

Dourados, Nov. 9, '74

Dear Ones,

On the way back from Rio Verde, in all those long kilometers of thinking, I decided it would be very nice to put the trip on paper. We have been home almost a week, and there have been few spare moments, but even if I had time unlimited I find that the week of festivities was so special and wonderful that it is hard to write down. Then I thought maybe we could put it on tape and all of our family contribute - only to find that both of our tape recorders are out of order. So I will try, and hope the typewriter can peck out what I can't even form in my mind!

The festivities of the Gordon Parents 50th wedding anniversary began in Rio Verde on the afternoon of Oct. 29th when the town met them some 10 kilometers out of town. Gary and Uncle Carl had flown from the States to Campinas, and drove with the Folks on the 2 day trip Campinas - Rio Verde. Mid afternoon on the second day they began seeing some cars and people along the road. After passing a few Gary suggested that they better stop at the next group, and sure enough, these were all part of a reception committee. Mother and Father were then taken to a shined up '29 Ford and were driven the remaining miles into town with the mayor and other dignitaries, greeting people on all sides from the open car. Behind them followed Gary and Uncle Carl, and some fifty other cars making quite a procession into and around town. Rio Verde has changed so since the asphalt road was finished, that Father said later that he didn't recognize anything until they drove by their own home! The parade stopped in the main town square where there were speeches, fireworks, and much rejoicing. The mayor in his speech said that he could not give the town to Dr. & Mrs. Gordon because it already belonged to them. He could only welcome them home.

Now all of the above we only heard about, as we could only leave Dourados on the 29th and it is a 2 day trip from here. We formed a 2 car convoy with the Doles, going as far as Rondonopolis the first day. That was 13 hours of travel, made much easier by almost all asphalt roads. The two cars got started talking to each other using the deaf hand alphabet, and the hours just flew by. Even Dick who drove the second car became quite good at it. To help on expenses we stayed in an almost-clean rickety hotel with a bathroom in the yard. That morning before Rio Brilhante and asphalt we had gotten stuck in the mud, so most of the 13 of us were pretty dirty. Around noon we had gone by a creek with pretty rocks and shady trees, so had let the children play awhile. A couple of course fell in, and were still damp when we stopped in the evening. So you can imagine the audience we had as everyone went in and out of the shower stall at the hotel. About dark a storm came up and all the lights went out and we got soaked getting to supper. With an early start the next day we got to RV by 3PM. All of the family was housed in the Nursing School, except the Folks who stayed with an adopted daughter where they could get a little more rest. We were fed at the hospital in a beautiful downstairs dining room. On the 1st just before the thanksgiving service there were about 50 out of town guests for the supper meal. Many food items were donated by town folk including turkey, beautiful roasts, and artistic salads. All of the work of caring for us though was done by hospital staff, and they were so loving and gracious. One afternoon we did have a tour through the hospital. Even very sick patients would lift up their heads anxious to see Father go by. We would try to help him reach those that seemed to want so much to touch his hand, and would smile and talk a minute to as many as we could. The hospital has 124 beds now (just double our Dourados one) and 8 full time doctors. Only 3 are evangelicals, but much is still being done to proclaim Christ. Each morning at 8 we all took part in the devotional. The young folk took guitar and sang, the middle generation took turns leading. On the last day we sang in the rooms too. Pediatrics is the newest wing and just beautiful. Drawings and pretty colors everywhere, a sunny porch for visiting. Even the ceilings had fun figures on them.

When we arrived on Wed. afternoon Hope and family were already there, and Dr. Carlos Patrício and family arrived just as we did. Along with all the hugging and greetings we spent the rest of the afternoon getting a stage program ready for the evening. Alan was promptly designated master of ceremonies and both requests and offer of talent flew wildly around until with half an hour to go he finally typed out a program and some order came out of the chaos. There was a great deal of talent available, and M&F in whose honor the program was presented were delighted by every number. It was held at the club in town which held some 800 people, and has a nice stage and passable piano. The audience really brought the house down when M&F sang their old love song. They had put it on tape in Campinas because Mother felt she couldn't sing very well in public anymore. When they got up on the stage thinking they were just going to act it out, Alan told them the tape could not be found. Mother froze for a moment, but recuperated right away and with Alan's music helping them they started off - and before they were half way through and doing very well musically, the audience could not contain their joy and admiration and they finished singing to a standing ovation. You couldn't hear them very well, but everyone's heart had heard. So in a way that was one of our easiest programs. The love and fun that flowed through the audience and participators made up for any deficiencies in timing or content. It was quite late when we family left the club after greeting so many old friends. Susan had long been asleep on a table surrounded by chairs. Uncle Carl and his very special photography talent had been at work all evening, including the sleeping little one. Many had talked away in Port. to him and he had smiled and talked back in Eng. The official photographer and Uncle Carl had many long conversations, neither able to understand the others words, but still enjoying each other. Late that night Uncle Carl started a RV tradition - ice cream treats. Anyone still awake piled into our Kombi and invaded a corner bakery that sold ice cream. Soon a crowd would gather around us, and news would fly into the neighborhood that Dr. Gordon was there. Folk would come to shake his hand, or if they had mistook Uncle Carl for Father, they would be content to shake our hands, and tell of some dear one that Father saved.

Alan went to a 7^{pm} medical meeting where Dr. Carlos presented a case to the 17 doctors present
 Thursday morning Oct 31st we were greeted at breakfast with an invitation for the kids to go out to the swim club for the morning. The days there were all cristal clear, with blue skies and perfect temperature. So Gary volunteered to take the gang and Alan and I made some calls, like to Tia Elsie. She felt too weak to go out to the festivities, so we found many other out of town visitors in her home and we all had a grand hour together. Tia Elsie delighted in ringing a bell and showing us all how her seriemas sing when they hear the bell. It really was most interesting.

Just before lunch had been set for family pictures. We gathered by the bamboo between the old home and nurses home. None of us could get over wondering at its 60 foot height and great mass, since many remembered it had sprouted on its own from a bamboo rod stuck in the ground as support for a shelter during one of the young peoples' parties about 30 years ago. Also near-by was the faithful old windmill, no longer used to pump water. I am sure the neighbors all held their breath those days while grandchildren often climbed to its 40 ft. height. So you see there was plenty of hide-and-seek and climbing between pictures. A sad addition was an old black woman in rags who added liquor to her already confused mind, and who wanted to be in all the pictures with her beloved Dr. Cordon and Dona Helena. We took some with her, and then took turns trying to keep her out of them. She would kneel and ask their blessing, and was so pityful. The grandchildren got a vivid picture of what alcohol can do.

After lunch we were all invited to a near-by farm to enjoy caju and mangas. There was a fun stream running under the trees near the house, and the hostess herself had 17 small grandchildren most of whom added to our joyful confusion. We left town in 4 cars, having loaded our Kombi to the hilt, but safely so. Unfortunately in the short drive we had to go through a state police check point, and he stopped us because he couldn't count fast enough seeing so many heads in our car. Alan in his jovial way agreed with him that we had too many people and explained that there was no problem, the three other cars could easily take however many he wanted us to put out. So several of our passengers walked down the road to the other cars that had pulled up, and the officer was satisfied. What he didn't know was that the other cars were more loaded than ours! Out of sight we exchanged and adjusted, and on the way home the little ones staid low. We really did not have that many people - it just looked like a circus with so many kids.

That evening was the special session at City Hall with all the officials and special guests. Most of the Councilmen had been Mother's students, and one elderly gentleman had met M&F when they were first coming to RV and vividly remembers Alma swinging in her basket attached to the roof of the old Ford. Several beautiful and heart-warming speeches were made, and M&F's reply was that any good they had done was in the name of Christ, and they urged all present to accept Him as Lord and Saviour, and thus to meet them in heaven someday. All of us were caught up in the example of the Folks, and it was so easy and natural to speak of Christ, give Him the praise for using the Gordon family in such wonderful ways, and to liken the joy of those days of being with old friends and sharing so much with so many as a taste of heaven. To me it was a bit of heaven. The town's generosity and love provided a special gift to the grandchildren. In such a rare happening the young ones could see and feel the worth of a couple dedicated to God, and how honors that would bring out pride in most of us simply allowed them to proclaim Christ as Lord even more clearly.

After the official ceremony the band played and everyone clapped as M&F were escorted out and we all adjourned to the club for a reception. Most of the people who filled the room and sat around at small tables were well dressed towns folk. Dotted among them, and equally as welcome, were some of the very poor who loved M&F. All our family was seated at a beautiful central table which at first made me somewhat uncomfortable wondering what I was supposed to do next. It wasn't long before I saw Father go over and sit with a little old lady all alone at her table. She too probably wondered what to do next in a strange place, but had put on the best she had, and come to honor her beloved doctor. I watched as Father talked happily with her for a few minutes, and then in turn with others, as we all spread out to greet people and rejoice with each one. As in much of the public festivities we did not get much to eat or drink, but what a blessing we received in personal relationships!

I did forget to mention that on the first night of the program there was a special speaker representing the town, who used many illustrations of happenings through the years, and then presented a surprise by presenting in person Father's first patient, the first "baby" he delivered, the patient first operated, etc. It was really a "this is your life" program.

Friday was the Big Day, the actual anniversary. It seemed impossible that there could be more parties, more fun, and more old friends arriving from everywhere - but that's just what kept on happening. The Folks got up before 5AM to get over to the Nursing School so the band could play for all of us to wake up! As we listened to them and watched, our thoughts went back to the many Mother had taught to play an instrument, and to the years when the band master had started Alan on clarinet. Lorraine Bridgeman (Wycliffe) had

come to celebrate with us, and Mother introduced her to the band and told them of her work in making the Bible available to the Indians. It was a beautiful way of speaking of Christ. After much music some of our hostesses invited everyone down to the ping-pong room where they had coffee and goodies all set out. Soon Alan had his accordeon out and there was much laughter and singing, and exchanging of instruments. Mother and Father were in top form. At one point I suggested they get a nap before the big evening, but they only smiled and said they were feeling fine and having a great time.

Soon after breakfast we had a tour of the Nursing School. They have a pretty new class-room building where I found my old friend Job. He's lost some of his insides and a little paint off his face, but was still recognizable as my first patient - before the real ones. The tour was frequently interrupted by folks coming to see Mother and Father, many old timers with long tales and much love. Soon it was time to gather at the swim club, not for the water, but for rehearsal for the evening service. The largest meeting room available was there, and it did hold over a thousand guests that evening. The grandchildren and children, both Brazilian and American, lined the aisle through which Gary brought Mother. Alan came in with Father and stood on the stage. Once the service began the four children stood with M&F as witnesses. Marcia carried the train, Susan and Mark the kneeling pillow, bright red velvet. The younger generation was most patient while differing opinions were vented at the rehearsal. Alan played his accordeon to set the entrance march, and in the long pauses for planning among the co-ordenators, he would liven up the music for the kids to dance around. It was more fun to watch than the Roquette, and the ease with which the kids changed from serious to playful was beautiful. After an hour or so we happily left, and a group pf ladies spent the rest of the day decorating the place! What a present to our middle generation to be free of such responsibility!

Our next stop was the orphanage, which had requested a visit from our family. They were just getting ready for lunch, but did not seem to mind at all and listened to our songs and to our words about Christ. We were taken on a short tour of the building, all so clean and well organized. There were about 100 children there, some who have been there over 10 years. Our happy gang were a little more thoughtful looking as they left - maybe considering what a privilege it was to have grandparents to honor?

After lunch we all had the special treat of visiting the old home. It has been divided into two residences, and the larger front part is rented out to a town doctor, playmate of Alans'. The young parents living there were so very gracious to us all, insisting we explore every nook, show the children where Grandfather used to hide valuables behind a panel in the library, and even displaying the clothes shoot which is the center of so many family tales. The house looks lovely, well cared for and freshly painted. In fact most of the town must have spruced up for the occasion as everything looked so fresh. Even the white lines that border all the hospital walks were glistening, and some in the gardens were being finished after we arrived. The young folk stayed on listening to records and so spent a special afternoon in the old home.

Just before sunset as we waited in the hospital yard for supper, we practiced up on the hymn for the service - "wonderful grace of Jesus". Friends continued to arrive in small groups - Rev. Joas, Polly and Chalmers Browne, Al and Cathy Reasoner, Delmira, a blind lady who came all the way from SP with her son.

All of us wore long dresses for the service. By 8PM we were all ready and waiting at the club for the bride and groom - and then we realized none of us was helping Father dress, or driving after dark for Father! Sure enough, visitors had kept them from being able to

get ready, and they were trying as hard to get to us as we were trying to figure out how to get to them. The children all got thirsty and we found one glass of water to pass around with many "don't take too much!" When the club looked like it could not hold one more person, people kept arriving and going in, with a last minute flurry M&F arrived. In a dressing room behind the stage Alcita helped Mother into her original wedding dress, complete with pearls, white shoes and stockings. Alan had recorded the march earlier in the day using a good organ in the new catholic church. At last we all lined up and entered, and then came Mother just as beautiful and happy as she must have been in that dress 50 years ago. Severino led a meaningful service in which we all gave thanks to God for the couple being honored, and as our Lord and Saviour too. When it came time to exchange the vows Severino asked Father, "Have you kept your promises to this woman?" and then enumerated each one. I remember Father's smile, and I suppose he said yes, but I can't remember his words. Then Severino asked the four children, "Are you witnesses to the fact that your father kept his promises?" and they all added, "yes". Then to Mother he asked if she would renew her vows for the rest of their days, and she said, "Yes sir!" After a prayer and blessing during which they kneeled, chairs were brought for them and Severino spoke so eloquently of the love of God. At the end of his words the girls and I sang Aleluia, and the four children sang a quartette.

Mother & Father then left for Mother to change into her gold dress that Helen had made for the occasion, and both the church choir and our family presented several music numbers. When M&F came back they led us into the reception where there were 2 enormous and beautiful cakes that had taken a week to make. One had some 200 eggs in it I think. Unfortunately we had not planned well how to control the great number of people, and they just engulfed the folks and cake, and for a few minutes I was afraid someone would get hurt. All of the family fanned out trying to spread out small groups, and in about half an hour there was more order in the room. I understand that almost 3 thousand drinks were served, and we knew there were hundreds of kinds of candies sent from almost every home in town, as they kept arriving all those days at the Nursing School. It was good that we got a bite or two ahead, and someone had thoughtfully prepared a box for each family unit, even including Gary. As the evening got late we were concerned for F&M and took chairs to them, but they said they were not tired, and kept right on greeting until the last guest had gone. João gathered up the kids and took them home, and some of us took M&F home. Our eyes were closing and our feet hurt, but M&F were as alive and bubbly as if they had been 20. It was special to thank God together for such a happy day, and then to bid them good-night.

Sat. we saw Hope and family off in the morning, and then all went to a barbecue at a near-by farm. Again it seemed like the party would never end. Real life just couldn't be that much fun! In the evening Alan led a youth Bible study and program, and in the odd moments we managed to pack for the long trip home. Because of hospital duties here we had to leave early Sunday morning. Mother and Father came over to the hospital to tell us good-by, Mother so pretty in pink with a snowy white shawl. And so we left the bride and groom with such happy faces, still to receive several surprises that day as a tribute from the WCC, and the presentation of an album taken during all the festivities and given to them by the doctors at the hospital. Our trip home was fun and safe, with a real restful stop in Campo Grande for fun and shopping. So it really was a week in which we stepped out of an ordinary world into a little taste of what joy God has in store for us in heaven.

This is recorded here with much love from,

Alma