that he did. However, when I opened the box, all the narcotics were gone. And there were a lot (about 150 percocet, many vials of morphine and fentanyl). I had bought them all last Feb when I was counting on doing a lot of surgeries. Rudy seemed shocked. We had left a detailed inventory list with everything on it. We found 2 small bottles of propofol (the drug that Michael Jackson OD'd on) and some recuronium thrown into a box with a bunch of other stuff. I had left many more bottles of propofol. The only people who would have had access to this were Nulo, Peter and some other girl who had been working for Rudy for about 6 months. Rudy was so upset and then he told me that apparently he found out last week that Nulo was forging information for 2 of his brothers to get visas to come to the United States and Peter was helping him do it. He was using Rudy's letterhead and his organization's stamp to make letters saying that these people were employed by "Living to Serve" and that they were receiving big salaries. Peter

knew all about it and was helping them to get the visas. Rudy has no idea how they had the money to buy plane tickets because they are very poor - he had to wonder if the drugs were being sold for this. Who knows.....but needless to say Rudy is pretty devastated - people in the community know about it and it puts his organization in a terrible situation.

Then, for whatever reason, Rudy had little ready for the surgeries. The anesthesiologist never came so I worked with a CRNA, which was fine until today when I had a really hard case. The woman was obese and had all kinds of problems and none of the equipment worked and she was hemorrhaging. So, I decided I had to convert the hysterectomy to abdominal from vaginal only to hear from the CRNA that I can't do that because she doesn't know how to give anesthesia for that!! I considered taking a gun to my head but instead took a deep breath and somehow with almost no light and no help, got the case finished and thank God, the woman did fine.

Then Ismael made the 10 hour bus ride down to Guatemala to get the Association papers signed by Isabel and company. Randy arrived safely and he and Ismael were waiting. Then, guess what???....too much rain in Guatemala City and there was a massive mudslide and so the main road was closed so they couldn't get there to get the papers signed and one of them leaves for the United States in the morning so that big trip for nothing. We had hoped that Ismael would be able to pick up the new van while he was there but the surgeries took me so long today that I couldn't get to the bank to verify that the \$20,000 that was sent was for our humanitarian organization!! So now he will have to come down here again next week.

On the bright side, the surgical patients all did well and went home the next day. The 2 residents working with me are great. Sr. Pam is rooming with me now and we are somehow finding a lot to laugh about! Food is good. No one is sick. We've seen a few hundred patients in the clinics and have really helped a lot of them. Ismael and Orfe continue to amaze us with their stamina, insight and love for Jesus. Randy arrived safely. The new nurse, Carmen is outstanding.

Met with Erick Barrondo which was pretty exciting.

### **Saturday, Oct 26**

Randy and Ismael took the bus up to San Cristobal. We went to the race "expo". It was hilarious. Walked around and had our envelope marked with an "X" at every stop so that we didn't get 2 apples, or 2 advertisements about some silly hotel!! They said there would be about 1000 people at the event! (actually, there were about 250!)

We met with Erick Barrondo again. We met at a park where he was having a sports training program for a group of young boys. He seemed really positive about having a run in the Peten. He suggested a half marathon. We have to think about what month he might be available as well as what month would be the coolest - probably Jan or Feb.

Ismael seemed perturbed that Erick was given 30,000Q for having his name used for the 16K on Sunday but I told him this was pretty standard. He seemed genuinely happy to use the event for Cervical Cancer prevention in women and he was fine with the Peten. Randy thinks we should also add a 5K.

Rudy was clearly happy to be involved - he wants to be in charge of logistics - but after all the blunders at the hospital, I'm much more inclined to have Orfe do it!

We walked around San Cristobal - shopped at a little "tipico" shop run by a friend of Rudy's which was fun. Bought a few souvenirs to sell at our event. I bought 30 bags of coffee from Rudy.

Sunday, Oct 27

Randy and I and Rudy ran the 15 K race (raising money for the hospital in San Cristobal). Very hilly and hot but loads of fun and a great way to end the trip there. Then we headed back on the 6 hour trip to Santa Ana.

Monday, Oct 28th

The director of the school in Santa Ana and one of the parents who is the head of the PTO at the school came to Ismael's house the other night and they begged us to help with their school which was pretty cool. Plans are in the works.

Tuesday, Oct 29

The clinic was busy - about 25 ladies came from Mango with varying degrees of complaints - people mostly wanted ultrasounds. It was really good having one that worked. The EMR works well too.

Lauren left last night.

Wednesday, Oct 30

Clinic was fairly quiet - kind of intentionally since we had lots of things that needed to get done. More waiting at the bank to meet with several layers of people so that we could get the money through. I told them my PIN didn't work so after trying it 4 times, they gave me a new one that still didn't work - Ismael said his doesn't work either.

We met with "Professor" Edwin Maldonado who was one of the winners of the Cien Puntos award. He was good looking, tall, very "with-it" appearing - not at all the usual Guatemalan teacher. Seemed very excited about using the SOLES method of teaching using the computers. Could also supervise programs in Purushila and Santa Ana.

The we met again with the Director and the 6th grade teacher in the school in Santa Ana. We visited the school which wasn't much different than the one in Pueblo Nuevo. Perhaps I am too suspicious or perhaps my Spanish is too bad but I was wary of everything they said. The story seemed to change every minute. Books strewn everywhere. Workbooks unused. Are the children even allowed to write in them? Sometimes it seemed yes, sometimes no. I thought the level of difficulty was high and when I asked the teachers if the children really learned these things, they seemed to look at the pages inquisitively as if they had never seen them before! Somehow, it all seems like a sham. Empty cans of pop on half broken school desks.

The have 9 rooms - 11 teachers - some of the rooms are divided. Kids go to kindergarden ages 4,5, and 6 . Start first grade at age 7. What percent finish all six grades? "95%". How many are in 1st grade? 44. How many in 6th? 25. How many go to "basico?" "About 50% of those who finish 6th"

Who knows what the real answers are.

The director showed us the very clean and tidy official book which shows all the names and grades neatly typed. About 10-20% don't get passed to the next level. I asked to see one of the final exams. He was happy to show me one that basically had 2 questions on it:

Here is an example of a sentence. Write 10 more like it...

Maria come desayuna.

Juan juega beisbol.

etc, etc. Basically, do you know that a sentence has a noun and a verb?

The second question asked for 12 answers. This particular child wrote 5 - he was given 100%. It's all very confusing to say the least!

One chalk board for each class - drab. The parvulos had more color and "stuff" but nothing like they had in Purusila. One of the teachers had a baby this year so she was absent for months so one of the other teachers had to "double up".

Ismael, Randy and I met with a man from a local construction company. I guess that after everything with the Casa Materna, Ismael is inclined to just go with a company. It will cost much more and lots of potential for problems but also, lots of positives:

1. They will have to worry about protecting the materials
2. They will buy and transport the materials
3. They will probably have an easier time finding workers
4. It will be done more quickly

We talked about a lot of things such as:

1. How to bring the roof out more to avoid rain on the patio
2. Not having glass on the windows - concrete or metal bars instead
3. Perhaps putting the buildings together more - he couldn't understand why we were spreading them out so much but I said that it had to do with the look and feel of the place as well as separation of function
4. Randy and them chatted about septic; leachfield; options - "French drain" - Plastic drain to use with composting?
5. How to made the foundation so that there would be less problems with water around the building; good irrigation
6. Solar - he seemed to think it would be easy - he knew where to get panels - they talked about where to put the batteries
7. They felt that the place where the storage tanks for rain water was was too low - want to put it somewhere else. Have to have a plan for overflow
8. Need to apply to municipality for water usage
9. Electric is available from municipality
11. We need final plans and then engineer needs to give specifications and permits
12. What kind of material for roof?
13. Concrete block between rooms - no change in cost - more quiet - won't be damaged as much as dry wall
14. Randy suggested having a second level for the "hostal" - we could put a balcony - nice view - much better air flow in the evenings especially
15. All windows need to be high in the rooms
16. Should the buildings be rearranged a bit to avoid the low spot in the front?
17. What kind of wall around the property? Ismael had ideas of what kind of plants could be used
18. "Cena" tree in the middle of the entrance?
19. Need to pick which plan for how to arrange the parking lot - one more aesthetic? One less expensive
20. Randy talked about just having a dirt drive at first to make sure the ground was packed down before putting in asphalt.
21. Need to flip the door opening in the bathroom
22. Switch pharmacy and admin room
23. Flip door in cytotech room
24. Where will trees be?
25. What kind of material on overhang?
26. Hangar system for privacy material in each room
27. Insulation in ceiling?

28. Cindu?

29. Estimate Q1500-Q2000 per square meter

Thursday Oct 31

Surely didn't feel like halloween except that everywhere they were preparing for the "day of the dead" tomorrow. Only new twist is that now there are cops all around the cemeteries - I guess there was too much drinking, drugs, violence in years gone by.

Saw a few patients in the clinic in the morning. One woman had complete procidentia and was so delighted to have a pessary placed so her uterus was no longer hanging between her legs!!! She almost cried with thanks!!

We visited several ladies in Mango that had the hortilizas. Now is not the time that the vegetables are growing so we didn't see much but they proudly showed their "cercos". The level of poverty was sickening - maybe I've see so much of it now that it seems "normal" - it is sad that I can look at it and not be horrified. One lady had a baby 2 months ago. He was sleeping in a hammock and his 4 year old sister was wildly swinging him - to the point that he was close to hitting the door. I gasped and said "cuidado". She slowed down. Does the baby hit the wall all the time? Does the mother care? Yet, the mom was so very pretty and cleanly dressed in a lovely shirt and smart skirt - if she had come to our clinic, I would have had no idea where she lived. Toothless man sitting aimlessly on rock in front of the house cheerfully waved and thanked us for coming to see them. What could they possibly hope for? Do they even think of hope? Do they know what it means?

Ladies seemed delighted about idea of expanding their hortilizas and starting a business where we could buy the food from them instead of sending KAH food. Now we just need to get an income similar to what we had with KAH. I made some good movies of them.

We had a meeting set up again with the director of the school. He didn't show up and instead sent 2 of the teachers - it made me angry. We waited an hour and a half and as we were about to leave, he showed up with the 2 teachers. I explained that now we had no time and I wasn't able to show them all I had prepared - a demonstration of the Khan academy program; youtube videos explaining the SOLES program; a 4 page proposal I had put together. Instead, we quickly went through a few things and I said I would have to email them. Perhaps the other "cien puntos" teacher could supervise it.

I really like the land. We walked around it a bit - I ran on the road in front of it many times in the morning. Around 5:30 or 6AM, it is a bit cooler and so very peaceful. Men on bicycles pass and nod. Trucks go by and seem to purposefully get out of the way. I never feel concerned about the things that Ismael worries about it. I like it a lot.

It's too bad we can't buy the land next door. I hope it doesn't become a noisy, dirty, yucky place in years to come.

We said good-bye to Carmen (speaks Quechi)- one of the highlights of the trip. We made a little "corona" for her and called her "Miss Enfermera"!! We took pictures with her as though she had one the contest. She also comes from great poverty - this had to be a highlight in her life. I gave her Q2000. We laughed and her hug good-bye seemed so genuine. I have great hopes for her -

There are 2 girls who work with Orfe helping her with Anita - Flor and Ericka. We got news that Ericka's brother "disappeared" over night. The mom was frantic. Then, 10 minutes later - they found him on a bicycle in Naranjo, Frontera!!! - probably escaping to the U. S!

I bought a bunch of coffee bags from Orfe's group - they were so happy to sell them. We visited the Villa Maya - pretty fancy if we ever want to have an "exclusive" retreat there!

Final meeting with Sr. Pam - Orfe, Ismael, Randy and I.

#### Miscellaneous

1. Check out "guacami - they make expensive purses. Women are taught for 2 years. It's in Jocotan
2. Check out Christian water group that was going to be staying in Hostal Los Lagos
3. Check out more about Cindu
4. ElectroMaya

#### Patient stories

1. One woman 60#
2. Prolapse
3. Breech, twins
4. SEveral who didn't know if their tubes were tied. - one wanted it undone. Came to me for a pap after she already had one with Lauren because she didn't like Lauren's answer that it couldn't be undone!!
5. At least 5 cases of HIV in Purusila
6. Child with probable retinoblastoma

Holly wasn't able to bring suitcase. TACA used excuse that thin preps might blow up. It was comical listening to Ismael on the phone with police "Cual es su motivo?" Holly said she was waiting 4 hours after checking her bag and then 10 minutes before take off they brought her into office with 5 police!!