

Day 2 – Saturday, January 16th

After a fairly smooth flight, we arrived in Guatemala City around 6:30 am. It was a tad warmer than Iowa and the sun was shining. Again it was fascinating to see the improvements made at the airport. And like last year our plan was to travel to Reu from the airport, rather than staying in Guatemala City for a day. And again we boarded a coach bus (not a “chicken/school bus”) to the trip. Our bags were tagged – red duct tape for donation bags and purple duct tape for personal bags – so we attempted to keep the personal bags in separate bays from the donation bags – this would make things easier when we would unload things. We also had a listing of what was in each donation bag to help us sort things out easier on the Guatemala end. With luggage in the bays (not the roof or in our seats) and seats that tilt – off we went.

Mommie (Estuardo’s mother and our gracious host) had prepared breakfast for us on the bus - as has been the pattern. Tamales, chicken sandwiches, breads and fruit along with coffee and OJ. It hits the spot and sustains us on our trip to Reu.

We have often stopped at the “farm family” on the way to Reu but this year it was decided to stop on the return trip. So we were in Reu by 11:30 am. Our first stop was at the Dardon’s home to unload our donation bags. All the red tagged bags were removed (or so we thought – the plan was good, our execution was not so good). By the time we were done, lunch was ready, so we ate.

After lunch, we made our way to our hotels. In years past, we have housed our entire group at Hotel Astor – a lovely place. And we would have again, except that they had booked much of the hotel with another set of guests. “Children of the Americas” – a non-profit group that organizes medical teams consisting of surgeons and support staff that travel throughout Central America working to assist underprivileged people. (I encourage you to look up their work on their website www.childrenoftheamericas.org) Though they have groups that travel throughout Central America, this particular group out-of Kentucky travel to a different hospital of Guatemala every year. Retalhuleu is overwhelmed with “gringo” medical personnel this week. Between us we will see as many as 2,500 people in this community, and complimenting each other as our emphasis and expertise does not really overlap.

Because of the extra guest in Reu, we found ourselves staying in three different hotels (including Hotel Astor) – a bit different, a few concerns – but part of the adventure. All three hotels proved to be nice and were located within a few blocks of one another. But some things don’t change – hot showers with water pressure are still a precious commodity. And all their pools are colder than reasonable in this climate. (That still remains my great mystery of Guatemala – 90 degree days with pools colder than Lake Michigan.) So everyone had time to settle. We spent some time cleaning up and before we knew it, it was time to eat again.

Supper as always was at Mommie Dardon’s. It was as good as the returnees anticipated and the newcomers were told. After worship we took time for devotions and some time to

introduce ourselves to one another, especially since we gathered people all along the journey. Many are old friends, but we always have those with us for the first time and it is important to learn about one another as we learn other things with one another. The group dynamics always prove to be as valued and blessed as the work that is being done. God works in all those things in amazing ways.

After supper and announcements we made our way back to our hotels. Some detoured to one of the ice cream shops and store. After being on the go for over 36 hours more or less (a few travel naps along the way), all were ready for a good nights sleep.