

LA IGLESIA DE
JESUCRISTO
DE LOS SANTOS
DE LOS ULTIMOS
DIAS

CENTRO DE ENTRENAMIENTO MISIONAL

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THE NEVER-ENDING NEWS
There's always something! Things keep happening!

O.K., I know what you're saying: "Dad calls this The Never-Ending News, and it sure is. He goes on and on and on and on and on and..." As you know very well, my intent was to communicate the idea of life eternal, never ending, thanks to our Savior's sacrifice. Continuance is supposed to be the concept imparted, not duration. Anyway, you are beginning to understand what is meant by forever and a day.

Emerson, I believe, said he could no more remember all the books he had read than the meals he had eaten, but they had largely made him what he was. The same here at the CEM. How long will I remember the fugitive sight of Sister Sandoval hurrying down the hall, a little late for class, her face alight with an eager, questing look, her lustrous, long black hair streaming behind her in the air? And so with thousands of vivid, wonderful impressions that are remaking what we are.

Last night we spoke at a fireside in the Puente Alto Stake, about 45 minutes from here the way I drive now that my new international driver's license has arrived. I'm no longer as scared as before. What a scary thought!!! Mom gave an excellent talk on service and sacrifice. The audience welcomed us with such loving kindness and was so receptive it would have been hard not to do well. I had prepared a few things especially for the many children I knew would be there--typical in Latin America. These simple, sort of dramatized concepts seemed to go over O.K. with everyone. At the end I made the audience weep, and I shed a tear myself. To express my love for Chile and its people I sang the final words to "Chile, Chile lindo" (Chile, beautiful Chile). The Chileans wept to hear what is practically their second national anthem so badly treated, but my own eyes were wet from sincere emotion.

Have to tell you this: There was a disturbance in the casino (cafeteria) yesterday at lunch time. Hasty words were exchanged and Elder Aguilar stormed out in a state of high emotional turmoil. This was reported to me at once and a search was made for the offended elder, who had disappeared. Finally I went into the elders' bathroom, where a crowd was converging. The district leaders started looking for legs under the toilet and shower doors, which are identical. I happened to notice that in a flash little Elder Marcos Mancilla had gone inside one of the doors, his legs at once becoming visible in a sitting posture. I told everyone to disperse--"¡al tiro!" ("like a shot," immediately). The scene was becoming too much like a pack of hounds after a fox. When things had calmed down, I opened the door and there was Elder Mancilla, sitting on air. It was a shower--right next to the last toilet--and Elder Aguilar was hiding in the rear with the shower curtains drawn. To protect his fellow missionary, Elder Mancilla had squatted to make it appear that the "toilet" stall was occupied. He is the most quick-witted, comical little guy I've ever known.

I didn't open the shower curtains or bother Elder Aguilar at all and kept the immediate premises vacated. After a while I went downstairs to the casino to apologize to the cooks and the sister in charge. There I discovered that Elder Aguilar hadn't touched his lunch and that it had been kept warm for him. So I took it upstairs and found him reading the scriptures, completely calmed down and very repentant. "Please, president," he asked, "may we kneel and pray together?" So we did, gave each other a big hug, and I left. Soon the other party to the dispute appeared--unidentified to me till then. The same request was made and I suggested that all three of us should kneel and pray. So what could have been a very divisive, potentially catastrophic episode ended by bringing all of us in the CEM closer together.

Afterwards I thought, What if praying together as a means of restoring peace could be used the world over! Can a time be imagined when two heads of state might kneel in humble prayer to settle a dispute instead of going to war? In the Millennium, I guess. In the meantime, when difficulties arise, husband, wife, parent, child, brother, sister, friend, neighbor... would do well to practice this.

It may seem strange coming from the shyest of the Halls, but one of the things I like best about Latin American culture is that being demonstrative is considered acceptable and natural. In Discussion No. 4, Christian selflessness is stressed--being compassionate toward the weak and underprivileged. Under "scientific" Darwinism (survival of the fittest, whether individuals, corporations, or nations) this would be adjudged misguided. Jesus went about blessing, teaching and healing the unfortunate, and with insuperable irony told the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, supremely oblivious to how sick they were, "the whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17). Moral and spiritual infirmities are much worse than physical ones and often more difficult to heal. "They have eyes and see not, and ears and do not hear." In an overview of Discussion 4, I mentioned how Elder Marcos Eguino, a member of our first group, is valiantly serving the Lord as a full-time missionary in Bolivia though confined to a wheelchair and unable to take a single step. The handicapped of the world not only can bring out the best in us--understanding, selfless service, love--but they also can grow in the nobility and beauty of their souls as they cope and overcome. (See New Era, January 1989). I brought up the inspiring example of Elder Eguino partly for the benefit of Elder Juan Deigado, a small crippled hunchback from Bolivia. He accepts his deformity with such good grace and is so talented and intelligent I feel awed by him. (And to think, that as an over-sensitive teenager I let the absence of a few unreplaced front teeth--knocked out when I fell on the ice--affect me so.) Not wanting to make my analogy with Elder Eguino too obvious, concerned as to how he might take it, I waited till the next day to say that in that lesson I was thinking of him and his shining nobility and greatness, as well as of Elder Eguino. Then I put my arm around him, bending down so my head could touch his, he put his arm around me, and we walked down the hall like this to class. Don't know if I would have done that in the States. Here I didn't feel the least bit self-conscious about it. With our heads touching that way it was as if I felt his extraordinary spiritual strength pouring into my mind and heart and soul. And I thought of the man born blind (John 9:3), "...but that the (glorious) works of God should be made manifest in him."

Our next group, No. 186, will consist of only 26. Problems and our work load should be cut considerably. We are certainly learning about service--in just about every conceivable way. We rebound fast from strain, exhaustion, and emotional drain and are thrilled to hope that with some small degree of justification we may be able to say one day "We have fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4.7).

Ever-loving Mom and Dad / Merrill and Wendell

Merrill & Wendell