

March 2001 Newsletter

Dear ICC Family,

A few days before we were to leave for Guatemala to attend Salvador's wedding, we received a message from Juana at The Pines. Like other older children of ours, Salvador was anxious to have his wedding right in our outdoor chapel where he had gone to church as a child. Fortunately his bride-to-be was in agreement.

The message was somewhat alarming. "I feel that we should let you know that the road between The Pines and Poptun has become dangerous again. There have been several attacks and robberies in the last few weeks, even in the last few days."

Ken and I had traveled that isolated, narrow, jungle road many times, even when it involved risks from guerilla bands or robbers. But, this time we were bringing our son, Ron, and his family. Of course we had to tell them the news. Next, we contacted Juana to ask if there would be a possibility of getting an army or police escort. We were assured that they would do their best.

We arrived in Guatemala City Thursday afternoon and left early the next morning for The Pines. Juana had left a message for us to stop at the gas station just before getting into Poptun, and wait for them there. We didn't know what to expect. Just after arriving at the gas station, we saw a big school bus full of children, turning in at the side road there. We thought it was a local bus bringing children from school, but it turned and drove up right near our car. The children were all waving and screaming. It was our children from The Pines, a bus load of them! I think there were 34. It was quite a welcome. First there was all the hugging and kissing. When all the greetings were over, the children lined up and gave us a program, right there in front of the gas station. They were going to escort us through the jungle!

As I started to get back in our van, Juana came to the door and said, "Mommy Fleck, the children want you to ride in the bus!" So I got out and climbed into the bus amid loud cheers and screams of "Mommy Fleck!" They popped balloons and then entertained me all the way out there with singing. A faculty member on a motorcycle led the caravan followed by our van, with Salvador and our busload bringing up the rear. Just as we turned off the road, Juana pointed out a police car that was just taking off. "See that police car? He is going ahead of us!" I saw that we were well escorted.

As we turned into the gate of The Pines there was another big welcome with the rest of the 141 children, including a barrage of firecrackers!. We were to all stay in the guest house that is in the center of our compound. The trailer where we usually stay is right on the road and would be more exposed. The interesting thing is that they had honored us with a huge American flag waving in the breeze at the guest house. Ron and Ken commented that if robbers were looking for the Americans, they would know right where to go!

It was a wonderful weekend. Salvador preached at the vespers that evening. I noticed his mother looking so proud of her son. That whole weekend was a lifetime experience for her.

Mayra arrived late that evening and stayed at Juana's place, so we met her at breakfast time. Salvador had told me all about her, and we had talked on the phone, but I was more impressed with her than I had even expected to be. She is an educated, cultured girl, a dedicated Christian, active in missionary work, and a beautiful girl besides. I believe that she will be a good pastor's wife, and will be an asset to his ministry.

The whole Pines family of children and house parents were involved in the wedding, the decorations, and the wedding feast afterwards. After all, this was a family affair. Salvador is their big brother and they all love him. The keyboard was brought over from ICAP for the marches. It was sort of a combination of cultures. The bride had a beautiful gown with a long train, and the bridal party could have all been in an American wedding as far as their dress went. However, there were some differences. Apparently, it is the custom for the mother of the groom to take him up to the altar. There was an announcer, giving the names of each one in the wedding party as they came up. Both the bride and groom had godparents. Ken went up first, as he was the minister. Ron and his wife, Bobbie, marched up for Salvador. When the groom went, his little mother in her typical Indian dress went on one side of him, and I on the other. As our names were given, we were introduced as the two mothers of the groom. There were a number of bridesmaids and groomsmen, and they formed an aisle for us all to march through.

Up in her village, Salvador's mother was so serious. It seemed like the suffering of all those years was still on her face. But as I saw her there at the wedding, she wore a smile that seemed to glow. I was so happy for her. She has said that she can see it was God's will that brought Salvador to us, in spite of everything.

There were some very serious and emotional thoughts going through my mind as I sat there. I have wondered sometimes if I would have had the courage to start ICC if I had known all that it would involve, the struggles, the dangers, how this would totally consume our lives. I can't say that I would have done it, but I am so glad we did do it. I love all these children and young people like my own. I shudder to think of where they might have been if ICC had never happened. There are so many wonderful young people developing in our facilities, and many of them hope that some day they can work for ICC! That is our hope too. I can't say enough to express how I feel about your support, both financial and moral, through the years, but it never could have happened without you. God bless each of you. Only Heaven can give the real rewards.

With our love and prayers,

Alcyon and Ken