

Dominican Republic Mission Trip, June 2009

A journal by Jim Drazdowski

Daily Schedule

Get Up & Get Dressed

Go to Dining Room for coffee

Morning Prayer / Breakfast

To Dorm to prepare for Bible School or on the Job for Projects

Lunch

Rest Time

Bible School

Relax

Supper

Get ready for tomorrow

Compline

Bed

June 19, 2009; 9:08 p.m.

Getting ready for bed. Alarm is set @ 3:50 a.m. to catch the 6:30 a.m. flight to Miami. We drove down to Jacksonville with myself, Tar, and Sally Shovar in one car and Mimi, Juanita, and John Walker in another car. Checked into the hotel and then ate at their restaurant. Relaxed by the pool and then had Compline.

JAD

June 20, 2009; 10:26 p.m.

Liz and Andrew just made it in. While we were at the Miami Airport, Tar received a call from Liz saying they were running late because their flight was canceled. They had to be rescheduled through Orlando and then Miami so their flight into Santiago wouldn't arrive until 8:30 p.m. Our flight departed at 11:15 a.m. from Miami and arrived in Santiago between 1:15 and 1:30 p.m. We were met by Fr. Vincente and Pablo, loaded our luggage and arrived at the camp just a little before 4 p.m. Tomasine and Anna Marie had snacks of crackers, ham and cheese and some potato chips and cheese puffs. Most of the rest of the afternoon was spent sorting supplies and getting things ready for Bible school. We should finish the rest of the things tomorrow.

JAD

June 21, 2009; 7:22 p.m.

Just finished supper of pork chops, boiled green bananas, potatoes and Spanish onions, eggs with cheese, peppers and onions. Fr. Vincente and his family ate with us. We have been putting Bible school packets together all day except for eating and the 3 p.m. church service (Holy Eucharist). Liz led morning prayer before breakfast. I've made a list of possible work projects for us to start on tomorrow morning. We need to finish about 100 more packets for tomorrow's Bible school lesson, go over the script and the songs and do Compline. Pablo finally got all the lights and outlets working in the dorm.

JAD

June 23, 2009; 10:30 a.m.

Arrived back from Jaraboca where Pablo and I went to purchase a water dispenser. The one they had in the dining room is broken. When I went up this morning about 5:30 to plug in the coffee pot, there was water all over the floor where a whole bottle of water had leaked onto the floor overnight.

Yesterday morning was spent getting all the art supplies ready for the Bible school, although some of us went into town to choose plants to plant in the 10 planters around the tree, the planter around the cross, and the planters at the front entrance to the dorm.

Yesterday afternoon at Bible school was best described as "organized chaos," in other words, everything didn't quite go as planned. The lesson and singing went well, but when we set up to begin the artwork, the chaos ensued. We started with just a little over 60 children at the beginning, but when we set up the tables, more started drifting in until we had around 150 children. Since we had only prepared packets for 100, we had to go around giving out more materials. Tar went out front and got some of the older boys to come in and give us a hand at the tables. We are going to try something different this afternoon. After the lesson and singing, we will march the children out the back door while we set up the tables and then let them in one table at a time and only give out extra supplies to the table leaders. The children were coming up to the adults tugging on them with their "hey you" and pantomiming what they needed. As a result, some had more than one project, generally the buttons on the yarn used for the spinning toy.

Juanita said her morning and afternoon knitting class went fairly well although she ended up with more than were on the list. Last night was spent putting together more packets for today's art work since we had only prepared 100 of those. Additionally, changes were made so we were also pulling some stuff out of some of the other packets and placing them in today's packets.

Yesterday's art work was

1. The sheep with cotton balls,
2. The spinning button with yarn,
3. The cross with small squares of colored tissue paper, and
4. The star to be colored with markers.

The only thing we 'lost' quite a bit of was the glue sticks. Today's art work is to be

1. A "book" to color and
2. A cross to make with strings and beads.

Tomorrow morning Fr. Vincente wants us all to go in to Bonao and visit the church and then the new mission he has started. He plans to feed us lunch at his house.

This morning we did all the planting. We may not be able to get any painting done. All the walls are concrete and those that are not sealed just soak up water. It has rained every afternoon so far. This really cools things off and makes for a pleasant evening.

I will read back over this later and see if I need to add anything to it. JAD

June 23, 2009; 10:00 p.m.

Things went smoother with the set up this afternoon. We did away with the tables and had them work on the floor. The older children were a great help. We only had about 120 today. After everyone was through and the children were on the playground, I finished the planting. Just before supper we put together all the packets for tomorrow's art work:

1. Shoestring necklace and
2. Butterfly made with coffee filters and pipe cleaners

We were able to relax after supper for the first time. After Compline everyone headed for bed. JAD

June 25, 2009; 7:50 a.m.

I woke up at sunrise this morning which beat waking up at 3:30 a.m. like yesterday morning. Yesterday morning we had to catch the bus to Bonao at 6:00 a.m. We were to eat breakfast At Fr. Vincente's as well as lunch. After breakfast we visited the missions he started, then went to a school, then to another community center. Actually, first we visited the church in Bonao where he showed us the classrooms for the Academy including the computer class which had 12 computers. The battery backup system for the computers consisted of what appeared to be 8 car batteries with an inverter for converting it to A/C current.

At each location Fr. Vincente passed out packages of soap and packages of toothpaste and toothbrushes. He also had the children sing the correct way to brush their teeth. Fr. Vincente has a vision of schools at each of the communities which don't have one in close proximity.

We left for the camp after lunch at Nancy's and Fr. Vincente's and arrived a little after 3, over an hour after Bible school was supposed to start. The numbers were down yesterday - only around 75. I went to bed early while the rest stayed up to play spoons. I know that Pablo and Fr. Vincente also played but I don't know who else did.

Today is to be the splash party. We bought another pool while we were in Bonao yesterday because the rodents had chewed the pools. We will have 3 pools and 2 tarps for the children to play with.

Story of the Rat - June 23rd

While we were in the common room, Elizabeth yells, "A RAT!" She holds out her hands to show it is a foot and a half long, and said it ran into the book shelf. Tar and I went to check it. Tar removed a book and we saw a mouse. Elizabeth and Sally ran out the back door. Tar removed a couple more books and the mouse jumped down, ran through the middle of the dorm room, and ran out the back door where Elizabeth and Sally were waiting.

Screaming ensued! And of course, the laughter from the rest of us. Sally and Elizabeth still claim it was a rat two feet long.

JAD

June 25, 2009; 9:40 p.m.

This morning, after Compline and breakfast, the three pools were started being filled up. I painted the base of the planter around the cross. At 2 p.m. the gates were opened and the children were marched in by groups of 10. By the time the splash party was over, we estimated between 300 and 400 children were there. As the children left through the gate, they were given a hot dog, juice in a cup, a popcicle push up and either a package containing soap or toothbrush and toothpaste. Since the soap came in boxes of 100 and the toothbrushes in boxes of 144 and we gave out over a box of each, I know we had over 300 but Fr. Vincente

thinks we had over 400. We all relaxed the rest of the afternoon and after supper some of read and some of us played spoons. Things seemed to go well today and everyone seemed pleased with it.

JAD

June 26, 2009; 9:05 p.m.

A very relaxing day. Everyone lazed around this morning. After lunch at 2 p.m., the bus arrived to carry us to a waterfall. Fr. Vincente drove his car with his family. We paid \$5.00 RD each (about \$1.25 US) to take the trail to the falls. We started at the turnstiles, went up some concrete steps and then started across a swinging bridge. After they had crossed the first two bridges, Tar and Sally decided not to continue. The rest of us continued on our way including crossing the river on a swinging bridge. There were no more bridges after that. Just past where we crossed, there were some people swimming in the river. We continued to the falls. At the falls, Juanita felt a little faint, so we waited until she felt well enough to head back. At the same swimming hole, Fr. Vincente's two boys, his daughter Ruth, his mother-in-law and Andrew went swimming while the rest of us sat on the rocks and watched. After we all came back out from the trail, we waited for the bus to come back and then went to a super "mercado" (market) so people could buy their coffee, etc. to carry home. We then went back to the camp. Fr. Vincente and Tar had ordered about 50 pizzas and we had a little get together for the older children who had helped us and for the camp staff and their families. We then went back to the dorm, held Compline, and packed so we could load the bus tomorrow at 5 a.m. JAD

June 27, 2009; 9:35 a.m.

I was woken up this morning by a dog barking outside the dorm window, so I got up and went to the dining room and plugged in the coffee pot, went back to the dorm and got dressed, and then went back up the hill and got some coffee. Breakfast was leftover pizza or cold cereal. The bus picked us up. We rode to the aeropuerto (Airport) with Pablo and his two children, Sterling and Stephanie, because they wanted to see the plane take off. We sent our bags through the first check point, picked them up and then went to the ticket counter to pick up our tickets and check our baggage. After passing through security, we browsed the duty

free shops while waiting for our plane to board. We are now descending and should be landing in a few minutes.

JAD

Postscript

Upon arrival in Miami, we went through passport control, then picked up our luggage, and went through customs. Then we dropped our baggage back off and went to wait for the Jacksonville flight. After arriving in Jacksonville, I took the shuttle bus to the hotel to pick up my car. I then drove back to the airport to pick up Mimi to carry her to get her car. We then both went back to the airport, loaded up and headed for home.

JAD

Possible Projects considered before arrival in the Dominican Republic

1. Plants for around cross
2. Painting
 - a. Dining Room - lower outside wall - paint red to match front
 - b. Dorm - front entrance - paint is coming off
 - c. Cross - wall which has been repaired need to be primed and painted
 - d. Front gate, prime and paint pillars, prime and paint planter beds

Walls are concrete so we will need sealer.

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At the request of the Vineyard editors, Jim kept this diary of the 2009 Mission Trip as a way to let others know more about the day-to-day activities of the mission. It has been transcribed here with minimal editing, and excerpts were used in the August 2009 Vineyard. Thanks, Jim!