

New Mercies

By Dorine Smith

Oswaldo Canario was born in San Juan de la Maguana on May 16, 1958. He and his siblings were raised by their mother, who was never married to their father. They grew up in a poor barrio where the Evangelical Mennonite Central Church had planted a daughter church, Las Buenas Nuevas. Though not a Christian herself at the time and though she had never gone to school, their mother insisted that her children go to both church and school.

Oswaldo, known as Yiro (which is pronounced Jeeto), trusted Christ for salvation at the age of 8, and later, when he was 14, rededicated his life to God. Getting through grade and high school was a struggle for these children and for their mother, but Yiro set his sights on going to the university. Even though the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, the oldest in this hemisphere, is the government university and tuition is free, there are many expenses: room and board, fees, transportation, clothes, etc. Without help, prospects were bleak for him and he spent 3 years exploring possibilities. At one point he was ready to join the army, having passed the academic tests, but a recurring ear problem kept him out. Meantime, he volunteered in the church conference office. Finally he was given money to at least get started in school. A man in Arizona, father of Willy Hunter, former Evangelical Mennonite missionary, gave him \$100 a month for a one-year period and, in his words, “overnight I became rich!”

He chose medicine as a career because he believed he could make the greatest contribution to the needs of the poor in that field. He made the money do for about a year and a half. After that it became a continual struggle. Some months his family was able to give him a few pesos; sometimes not. Those months both his body and the soles of his shoes wore thin as he walked and went without meals.

During this time he did theological studies at a Baptist church and later began to pastor the Prince of Peace church, a mission work of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. He was given a stipend for serving there and this helped see him through his last couple of years.

A young woman, Eulalia Encarnación, had been appointed by the Dominican EMC Conference to work with a missionary couple to plant the Prince of Peace church. She was born in Vallejuelo, a village south of San Juan. Young people from the surrounding villages had to come into the city and stay with friends or relatives if they wanted to go to high school, and from there to Santo Domingo to the university. Eulalia was studying lab technology. Some of the other fine young people in that church were several Melo brothers—Isaías, David, and Samuel. Isaías was also studying medicine. These people became family to one another and ties have remained strong. They were serious about serving the Lord and some of them, Isaías, Yiro, and Eulalia especially, talked wistfully of someday having a medical ministry in the San Juan area.

Intersecting this period of time was our service with the Evangelical Mennonite Mission in the Dominican Republic. In 1977, Jim and I had taken an 8 month leave from the EMC camp in Michigan, where we were directors, to go to San Juan to help develop camp Bethel. We returned to Miracle Camp for the summer and fall seasons and, in January 1979, went to language school. Coming back to the DR, in 1980, we lived for 6 months in Santo Domingo where we attended the Prince of Peace church and where we became friends of these young people. After our move to San Juan we remained friends as we saw them often at camps and retreats and as visitors in our home.

Jim's work with the mission entailed development and maintenance of Camp Bethel, maintenance of mission property and new construction of church and school buildings. My work was hosting groups in the 6 bedroom mission house where we lived. I also administered the Compassion International Program there on the frontier. The work team ministry got off the ground that winter of 1980, the first one coming down from Wauseon, OH, just two months after our arrival. Leading the team was Orville Fricke with whom we were to form a solid partnership in ministry. In all our years with the mission and, later, with the clinic, Orville brought a team down every year but one. There were others who came, among them many youth groups, but Orville remained a constant. He is a very busy person, head of a successful roofing and fibreglassing business and is a dedicated family man, a person who gets things done. He and Jim meshed, saw things pretty much eye to eye and tackled things head-on.

One of our duties was to work with Medical Group Missions, a Christian organization that brought a team of doctors, surgeons, nurses, and helpers to our area every year. They held daily clinics, which Jim pre-arranged, in various outlying villages and countrysides. Surgeons worked in the Las Matas government hospital. I and other EMC missionaries traveled with the clinic team to translate. Jim worked with the surgical teams translating, keeping equipment running, riding herd on hordes of eager, waiting people. We lived with the group at a Catholic Center. We helped entertain them on weekends—a challenging job with the area being as far away from a beach as you can get in the DR! But we became well acquainted with some of them and we remain friends.

Through our work with MGM (now MMI) and with Compassion International, we saw the need for follow-up health care, for something permanent. In a study done by the World Health Organization, it was determined that the frontier area had the highest rate of infant mortality in the country. We had prayed a lot about how best to help. We learned through the many mistakes we made during our first term that giving away bread and bananas at the door was not the answer. We wanted to know how we, two people, could somehow help Dominicans help themselves.

Then one Sunday afternoon in early spring of 1985, soon-to-be Dr. Canario, who had come out to visit family, stopped in before catching a bus back to Santo Domingo. In conversation we asked what his plans were after graduation 3 months hence. With a sigh he told us his desire had been to come back to San Juan and work among “his people,” but that he had to get a job where he could earn some money. He had done a 3-month rotation in the grim

government hospital in Elías Piña, a town directly on the Haitian border, and we had heard of the work he had done bringing compassionate understanding and hope to the thankless task of government hospital work. We longed to be able to help him.

A couple of years before that time, an anonymous gift of \$2,000 had been given to the mission in the DR to be used for some kind of medical work. We, as a mission team, hadn't come up with what we considered the best use of the gift. The day after Yiro's visit I tentatively asked Jim if he thought, given the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and Dominican Peso, it might be possible to set Yiro up in a little office in San Juan or even further away, somewhere on the frontier. In Jim's nature there is nothing tentative. He knew of an empty building out between Las Matas and Elías Piña. It had been built by Conservative Mennonite missionaries and was not being used. Very soon after we talked and prayed about it, he "happened" to meet one of the missionaries on the street and asked about their plans for the building and if it might be available to rent. After meeting with the other missionaries he told Jim they would rent it for \$DR 60 a month with an option to buy after a year!

The next step was to consult with the other missionaries, all in Santo Domingo. They all thought the idea was worth a try and one of them, Andy Rupp, went with us to see Yiro. He, too, was willing to give it a trial run, to go to the frontier soon after graduation. At the next executive committee meeting of the Dominican EMC, the plan was heartily approved. It was even agreed that the Conference would pay the rent for a year. This would leave the US\$2,000 for a few furnishings and supplies. Our spirits soared. Jim was to work out details on the building which was fairly new but less than ideal, there being no electricity nor water, but both Jim and Yiro agreed the problems were not insurmountable.

However, within three days of our return to San Juan after these meetings, Jim had a heart attack and we flew to the States. Jim's subsequent surgery and recovery and our North American assignment kept us there for eight months. Yiro had said he needed to know for sure by graduation as to the status of the plans for a rural frontier clinic because Willy Hunter, director of MGM and of the Elías Santana Medical Center, had asked him to work for them at the center located near Santo Domingo. Andy and Yiro were each waiting for the other to make the next move until Yiro, thinking that our going home had meant the project was dropped, signed on at Elías Santana for two years.

When we read in a letter from Andy in one brief sentence, "the clinic project was shelved because Yiro went to work for Willy," we felt a real sense of loss. We assumed that when Yiro's two years were up he would be returning to study for a specialization. Nevertheless, when we were asked to fill in at Miracle Camp for three months in the fall of 1986, Dr. Everett Gibbens came with his family to Labor Day family weekend. In visiting with him, Jim learned that he had left his family practice in Gridley, IL, and had joined an emergency medicine group in Bloomington. He told Jim he hadn't been able to sell his substantial office furnishings and equipment and that, if Jim could find use for it, he could have it. Jim immediately and enthusiastically accepted, thinking it could surely be

used somewhere. (He had not earned the name “usable but not salable Smith” for nothing.)

Having been given the go-ahead by Jim's doctor and by the mission, we had decided to serve two more years in the DR and then come home and get “real” jobs before were too old. We returned after Christmas of 1986 and plunged into catching up.

We didn't see Yiro until March 1987 when he came out for a week to work with the MGM project. There we were surprised at his immediate question as to what had happened to the idea of a clinic on the frontier! The story of the misunderstanding unfolded. And when we told of Dr. Gibbens' gift, “unforgettable” is one word that might describe his reaction to the awesome possibilities. He was very excited.

Again our spirits were high. There were questions of course. Was the \$2,000 still available? The executive committee still in accord? What about a place? Obviously the building on the frontier wouldn't be adequate for the Gibbens office equipment. We forged ahead. The mission again gave permission to use the \$2,000. Jim called a friend in the EMC Salem church near Gridley, IL, and he rallied the men of the church who fabricated big crates from \$700 worth of plywood and packed up everything including the pencils on the desk! A trucker among the members moved the stuff to Miami and it was on its way.

Then we hit a snag that was to have repercussions for the future of the clinic. The make up of the Dominican executive committee had changed somewhat and questions and arguments arose as to direction, ownership, and quotas, etc. More than that, there were questions as to the philosophy of the ministry. After several months of getting nowhere, the Director of International Ministries in the States said that if the clinic were to be successful it would have to be independent of both the Dominican church and of the mission. Cut afloat. Frightening but somehow freeing.

Isaías and Yiro lost no time in putting together a board of directors who put into motion the process of becoming incorporated as a non-profit organization which they named “La Asociación Cristiana para la Promoción de la Salud Integral,” in English “The Christian Association for the Promotion of Integrated Health.” It was given the acronym of ACPSI, pronounced “Asepsi.” Isaías was appointed President and Yiro as Executive Director. Their project was the “Clinica Cristiana de Salud Integral” or the Christian Clinic for Integrated HealthCCSI. Isaías was still finishing his studies but had married Peggy Morpheu, a doctor whom he had met on an MGM project. Earlier, Isaías had spent a year in the States working and living with a couple of doctors and had learned to speak English. Peggy shared his desire to serve. The rest is a story of dependence on God and lots of hard work and of watching God take the ministry far beyond our limited vision.

The introduction to the ACPSI mission statement, dated June 1988, reads as follows:

The Christian Association for the promotion of Integrated Health is an independent non-profit organization incorporated in

the Dominican Republic, born under the inspiration of biblical principles, particularly those found in the gospels (the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, God-man) for the purpose of helping the poor of the community to find health, both spiritual and physical.

This ministry seeks to bring together, in a natural and harmonious way, the integrated health of the individual as the only effective way to bring about changes in the person and, thus, in the community; always taking as the basis Jesus Christ, to whom we owe all and from whom we have the command to go in the same way he went, sent by the Father (John 20:19-22).

Sometime before this we had received a visit from another young man, Samuel Herrera, with whom we shared the plan for the clinic. Samuel had a friend, now deceased, who was a journalist in San Juan and he later brought his friend, Jeremías de los Santos, to interview us. Several weeks later Jeremías gave an editorial on both morning and afternoon radio news telling of the vision for a non-profit clinic to serve the poor of the San Juan area. He encouraged people to help in any way possible. The broadcast was heard by all, high and low, in that place where people are never far from their radio. Several things resulted, one of which is that the clinic has never had to pay for the countless gallons of water used daily apparently exonerated by the governor.

Another I relate as follows: Jim and Yiro had gone out several times to look at possible properties, prospective building sites. Yiro's future sister-in-law, Rosanna Lerebours, an architect, had drawn up a plan for the structure. One of the sites, though narrow and sitting rather low, was directly in the center of several sprawling barrios. They took a picture of it, which still sits framed in the clinic office, with Hebrews 11:1 printed below it: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for" Dr. Julian Duval, a local pediatrician, had also heard Jeremías' editorial and had been trying to contact Jim about giving him that very piece of ground. Great faithfulness of a great God!

Our last eight months with the mission were hectic. Orville's big group will remember that winter of 1988 as the time of the riots. The country was restless in the face of shortages, high prices and unemployment. A series of strikes and riots spread from the capital to the frontier, reaching San Juan on the day the work team was to return to Santo Domingo to spend several days before flying home. They were forced to remain in San Juan where they were entertained by watching the riots from our roof top, coming inside only to escape the tear gas!

Jim had told them about plans for the clinic and had shown them the property. They were interested, particularly Orville. Another obvious thing caught Orville's attention. Due to the serious shortage of electrical energy, small business and homes suffered frequent, lengthy power outages. To help alleviate the situation, the president had lifted the duty on small generators. Thus, after Orville got home and was thinking of a way to help both the power situation for a few people and also of a way to help get the clinic construction off the ground, he shipped 23 generators of various capacities. He told Jim to sell them for a fair price and use the money for construction.

That last summer we hosted several groups and Jim and Hal Lehman, a fellow missionary, built a four-room school in Vallejuelo. With funds from the sale of some of the generators and sale of our jeep, Jim bought materials and hired men to put up a 20' x 40' shop building on the clinic property. He also had them do footers and lay 6-8 rows of block on the clinic proper. Meanwhile we gave away, sold and packed up our belongings.

In August we attended the wedding of the Drs. Dolores Lerebours and Osvaldo Canario. They moved to San Juan and Yiro took oversight of the construction. They moved into the empty mission house which they occupied until it was sold. Their sole means of support their first year of marriage was a monthly gift of, as I remember, DR\$100 from the Prince of Peace church. That church considered them as missionaries and has remained very supportive through the years.

Then it was time for the very painful goodbyes. We still have trouble thinking of the delicious meal prepared for us by the two ladies who were the camp cooks. It was a sacrifice of love that we could hardly swallow past the tears welling up and spilling over. They hovered over us and cried with us. But the hardest goodbye was to Yiro, turning over to him the bit of money left, but with generators yet to be sold. We all were feeling overwhelmed thinking of this huge thing we had gotten started and now realizing how dependent we were on God to continue. Had we counted the cost? Probably not, since none of us could actually foresee that total cost. We just knew we all had a burning desire to see a medical facility in the midst of those barrios and we were quite sure God had given us that desire.

Arriving in Ohio in September 1988, we set up housekeeping in a rented farmhouse. We had four months of North American assignment to complete with the mission and we got part-time jobs working for our son-in-law. The Wauseon EMC became our home church. Through the years that church's partnership in the ACPSI project has been a big part in making it go.

Under Yiro's direction, the construction continued and, of course, he was soon out of money. Our letters and calls crisscrossed the distance with frequency. We began to assume the dreaded and disliked role of fund raisers. Orville became involved. We all wrote, called and talked to people who had been down on teams, either EMC or MGM. We dug down and on one occasion we borrowed. This thing had been set in motion and had to be kept rolling. One man from Canada not only gave a good cash sum but also invested in a Dominican cooperative savings and loan which paid good interest. The clinic then was given the use of that interest. Later other investors followed suit. An Evangelical Free Church in Wausau, WI, where Isaías and Peggy were members, gave generously directly to the clinic and sent some of the first groups to work on finishing touches to the building. We generally found that it has been the men and women who have been there, hands on, and had seen the need, who became the core group of supporters. And it has continued, basically. There have been no huge grants nor, with few exceptions, very large personal gifts. Orville had kept alive much of the enthusiasm engendered by his groups as, year

after year, he had reunions where people reminisced, looked at pictures and were challenged to continue going, praying and giving.

Yiro's letters to us from the fall of 1988 to spring 1990 show that his enthusiasm remained high in the face of money shortages and setbacks. His sense of direction remained firm. He organized the church young people to help him survey the barrios to determine the state of health of those the clinic would be serving. This activity, he said later, filled gaps when work was stalled for lack of funds. I quote from his first letter after our departure:

If someone were to ask me how I feel, I would have to say I feel a mixture of excitement and calmness; excited to see how beautiful the cement roof looks over the hallways, and calm even though, as of today, money is exhausted.

Two months later he wrote that the roof had been poured over the surgical unit and he thanked God that, so far, in spite of the tightness of finances, God had supplied what was needed just in time so that work never completely stopped. At that writing he was working on plans for two large septic systems.

In January 1989, we went with a small tour group, including Orville and his wife, Delight, to San Juan to see all the EMC churches, as well as the clinic. Then in March, John Sandusky, from Toronto, whom we had met the year before on the MGM project, invited and made it possible for us to again join the team in Las Matas. One day the team held the clinic in the still uncompleted building. Walls were up, roof was on, but I can't remember if all floors were poured. I do recall that the water and septic systems must have been functioning because we were able to use the restrooms. For an MGM project, that was a luxury!

I include here a report Yiro and the board sent to the list of "Friends of ACPSI" in August of 1989:

Dear friend of ACPSI

It has been a little over a year that we initiated the construction of the clinic building and finally we are arriving to its completion.

The design of architect Rosanna Lerebours, whose only charge for her work was a pizza, has resulted in a practical, functional and very beautiful building that causes the wonder of everyone who visits it.

These past thirteen months have been full of stressing situations and especially a lot of prayer and praise. We have seen the hand of God moving and act on our behalf countless times at the right moment.

More than once we have had to stop the construction due to lack of funds, only to continue immediately because God has used the generous hand of one of his children.

Our Lord has taught us that this is not our project. That this is His project and that He is simply giving us the privilege of being part of it.

The clinic is not completely finished but we plan to open to the public in the next two or three weeks. Our official inauguration though, will be in January of 1990.

We thank you for being part of this effort. Without your generous help it had been impossible to arrive to this point.
So receive our deepest love and gratitude.

We hope we can still count on your generosity to achieve the completion of this clinic.

We are enclosing copy of our financial report up to July 15, 1989.

We gladly welcome any inquiries or suggestions. God bless you.

Yours in Him,

Dr. Isaías Melo, President of the Board

Dr. Osvaldo Canario, Executive Director

Two days later he wrote that finally the much needed wall surrounding the clinic was in place. He had received a quantity of vinyl covered particle board on one of the shipments sent from Wauseon and he was building shelving and work tops in the pharmacy and lab and was putting the Gibbens things in their places finally. This activity made him eager to, once again, be a doctor.

We had learned that Youth With A Mission had a ship, the Anastasis, that was making trips into the Dominican Republic, docking at the port of Barahona, a city 50 miles from San Juan. YWAM had been able to obtain a blanket exoneration for their cargo. Contacting them, we found that by making a contribution to YWAM, we could send a good sized shipment with them. It was necessary for us to get proper legal clearance, titles, etc. and I'd like to say the first time was a learning experience that we were able to fall back on each time we sent a shipment. It was not! Port Authority and government personnel change and the whole system has a capricious nature. Shipping equipment, vehicles, furnishings, etc., though good and necessary to the work, became probably the most difficult and painful part of our partnership with the clinic. However, those first two shipments were relatively smooth once we waded through the red tape of getting papers necessary to ship a used Ford Cargo van. That was summer of 1989 and, as of this writing, the old red van, like the bunny with the drum, just keeps on going and going, taking all kinds of abuse and surely holding the record for being the most multi-use vehicle in existence! The clinic

opened to the public without fanfare on Nov. 15, 1989, 16 months after the first blocks were laid. 13 people were treated free of charge, including medicines.

The second YWAM shipment docked at the same time that Tom Shaffer, Jim and I arrived in January 1990 to get ready for a large group that followed us a week later. That team painted, assembled, plumbed, wired, cleaned and settled in preparation for the dedication of the clinic on February 3, 1990. A building 60 feet wide by 200 feet long, housing four large exam rooms, and rooms for x-ray, dentistry, pharmacy, records, reception, conference, laundry, kitchen, nurse and doctor's changing rooms, laboratory, pre-op and recovery and the two surgery rooms. There are six full and four half baths. More than the building, the total ministry was dedicated to God's glory. Our North American team was very thankful to be able to share the happy day.

That time in San Juan was historic in another aspect as well. A piece of property between the highway and adjacent to the clinic had become available shortly before and we all trooped through a hole in the wall to look at it. Yiro was asked to investigate the price, which he did. He called sometime in March saying the owners, a milk producing association was asking \$133,000 pesos or \$12,600 dollars. Jim set about trying to raise the money and, at Orville's suggestion, he went to see a business man and fellow member of our church, expecting at most a donation of a few thousand dollars. However, he unhesitatingly promised \$12,000 dollars.

The plan for the new property was to put a building on it to house volunteer work groups and prospective medical/surgical teams. It had a wall around it, an electrical pole and city water. There was a building, a milk receiving station with several large openings. All removable facilities had been removed, including the roof! The size and shape of the lot was identical to the clinic property, making it suitable for a motel-like construction. Jim began to estimate the cost and to raise the funds for the building.

Here I include a translation of Yiro's report to the ACPSI and annual board meeting:

[English translation of the Director's report to the Annual Board meeting of the Christian Association for the Promotion of Integrated Health, May 26, 1990]

Here is something remarkable: It is the expression that, as a testimony of how their health problem was solved, many patients say, "God is all-powerful!"

I want to present and comment chronologically the events (of the past year) so that as little information as possible escapes me.

MAY, '89

Money arrived to pay current debts on the building so our word and credit remained intact.

JUNE AUG, '89

The Mercy Ship, Anastasis, arrived and, with it among other things, equipment for the two operating rooms. We are grateful to Dr. Robert Jackson and John Green, Director of the Marion General Hospital of Marion, In., for this valuable help. Also

on the ship was the van we now possess, and a great quantity of vinyl covered particle board that served to make cabinets and closets for the clinic. Jaime came with two workers who built cabinets for the laboratory and reception area.

SEPT. OCT., '89

We continued to ready the part of the clinic that we would need for the first phase of operation, doing the carpentry in the pharmacy, storage and files. During this time, with the help of Angel de los Santos, we repaired and painted donated equipment.

NOV. 15, '89

HISTORICAL DAY! Our first day of operation of the clinic! One Dr., one nurse, a secretary, a cashier/bookkeeper /administrator, a pharmacy helper/van driver, two maintenance/cleaning people and two watchmen made up the staff. On that day, 13 people were treated, totally gratis including medicines.

DEC. '89

People started to arrive by the recommendation of those who had come earlier. We work from 8 to 4, Mon. through Fri. We charge DR\$7 for the initial visit and DR\$5 for following visits, with no charge to those returning with results of lab work. Those apparently unable to pay are not charged.

JAN. '90

Again, with the arrival of the Anastasis, we received more equipment and a good quantity of medicines. With the equipment were some beautiful desks and furnishings donated by Sauder company. There were also two refrigerators, a gas stove, folding tables, a large quantity of cabinet doors, etc. donated by the Short Hardware in Stryker, Ohio. Jaime and Dorine came in mid-Jan. and were joined by about 20 more who completed the work of cabinetry and closets, assembling of furniture and painting the entire building inside and out. They tried to solve the problem of the 50K generator but, even though three new parts were installed the problem still wasn't solved.

This was an important time because of the opportunity the group had to see, feel and, to a point, take part in the work that is being developed in the clinic. We want to recognize the attitude of solidarity, in the greatest sense of the word, that Orville Fricke and his family have shown us, to come and be with us in Jan. in spite of the serious health problems in his close and beloved family that caused him to have to return to the U.S. before the dedication. Thank you, and may the rewarding God repay this family according to his riches in glory. Thanks to each one of the participants of this project!

FEB. 3, '90

The Christian Clinic for Integrated Health was dedicated to the Glory of God. Many came without invitation and many who were invited did not come, among them the city authorities and the provincial governor. And we thank them, too, for their attention to our petition to fix the road into the clinic; as of today, they have done nothing!!

March, '90

A group from the Christian Medical Society worked with us one day. We started

having a devotional time with the patients at 10 a.m. with Bienvenido Acosta. More than 100 have been converted, with some testifying later to be attending church on a regular basis. We hope in the near future to find the means of following up on others of these new believers.

At last! After much prayer, the Lord opened the door to the solution of the problem of the generator. We expect, no later than 10 days from this date, to give it the first trial, connecting it to the clinic system.

APR. MAY, '90

God continues to open the way before us. The 22nd of this month we delivered to the Milk Producers' Association of San Juan a check for \$RD66,500 which represents 50% as an advance on the property adjoining the clinic and fronting the main highway. It is 1500 sq. meters entirely enclosed by a block wall and with a light pole. A brother in Wauseon, Ohio, Dave Blosser, is giving \$12,000 for this purchase.

FUTURE

The last week of June we will have the honor of receiving five brothers from the First Evangelical Free Church of Wausau, Wis., headed by Pastor Ken Moberg. They will be painting (putting a coat of oil paint in entrance and corridors where finger prints will be more washable).

In March, '91, we expect a visit of a team of surgeons who will operate in our installations if by that date everything is ready for them.

The ACPSI and her project, the Christian Center for Integrated Health, San Juan de la Maguana, are in the phase of development/solidification with a panorama that, at times, presents itself as extraordinary. The work is presenting fountains of service not foreseen by us and in the future, we don't know how near or far, we will need to make a decision. For now, I believe we must put aside these questions until the clinic is well established, which we hope to be able to report as good news at our next meeting.

To finish, we still have not completed the building. We lack doors, 15 florescent lights and other things to finish the electrical hook-up. Those alone will cost about \$RD10,000.

Welcome! Jaime and Dorine will return in July.

Oswaldo Canario, Director
CCSI

On a visit to the Midland, MI Evangelical Mennonite Church, a friend, Marie (Mrs. Loyd) Brown told us that her brother, Dr. Jim Diller, a plastic surgeon and former missionary to Africa, had been taking teams first to Haiti and, later, to Barahona, D.R. He had established Midwest Medical Missions and teams came and went usually through the month of January each year. The light bulb came on in our heads and we inquired, first of Yiro and then of Dr. Diller, of the possibility of a group going to San Juan. Our letter to him coincided with a

request from a young Family Practitioner/Professor to consider the possibility of taking a group of his 3rd year medical students to the D.R. the week of spring break at the Medical College of Ohio. In short, it was decided to take a small exploratory team down in March of 1991 for one week.

Three weeks after the dedication, Yiro wrote of the “tremendously agreeable problem above expectations” of the number of patients coming each day. He and Dolores were seeing around 80 patients daily and sometimes sending that many home to wait another day. He told of the urgent need for doctors, a functioning clinical lab and for dental service.

Sometime that spring of 1990 we began to think and pray about returning to the D.R. on a semi-permanent basis. We had gotten a letter from Willie Hunter written on behalf of MGM, YFC and CEF inviting us to return and give some assistance to these organizations with their visiting work teams. He realized that our main concern would be the needs of the clinic. The immediate need would be oversight of the guest house construction, but we, like Willie, didn't see why we couldn't fit these other needs into our time. Little did we know!

So, once again putting our things in storage, we returned to the D.R. the last of July in time to go on the Azua MGM project. We went first to San Juan and unpacked our duffles in one of the recovery rooms, which was to become home to us for the next seven months. In Azua, Jim worked as usual, with the surgical group which consisted of a plastic surgeon and his team of two nurses and an anesthetist. The surgeon was Dr. Tom Roberts from Spartanburg, SC, who is now a member of the Solid Rock Mission Board. Sunday p.m. part of the group opted to take the bus to San Juan to see the clinic. They were impressed with the ministry. In fact, Tom and his team later made a contribution toward the construction of the guest house. They were also impressed with the plentiful running water in the restrooms and some borrowed towels and showered. Ten days on an MGM project in Azua is guaranteed to make one appreciate even a cold shower and a flushable toilet.

That summer the ripples felt in the U.S. from the Persian Gulf Crisis reached tidal proportions in little places like the D.R. Overnight the price of all combustibles tripled and became in very short supply. The IMF had ruled that these little countries must stop subsidizing fuel prices and begin to pay off the interest on their debt. Consequently, all prices were rapidly raised. Asking why the prices of things like sugar, beans, plantains all staples rose so steeply, the answer, with a shrug of the shoulders, was always “Petroleo!”

That late summer and fall there were strikes and riots and long lines at the pumps. Orville had organized one or two teams for the fall months to work on the guest house but they were cancelled due to unrest; postponed until winter. It was decided to hire Dominicans to do all of the cement work and roofing. When the groups did come in January, the men worked on wiring, plumbing, cupboards, etc. Our goal had been to have enough rooms available to accommodate Dr. Diller's team and we made it barely. We had, I think, just six rooms ready, one of which became ours for the next six years. There was no paint on the walls and beds were some old bunks given us by the EMC Mission. Pieces of tar paper made door mats. But Dr. Diller's experiment was a great

success with two surgeons, Dr. Doug Schmucker (the Family Practice teacher), his students, nurses, and a cook's helper. This was the beginning of a very productive mutual relationship. Dr. Diller returned every year, except 1998 after the hurricane/flood damage, the second year for two weeks and every year thereafter for three weeks. Third year students often returned as 4th year students. One, now a seasoned doctor, has come for 8 years! Dr. Diller is a charter member of the Solid Rock Mission Board.

The first several years, gifts to ACPSI were funneled through EMC Conference headquarters or through the Wauseon EMC. This became more and more a burden on these organizations. Thus, at a work group reunion in 1992, it was decided that the supporters of the clinic ministry should organize, and seek non-profit status. Orville became president with Ed Meier his capable vice-president. Other board members included Andy Broadbeck, Larry Wyse, Gordon Zimmerman, and Dave Blosser. And so this group of people that had supported the work in San Juan for five years, was now Solid Rock Missions. At that time they were from NW Ohio, almost without exception. Now the board includes people from Pennsylvania, North and South Carolina, Minnesota, and Canada.

When we returned to the D.R. our plan was to go home each summer for three or four months. We did go home in May of 1991, but returned in July to host a Canadian YFC group; in August a small group Isaías brought from their church in Wuasau, WI. So it went. Another Evangelical Free Church in Gaylord, MI sent a team in November. Individual Evangelical Mennonite Churches began to send people, both adult and youth groups, and several years EMC International Ministries sent "Plant-A-Seed" groups of Conference-wide young people. People we had met on MGM projects became interested in the clinic ministry. In 1993, Dr. Diller was desperately short of anesthesia people and Jim remembered Dr. Tom Robert's anesthetist, Van Richardson, who had done a stint or two in Romania. Jim called him and he came down for a week. Returning home, he reported the exciting things going on at the clinic and showed Tom his pictures. Shortly after that, Tom called Jim and they talked at length. Tom wanted to put together a group from his church, First Presbyterian of Spartanburg, SC. In June, he brought his pastor, Dr. Todd Jones, for whirlwind visit. A year later he brought his first two-week team and has returned every year, preferring the summer dates so doctors with teenagers could bring them along to see how the vast majority of the world lives.

However, one of the surgeons and his nurse wife preferred winter dates Dr. Don and Kay McClure. They came the following February with a group of 22 and they have continued. Immediately following them was First Presbyterian of Spartanburg's premier construction team which has continued except for 1998 after the flood. First Presbyterian of Spartanburg has raised many thousands of dollars for construction and equipment. The surgeons, Dr. Roberts and Dr. McClure, are both board members of Solid Rock Missions.

Several other doctors have brought groups. Jim Blankenship from PA, Pete Prahlad from W. Virginia and Mark Rens from Arizona. Jim and Mary Blankenship have come with their children five or six years and Jim is also a member of the Solid Rock Missions Board.

Jim Smith had worked in surgery in Las Matas with a couple of nurses from State College, PA. One year, they arranged with us and with Willy Hunter to bring some men from their church, Calvary Baptist, to work at the clinic while the nurses were on the nearby MGM project. They did some finish work on the RODA building we had put up between the clinic and the guest house to house labs and Infant Survival. Calvary Baptist has continued to send teams and support under the leadership of Craig Kissell who is now a Solid Rock Missions Board member.

Others have come by way of Youth For Christ, Worldwide Christian Schools, University of Connecticut and Calvin College. The blessings of working with a multiplicity of people are countless and rich.

The Infant Survival program, initiated in 1991, had grown to where Yiro was hard put to keep up with it as many other things pressed him. That program was close to his heart but when Cora Hunse became available he welcomed her. Cora was another of those Jim had become acquainted with on two different MGM projects. Ever the recruiter, Jim spoke to her of the need for help with the mothers and babies. Cora was very qualified, with experience in all kinds of nursing, midwifery and computers. She raised some support and came down in 1993 and gave two years to the ministry. She then returned to Canada to become a nurse practitioner. She left a host of friends and remains in close contact.

We had given lots of thought to the need for a Christian school in the barrios, realizing that a Christ-Centered education is even more basic to integrated health than the clinic, more able to teach prevention of ills and to evangelize the children and teach them Kingdom values. Sometime in 1994, we talked to Yiro about this, to see what he thought about asking Dr. Duval if he would consider donating more land for a school. But of course Yiro had already been thinking about it. He said next to the clinic would not be a good place for a school, but he had in mind the perfect spot. He took us to see it an open field far to the back of Barrio Nuevo where nothing seemed to be between us and the mountains. I remember thinking the location was great but how in the world would vehicles be able to get through the mazes of electrical wires draped across corners and hanging four or five feet off the ground. But again, the problem was surmountable. Yiro set about checking on the possible purchase of the property. The owner was very amenable, offering some land gratis and selling another portion at a comparably good price, enough to make a good-sized campus. The idea was presented to the Solid Rock Mission Board, which heartily approved. Orville approached just one couple who anonymously gave the purchase price. "Morning by morning new mercies we see."

Construction on the initial building began in January 1995. Work teams came from Solid Rock, Archbold EMC adults, a Christian Reformed Church in Gr. Rapids, MI, First Presbyterian of Spartanburg, Archbold and Wauseon youth, and Evangelical Free Churches in Wisconsin and Michigan. Over a seven month period we hosted, in addition to these groups, seven medical teams, for one week each. It was a dizzying seven months but the initial school building, restrooms, kitchen and open dining hall had been completed by mid summer.

As soon as it appeared that the school could be ready for occupancy by fall of 1995, Yiro began to look for a qualified director and administrator. Sights had been set on José Ramón Rodríguez and his wife Joselyn. They had worked with Food For the Hungry on the frontier and had lived in San Juan but had moved to Santo Domingo to do an assignment for World Vision. Their families were there and they didn't care to return to San Juan, "the backside of the desert." However, we started praying. Eulalia and I met as often as possible out in the gazebo and we asked God to send the Rodríguez family to us. I believe they really felt called to the challenge of being able to start from the beginning and to make the Christian Center of Education for Development (CCED) a model that would make a difference spiritually, socially and physically in those barrios. They moved back to San Juan that summer and began to put together a budget and a staff to be able to open for classes for pre-K through grade 4. There were actually to be classes for both three and four year olds so the children could be molded before the cement began to set. They had their work cut out just to get all the government requirements met. Yiro had been farsighted enough to give some financial help and encouragement to some education students one of whom was part of the first staff.

Solid Rock Missions also had its work cut out. The school needed sponsorships right away. Solid Rock gave money for many start-up costs, like furnishing the kitchen and offices. Used school desks came on several different shipments. (Ed Meier learned there are few things more clumsy and space consuming than school desks for shipping!) The main two sources of sponsorship have been people going down to work and those who attend the annual Solid Rock Missions reunion. And there has been a good response to the school in general, but we have always lagged behind in finding sponsors, especially as the student population has grown.

In 1996 two important things were added to the school. Evelyn Oliveira, daughter of Grace Mitchell Lewis, came to teach English as a second language; and the vocational school opened to 80 students. A six room building had been constructed to house the vo-tech school that year. Four rooms had also been added to the regular school and grades 5-8 were added.

Through an evangelistic thrust early in the school year, 17 of the vocational students came to saving faith in Christ and two more were added later. Some of the teachers, led by Evelyn, disciplined these young people throughout the year. We understand that the majority of them are still following the Lord in their home communities.

The vo-tech school, though such a positive addition to the CCED and community, was fraught with difficulties. A bit of background: the D.R. suffers a great lack of technical labor which fact has been recognized by its neighbors to the north. The country had been given huge grants to establish schools and train technicians of all kinds. Apparently these monies had not been administered honestly and efficiently and IMF/USAid were asking an accounting. It seems the government eyed the strategically located school in Barrio Nuevo as a possible showcase. At any rate, promises were made to completely underwrite the costs to the school if those 80 students from all over both San Juan and Elías Piña

provinces, were accepted into a program where they would receive both academic and vocational training. Teachers were hired and minimal equipment put in place and students moved in. I say moved in because they came from such distances that it was impossible for them to go home except on weekends. The first semester they were bused back and forth to Camp Bethel, eight km from the school where they slept and ate two meals a day. Meantime, José Ramón waited for the first check to come from the Secretary of Education's office. It never did. There were always demands for further equipment or more personnel or paperwork. The money was always almost within reach so the school struggled on, somehow making the budget of the regular school stretch to keep the whole institution going. Both ACPSI and SRM realized it could not go on another year but we were saddened as we attended the closing assembly and saw the promise in the faces of those young Dominicans and thought of the opportunity lost. The feelings of frustration and helplessness are such a part of banging against the wall of shortsightedness, greed and corruption put up between these governments and their poor.

We had tentatively thought to retire in August of 1996, when Jim turned 70. SRM had asked us to set a date so replacements could be in place. In summer of 1996, Jack and Jane Rimbey, from Archbold, OH, spent six weeks with us and began preparing to return the next summer so we could retire in August of 1997.

The Rimbeys served until November of 1998 and Mark and Darla Rupp, a young couple from Wauseon, OH, have been overseeing the guest house and visiting groups since that time. Their youth and great adaptability have gone far to keep the mission intact after the devastation of the hurricane Georges. They arrived a couple of weeks after the storm cut a path through the country from East to West, stalling over the second mountain range to pour flood waters through the barrios of San Juan and on out to the sea. Barrio Nuevo and the school, being on higher ground, were spared but the clinic and guesthouse and surrounds were not. Homes were swept away and uncounted lives were lost.

Taking stock after the water receded, Yiro and the staff found the buildings intact except for damage to the surrounding walls. However, almost nothing usable remained of furnishings, equipment, medicines or records. And they found two feet of mud inside.

Almost immediately they organized people to begin the cleanup. Eulalia headed up laundry detail, trying to salvage some linens, and the preparation of food for the workers. For this record I must say something about Eulalia. We think of her as the real heart of the work, the prayer warrior. She has a thorough knowledge of God's word and has worked tirelessly in Christian Education in the Dominican EMC and in Child Evangelism. She has done post graduate study in lab technology. She is a dedicated and very humble servant of God. And when I say she headed up the food preparation for the workers, I mean she was "hands on." She did menus, ordering and cooking.

Yiro's leadership ability came through in the clean-up and reparations of the buildings. He demonstrated compassionate care for the staff and other workers hired to shovel mud and to scrub. He visited the various shelters to give

medical aid. Perhaps most of all was his Nehemiah spirit which led people in a willingness to work. When Jim and Orville made an investigative trip right after the storm, they encountered mind-boggling devastation. A month later when the two of us went down for three weeks, Jim was completely amazed at what had already been accomplished. The buildings were far from being ready for occupancy but the mud was gone from floors and walks, if not completely cleaned from outlets and, indeed, every possible crack and crevice it could be forced into by the pressure of the flood. But reparations had begun.

The storm hit on September 22 and on January 30 the clinic reopened. Several groups had come to help with repairs, painting, etc. and a small team went with the McClures in early February for a week to get the operating rooms ready for business. It was no small miracle that while they were there a shipment that they had put together arrived. It contained a treasure trove of equipment, appliances, furnishings and a whole skid of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood! That, along with a shipment from Wauseon containing a great deal of foodstuff, was a tremendous boost to the ministry.

About \$140,000 had come in to SRM for hurricane damage relief. It has been used for extensive clean-up projects and to replace large items such as a vehicle and a generator which were damaged in the flood.

Mark and Darla, as of late August 1999, had hosted 16 groups of varying sizes. It has been done with grace and good humor in circumstances anything but ideal. Practically every bridge between Santo Domingo and San Juan had been washed out. Of the two between the city of San Juan and the clinic, one was badly damaged but continued in use and the second was completely gone. Temporary passage over the two rivers, which became one under Georges' power, kept washing away with new rains. They had to depend on public transportation to and from the airport. (Dominican bus drivers are good at giving thrills and/or keeping you hunkered down in prayer.) Then there are the daily multiple trips into town for marketing, building supplies, mail, etc. All of that besides dealing with a different culture and language. As Darla commented early on, "It sure is a steep learning curve."

This is the story of ACPSI/SRM as Jim and I remember it from beginning to the present, September 1999. So much has been left out—so many people have served and given. Because of them, many have come to saving knowledge of Christ, physical problems have been solved, children are educated, and we believe God has been glorified.

As someone put it—no monuments, just footprints. Lots of footprints. It has been said that a hurricane clears and purifies the land. We don't know about that, but we do see a fresh beginning of this ministry. When we are given a second chance we have the opportunity to make changes, correct mistakes, to start over with the useful benefit of hindsight. New mercies.

ADDENDUM

ASOCIACION CRISTIANA PARA LA PROMOCION DE LA SALUD INTEGRAL, INC.

Apartado 216
San Juan de la Maguana
República Dominicana
Tel. 809-557-3370

The Christian Association for the promotion of Integrated Health is an independent non-profit organization incorporated in the Dominican Republic, born under the inspiration of biblical principles, particularly those found in the gospels (the life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, God-man) for the purpose of helping the poor of the community to find health, both spiritual and physical.

PHILOSOPHY

I. This ministry seeks to bring together, in a natural and harmonious way, the integrated health of the individual as the only effective way to bring about changes in the person and, thus, in the community; always taking as the basis Jesus Christ, to whom we owe all and from whom we have the command to go in the same way he went, sent by the Father (John 20:19-22).

II. Thus, this ministry takes as its basis the earthly ministry of the Lord, which was:

- A. of identity--entered into lives and needs.
- B. of incarnation--made himself one with humanity.
- C. of sacrifice--gave his life.
- D. of prayer--always sought spiritual resources to combat evil, sickness and death.
- E. of appropriateness--healed the sick, fed the hungry, oriented the confused and comforted the afflicted.

III. We believe human life begins at the moment of conception. We believe, as is taught in the scriptures, that man has been created in the image of God and, thus, we reaffirm the sanctity of human life and declare that never will we participate in nor give support to any program which commits a crime against the dignity or integrity of that life at any stage of its development.

OBJECTIVES

To promote the physical and spiritual health of the individual by way of:

I. The establishment of a clinic as a base of activity where will be offered, at the lowest possible cost, general and specialized medicine, preventive medicine, dentistry, ophthalmology, surgery and others as the Board of Directors finds fit.

II. The announcement, in every way possible, of the Good News of Salvation, emphasizing that only by way of a personal relation with Jesus Christ can man be fully healed and restored.

III. A program of Infant Survival where badly malnourished babies will receive vigilant medical attention, milk and vitamins until they reach normal health; and where the mothers are taught to use the resources they have to better care for their families.

IV. The offering of mobile clinics in outlying villages and districts, giving emphasis to preventive medicine.

V. Cooperation with similar organizations whenever their philosophy is not in disagreement with ours nor with the scriptures.

The above purposes and objectives are carried out by a Board of Directors made up of seven members, and an Executive Director who serves ex-officio on the board. The members of this self-perpetuating board are all Dominican Christians who are members in good standing of an evangelical church.

FINANCES

All funds for the building of the clinic were donated by interested persons in the Dominican Republic, the United States and Canada. Almost all of the equipment, materials and furnishings were also donated. The clinic seeks to be self-supporting as far as salaries, maintenance and utilities. It depends on donations and/or funds to purchase medicines. It also seeks interested people to underwrite the Infant Survival program. (A statement concerning this program is attached.)

HISTORY

The idea for the clinic was born of a need seen by some North American missionaries and of the desire of some Dominicans to serve Dominicans less fortunate than themselves, particularly Dr. Osvaldo Canario who, after completing his education, worked two years with the Dr. Elías Santana Medical Center, a ministry of the Christian Medical and Dental Society near the capital city of Santo Domingo. He then returned to his birth place in San Juan de la Maguana, oversaw the building of the clinic, hired personnel and opened the clinic to patients. He serves as Executive Director.

The construction was begun in July, 1988, and the Christian Clinic for Integrated Health was opened to the public in November, 1989. It was dedicated to the glory of God in February, 1990. The building is 60' x 200' and houses reception, records, four patient examination rooms, X-ray, dental office, waiting areas, pharmacy and nurses' changing rooms, two surgeries with pre & post-op and scrub rooms, two recovery rooms, six full and four half-baths. Since opening, the clinic has recorded more than 10,500 new patients who have made a total of over 20,000 office calls. A brief gospel message has been given on a regular basis to the waiting patients and between 400 & 500 have made decisions of faith. They are given gospel literature and are directed to an evangelical church in their area. The laboratory was opened in February, 1991, and has performed over 4,000 analyses of 19 different kinds. With the acquisition of the last of needed equipment, the dental service will be opened by October of this year. A Dominican ophthalmologist will begin service as soon as equipment is donated.

Construction of an adjacent guest facility was begun in November, 1990, and, although still in the last stages of completion, began receiving visiting medical and construction teams in March, 1991.

The Association welcomes medical persons who wish to give a period of time to the ministry here. Please write Dr. Canario at the address on the letterhead or call 809-557-3370.

INFANT SURVIVAL PROGRAM

The Christian Clinic for Integrated Health is located in the center of several growing poor barrios on the edge of San Juan de la Maguana. San Juan is in the western part of the country, the area bordering Haiti. This area has the highest infant mortality rate in the nation, the national average being 75 out of every 1,000 babies dying before the age of two years, with this area being higher.

It was in the mind of the Director of the clinic, Dr. Osvaldo Canario, before the construction began, to have a program to help combat this problem. With the help of the youth of the church, he took a census of the children in the surrounding barrios from ages 0 to 5 years, and found that 52% of these children suffer some grade of malnutrition caused by one or all of the following: 1) lack of adequate food, 2) acute diarrhea and 3) maltreatment caused by lack of resources and/or education. This makes the children easy victims of a vicious

cycle of acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, malnutrition, respiratory infections, etc.

In answer to this need, the clinic has initiated a Mother-Infant project that provides adequate pre-natal care, reducing the incidence of low birth weight, and seeks to educate the mother to breast-feed and to care for herself and her family.

The clinic is also a center for caring for malnourished infants and children, curing their infections, rehydrating them, feeding and caring for them on a daily basis until they are out of danger and then on a several times a week basis until they are healthy, developing children. Their homes are visited to see that the mothers are doing their best to follow instructions in the care of the children.

The program, initiated about ten months ago, is helping 55 children. Having worked with these babies, Dr. Canario has been able to calculate what the cost is per child for milk, vitamins, medicines, pureed vegetables, eggs and nursing care. The first month to six weeks is the most costly, the formula now being used costing about \$Us10 per week. But the cost goes down when the child is able to tolerate regular milk and other foods. The overall cost per child per month is about \$Us20.

Two nurses came from the capital to give several training sessions in health promotion but, other than that, the burden has fallen entirely on the shoulders of Dr. Canario for the program. There are two great needs, one for funds to run the program and the other for a full-time nurse to administer it. We are praying for a person from the U.S. or Canada with special training in health education and with enough knowledge of Spanish to be able to work with and train a Dominican woman to replace her after two or three years. She would work with the Dominican women to train local health promoters in the barrios. If you are able to help with either of these needs, write to Dr. Osvaldo Canario at the above address.

August 1991

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