

Two more interviews: A retired couple from Cochabamba. These interviews are so choice!

Back from our walk... So far, Santiago looks and feels just the same. Of course we didn't walk as far as the new subway system and other new construction farther downtown. We bought a few things at a nearby supermercado and have already enjoyed some real bread (marraquetas) and delicious Chilean fruit (best in the world!) Just now Pres. and Sis. Schmidt, Santiago North Mission, stopped by to greet us. They are excellent people. Answering a question on the political situation, Pres. Schmidt informed us that one of our stake presidents is a personal friend of August Pinochet the president of Chile. Some people in the U.S. have been very critical of Pres. Pinochet, but it seems to me that he has provided a period of stability in Chile, with a minimum of repression, and has avoided serious pitfalls by steering Chile clear of leftist influences. Consider the example of Argentina. The U.S. itself must be blamed in part for much of the anti-Yankee feeling in Latin America, because of certain attitudes and policies, but unfortunately some countries, to emphasize their independence and snub the U.S. have turned to the "East." As a result, much of Argentina's equipment for generating power was obtained from Russia and Czechoslovakia. Now the country is experiencing a terrible crisis. Power plant breakdowns throughout the country have left vast areas without electricity. Factories are paralyzed, food is spoiling for lack of refrigeration, and water is scarce (with pumps not working and also because of a prolonged drought). Our hearts bleed for our dear friends in Buenos Aires, Rosario, and just about everywhere ⁱⁿ Argentina.

Speaking of water, we are back to boiling it again, but so far I've only remembered once not to brush my teeth with tap water. I'd better get with it! Last time, my State Department physical exam at the end of our four years here turned up three types of parasites (worms, ugh!) plus amoebas.

1-26-89. Two Chilean missionaries have already arrived, 2 days early and 1 day early. Both are from Arica, far in the north--a 3-day bus ride in stifling heat, a good part of ~~1/2~~ the way through the Atacama Desert, where it never rains. This afternoon I went to the airport early to get my computer out of the aduana (customs) where it has been impounded. I'll be able to get it out without paying "los derechos" (duty/taxes) but... "mañana." Our Bolivians arrived late and without six of their number, who had visa problems. I still don't know this building ~~well~~ well (with its many church offices), but with the help of three church employees, each of us at one corner of the wheelchair, we managed to get Elder Marcos Equino up a back way where there are fewer stairs. I admired and loved him at first sight. His body is so crippled, but here he was, so handsome and fine, wanting to serve his Savior on a mission. He looks very Bolivian, so at the start of our interview my mouth dropped wide open when he said he'd like to speak English. After a few words, he began to look 100% American to me, so perfect was his pronunciation. ~~Imagine~~ Imagine, learning such faultless English in a U.S. hospital, confined to beds and, later, wheel chairs. Amazing! When he returned to Bolivia, ^{after 4 years} he found that his parents had met the missionaries and joined the Church. After careful study and prayer, he joined too. He has paid his way in life teaching English at home and has studied accounting. He can program in Applesoft and has used various software programs ~~for~~ for accounting. As a result of ~~polio~~ polio, his right hand is very small and shriveled, but his left is normal. He can type O.K. Both legs are very short and crippled. His humble testimony to me was so sincere and spiritual I couldn't keep tears from my eyes. What a great young man! If I ever complain about anything--especially about my lot in life--give me a swift kick where I deserve it!

Well, I'm less than half-way through my interviews, so I'd better get back to it. There's only time for 5 minutes each, but they have such fascinating things to tell--about how they joined the Church, etc., that I'm averaging about 20 minutes each. We feel so blessed we can't stand it! Miss you! Love you!
Ever-loving M... ..

Centro de Entrenamiento Misional
Provo, Utah 84603

18 de enero (cumpleaños de la Carolina, ¡qué los cumpla feliz!) 1989

THE NEVER-ENDING NEWS

There's always something! Things keep happening!

My word!, has Merrill made a conscious decision to take part more or has she just been caught up in the enthusiasm of our group? She speaks right up in our classes and makes some very perceptive remarks. I find myself thinking, "Wish I could have said that!" Makes me proud of her.

Our group is great and we share lots of things together, often with good humor. A funny one: Vernon Bingham (an old friend, going to Argentina), trying to get some interaction, asked a missionary who apparently was just barely paying attention to comment on the scripture "Cease to be idle." "Well," he said, "it's, it's, like, a stone statue." "Excellent!" Vernon exclaimed, complimenting him: "Just like a statue, sitting there doing nothing." Then it dawned on him that the elder was confusing "idle" with "idol."

Bruce Gibson (Perú), the most extroverted of our companions, comes up with some good ones. I liked his remark in a discussion on mortality: "That's what was brought about when Adam and Eve partook of the white sugar and white flour." I don't know if he is a complete health nut, but suspect that he would never put gravy on his bean sprouts.

Brother McPhie (Church Missionary Dept.), in a session on special problems, told of a missionary who moped around after his arrival and continued to mope around until his mission president, observing this, said "O.K., O.K., I'll make an exception and let you call your girl friend." "What girl friend, president? It's my horse."

After our group fireside the other night, Bro. Shino (Japan), at our side, hugged us around the neck in his joyousness until our heads touched and we bobbed around and up and down feeling a closeness seldom experienced. "Wait a minute," I said, "Sister Shino got left out." (She was conversing with someone else.) So we included her in our multiple hug and repeated the routine like a bunch of giddy teen-agers. Not in the same league, not nearly as overwhelming as Ammon's experience (Alma 27:16-19), but we were decidedly whelmed just the same. We really love each other.

25 January 1989

.....
Ya empezó nuestra misión y ya me cuesta escribir en inglés (Our mission's under way and it's already hard for me to write in English--especially on this old manual typewriter in my MTC office. We just arrived a few minutes ago and have assumed responsibility for all kinds of things. For example: Special arrangements for transporting a Bolivian missionary from the airport tomorrow who is a cripple and uses a wheel chair. At the MTC in Provo we were impressed by the large number of handicapped persons who are called on missions nowadays. A mission appears to do wonders for them and we're eager now to help this young man prepare for his great adventure, forgetting himself and his problem in the service of others. At the moment Mom is going through the papers of all the missionaries arriving tomorrow, looking at their photos and getting pre-acquainted... Now Pres. and Sis. Davis have left for the airport, together with one of their daughters who has been here a week and will do some traveling with them. The MTC has a Mitsubishi van that is similar to Sandy and Wendy's Toyota... I'm just writing a line or two as I have a second in order to get a letter off this week. We find Chileans to be the same friendly, gracious people as always. As soon as we've rested a little from our long, tiring trip, we want to take a walk, for exercise and to have a look at Santiago again--almost exactly 27 years after we first arrived here in 1962.