



MENNONITE *Air* MISSIONS

The following article is a translation of a personal testimony written by Ricardo Barraahona, a young member of the church in Porvenir; after a near-death illness. God used this time to strengthen his faith, and Ricardo draws from his experience to encourage others.

Ricardo's Testimony

I, Ricardo Barahona López, member of the body of Christ Jesus our Lord and brother of all those who call upon the name of God from other parts of the world. Grace and peace be to all. I give thanks to God for giving me the opportunity to see and to experience His power in my own life.

About seven months ago, when I was working as an assistant on a small masonry project, I began to feel a bit sick and weak. Every evening throughout the week, my mom would always ask, "How was your job today?" I would respond, "Good, it was good." One day my mother looked at my face and asked me, "How do you feel? You look a little bad; are you sick?" Trying not to worry my mom, I said, "I'm fine, *mamá*. Why?" She replied, "Son, I know you, and you're not well; don't try to deceive me." And as much as I tried to act as though everything was fine, I could not fool my mother; my face betrayed me.

After seeing my mom's concern, I finally told the truth, "I do feel a little bad." I had a fever almost every day, and the only thing I had done for it was go to the store and buy some Acetaminophen. After taking them, I felt a little better and kept working, drinking little water and sweating a lot. I only drank one liter of water all day long.

On Friday, my feet began to feel heavy and my body felt weak and numb, but I tried to work that day, always thinking that I must work so my mom could have what she needs and not go hungry. The next day, Saturday, I went to work, but I simply could not work anymore. I told my boss, Mr. Angel, "Excuse me, but I . . . I don't feel well and am not

able to work right now." He told me, "Don't worry, Ricardo. I understand. Thank you for showing up in spite of how you feel; you are a strong man." He also told me that when I felt better, I could come to work, which I was not able to do.

Sunday was the day for baptismal class. That day when we left the morning service, my pastor, Brother Galen Miller, whom I thank very much for his support, wondered if it were possible to have our class. I said, "Yes, it's okay," without knowing what would happen.

Ten minutes before the class, I told my family to tell Galen that I was not able to go. I was in bed, almost unable to move. That same day they took me to the local Health Center. When I arrived, they asked me some questions. I did not want them to ask questions; I just wanted to be taken care of. I responded with a little impatience. The nurse told my brother that my symptoms pointed to a possibility that I was lacking in potassium. The nurse gave me an injection of Diclofenaco to help me walk, but it didn't help me.

The next day, Monday, I was as tense and stiff as a piece of wood. My feet started cramping up, and my whole body felt numb. I could not move; my mouth was stuck as if there were glue on my teeth. Thank God, I could still speak; I could still wiggle my lips, which seemed like the only muscles that were not stiff.

That night I told my older brother to call my older sister Alicia and my brother César. I told them to pray for me, because I did not believe I would live

(continued on page 2)

to see the sun the next morning. My nephews asked me what was wrong. I only told them that it was God's will that I should be like this. And so the hours passed, and my body grew weaker; my condition continued to worsen through the night.

Tuesday was the saddest; the hours of the day passed and everything was the same. At eight o'clock that night I had a small convulsion, and my body became limp like a rag; it seemed to me that the end was coming. My mother and sister again prayed for me. After that I don't know what happened. When I woke up, I was in my bed. I began to pray again, as I had been doing ever since I could not get up. But my prayers seemed not to be heard, even though it wasn't true.

That night my mother told me, "Put everything into God's hands; make your life right with Him, no matter what happens." She told me this with tears in her eyes; she was already convinced that I was probably going to die. I did everything that my mother told me; it was the very thing I had not done before. Thank God; that night, after I had placed everything in God's hands, I got a good night's sleep.

The next day I was the same; my whole body was numb and cramping. That afternoon I asked to be taken to a hospital. Before deciding whether to take me, my family called our pastor; when he arrived, we gathered to pray. While they were deciding what to do, other members of our church came to show their support for my family. These brethren suggested calling the ambulance, which they did. The ambulance soon arrived to pick us up.

With a broken voice I managed to say good-bye to everyone. With great confidence and faith in God, I said that I'd be back, although I did not know when. Then I was taken to the ambulance while my church brethren stayed in the small chapel and had a prayer service.

We arrived at the hospital after a ninety-minute ride, and I was carried in on a stretcher. The medical personal began asking my sister-in-law questions. After giving me several IVs, I heard them tell my sister-in-law that I would have to stay in the hospital because my body couldn't handle anything.

The next day they did some testing and gave me some medication. During visiting hours, I tried to sit up and found I could do it without difficulty. When my sister-in-law came in to visit me, she told me that I had lost potassium from being dehydrated and could possibly be in the hospital several days. She left shortly so that two brothers from church could visit me. I remained sitting up while I waited and managed to see Brother Galen Miller and our

bishop, Brother Isaías Muñoz. After greeting me, they asked me how I felt. I responded, "Thank God, I'm good."

Brother Galen smiled and told Isaías, "He looks a lot better than yesterday." Truthfully, I did feel better. After talking a while, they took the time to pray before leaving. After we had prayed, I felt different in my body. I began to feel hot and thirsty, and wanted to walk. When they had left, I got off my bed and began to walk. God had worked in my body; I could walk just fine! May God be honored and glorified!

When the nurse in charge noticed that I was walking, she asked me, "Do you feel all right?" I told her, "Yes, thank the Lord, I feel good." Several minutes later the doctor came to examine me and told me, "Mr. Ricardo, would it be okay if we took out a small part of your kidney?" I asked him, "What is the problem with my kidney, doctor?" He replied, "There is a serious problem with your kidneys; they don't retain potassium. They have gotten used to a very low level of potassium in the body and now no longer retain it. We need to do a test on your kidneys, but to do that we must take out a very small piece. Would you be okay with that?" I told him, "Yes, that's fine." I asked what my potassium level was, and what was normal. The doctor told me, "You are a very strong man, because your potassium level is 1.70. It's incredible how you can still be alive; at this level, no one can live. The lowest potassium level one can have is 2.5; lower than that, you die." I told him, "It's not because I'm strong, but because of God's mercy that I'm alive." "I believe that," he told me.

After talking with the doctor, I took time to pray and ask God to do His will in me. The next day they did more testing; the doctor said that they probably would not have to take a piece of my kidney and that everything was going fine. I began to thank God for His mercy on me. Nine days later I was released from the hospital.

My doctor thanked me for what I had done for them and others in the hospital. I still don't know what I had done or why the doctor thanked me. It's certain that God gave me the opportunity to speak for Christ while there.

I returned for a checkup a month later. Because of my financial situation, I haven't gone back. But I have left everything in God's hands. Now, months later, I am grateful to God because He has kept me. He has given me life; but above all, He has given me the opportunity to be a member of His body.

To all my brethren, as well as to those who don't

know God nor have surrendered their life to the Lord, I challenge you to believe and put your faith in God. We receive many blessings from God; God tests us in many ways to see where our faith is. I was tried and found lacking in faith; but God, in His great love and mercy, gave me the opportunity to return to Him. He found me, and with the help of my brethren, guided me to believe and surrender my life to Him. And by obeying the voice of my brethren, I really wasn't obeying them, but God who was speaking to me through them. And now I can say with all confidence that God works miracles—big

miracles. But we need to depend on Him.

Let's put our faith in the author and finisher of our faith, who is God. We need to remember that without faith it is impossible to please Him. If anyone lacks faith, let him ask God to help. Therefore, "watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

I, Ricardo, salute you and beseech you that you "submit yourselves to all those who labor in the Lord." May the grace of our Lord and my love in Christ Jesus be with you all.

Ricardo Barahona López

Sendas Antiguas

In Guatemala city, not far from MAM headquarters, is the school with the name "Sendas Antiguas." This school operates under the direction of the Lirio de los Valles church. The school name comes from Jeremiah 6:16, which speaks of "old paths wherein is the good way."

This year there are fifteen students and two teachers in two classrooms.

Roxana is teaching the older grades. She has five students in fourth through sixth grade.



Roxana and her students.



Magali and her class.

Magali is the other teacher with the younger ten students. She has been teaching for many years at various places. This is her third year at this school, and she teaches kindergarten through third grade.

Some of these students come from church families, but the majority come from the community. Pray for these children, that the seed of God's Word would be planted in their hearts and grow. Pray for the teachers as they work with the children, that they would have daily wisdom and would be a godly example for the children to see and learn by.

New Workers

Dean and Jodi Boll arrived in February to begin serving in Guatemala. They're currently beginning three weeks of Spanish study in Antigua, which they've found enjoyable and profitable. They will likely be living in the Joya Grande area and serving the church and community there. Pray that Spanish will come easily and they could soon become fluent enough to relate comfortably with the Guatemalan people.

Personnel Needs

We are in need of **church planting and pastor support couples** willing to live among and serve the national church and reach out in the community. We also need **single fellows** willing to serve in support roles and to build relationships with nationals. Please prayerfully consider these needs, and if you could volunteer or could recommend someone, contact Wesley King.



Dean and Jodi Boll are from the Muddy Creek congregation in Denver, Pennsylvania.



Volcan de Fuego, about thirty miles from Guatemala City, erupted in early February, causing evacuations and sending ash into the surrounding area. None of the focus areas of our mission were affected, but it did cause local damage.

**Newsletter subscriptions and address changes can be requested at mam@clp.org.
Visit our website at mennoniteairmissions.org to sign up for digital newsletters,
or e-mail your request to mennoniteairmissions.eey@gmail.com.**

Please make donations payable to "Mennonite Air Missions" and send to Mennonite Air Missions, c/o Amos Hurst, 140 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA 17543.

Mennonite Air Missions (USPS 383-570)

Mennonite Air Missions newsletter is published bimonthly by Mennonite Air Missions, Inc. Editor / Mission representative: Brian Yoder, 590 Dusty Rock Rd., Riner, VA 24149; Mennonite Air Missions Board: Chairman: Duane Eby, 12731 Greencastle Pike, Hagerstown, MD 21740; Assistant Chairman: Wesley King, 30 Juliasam Dr., Belleville, PA 17004; Treasurer: Amos Hurst Jr., 140 Rothsville Station Rd., Lititz, PA. 17543; Secretary: Lee Lehman, 2065 Sollenburger Rd., Chambersburg, PA 17202; Urie Sharp, Leon Yoder, Pete Shirk, Stanley Neuenschwander, Jeff Weaver. The newsletter is sent free of charge. Send all newsletter correspondence to MAM Newsletter, 590 Dusty Rock Road, Riner, VA 24149. MENNONITE AIR MISSIONS is published on the fifteenth of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

ATTN. POSTMASTER: Send address subscription changes or change of address materials to MENNONITE AIR MISSIONS, PO Box 1212, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.