



Jeff & Diane Brown in Venezuela with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention

WE'RE BACK!

Where have all our readers been all this time!?! Uh...whoops...the question should be: where have WE been all this time!?! Not remembering where we were in the newsletter cycle when our computers were stolen – did we get one out in June 2000? – it's been several months, maybe close to a year since we sent out a BROWNEWS. In August of 2000, both our desktop and our laptop were stolen (more on that later). It took us five months to work through the insurance, shopping, ordering, and (most difficult of all) shipping. We don't know how it is for you in other countries, but five months for missionaries these days to be without a personal computer is nearly unheard of. Then after receiving it, there was the issue of ordering a replacement part for the faulty one, and, finally, learning it.

However, for the last two months the only reason we have is inertia. For that we apologize. But here we are, hoping to get back into the swing of keeping in touch, because it is important.

TEACHING NEBRASKA

Daniel's class had a project today ... all the students paired up and each took a state in Venezuela. Daniel's task was to present the state of Nebraska to the school. They set up in the Cantina area, where every student in the whole school comes to eat their snack and have recess. We were so proud as Daniel recited some interesting facts about Nebraska to group after group of peers. You should have seen their faces when he told them that the temperature can get to over 38 degrees Celsius (100 F) in the summer, and less than -23 degrees Celsius (-10 F) in the winter. The temperature here varies maybe 10 degrees the whole year, day and night! Too bad we didn't think to display the snow boots we foolishly brought here!

HAIY-YAH!

Daniel recently passed from a white belt to a yellow belt in Karate. He seems to have “found himself” in this sport, for he is quite naturally inclined to the necessary strengths, especially in his powerful little legs. The truly amazing thing is that his Venezuelan instructor (class is entirely in Spanish) is now teaching Daniel some Japanese!! We're sure the discipline of this self-defense sport will come in handy when Alyssa starts to have potential suitors! Watch out!



ROLL TAPE!

Last night we listened to a new Adventures in Odyssey cassette (THANKS Howard “Pudentane” and Dolores). This Imagination Station series dealt with death. Afterwards Diane asked Alyssa what she was thinking about. She said that she thought that all the bad things that happen to us are like a roll of film, all wound up, untwisting rapidly before our eyes when we die; but since we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, He is faster than the bad experiences we had and He takes us up into heaven.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Recently in Alyssa's class they got to see a cow's heart. Now, it's not clear how all this came about, but this is what Alyssa explained, very matter-of-factly to Diane: “You see, the cow's blood in his heart was black because he was really mad when he was killed. If he hadn't been mad, his blood would have been red, like the rest of his body. Or, if he were only a little mad when he was killed, the blood would have been kind of black, kind of red.”

ALYSSA'S FRIEND

Alyssa wanted to tell her friend Alexandra about when she asked Jesus into her heart. Alyssa remembers in Costa Rica when she was thinking about being afraid that robbers would come into the house. At that time Daniel told her about how she could ask Jesus to forgive her of all her sins, and she could have a right relationship with God the Father through His Son, Jesus. This is what Alyssa is going to try again to tell Alexandra.



GOD'S PROTECTION

We praise God for His continued protection over our family. On Sunday we worshipped with a small congregation we hadn't been with before. As we sat underneath the tent awning during the adult Sunday school class, Diane was able to observe Daniel with his class at a table, and Alyssa with her class at a different table, near the high-rise apartment building. It made Diane so thankful for the payoff of all the tears shed by Alyssa (and Diane) about attending a regular Venezuelan school. This day, she was able to integrate herself easily, almost effortlessly, because of the year and half of daily interaction with Venezuelan children her age. As Diane watched her laugh and listen to the lesson, she saw a large object fall from an open window from one of the upper floors of the high rise apartment building. The object was a glass bottle, and shattered behind Alyssa, inches from her chair. The teachers wisely moved the table to a different location, but it was obvious that there had been opposition to children hearing about the Word of God, and being taught lessons of Jesus' life from the Bible. We praise God for His protection!

IS THERE A TRANSLATOR IN THE HOUSE?!

Daniel noticed a couple funny things about Spanish translations:

- Actual translation: por supuesto = of course
- Daniel's (literal) translation: por su puesto = for your seat
- Actual translation: Salto Angel = Angel Falls (world's longest waterfall)
- Daniel's (literal) translation: Salto Angel = angel jump
- In English, we can't say good bad. But in Spanish, you can! Bien Mal!

TWO SILVER LININGS

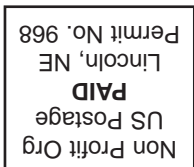
There were two silver linings to mention that came out of the theft of our computers. We had spent the whole day in a barrio called Negro Primero with a volunteer group from the US. We were getting back late, maybe 10:00pm. We saw that the door lock to the metal bar door was missing and the one to the solid metal door was damaged. We couldn't get in without the help of the building manager's husband. Jeff went in and looked around briefly. Noticing the TV, VCR, stereo, and a portable radio in place, he announced that the thieves hadn't actually gotten in. But then we noticed that the laptop wasn't where we often used it. Jeff didn't panic (shocker!) because he had been working with it around the corner with the desktop, transferring some files earlier. He went there and found a lot of empty space where two computers and a printer had been. They had gotten in after all. Then in our bedroom we found stuff strewn about as they had looked for valuables such as jewelry – finding none. But they had found a couple hundred dollars worth of local currency tucked away.

Where's the silver lining? Well, Jeff told Diane that day in Negro Primero that we'd have to get by on whatever money she'd brought, because, totally out of character, he'd forgotten his wallet. It wasn't until the next morning that Jeff noticed where he had left his wallet. Smack in the middle

of the living room sat a desk. And smack in the middle of the desk surface, all by itself, sat the wallet! Jeff picked it up, and it had all the money still in it, and more importantly, the ATM cards, and credit cards, and Venezuela ID card, and passport copy....! We truly feel that God protected us from additional, and possibly more severe, loss by somehow blinding the thieves to the presence of the wallet.

The second silver lining has to do with confronting stereotypes. A middleclass north American is more likely to set foot into a Caracas barrio than is a middle-class Venezuelan, whether to run an errand, or do social work, or visit a friend, or give somebody a ride home, or sightsee, or do Christian service. Middle-class Venezuelans just don't go there. And heaven forbid that kids are taken in there! We've asked about this, and concluded that their fears are based more on stereotypes and classism than on empirical evidence or even second-hand experience. So, when the dust settled at our apartment, and the conversations about the robbery began, we were able to say: "You know, we were in the barrio all day and nothing happened to us, while at that very same time, in our 'safe' middle-class neighborhood, we were being robbed. Isn't it ironic? Don't you think?" Venezuelans don't generally reach out to their poor. Maybe this made some think twice about it.

News from Jeff & Diane



New Covenant Community Church
6000 S. 84th
Lincoln NE 68516

If you know somebody who would like to receive
BROWNEWS, send their address to:

Sue Thomsen at either:
7650 Cross Creek Circle
Lincoln Ne 68516; or
glrthomsen@juno.com.

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Updated Contact Information:

Mail:

Jeff & Diane Brown
Junta Misionera Foránea
Apartado 80920
Caracas 1080-A
Estado Miranda
VENEZUELA

Phone: 011-582-979-9653

E-mail address: caracasbrown@bigfoot.com

Website: (under reconstruction)

www.townbeacon.com/caracasbrown