

# **My Journal... Honduras, September 2005**

## **With ProPapa Missions America**



**Friday, September 16, 2005**

I left home this morning at 1:50 a.m. My first stop was for coffee and then Wal Mart to pickup a few last minute things.... most importantly, snacks.

I parked my truck at Charlie Brown's Airport Parking and took their shuttle bus to the airport. The driver was very friendly and quite curious as to why I was traveling to Honduras to do mission work. I explained everything I could to him in the ten minutes that I had before being dropped off at the curb.

I'm sitting curbside waiting for Keith and Janice Hurley from West Virginia and also Kay Smith and Shirley Sholtis from the Johnstown area. Kay and Shirley spent the night here in Pittsburgh so that they wouldn't have to make the drive from Johnstown this morning. We've been communicating by cell phone to make it easy for us to meet.

I'm so excited that the trip is finally here. I've been thinking of how the kids will react when they see me come off of the bus.

My family and friends donated items for me to take along for the kids. I'm so overwhelmed. I had a little party on Wednesday night before I left and my brother Rick donated many new Greensburg YMCA shirts, my sister Katie donated visors and my sister Wendy donated harmonicas and jump ropes. My brother Corey brought writing tablets and everyone brought pens....I have over 300 of them. I'll tell you more later on as the West Virginia people just pulled in.

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I was able to meet everyone in our group at either the curbside pickup or the check in line. Although it's early, I feel that we are going to have a great trip. There are 11 guys and two women, plus Sister Laurinda.

My flight from Pittsburgh to Houston was on a small 'commuter-type' plane. There were 2 seats on the right side and one seat on the left. I was lucky enough to have the single seat near the rear of the plane.

While sitting waiting for the plane to takeoff from Pittsburgh, I talked with Tom Ross, a gentleman in his 60's. Tom told me that his daughter and son-in-law live in Irwin, only a few miles from my home. I worked on Tom, trying to get him to invite me to a cookout at his daughter's home since it's local. On the plane, I napped a few times....the first as we taxied down the runway. The flight from Pittsburgh was smooth although it dragged on and on.

The second flight from Houston to San Pedro Sula wasn't too bad either. The front part of the plane was basically empty so after take off we moved around to have more room. I sat next to Jamie, a 30-some year old self-employed contractor from West Virginia. Jamie is a former employee of Wayne Homes and started working for Keith when he was about 15 years old. Jamie has two girls and a baby on the way. I really enjoyed talking to him and it made the time fly by.

We made it through customs fairly rapidly. I stood in line with Shirley Sholtis. I enjoyed chatting with her, and again the time went by quickly. Shirley and I were hit up by a group of panhandlers and so we gave them \$5.00 US. Later, we joked around about it several times when the subject would arise from Sister Laurinda about people begging for money.

Sister Laurinda met us at the baggage claim. She was very happy to see me and told me that although Jessica asked if I was coming to Honduras, she replied "I'm sure Davee will come back again in the future". That is all Sister would tell her. The sound of that made the butterflies begin in my stomach. I pictured how I was going to get off the bus. I was getting even more anxious now to see Jessica.

Shirley and I also talked about wrestling. Her son wrestled for University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and before long we realized how many of the same people we knew.

I found Benigno waiting in a different area of the airport for our group. As I walked around the side of the building, he saw me and began to wave. I waved for him to come this way, so he got up out of his seat and came over. Benigno shook my hand, then relented and gave me a hug. I had him follow me to where the group was waiting.

As we loaded the luggage into the trucks of Benigno and Sister Laurinda, it became apparent that we were missing a team member who was flying in from New York. Sister found out that his flight had been canceled in New York and that he was rerouted on a different airline and would arrive later today. So Sister decided that we should go to the Pro Papa office to gather up some extra tools. Later, she would head back to the airport to get Michael Kelly (the missing team member) while we continued on for the bus to Urraco.

After gathering the tools, the group made a stop in El Progreso for Kay Smith, our leader, so she could make a call home, then we picked up our translator, Josh. After stalling for a while, and getting food for those who wanted to eat, we continued on to Urraco.

As we passed different things along the way, I would point them out to the group members. I forgot to mention that this is Kay's eighth time and Shirley hasn't been here in the last few years but she's been here at least six or seven times previously. For all of the other members, it is their first trip. For me-- it's my second one.

My butterflies were getting worse as we entered Urraco. As we rode by, I saw Alberto on his bike. I leaned forward so he couldn't see me. We turned onto the road that leads to the place we would be staying. I recognized most of the kids when we stopped. I ducked and let everyone else get out of the bus before me. When I finally stood at the door, Jessica yelled "Davee!" and her face lit up. (Armour Cribbs, another team member, told me that my face lit up at the same time.)

I stepped off the bus and immediately had kids hanging on me saying "Davee, Davee!" They remembered me!

I recalled so many names— like I never left in March. There was Keyvi, Kathy, Jonny, Darlene, Jossi, Wendi, Juan and many, many more. I shook hands with the gentleman who lives across the road and then Jessica took me by the hand to see her mama. I saw that their home is now complete and that Tonia, Jessica's mother, was very happy to see me. I gave Tonia a hug and she told me that Jessica cried when I left in March. Tonia then showed me an 8x10 photo of Jessica and me hanging on the wall of their new home. I'd spent 25 minutes or so with the family, and I thought that I better hook up with the group again.

I returned to our house, but everyone was gone. They left to see the job site, the Medical Clinic. The rain began to fall steadily, so I walked up the hill to the clinic at a good pace. The kids all followed me, of course, and I found our group inside the warehouse near the clinic.

The kids played in the rain, running and sliding on their stomachs on the smooth concrete sidewalk. They were doing concrete belly smackers. They sure are tough! Michael Moran, one of the guys in our group took off his shirt and did the same slide as the kids. Mike is very good with the kids and knows some Spanish. All of the members of our group are very good with playing with the kids.

On the way off of the hill from the clinic, I heard that Wendi had a baby just two weeks ago. So after I changed out of my wet clothes, I walked back up the hill to see her new baby. He was so cute... big, brown eyes staring at me as I'd say "Hola". He didn't cry at all! Wendi cared for her four brothers and one sister when their mom left home for a few years. At the time, Wendi was only 12 or 13 years old. Her mom is now home and I understand that Wendi has married and will move to San Pedro Sula with her new husband and her baby. Wendi is now about 17 years old.

When I came back from seeing the baby, I gathered some new shirts that my brother Rick donated. I handed them out, and had the kids take off their wet shirts and replace them with the dry ones. They all liked their new "*Camisa*"-the Spanish word for "shirt".

The group had dinner at a restaurant new to me, and I enjoyed it thoroughly as usual. This trip we aren't going to Lupe's Restaurant, the place we ate at during our March trip. Apparently something had happened there and Pro Papa decided that it would be better for us to go to Donna Marie's instead. While I was sitting there at the table, I could hear my name being yelled in from behind the tarp and the fence. The kids wanted me to stop eating and come out to play. Donna Marie finally asked Sister what the kids were yelling about and she explained that "Davee" is my name. She was happy to meet me.

Sister Laurinda walked with Jessica, Darlene and I back to our house. Sister and I had a serious talk about the choices I've made. In March, I signed up with the group because I felt like I was searching for something in my life. In September, again, I needed to come to Honduras as doing mission work gives me a wonderful feeling and is important to me. Its way past my bedtime and I'm rambling on... I'm heading to bed.

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### **Saturday, September 17, 2005**

It's now Saturday night and I've just finished taking a shower. We worked long and hard today at the clinic.

This is how my day went:

I was in the shower at 5:30 a.m. Shortly thereafter, a few kids were outside the front gate. I brought out pens and tablets for them to draw and write in. I was trying to teach them how to share but it became more difficult as more kids were coming down to see us. It's much easier to have just four or five of them at a time so that I can spend special time

with each of them. When there is a group, it becomes pretty hectic. As a few of the kids came from their homes on the hill, they would call my name and wave to me.

The group was ready, so we walked together to breakfast, which was coffee, freshly squeezed fruit juice (maybe a mixture of pineapple, oranges and bananas) and some French toast. I cut up a fresh banana to put on top of the French toast and smothered it all with syrup. No use eating it with a fork, I just rolled each one up and ate them with my fingers. Since Sister decided she didn't want the last one (might have had something to do with me touching it with my finger when I asked 'Hey Sister, you want this?') I ate it...my fifth of the morning. They were really good! Our breakfast lasted only for about 25 or 30 minutes before it was time to head for our tools and the clinic.

As we walked to the work site, we had to leave the kids at the front gate that stands in front of the clinic. In March when I was here, we had kids working with us every minute of every day. But now, since the clinic is still seeing people even while we're painting, the kids had to stay out. I felt bad, but no doubt it's the right decision.

We gathered in the front of the building so that everyone could decide what job they wanted to do. I picked changing all of the lights on the front and side porches. We had brand-new lights with ceramic bases (the kind that are mounted in an unfinished basement at home) and the procedure was simple enough: we'd take the old one down and replace the wires the same way as we took them off, and then replace the old light with the new. I worked with Tom Ross, the man I tried to get an invitation from on the plane down here.

Tom and I used scaffolding made of three benches to change the outside lights: two benches on the bottom facing each other, and then setting one on top of those two to provide exactly the height we needed. On the side of the building where there were cathedral ceilings, we used the benches, plus a 5-gallon bucket turned upside down. (My feeling is that this is not OSHA approved!) Once all the lights were up it was time finish the job with new light bulbs.

Instead of moving all of the scaffolding back to each one, I placed Nelson Rodriguez, age 12, on my shoulders. He'd be talking to me in Spanish as I'd come to the next one and although I didn't know what he was saying, I knew to stop. He'd lean way up in order to reach the light and screw in the bulb. Once they were all in we hit the switch, only to find that one light refused to light. So we moved the scaffolding back over and took the light apart. I found that one of the wires 'popped' out. Once the wire was re-secured, it worked great. Tom and I were happy with how quickly we'd gotten all of the lights and bulbs changed.

I worked on the next task with Shirley, replacing outlets inside of the clinic. Pretty simple; replace the wires exactly how they were on the old outlet. It was amazing to see a perfectly good wire just 'stripped' and have a pigtail added that would run to the outlet. The pigtail would be taped with electrical tape, but some of it was peeling off and some of it no longer covered all of the bare wire.

On some outlets, I simply re-taped, but most of the time, I replaced the whole outlet and didn't have to worry about the ugly details of repairing them. Nelson was helping me with the electrical work. He was such a pleasure to work with, and always seemed to know what tools I needed, and when. Soon, he understood how to do them and so he would take the old ones out and I'd replace with a new outlet. In one of the rooms, he found a third outlet that was located behind the bed, and in his eagerness, he began removing the outlet without testing it to see if it was still 'hot'.

Needless to say, it was hot, and when the sparks went flying, Nelson leaped right into my arms. It scared the heck out of me as well. We double-checked all of the outlets from then on and Nelson gained the courage to help me work with the electrical wiring again. It was funny listening to him tell his story in Spanish until he got to the 'BOOM' part. Working with Nelson reminded me of when my boys were about his age and helped me remodel my home in Level Green.

We paused for about 30 minutes at lunchtime, then went right back to working. By 6:00 PM, I was 'whipped.' I decided to take a walk, and I took some more photos of our workers as I went. Up on the roof, where some of our group was working, I found Nelson now helping Armour Cribbs. Nelson looked up and gave me that big smile of his.

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Dinner is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. so we're quitting for today. As we walked off the hill, I had to make a stop to see Jorge, my construction crew Leader from my trip in March. I bought him a present that I couldn't wait to give to him. When we arrived at his home (one that I helped to construct in March), Jorge's mama was very happy to see me and gave me a big hug and a kiss. She said that Jorge was working and maybe he could come visit me later. (I'm not sure exactly how I knew that she was saying this but that's what I got out of our conversation)

On my way back to go to dinner, Jessica took me by the hand, leading me to her home. I walked in and there were plastic chairs set up, candles burning and pictures of Jesus on one side of the room. Jessica's Aunt was crying and then she picked up a photo and handed to me to see. It was Jessica's grandmother that passed away. They made me sit down and then brought out food for me to eat. I was warned that we are not to eat any food prepared by anyone except by the restaurant, as it is prepared using bottled water. The food was pretty much forced on me and I didn't want to hurt their feelings and so I took several bites. I explained that I had to leave for dinner and so I offered my condolences and left.

At dinner, everyone was very tired from the long day of work. I sat with Shirley, Nate, and Mike Kelley, the guy from New York. By the way, Mike is leaving early on Friday as he has stuff to do to get ready for his wedding in two weeks.

While we finished dinner, the rain began to fall again. We walked back to the house with the kids holding our hands. As I made it to the gate, Nelson, Alberto, Arno and one other boy got wind that I handed out some Greensburg YMCA shirts. “*Camisa*” they kept saying. So I went in and found one for each of them and was able to sneak them through the gate. Now most of the kids have their new YMCA *camisas* on and it looks pretty neat seeing the familiar tee shirts here in Urraco.

The rain has been very heavy... the thunder and lightning hit knocked out the power. It’s only about 9:00 PM and I’m writing this using the light from a flashlight. I’m tired and it feels good to lie down. My muscles are sore but the room is really hot. We don’t have a fan blowing. Here are a few more last-minute things I want to share:

Today, Jessica came out wearing her new ‘flip-flops’ and outfit bought by my friends Darcy and Sandy. She is so proud of them- but I had to keep reminding her, “Shhhhh-secret....”

A couple other things I remember about today:

These kids love candy. Someone gave Nelson a pack of Smarties and he offered to share them with Shirley and me.

I was happy to see that some of the kids, when given candy, remembered to take the *papel*— paper— and put it in my pocket, not throw it on the ground.

It gets dark very early as they don’t have a daylight savings time.

A few new Spanish words for me: *Lasso*—jump rope, *pequino*—little, *gorro*—hat, *gordo*— fat

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### **Sunday, September 18, 2005**

It’s 5:00 a.m. and the roosters are crowing. I was first up this morning and when I came downstairs, all the lights were on from when the power went off last night. Mike Kelley got up just a few minutes after me.

I had an interesting night last night. I’m rooming with Tom Ross and Michael Moran, an actor and stay-at-home dad. Tom is Michael’s father-in-law. Tom has a bed, and Mike and I each have a mattress on the floor. It’s actually pretty comfortable. Last night, I heard Michael start talking, so I sat up in my bed. All of a sudden he threw his covers off and headed for the door. Tom and I both tried telling him that he was having a bad dream, and finally we convinced him to get back in bed. It was kinda scary, but everything ended up being okay.

It is a beautiful morning, with the sun rising from behind the dark rain clouds. It's not raining at the moment, but rains seem to 'pop up' pretty quickly here.

The plan for today is for all of us to get up on the roof to scrape off some sort of roof coating. Although I haven't done it yet, the other guys told me that it is a very tedious job. We are about ready to leave for breakfast and then be up on the roof before 7:00 a.m. Someone just said that the gate is locked so we can't leave, but our translator, Josh, will wake Benigno to get the key. I really need a coffee!

One of the boys that I gave a YMCA shirt to showed up at the gate to show me that I gave him a small shirt instead of a *grande*— large one. I was able to find one that fits him better and now he is happy.

I'm a little disappointed that I haven't taken nearly as many photos as I took when I was here in March. I guess with the kids not working alongside us, and us working from basically daybreak to sunset, there's just not enough time.

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It's now Sunday evening— and we worked only part of the day at the clinic. At first, everyone got on the roof and helped with removing the rubber sealant around the leaking area. It was a very tedious job, and we couldn't finish it. We'll have to get it done tomorrow morning when it's a bit cooler up there.

Nelson helped me with pulling the rubber sealant. He is such a good worker. After the sun became unbearable, I got off the roof for some water. I didn't feel right the rest of the workday...my butt was dragging.

We had a young lady come visit us today who is from Long Island, New York but staying in El Progreso. Melissa is a Physician's Assistant at the Hospital in El Progreso and has been there for about 8 weeks. She'll be going back home to New York, I believe in November. She really loves it in Honduras.

There was a celebration to honor Shirley for the work she has done over the past eight years with the Pro-Papa Scholarship Program. We all were Guests of Honor and were able to sit with Shirley up on stage. Some of the different schools did dancing routines... oh how they love to dance! All of the students also sang the Honduran Happy Birthday song to Nate.

After the program, Nelson, his younger brother Alberto, Armour, and I did some electrical work. At 6:00 p.m., Armour and I called it 'quits' and went back to the house to get ready for evening mass. Mass starts at 7:00 p.m. so we didn't have much time to get ready, plus I needed a ten or fifteen minute nap! I took my shower, grabbed a quick 'power-nap' and woke up with a headache. I took two Tylenol tablets and was ready to walk to the church. The walk is not quite a mile but sometimes it is slow moving stepping over puddles, manure, garbage and other stuff along the way.

Armour, Sister, Shirley, Melissa and I walked with Nate and Josh, the translator, to church. Nate and Josh were going to a different church just down the road so as we arrived at the Catholic Church, those two continued walking. Although it was a little after 7:00 p.m., mass hadn't started yet. When I walked through the door, Jessica came from behind me and grabbed my hand. I was so surprised to see her!

We walked up near the front of the church and Jessica sat right next to me. At first, she wrapped her arm around mine and snuggled up next to me. My heart was melting when she took her other arm and wrapped it around my same arm and leaned her head on my shoulder. Before long, Jessica repositioned herself, laid her head on my lap, and fell asleep. It was such a great feeling! As mass ended, Jessica awoke and held my hand as we left the church. I gave her a 'piggy-back' for a while— she was tired and didn't feel like walking. We arrived at the restaurant for dinner, and Jessica made it the rest of the way home by herself.

At dinner, we celebrated Nate's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday for a second time today. This time, though, we had some cake... and it was really good! Talking about our meals, almost every meal had 'beans and rice.' I didn't mind it too much, since I like them but it became kind of a joke after a while.

After dinner, we went back to the house and I was able to sneak Nelson a harmonica. When you heard the harmonica, you knew that Nelson was around.

Also today I was able to walk across the street to see a newborn baby that Darlene's sister had. I was able to hold the baby... about 3-4 days old. The mother is only about 14 or 15 years old.

It's been a long day and I'm ready for bed.

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### **Monday, September 19, 2005**

It's about 5:15 a.m. and once again I am the first one up. It's Monday already. I came out to write in my Journal and saw the dog, *Oso* (means 'bear') laying in the front yard. I'm now beginning to wonder how my dog, Buddy, is doing back home. I think I'll make plans to walk to the Internet Café to call my parents tonight and check in on him.

When woke up, I could feel my legs had many bites on them, probably from the mosquitoes. I had trouble with bites on my legs when I was here in March and had to get some kind of shot to help me with the pain and discomfort. I hope they don't get bad like that again.

The sky again is beautiful as the sun is rising, mixing bright colors with the clouds.

Last night before going to bed, Sister and I talked about the Scholarship Program that Shirley has for kids. I told her my desire to sponsor Jessica the whole way through high

school. Sister and I will talk with Jessica some time later today to tell her about my offer. I'm going to set some rules that she'll have to follow.

Today at the clinic, we will mainly be on the roof trying to finish that project up, plus get a crew to start painting the inside of the building. Sister Laurinda is concerned about the fumes from the oil-based paint. Even while the other guys and Shirley were painting the outside yesterday, the fumes were pretty bad. I guess we'll find out how bad they are once we start.

Tom Ross and I are sitting out front talking about Nelson. He was impressed at what a good worker Nelson is and wanted to know more about him. I told him everything I knew about Nelson and his family.

It's about 6:00 a.m. so the coffee should be ready. Tom, Armour and I are heading down to the restaurant.

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## **Tuesday, September 20, 2005**

It was quite a day yesterday... I was even too tired to journal last night but here is how the day went.

At breakfast, Benigno announced that Nelson could help us but not with any of the electrical stuff. I guess Benigno heard about the 'boom' story.

Nelson and I went up on the roof and began to clean the debris from where the cement edge acts like a gutter. After that we went back down to help Armour with the 'reverse polarity' on many of the outlets. Nelson really wanted to help so I decided to give that job to Tom Ross and then Nelson and I would do something else.

Nelson's brother Alberto came, too, so Keith put them both to work painting around the trim up and down the hallway. The whole time the boys were near each other, they were agitating each other. I couldn't understand a word they were saying but Nelson 'ticked' Alberto off and Alberto threw a 'pee cup' at him. They fight the same way our kids do back in the states... they agitate each other until one of them blows up. A little bit later I found out that this bickering was from a fight earlier in the day when Nelson hit Alberto with a stick.

Our lunch break went quickly... thirty minutes and we were on our way back up the hill to the clinic. When we arrived, Keith had a talk with Nelson and Alberto and said that if they kept up this agitating, they'd be put outside the gate and not able to help. Now picture this with kids from the USA... 'If you don't quit fighting you won't be able to help another 5 ½ hours with all of these heavy paint fumes in about 85 degree heat.' But working is what these kids love to do.

My legs were bothering me all day; at the end of the day they really hurt. The bites were 'weeping' and there were even more bites than what I noticed on Monday morning. I saw that my right leg had a little bit of swelling too. Since we were working at the clinic, I asked the Doctor (with Josh translating for me) about my legs. He looked at them and had the nurses clean them out and then gave me a prescription ointment to put on them.

As for the nurses, when patients come in, they are there to help. But when things are slow, the nurses pitched in, cleaning paint off of the beds, floors, wheelchairs and other things, with turpentine.

In Honduras there is also no HIPAA (privacy act). While I was on the Emergency Room table, Nelson walked in and listened to what Josh is saying to the Doctor and the Doctor saying back to Josh. Then another helper, *Gordo* (real name Roger), walks in to see what's wrong. He stands there looking at my legs and listening to the Doctor. It's funny!

As the workday ended, I walked down from the clinic and the kids were all yelling my name. A couple of the little girls were yelling *lasso* – jump rope. I've given three out so far but only have one or two left. Things I give out end up disappearing rather quickly around the neighborhood.

Anyhow, back to *lasso, lasso*. I pretended that I was handing out many jump ropes and although my legs were bothering me, I'd say *uno, dos, tres* and we'd all pretend like we were jumping rope. We did it several times but I really needed to lie down for a while to give my legs a rest. As I arrived at the gate, one of the younger kids tried to swing Evan between his legs and Evan cracked his head on the ground. I ran over and picked him up and the kids showed me where he lived. I carried him into the house but his mama was not home. I had about 30 kids 'helping' me handing me water and rags. Finally a neighbor lady came and took him from me as the blood was dripping down his face and off of his chin.

I showered, then laid down for a while. My legs were becoming more painful. After taking a brief rest before dinner, Jessica was waiting for me at the gate. I asked Sister Laurinda if this would be a good time for us to have our talk about my wanting to sponsor her in school. Sister agreed, so I brought Jessica in and we sat with Sister Laurinda.

Through Sister, I explained to Jessica how I love her very much and would like to sponsor her for the rest of her schooling. There are rules that must be followed and if she does that, I'll get her whatever she needs. It was difficult for me to explain to a seven-year old girl that it is not a good idea to have a baby at a young age. Her older sister Cindi is about 14 years old and expecting and her other sister, Jossi, age 11 just moved in with an 18 year old boy. I asked Jessica if she thought that this is okay. At first, she said 'yes' but then I explained how hard it is to continue with school when you have a baby. If she would just wait and complete her education first, she'll be so much happier. There were different topics we talked about but the main thing I wanted her to know was that I'll always be there for her. I just love this little girl!

Now today, Tuesday, I went with Shirley and Sister to visit some of the schools that have Pro Papa sponsored students. I rode in the back of Sister's truck on a mattress. At our first stop we visited the school named 'Area 28'. Sandra, the Area Coordinator, and her daughter Daniella came along with us as did her sister, Jenny, to visit a few of the other schools.

After spending time at each school, we were invited to the homes of some of the children. At each home we were offered items in gratitude for their children's education, paid from the Pro Papa Scholarship Program. The Hernandez Family gave us a large bag of oranges picked from a couple of trees in their yard. The Bonillas' gave us coconuts from a tree out in back of their home, and another family a water melon and another family a papaya.

I enjoyed meeting the school kids and Sister asked me to say a word or two. I encouraged the kids to stay with the program and continue getting an education. I explained that it is important for their future. At a few of the schools I did the 'magic bag' trick. I usually started by asking if anyone in the class was magic (through Sister of course). I'd pick someone out of the crowd and start my act. It would go over pretty well... I think even some of the adults were entertained.

After visiting one school, I was introduced to Maria, a 15-year old girl who has heart problems as well as respiratory problems. Maria's family cannot afford the medication so she does without. For only \$25 for a 2-month supply of medicine, she'd be able to breathe much easier. I'm going to see if I can find a few families willing to pitch in to get Maria her medicine. What a lovely young lady....

At our last school to visit, the Area Coordinators name was Francesca. Francesca is a beautiful woman about 40 years old with four children to her first husband and then one child to her second husband. The surprising thing here is that her second husband is 97 years old but she said, "She doesn't have to worry about him running off." By the way, her child to this gentleman is only about eight years old meaning he was about 89 or 90 when the child was conceived. Whew!

On our way back to the house where we were staying, we stopped at the Urraco soccer field to watch the team that was practicing. The field just received a new set of bleachers but the goals had no nets. When there was a score, someone would have to go get the ball.

We stopped to get ice for my legs, so Shirley and I went into the Internet Café. Sister went in for the ice. Shirley wanted to check her e-mail to see if she heard anything regarding the type of shot I was given when I had the bug bite problem in March. I called home to check on my boys and my dog, Buddy. The Internet was very slow there and the phone call I made to my dad had a very bad connection.

When we got back home, the kids saw me in the back of the truck and followed. They were yelling 'Davee, Davee'. By the time I was able to get out the truck, kids were gathered around asking for *plumas*, *chickelets*, and *lassos* (pens, candy and jump ropes).

It must have been a long day for the kids as the group was working at the clinic the entire time and Shirley, Sister and I were also gone.

Tonight Josh and I had a talk about his girlfriend Shandley. He hasn't talked with her in about three weeks and feels that there might be something going on. He also has a 'best friend' named Natalie. Natalie really likes him but he only likes her as a friend. I explained that best friends sometime end up turning into more down the road. He doesn't think so, though.

Josh made me laugh when he was explaining about a science project he once worked on. It was a 'solar powered' car. He had photos of his drawings and a photo of the real thing on his camera phone. We talked about it for a while and when I asked 'did it work?' he replied 'it almost worked'. I laughed but he didn't see any humor there. One other thing, I asked him if he loses weight when he comes on these trips, his reply 'No, I grow more'.... Again, he didn't see the humor. He's a very nice young man and I'm sure he'll do well in the future.

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### **Wednesday, September 21, 2005**

I woke up early today and Jonny came to the gate at 5:30 a.m. I was able to spend some quality time with him by himself. I gave him a Styrofoam visor and wrote his name on it with magic marker. I also brought out some tablets and markers to draw in. As more kids came, I went and got more tablets and markers. I really like when there are only a few to give lots of attention to.

My bug bites are bad but not as painful as last evening. I notice though as the day progresses, so does the pain. After breakfast we got ready to go for a half-day trip to the market place in San Pedro Sula. We had one hour to shop, then meet at the bus at 10:30 a.m. While looking at cigars I asked some guy "*Bueno?*" (Are they good?) He said that he spoke English, and I learned that his name is Joe and that he went to college in Steubenville, Ohio, just over the Pennsylvania line.

I told him that I'm from Pittsburgh. We talked about the Southside and driving out of the Fort Pitt Tunnel seeing the city. I then took him to meet my friends from Weirton, which is pretty close to Steubenville. Joe owned a little Internet Café just up the block, so we went with him to make a few phone calls. It was time to get to the bus so we exchanged Business Cards and I told him that I'd e-mail him when I got home. What a nice guy.....

We went to a 'Detox Center' for young boys. Here we found boys that had drug and alcohol problems or were orphans living on the street. The main source of drugs is 'huffing' or sniffing glue. The youngest boy there is eight years old. It looks like they can be pretty tough on each other.

Our next stop was an Infant Shelter where little babies were brought when they were suffering malnutrition or were born to a young mother who didn't have the skills to care for a baby. There were 24 infants there, none over the age of 18 months. I was surprised that they had that many babies but not one was crying. There was one little girl that had a terrible case of malnutrition— her skin was just hanging from her tiny, little arms. When I talked to the little babies, they didn't respond.

There was a healthy looking baby standing in his crib sort of jumping around. So I walked over and picked him up and he snuggled up to me. According to the staff he is deaf and doesn't have very good vision. It was now time to leave. We were only there about 15 minutes, but I left with tears in my eyes. I felt sad for these children, but glad that they have a wonderful, caring center to give them help and love. I was able to meet the lady who started it all. Her name is Ann and she is from Texas. She moved here and keeps the center running with donations coming from the United States.

Lunchtime finally arrived, so we went to Pizza Hut in El Progreso. (Jeff really needed this meal.) Not only did we have pizza, we finished it off with a nice big ice cream. I was stuffed!

Once we returned from San Pedro Sula and El Progreso, we headed up the hill. My legs were hurting from all of the walking. I painted with Alberto, Shirley and Michael Moran. We talked the whole time, and Michael shared with us his story of how he met his wife and eventually married her. It was a great story.

I couldn't take the pain from my legs anymore so Josh and I asked to see the Doctor. He could tell that I had cellulites before and felt that this is why my legs were having so much pain. He also mentioned that I have a circulation problem and need a strong antibiotic, elevate and ice my legs. So I left work to go get a shower and lay in the hammock to elevate and put ice on my legs.

For about an hour, I rested comfortably on the hammock with my legs up. The guys came back from the clinic, and the whole time I could hear the kids yelling my name. When Josh came in, I asked him to go out and tell them that I'm okay but I have to rest. I heard Jessica calling me, too. Sister came in from talking with the Doctor and said that he does not want me to work at all the rest of the trip. I can't believe it! The guys are making jokes about it but I know that they are really concerned. What a great group they are! Sister also told me that the kids stopped her before she came in the gate and asked about me. They heard that I am very sick. She assured them that I'd be okay.

Jamie hurried up from the restaurant with a plate full of food for me. That was really nice... and before he left, he asked if I needed anything else.

While everyone was at dinner, Jessica came running to me on the hammock. She knew that she wasn't allowed in past the gate, but wanted to see me. Nelson was yelling to me, too, so I told her let Nelson know that I'm okay. She left. About a minute later, little Keyvi came in to see me. She is only 5 years old. She asked me to move the ice off of my

legs, then gave me a big hug and a kiss and ran off. Oh how I miss playing with the kids out in the street.

It's Wednesday evening and I just heard that on Friday we are going to a place called Capon. I knew that we were going there but didn't realize that it was so soon. I'm already regretting leaving the kids especially because I haven't had the time to spend with them like I did in March.

I'm in the hammock writing in my Journal. Sister Laurinda is meeting with Shirley and Wendi, the sister of Alberto, Nelson, Jonny and Keyvi. Wendi had her baby about two weeks ago and is now married and moving with her husband to San Pedro Sula. Sister laughed and said 'Dave, the kids are yelling I LOVE YOU, DAVEE' Those kids are all so special!

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### **Thursday, September 22, 2005**

It's now Thursday morning at 4:30 a.m. I'm using a laptop computer donated from someone in the United States and will be used for the soccer program down here in Urraco. It's much easier for me to type instead of writing in my journal while lying down.

My legs are feeling better although they are very itchy. I'm taking the antibiotic that the Doctor prescribed but they don't look any better and usually by dinnertime, they ache pretty badly.

Today our plan is to take a bus to the village of Pavone.... After Hurricane Mitch, nobody had been there for days to check on the people. Pro Papa went in and found basically the whole town wiped away and that the people had nothing to eat or drink. The Pro Papa volunteers were able to obtain rice and beans in 50 pound sacks and bring to each family. Over the years since Mitch (1998), Pro Papa has built 36 cement block homes and has raised enough money to have a deep well dug that provides clean water to the people of Pavone. I'm anxious to see the village and meet the people from Pavone.

After we return to Urraco, the work group will go back up to the clinic to work the rest of the day. This is actually the last chance that we'll have to finish the "to do" list that we had when we arrived. I'm already thinking about our departure from Urraco in the morning when we leave the kids here and head to the Capon Ruins.

Our translator, Josh, tells me that the Capon Ruins are very interesting. We will be staying there on Friday and Saturday nights and then head home on Sunday morning.

It's now Thursday evening and we are back at home. I rode in the back of sister's truck with Josh and Michael Moran on the way out and then Josh rode in the van and Nate hopped in the back of the truck with us. On our trip to Pavone, we stopped to see several

homes that were built by members of our construction crew. We talked with a few of the families and were able to see the water tower where the well is located. This supplies clean drinking water for about 2000 people.

One home we stopped at was just across the street from a school. I was happy that Shirley reminded me to bring the bag for the magic bag trick. The kids were standing near the fence where we parked and so it gave me the perfect opportunity to do the magic bag trick. Josh translated for me as I asked if any of the kids felt that they were magical. Nobody responded so I picked one young man and he threw the ball into the bag. It was fun... more and more students wanted to throw the ball, too, so we played for a few minutes. I gave one of the boys the bag and when I threw the ball, it didn't land in the bag and the kids laughed. I had everyone having a good time... but it was now time to go.

Next we stopped at a swinging walk bridge that leads from Pavone I to Pavone II. Most of us walked across and took photos and then walked back. It was nice... a beautiful view from the other side looking at a cornfield and the mountains in the background. The river was actually pretty rough and brown in color so I'm assuming that it had been raining pretty hard some place up in the mountains. Next, we loaded up to come back and I jumped into the back end of Sister's pickup. The dust was pretty bad and by the time we made it to the Hardware store in Urraco, my legs were covered. At the Hardware store, I think our group bought close to 20 machetes to take back home.

Sister gave people the choice to make a stop at the local technical school or go back to the house... I needed to go back to the house, because my legs were aching and very, very itchy from the bites.

I hopped in the shower so that I was able to put the medicine on my legs and then get them rested. The kids knew I was here and continually yelled Davee, Davee. I went out to explain my legs are hurting right now and that I need to lie down. They'd give me some sympathy for only about a minute and then ask me for *chickelets* (candy.)

The other group came back from the technical school and told me that I should have gone with them. Josh explained to me that there were three deaf people there and wished I could have been able to meet and maybe communicate with them through sign language.

It is almost lunchtime now and we will be heading down to Donna Maria's restaurant for lunch. After lunch, I'm taking Nelson and Alberto into town to buy whatever they want as payment for the hard work they've done at the clinic. I'm so happy to be able to do this. We made our plan last night to meet in town without any of the other kids going with us so I'll have to sneak off somehow.

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I'm back now from getting Alberto and Nelson their gifts. I gave them the option to get tools, or whatever they want, and they both said they wanted *zappotos*— shoes. So they led me to the store and I let them do all of the talking. I had them put on a sock and then

try some shoes on. It was the greatest thing to see their big smiles while they were doing this. Finally, we found each a pair that fit perfectly.

Next, we walked over to get each two pair of socks. In the Woman's section, they saw a brightly colored red brassiere, said some stuff in Spanish to each other, then started laughing. Boys! As we checked out I asked them if they would each like a Pepsi.

*Si!!!*

So we checked out and I paid the lady. As we walked out of the store with the boys, I felt like a million bucks being part of it. I took them to the sidewalk and asked them each to hold up their shoes and a pair of socks for a photo.

We walked together and then they had one more thing they wanted, to see the photos from my trip in March on the Internet. So we went into the Internet Café and I got the show running. Just then, Jessica and about 4 or 5 other kids showed up with Shirley and Josh. Shirley had to run to the Hardware Store to get a few plumbing parts for the clinic and so the kids stayed with me and watched the photos in a slideshow. As each photo came up, they'd say the name of the person in the picture. It was cute! My legs were hurting so I had to get back to lay down for a bit.

As I was lying back in the hammock, Benigno came in to tell me that I needed to come see the clinic as it was just about finished. So I grabbed my Pepsi and walked up the hill with him and about 15 of the kids waiting at the gate. Whoa, I knew that it had been painted a bright color of blue but I didn't see the DeWalt color of yellow on the pillars and on the cement fascia. It's really.....uh... bright!! Benigno is happy, so we're happy. I stayed for only a short time but was able to see Nelson and Alberto play a game with Keith and a super ball. It's like Monkey in the middle. They were having a great time. As I've said before, these kids have nothing, yet know how to have so much fun.

I came back to the house just as a bad storm approached. It was 4:30 p.m. and the thunder and lightning knocked out the power. It didn't really matter though as it was still daylight. Benigno's wife, Delmy and their two children Kayla, 3 and Stephen, 5 months, were here with me when the storm came. Kayla was afraid of the thunder but she didn't cry.

Tonight is our *Despedita*, the time to celebrate our departure from Honduras. It will be held at the restaurant and so I'm not sure what will happen if the power doesn't come back on.

The guys were coming off the hill for the last time and I was in the street with the kids. I told them wait until the guys got closer and then we'd start to clap and cheer. *Uno, dos tres...* we all started clapping. Oh it was fun!! We were dancing and having a good time. The kids started to chant "Davee, Davee..." so I went into the middle of the group, doing a silly dance... and then they changed the chant to "Keith, Keith, Keith..." and it went around to all who were there, including the kids.

Nelson had the harmonica I gave him last week and he played it. We gathered all the kids up for a parade with Nelson leading. He'd go up the hill and turn around, with everyone following him, laughing and having fun. After the parade, I asked everyone to be quiet for just a minute as I wanted to say a few words to them. With Josh doing the translation, I told them that tomorrow is our last day here but we will be thinking about them everyday while we are back home. We love them very much and I asked them to look out for each other, care for each other and love each other.

Keith said a few things as well and then I asked if anyone wanted to say anything. Several of the kids said thanks for the candy, and they thanked us for having fun with them. Nelson and Alberto spoke up and said that they loved us, too, and thanked us for everything. It was nice... for a rare moment, the kids were quiet and paying attention to what was being said.

It's about time for the *Despedita* and we still have no power. I offered to help sister with getting a few last minute things together for the event. I went with her to make a couple of stops. Her driving skills lead me to believe that maybe she was actually forbidden to drive in the states and so that's why she made Honduras her home. She laughed when I told her that. At one of our stops, I was able to meet a 21-year old deaf woman. She said that she can hear just a little bit and so I think I'll see if I can find a few hearing aids to bring down for her on my next trip. She didn't know any sign language so we were not able to communicate.

For the *Despedita*, the place was lit brightly with candles. It was a nice feeling being there in the dark with the candles reflecting off of the walls. The rain was falling and the little kids were waiting out in the rain for us. The program was long but it was quite intimate. Most of us spoke about how this group came together with many of us not knowing anyone. Sister handed out a few gifts to each of us.

As the program went on, most of the kids went back home, but not Nelson and Alberto. There was some cake left, so I asked permission to bring them into the party. They came in and I announced that they were here and we all clapped for them. We got each of them some cake and something to drink. They were so proud sitting there with us. I asked Josh to translate for them what we had said earlier in the day and thanked them for their work on the clinic. They both had a few words to say back to us... they are great guys!!

The power came on around 9.30 PM, and the guys were able to play a game of Dominos. I was tired and went up to bed.

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### **Friday, September 23, 2005**

The kids started arriving at our front gate around 6:00 a.m. They knew that it was our last day and so everyone was kinda 'down.' When I went out past the gate, I noticed that

there were adults and older kids there that I hadn't seen all week. I had one guy ask me for my shirt, another my sunglasses. Now I see why the kids always ask us for stuff... this is what they are taught.

Jessica kept close tabs on me. She sometimes gets a little 'attitude' toward me if I'm showing other kids too much attention.

I had a few kids ask me for some pens and so I took a handful from a bag I had and handed them to Alberto for distribution. Darlene wanted a tablet so I walked in and grabbed one for her. I had many kids ask for hats. Keith brought many down with him and so when I tried to get near the gate without anyone seeing me, a little boy saw me coming with them and yelled *Gorro, gorro!* (hat.) Everyone came running so I took them back inside. Benigno will distribute any of the items not given out later.

One boy, Darwin, was mad at me and said "*Davee, malo!*" *Malo* is the word for bad; he was upset that I hadn't given him a harmonica. I had only four, one each to Nelson, Alberto and Jessica. The last one I put in with the stuff we took to Pavone. So to get back on good terms with Darwin, I gave him an orange hunting cap. Now he likes me again.

It was time to load up the bus and get on our way to Capon. I gave Jessica a big hug and whispered in her ear, 'I love you'. I sat down in the bus and she looked inside to see where I was sitting and I blew her a few kisses. She blew one back....

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### **Saturday, September 24, 2005**

Tom Ross and I went looking for coffee at 6:00 a.m. in Capon. We found a little restaurant that was just opening a few blocks away from our hotel. It was nice for Tom and I to sit and talk. Tom showed me a photo of his grandkids including Brogan (Mike Moran's son.) Tom plans on coming to our construction trip in March, but is a bit concerned about the heat— and that he may not be able to do the work.

Sitting poolside at the hotel, I'm writing in my Journal. I'm thinking of some of the things that happened that I didn't include so far.

- ?? I found out from Benigno that Alberto is actually 12 years old, not 11, and that Nelson is about 14 years old, not 12. They truly don't know how old they are.
- ?? One night Jamie found a tarantula in his bed. He caught it with two hats and took it outside and killed it. A few nights later, Armour saw one in his bed while he was sleeping. When he moved, it went down over the side of the bed. He said he wasn't too concerned and went back to sleep.
- ?? When Darwin called me '*malo*', some of the others kids said, '*no Davee Bueno*' (good)
- ?? Jeff was sick almost the whole time on the trip
- ?? I gave Jorge his gift, a hand plane with an extra blade. He was very thankful but didn't know how to thank me. I just gave him a hug.

?? I've decided for every home I sell this year, I'll sponsor a child for one year of school on behalf of my Buyer or Seller. Shirley has a great program going and I'm proud to have met her.

Today we went to the Capon Ruins. They were interesting, but I was anxious for it to be over, since my legs were bothering me from walking so much. When we got back, I laid down for a little bit, then went to lunch and did a little shopping. After returning, we went swimming, then sat in the hot tub. The chlorine was very strong, which I think helped the bites on my legs. While in the hot tub, Kay met a guy who was from Italy and she commented "Oh is that in Mexico?" I told you the chlorine was strong....

A few minutes later, we met a young man named Christopher. He was born and raised there in Honduras and goes to an American speaking school. Chris was a good sport as I pulled his leg the whole time. I finally was able to get him to play the 'magic bag' trick and so some of his friends came over to play as well. Talking about 'magic bag', Keith found some participants out in the street on our way to dinner. It was great! At one point, we had everyone in the street watching us.

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### **Sunday, September 25, 2005**

We woke up about 5:20 a.m. Our bus was leaving at 6:00 a.m. to take us to San Pedro Sula airport. We had to make a few stops along the way— both Jeff and Mike are both having stomach problems now. Jeff mentioned that he thinks he's down about 16 pounds.

At the airport we met Sister Laurinda. Benigno, his wife Delmy, and their two kids were there to see us off as well. I wish I were able to speak their language to tell them how much I appreciate everything they've done for us during our stay and also, the things that they do for the people living in Urraco. I'm proud to be part of this group and look forward to coming again in the spring.

#### **UPDATE:**

Okay, I thought I was finished with my Journal but have one more entry. We had a connecting flight through Houston with a three hour layover.

The Steeler game was on and with only 1:20 left in the game, we had to board the plane.

We all did, except for Keith.

Yep, Keith made it home a whole day later....  
Kay forgot to keep an eye on him!