

Aschmann Action

April 2007

Travelogue Edition

Rick: We have certainly been having adventures! So much so, that we decided to put out a separate newsletter, sort of a travelogue.

From March 13 to 27 we went as a family to live in the Quichua village of Colta in the province of Chimborazo. We stayed in the house of a missionary family with the Gospel Missionary Union (now called Avant Ministries) who now live in Quito. Thanks for praying for our time there. (To see a map of where we went on our adventures, go to www.Aschmann.net/Rick/Newsletter/Highlands.jpg.) Here are some of the things that happened:

Tuesday, March 13:

We drove from Quito to Colta. Before we left Quito, we accidentally ended up driving through the middle of a rather angry political demonstration, and we did some serious praying before we got out of there. As we neared our destination, we saw that as usual, the Tungurahua volcano was pumping out ash, much of which was being dumped on Riobamba, the capital of Chimborazo province.

When we arrived at the house in Colta, we had to light the fire in the wood-burning stove, so that we would be able to cook supper, and so that we would have hot water for a shower the next morning. (The hot water heater is connected to the stove.) It took us a while to figure out how it all worked, and some phone calls, but we finally got it going. One thing that helped was that I (Rick) had learned to use a wood-burning stove in Jungle Camp in



The Tungurahua volcano, as we drove past

southern Mexico way back in 1978, but of course we're talking 29 years ago!

Wednesday:

Nathan woke up with a high fever, so we hung out at the house, instead of going visiting like we had planned. It turned out to be a good thing, since we found we were having to spend about half our time just figuring out how to live in this very different living situation, what with tending fires, boiling water for drinking, figuring out how to cook on the wood-burning stove, and understanding how the electric water pump worked.

(Okay, we did have electricity, and there was a microwave, fridge, washer and dryer, so we weren't really suffering that much.)



In the kitchen

About the middle of the morning, Marya showed up. She was one of the very first Christians in the Colta area, and has worked as a maid in that house for many years. When I talked to Dan (the missionary who used to live there), he said she was very apprehensive about our coming, since she doesn't speak Spanish, only Quichua, but he told her, "Don't worry, they speak Quichua." So right away we got lots of good Quichua practice! She also showed us lots of things about the house, how to work the water pump, brought in tons of wood, lit the fireplace, washed the dishes, and basically took care of us. For an old lady, she is amazingly tough! (We only asked her to come in a few hours a day, and she didn't cook or do the laundry, so there were still a few things left for us to do!)

One thing we had to adjust to was big changes in temperature, even greater than what we were used to in Quito. Quito is at 9,000 feet, but Colta is at 10,900 feet. It could be described as having early spring weather, with an occasional frost on a clear night. Since the house is not insulated, and has no heat other than the stove and fireplace, we needed to keep these going almost all the time. In the market towns the weather was even more interesting, as you will see!

Thursday:

Nathan's fever was down, so we decided to go to the market in Guamote, some 15 miles to the south. Guamote is at 10,100 feet, but is in a dry valley. It was a very sunny day, and I got a sunburn, even though I wore long sleeves and a hat. The equatorial sun is dangerous, and even more so at high altitudes.



Marya and Nathan



We sold quite a few magazines and books, and talked with lots of Quichuas, so it was a very encouraging day. We also sold all of the Quichua Bibles we had brought, on the first day!

That afternoon, after we got back to the house, Betty broke out in hives, and was itching like crazy. We tried to figure out what caused it, and suspected it was either the eucalyptus smoke or the ash she had been cleaning out of the stove and fireplace, or breathing in when she blew on the fire. She took some Benadryl tablets, and was fine the next day.

Friday:

We went to the market in Tsalarón, out in the middle of nowhere (see map). To get there we had to go about 10 miles on a dirt and cobblestone road. It was almost on top of a mountain, at an altitude of 11,600 feet, and it was cold! When we got there, about 9:30, there was thick fog and a very cold wind, and the fog didn't lift for an hour or two. Even so, there were quite a few people there, and we had some wonderful interaction with the people. They were a lot poorer than the people in Guamote, so we didn't sell quite as many books.



Driving through the fog to Tsalarón



Selling books in Tsalarón

That afternoon, Betty's hives came back, and with a vengeance! We strongly suspected it was the eucalyptus ash, and decided we had better not have her touch it again, until we had nailed down the cause. Sure enough, that was it, because she had almost no problems after that. Of course, it meant she didn't get as much practice lighting fires or cleaning out and sweeping up the ash, but she never complained!

Betty: I did stoke the fires a bit. After all, I wanted hot showers too!

Saturday:

We went to Riobamba, the nearest city, to do grocery shopping and try to connect our laptop at some Internet café so we could get our e-mail. Instead, we got snarled up in traffic and streets blocked by major utility construction most of the day, found out that the Internet cafés don't allow you to hook up your own machine, and never could get the e-mail. (There is so far no Internet in the Colta valley, though cell phones are everywhere, and many of the Quichuas have them.)

That afternoon, not long after we got back home, a huge lightning bolt hit nearby. The thunder was preceded by a weird sizzling sound, and we suspect it hit the Quichua Christian radio station next door. It knocked the power out for most of the town, so we got to do everything by candlelight that night.

Sunday:

Thankfully, the power came back on that morning, and the Quichua radio station was also back on the air. That afternoon at 4:00 we visited a church that Dan had recommended in Gatazo (north of Cajabamba). It turns out the pastor there had heard me preach once at a Quichua church in Quito, and he invited me to preach (I always have some sermons along in case this happens), and encouraged the people to buy our books. Afterwards

they invited us to supper, and we had a great conversation with a man who clearly has a deep commitment to the Lord and a lot of spiritual maturity. Very encouraging!

When we got back to the house it was well after dark, and we were tired. We couldn't get in the house! The deadbolt lock was messed up, and the key just went round and round. We called a couple of the GMU people on our cell phone, including Dan. He said, "You've got a problem! You're going to have to get the extension ladder out of the diesel shed, and get in by breaking the second story window." Which we did. Never a dull moment.

Monday:

Went back to Riobamba to try to get e-mail again. Failed again. The one place we did find had such a slow connection that we didn't accomplish anything. However, someone told us, "There's a little town near here named Chambo that has free wireless Internet at the town hall." We were surprised, but decided to check it out another day.

Tuesday:

First off we visited the Quichua Christian radio station next door. We had a good visit with the operator there. We also decided to buy some radio spots (in Quichua) to let people know about the availability of our Quichua literature and which markets we would be selling in. We bought six spots, for 75¢ each. Couldn't do that in the States!

After that we went visiting different Quichua towns that we had information about. One of these towns, Cebadas, is 12 miles on a dirt road from the main highway, through some rather spectacular scenery. We knew that several different MTW missionaries had had major involvement in that town years ago, but ever since our team leader Don Williams died over four years ago, there hasn't really been any contact. So who was the first person we met when we pulled up in the town? Manuel Pintag, the pastor, who had been an important disciple of Don's, and involved with him in various development projects there. When I mentioned Don's name, his face lit up. After we had talked for a while, he said, "I think God sent you here as an answer to my prayers. Can you come and help us with teaching and training?" I think he was right. We agreed to make plans to bring that about.

We also set up our table and sold quite a few Quichua books and magazines there, but our daughter Anne, now four, really stole the show. She loves to sing, and is always making up songs and singing them impromptu. The Quichuas found this fascinating, and the crowd around me soon moved over to her!



Anne with a captive audience in Cebadas

Wednesday:

We decided to go to Chambo to see about that free Internet. Sure enough, the town had set up a public library, and had also set up wireless Internet. The librarian turned out to be a computer geek, and he took the time to set up my laptop to connect to their network, at no charge. We had never come across anything like this in Ecuador before, not even in Quito, and we certainly never expected to find it in a little town way off the main highway.

On our way back through Riobamba we needed to buy a cooking pot. The first store we stopped in turned out to be owned by Quichuas. I started the conversation in Quichua, which surprised them very much,

and after I had done my business and was getting ready to leave, the lady said, “Excuse, me, what’s your name?” It turns out they had heard the radio spot, and were interested in seeing the books, bought some, and invited us to visit their church sometime.

Thursday:

Back to Guamote again. Remembered sunscreen (actually, Betty did)! Several people who came to the table said, “You’re the guy they mentioned on the radio!” Had another good sales day. A pastor invited us to attend his church in Colta at 4 p.m. on Sunday, and we told him we would come. (Based on past experience, this usually implies that I will be asked to preach, even though they don’t always say so in advance.) He said, “That means we can count on you, right?” I said yes, we would certainly be there. We weren’t completely sure where in Colta the church was, but the pastor told us just to ask around, because everyone knew where it was.

On several occasions during our selling, people said, “I’m Catholic, so I can’t buy your books.” I said, “Oh, but these books are for everyone, not just Evangelicals! Even the ones about the Bible are for everyone, because there’s just one Bible.” As I recall, at least one of these people bought a book.



Selling books in Guamote



Cultural Closeup

Betty: Out in the Colta area one of the major bus companies is Quichua-owned. The name is “Ñuca Llacta”, which means “our homeland”. They carry nearly everything the Quichuas need to travel with. Besides the normal passenger area, and a luggage compartment underneath, the top serves as storage space.

And we saw some interesting things on top— live animals as large as sheep, and even (to the horror of a mother) quite young children. We wondered how many deaths there are a year!



Schoolboys (unsupervised) riding on top of a bus.



Live sheep riding on top of a bus.

Towards the end of the day, two drunks came by and annoyed us. They were not Christians, and one of them got a bit abusive, but finally left. The other tried to walk off with one of our books. (He explained that he didn't have any money, and it seems fairly clear why.) Our books are sold at cost, and the one he had was only 25¢, but we have a basic policy of not giving them away, so that they will be valued and read. Fortunately I didn't find it too hard to extract the book from him, since he was pretty far gone. However, this was practically the only negative note in our entire experience: as a rule the Quichuas are very friendly and helpful.

On the way home I realized I was losing my voice. The kids had had colds for several days, but so far Betty and I had avoided it.

Friday:

Back to Tsalarón again, even though I couldn't talk very well. We had announced on the radio that we'd be there, so we figured we had better at least put in an appearance. The weather was even worse than the week before: it rained almost the entire time, and was really cold. We almost got stuck in the mud several times getting there, since the trucks in the rain had really torn up the road, and even with four-wheel drive we were sliding all over the road, and doing a lot of praying. Understandably, not many people showed up, and we left before noon. By the time I got home I couldn't talk at all, and my voice didn't really start coming back until Monday morning, and I was sick for two weeks. For those who know me, you know how terrible this must have been for me! I mean, I couldn't talk at all...



The animal market in Tsalarón



A hat seller in Tsalarón. Since most of the Quichuas wear them every waking moment, indoors and out, this is a major commodity!

Saturday: Chilled at home.

Sunday:

Betty: Rick and the kids were once again stuck in the house sick. It was about 1:30 p.m. and I felt bad that we were not going to the church where they may be expecting Rick to preach. We didn't know where the church or the pastor's house were, and Rick didn't feel like getting out. I hated just not showing up. Then I heard large groups of Quichuas at the radio station next door. I decided to go try to find someone from the church. Praise the Lord, armed with my beginner's Quichua, I found a singing group from the church practicing for a radio show. I was able to explain why we couldn't go to their church. One of the men said, "Well, if your husband can't come, will you be there?" One of the ladies cut in with, "Not with two sick children as well!" Some things are the same in any culture...

Monday:

Went for a short visit to a friend in Cajabamba. On the way, our power steering started acting up, and when I opened the hood, there was fluid sprayed all over the place. We had to go into Riobamba to try and get it fixed. The mechanic disconnected the power steering, and we finished the trip without it.

Back in Cajabamba, we wanted to go see our friend who works at city hall, but there was what looked like a rather lively political rally right in front, and after our experience leaving Quito, we decided not to enter. But just then, our friend came out, saw us, and we got to visit.

Tuesday: Drove back to Quito to rest. No special adventures, for once!

Thanks again for praying for our trip. All three of our goals were accomplished: we got lots of good Quichua practice and saw significant improvement in Quichua fluency, we sold lots of books and magazines, and we built new and fruitful relationships. Good trip, though we sure came back worn out!

Prayer & Praise

- Please continue praying for our new literacy program at the El Tejar church, that it will be a successful and effective program. Pray also for the safety of our team in a dangerous Quito neighborhood after dark.
- When we sold all of our Bibles the first day of market, we called to see about finding more, and found out that the last printing of 10,000 is now sold out. A revision has been completed, by GMU and the United Bible Societies, but has not yet been printed because of funding and other complications. Please pray that this revision of the Chimborazo Quichua Bible can be printed soon.
- Continue praying for the Quichua men's Bible study, that God would bless it and allow it to accomplish its purposes, and that the students who have not been able to attend will be able to start coming again.

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MISSION
to the
WORLD

This newsletter can be seen on the Internet at:

www.Aschmann.net/Rick/Newsletter

Please continue praying for our support needs. The Lord has brought in quite a lot of additional support, for which we are very grateful, but there is still a ways to go! A good part of the reason for this need is that our monthly ministry expenses are higher right now, because the ministry to the Quichua people here in Ecuador is growing so well.