



The call came March 9, to Edwin Marroquin, our Mission of Love Guatemalan on-site manager and translator, that the "Patriot Wing" was 45 minutes early. A disappointed silence fell over us three Americans (Kathy Price, Tom and Sharon Borrer) inside the truck, as Edwin attempted to quickly maneuver through the congested streets of Guatemala City on our way to the La Aurora International Airport. Passing brightly colored "chicken buses", with brown-skinned people packed like sardines, overflow passengers hanging onto the rear ladders, and baskets of produce tied to the roof, we heard the loud roar of a plane overhead. The diligent guard at the airfield security gate, added to our impatience believing the plane had already landed . Finally, after being admitted and driving towards the runway with our additional passengers still in the back bed of the truck (Jose, Francisco, Douglas and Axel) , we heard the loud roar again. Leaping out of the truck, brandishing cameras, we saw the enormous C-5 Denton Cargo plane as it appeared from behind the trees, flying directly in front of us just before touching it's many wheels down on the runway. Jubilant cheers, high-fives and huge smiles erupted from us all!

Construction crew members (Juan, David, Ismael and Alexandro) Dr. Edgar and Claudia Moran, Byron and other volunteers from Tecpan arrived, and eagerly began to unload the precious cargo, one or two 50# bags of corn at a time, placing them into a box delivery truck on the tarmac to be driven to Way-bi, 60 miles west of Guatemala City. Orange-vested Guatemalan military who came to observe, clamored into the belly of the plane to take part in the unload. The crew, 11 American Air Force reservists, astounded by the joy their delivery of an ambulance, school bus and 13,000 pounds of corn caused, were rewarded with hugs, thumbs-up, thank you's and smiles. After the cargo was unloaded, everyone was offered a tour inside the 3-storied plane, and many photos were taken.

Once the cargo safely arrived at Way-bi, the community (men, women, boys, girls, young and old) appeared to unload the corn that would be stored in a building on the farm, for eventual distribution to ALL in need. Even the young girls, dressed in their traditional wrap skirts, huipils and shawls, balanced 50# bags on their heads for the walk down the driveway, giggling while they shyly avoided my camera.

Bags of corn were taken to two families the next day, when we delivered the wheelchairs which we had brought with us on the airline. A local doctor accompanied us to examine Juan Heraldo's family members and prescribe

medications. Juan, and many others, are extended, multi-generational families who reside together in small structures, that have uneven dirt floors with rocks protruding, boards with large gaps for walls, a piece of metal sheeting, a tarp, or cornstalks woven together, here or there for a wall or roof to protect them from the elements. One room I was in, not more than 5'x8', ceiling barely 5' high had an earthen shelf carved out of the hillside to serve as a bed. The lucky ones may have a concrete-block house no bigger than a one-car garage, and a stove to burn cornstalks for heat and cooking, while chickens and turkeys scurry throughout.

The second (pediatric) wheelchair was delivered to Edwin, a young boy with cerebral palsy, whose family lives where there are gorges and valleys and structures cling to the sides of the hills, families adding another lean-to or "room" as it grows. When we parked on the road, level with the rooftops and smoke-emitting stovepipes, we were greeted by curious neighbors and family who had climbed the steep path from their home below. They joined into the group photo of Edwin in his wheelchair, smiling, holding a new drum, while the sun set.

On our journey, we saw men with large brimmed "cowboy" hats working in the field, plowing with oxen held together by a yoke tied to their horns, hoeing the rows of crops, and cutting cornstalks with machetes. We saw women washing the clothing in outdoor cement-sinks, that are then hung to dry on shrubs or cornstalk fences. Many women had a child on her back supported by a large swath of colorful fabric while she worked, or returned from market with large baskets balanced on her head. In front of a home we glimpse a woman sitting on the ground weaving their beautiful, traditional, colorfully-designed clothing with a back-strap loom. She will hope to sell the four-months' work for less than \$100.

A morning was spent in Chimaltenango, acquiring more building supplies (electrical, drywall and roofing) for the new medical/dental clinic that began construction on our previous trip, Feb 14-21. During that week, volunteers and neighbors working together, had the project progress from bare ground to erecting the steel posts and rafters, plumbing, laying concrete (without the use of a cement truck), building outside stud walls, to hanging some windows and siding. The construction crew were able to finish placing the windows and siding in our two-week absence. They completed the roof, and were well on their way with the interior wall studs when we departed Way-bi March 13.

A busload of troubled youth from Guatemala City arrived one morning at the Way-bi farm for a day of fun, food, and frolic with the service dogs. It took them away from low-revenue homes and gang pressures, to just be boys, playing catch with a dog in an open green space.

Edwin, Tom and I ran errands in Tecpan- to the bank, to purchase prescriptions from the pharmacy for Juan's family, a hoe spade at the hardware store for Tom, and meat and vegetables for the restaurant. Not being "market" day, with vendors from outlying areas filling the streets to sell their products, we were limited to the main, inside market. In the claustrophobic, crowded, dark, narrow aisles, with items hanging closely overhead, we scurried this way and that. To a choice vegetable vendor, to the butcher, then back to a booth that had caught my eye, with colorful woven fabric and clothing, to purchase gifts.

It had been at least three months since Dr. Edgar and Claudia had visited their "House of Dreams", the children's hospice. Therefore, a ribbon-cutting ceremony, with Kathy by their side to officially open the doors to Way-bi was emotional for them, the construction crew, Edwin and family, and the volunteers. Like a brood of ducklings, everyone followed Dr. Edgar throughout the building as he opened every door, and entered every individually-designed room, nodding and beaming. The proud crew answered questions as he inspected the final touches that completed the project in order for the work group to stay there in February.

Before departing, I ventured to Douglas's in hopes of seeing his newborn daughter. When he placed the bundled infant in my arms, it was a confirmation of what Mission of Love is all about, the children. She, and many others will benefit from the addition of the new medical/dental clinic, the ambulance, the school bus, the corn, and whatever else MOL has, and can provide or do for the Mayan community in Tecpan to enrich their lives. They have surely enriched and touched mine. Everyone greets us with smiles and kindness, they share with each other, provide friendship and assistance, and always say "Gracious, gracious!". I always leave feeling as if I received more than I gave.

Sharon M. Borrer





