

Summary of Mission Trip #2 to San Jose Villanueva, El Salvador

November 7-21, 2011

Donna & I would like to thank Doug Champ (the project and team leader) for the opportunity to be a part of this outstanding group. Doug is a member of the Rotary Club of North Renfrew (Ontario, Canada) and the primary organizer of the project as well as the "driving force" behind the ongoing success of it.

Members of this year's team included: Doug & Astrid Champ, Bob French, Charlene Brennan, Jon Kiteley, Paul Henry & Paul Tremblay from the Rotary Club of North Renfrew (District 7040); John Escott from the Rotary Club of Pembroke (District 7040); and Carey & Donna Beamesderfer from the Rotary Club of West El Paso (District 5520). Each member of the team donated a predetermined sum of money for the materials for the house and the overall mission goals, and paid their own travel expenses as well as room and board for the two week period of the project. Each member also donated clothing, medical supplies and related items that fit in the extra suitcases they brought with them on the plane.

Special thanks goes to members of Carey & Donna's extended family; the University Presbyterian Church of El Paso and several members of its congregation; as well as the Franklin Mountain and West El Paso Rotary Club members for their support of this project. The people of San Jose Villanueva were the beneficiaries of their donations of money for building materials, clothing and medical supplies.

The Project:

The project is located in the village of San Jose Villanueva which is approximately 50 miles south west of the airport in San Salvador.



Our flight to San Salvador was uneventful and we landed safely at approximately 7:30am on Monday, November 7. We were met by Susie Jenkins who, with husband Mike, are the host/site coordinators for this project and the primary representatives of Epilogos Charities, Inc. in San Jose Villanueva.

<http://www.epilogos.org/meetmikeandsusie>



Susie & Mike Jenkins

Upon arrival at the volunteer house we unpacked our suitcases and took a brief nap before the rest of the team from Canada arrived around 3:30pm. As I mentioned in last years report, team members sleep on bunk beds and share two cold water showers and flush toilets. We dispose of toilet paper in trash cans rather than flush it down the toilet. Sheets, towels and daily laundry service are provided to us. Local water is not potable, however bottled water was provided by Epilogos. Their is an area in the rear of the property that serves as both our meeting place and the "water hole" for our daily Happy Hour. The town, and the street in front of our residence, are filled with the sounds of the local people, businesses, trucks, buses, motorcycles, cows, horses, roosters and chickens.



Bunk Beds in Men's Quarters



Common Shower & Toilet Facilities



Back Yard of Residence

The US dollar is the local currency, and the population of the village is approximately 15,000. Latin American Spanish is the native language, and a few people we interacted with spoke English. The temperature was fairly constant at 80 degrees (26 Celsius) with 85-90% humidity. The roads and basic infrastructure is less than adequate in the town and primitive (at best) in the surrounding communities. Dogs, cows, chickens, cars, trucks, carts, buses and locals all share the same pathways. Rice, beans, tortillas and papusa's (really good) are the most common food choices. All of our meals during the week were prepared by Mike & Susie's cook (Anna) who did an excellent job with the local cuisine. A tortilla topped with peanut butter and honey was my favorite dessert.

The primary goal of the project this year was to construct one masonry block home in the two week period. The recipients of the house (Oscar & his wife Marena, their 2 sons & some local friends) worked to prepare the site prior to our arrival and also assisted the team during the construction phase.



Oscar & Marena with son Enrique (left side)



Paul Tremblay (in red) with PDG Bob French

As was the case last year Paul Tremblay, an experienced mason, provided technical expertise throughout the construction process. His "tri-pod" lifted the 42 lb blocks into place without a problem. All cement mixing was done by hand, as was all the block "pointing" and lifting of all the posts and blocks. Each member of the team was escorted by van to the job site (El Palomar community) every morning (a distance of about 7 miles), then back again at the end of the work day. We each carried work gloves, packed lunches, water and our cameras to the job site. Basic tools, such as shovels and wheelbarrows

were provided by Epilogos. Construction materials were delivered to the construction site by local vendors and roof, door and window installation was done by local trades people. The local construction manager, Chepe, supervised all the activity and did most of the measuring and leveling to ensure proper alignment of all blocks and concrete uprights.



Construction Site Supervisor - Chepe



Construction Site at the start of the project

A typical work day included a one hour lunch break at the home of Ricardo, the local ADESCO rep who was well educated and spoke excellent English. His profession is that of an airport Customs Supervisor at the San Salvador airport and his home and property were of a much higher scale than the rest of the community. The lunch break provided an opportunity to relax as well as refuel ourselves each day.



Ricardo



Lunch Time Gathering



Bob French & Charlene Brennan Relaxing



Coconut Harvesting During Lunch Break



Carey Drinking Coconut Milk



Astrid & Jon (Coconut Tasting)

Building the home was a labor of love. Each day's work brought the team closer together and gave us all an opportunity to get to know the "family" and their friends up close and personal. We learned to communicate and respect each other, despite the language, age and cultural differences, and a common bond of friendship and camaraderie developed quickly during the building process. We all shared a common goal; a true example of Rotary's motto - Service Above Self. The pictures on the next several pages illustrate our progress on the home as it progressed each day. Day #1 was on Tuesday. We spent all of our time on that day digging holes and doing prep work on the site. Actual physical construction began on Wednesday - Day #2 as noted on the pictures on the next page.



Grandma carrying 42 lb. block



Doug & Carey digging holes



Donna with Chello (Oscar's son)



Work in Progress - Day #2



Blocks & Columns that need a home



Nearing the end of Day #2



Morning Break on Day #3



Breaking Rock to Use as Filler



Cement for Pointing Brick



Paul - Getting the Proper Fit



Work Completed - End of Day #3



Happy Hour at the Waterhole



Moving the Tri-Pod



Charlene - Filling in the seams



Good Progress - End of Day #4

The weekend was here and it was time to head for the beach. We all piled into Guadalupe's van on Saturday morning and went to the Tekuani kal beach hotel and restaurant for two days of sun & fun. www.tekuanikal.com We arrived late morning and found out we couldn't check in until 3:00pm, but they gave us one room for us all to change into our swim suits then off we went.



A swim with an ocean view



Paul Henry - Going For It !



Each room had a porch like this



Waiting for the Sunset



Wow !! - Spectacular



Donna, Astrid & Paul - in awe of the sunset



The "Sweat" Lodge



Paul & the Waterfall



Now that's a handful

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 Checkout from the hotel was 1:00pm but they let us stay until 3:00pm so we could get the most from our visit. Later, we piled back into the van and headed home to the volunteer house where we all anxiously awaited dinner. It was papusa night at Graciala's family's restaurant. Only a short walk from our sleeping quarters this was a special treat that everyone looked forward to. Doug invited some of the student he sponsors - Maria and her family, Alex and his friend, and Chepe as well as several others who joined the 12 of us (including Mike & Susie.)



Lots of Pilsener fans here



Making papusa's



We want more !!

It was a fun day. Everyone was now refreshed and ready to go. Doug and Bob had a meeting on Monday morning on the Santa Anna water project while the rest of us went to the job site. We put up the remaining columns and walls and started to fill in the floor with dirt that was delivered to the site. Dirt is used as fill to raise and level the floor. Each shovel-full must be pounded into the ground to compact it in preparation for the rough and smooth finish cement layers.



3 columns in place - 2 walls to go.



Putting block in place



Unloading the dirt - by shovel



Oscar & Doug - Pounding dirt into place



Astrid cleaning up - A daily routine



Progress made by the end of Day #5

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 One learns to appreciate paved roads after traveling and walking the paths leading to the job site. The pictures below give a visual summary of our daily trek from Ricardo's house to the site.



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 On Tuesday and Wednesday we finished the rough and smooth layers of the floor, and the final pointing. The work involved mixing 6-7 batches of sand, gravel & cement by hand, so Paul and Chepe could do the finish work. The ladies finished the pointing. This was the end of our teams work on this home. The windows, doors and roof were completed by local contractors. See pictures of the floor work on the next page.



Phase 1 - The dirt floor



Phase 2 - The rough cement floor



Spreading the rough cement layer



Paul & Chepe doing it right



Celebrate - The rough coat is finished



Oscar & Marena in their new home



Making the cement



We're almost finished.



Great job everyone!



Jon gets an unexpected "Surprise" honor bestowed on him by Enrique.



Oscar & Marena thank all of us for our hard work. He said without our help it would have taken him his whole life to get a home like this. They were extremely grateful for what we did.

So - one home completed, but more work of a different kind to do. Here is a list of some of the other opportunities and goals that Doug, Bob and the Canadian Rotary Club put together for this mission.

- Visit the medical clinic to review the work of the "health promoters" and present donations to support their work and the clinic.

On Thursday morning, Nov. 17th, we visited the medical clinic and met with Dr. Gochez and his staff of health promoters. The meeting was very productive. It began with the Rotary group presenting our donations, followed by a one hour discussion with the doctor and the supervisor of the health promoters. We learned a lot about the procedures they follow and the processes they go through within each community in the village. Their top priority are the care of pregnant women and newborns, and vaccinations. They also spend a lot of time educating people on good health habits, sanitation, assessing the home and physical condition of each family, and raising awareness about the cause and treatment of Dengue Fever (a virus caused disease spread by mosquitoes) and related diseases. The greatest need at the moment is vitamins for expectant mothers and very young children.



Dr. Gochez receiving donated medical supplies from the group. Doug & Bob also presented the clinic with a new printer.



The team of Health Promoters



Dr. Gochez with the Supervisor of the Health Promoters



Posters about Dengue Fever

Following our visit to the clinic, Chepe asked us all to help clean a wall in front of the school. Mold had started to accumulate on the wall as a result of the recent floods in the area. Cleaning it involved scrubbing the wall with a wire brush and a throwing a little water on it to wash down the mold and dirt. The job also included pulling weeds and brush from the ground in front of the wall. This took several hours. There was no sand blaster, pressure washer or block sealer in town. Everything is done by hand. On the wall connected to the one we cleaned is the giant mural painted by the Rotary Interact students several years earlier. Its become a symbol for the town.



Charlene and Chepe cleaning the wall



Paul cleaning the lower section



Part of the town's giant wall mural

Later that afternoon Doug arranged a tour for us of some of the homes within Ricardo's ADESCO responsibility. It was an eye-opening experience for us. Many of the people in this community are below poverty level and live in whatever and wherever they can. They farm the land and survive on little to no income. Anyone fortunate enough to have a job is paid less than \$6 a day which is used to support a large, and sometimes even an extended family. These people are very resourceful and waste nothing. We can all learn a lot from them.



This is the home of the first family we visited. The grow maze in their fields and live in this make-shift shelter, and they're happy.



This family is supported by the woman in the picture who does laundry all day long for neighbors and makes \$3.00 for 10-12 hours of work. The bowl in the picture on the right is their dinner. Chicken feet boiled in water & used to make broth.



This is the home of the Vice-President of the local ADESCO organization. His wife is making corn tortillas for the family.



Do you remember Oscar, who we build the house for? Well the man in the picture on the left is his father. This is his home and the corn in the middle picture is laying on his front porch to dry. Oscar is in the picture on the right proudly showcasing his prize possession - an oven that he and his brother built to bake bread. Unfortunately he can't use it at this time because they can't get flour because the cost is too high and the supply within the country is low.

We all said our final good-bye's to Oscar and his family and headed for our next destination - a visit to the homes we built last year. We all looked forward to this to see how each family was doing and what they did to improve their homes in the period of one year. Here is what we found:



Home of Renne & Roxanna - Nov. 2010



The same home - One Year Later



Home of Blanca & her family - November 2010



The same home - One Year Later

We all celebrated with bananas that Blanca gave us. We knew our hard work had really paid off.



Friday morning arrived and we found ourselves in a meeting with representatives from Mentors International. www.mentorsinternational.org This organization was chosen to coordinate the work of the Micro-Credit operation that Bob & Doug put into place in San Jose Villaneuva. A lady named Zicri Noyola, who spoke excellent English, led the discussion which focused on the status of the existing loans as well as what could be done within the village to expand the products and services that are not available and be able to sell them outside of the village. The goal would be to have additional cash flowing into the village to benefit everyone. An alternative energy business was recommended that would involve solar lighting, heating and cooking. The North Renfrew Rotary Club has a client who is willing to work with someone in San Jose Villaneuva to supply product and build the business. The discussion concluded with a request from our group to visit several of the existing businesses in town that have been given loans through the Micro-Credit Program. We visited a shoemaker, a couple convenience stores and a baker as shown below:



The Shoe Hospital



Convenience Store Owner



Baker



Restaurant Owner ----->



She Delivers to the Local Community



Street vendor who sells lunches at the bus stop

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Late Friday afternoon we hiked to Israel's home. He is the market-gardener we spent visited last year. He's expanded his business since our last visit. It now includes a tilapia fish hatchery and a booming fish sales outlet. Prior to leaving his property Doug & Jon helped him install additional irrigation

tubing in his garden.



Israel & his cow



Doug with Israel in his garden



The tilapia fish holding tank



Israel's son holing a tilapia fish



Doug, Jon & Israel installing tubing



Israel checking the tubing