



**Habitat Build—October 15-24, 2011**



Saturday, 10/15

Flying, flying, and more flying. Our day started early. Some of us spent the night in hotels close to the airport Friday night, and some of us slept at home. Regardless, we all woke up early Saturday morning to be at the airport by 6:30 a.m. Kent, of course, was the last one to arrive at the St. Louis airport that morning.

Our flights that day were:

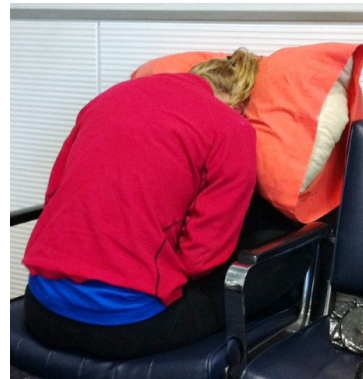
Depart St. Louis, 7:00 a.m.—Arrive Chicago, 8:06 a.m.

Depart Chicago, 10:57 a.m.—Arrive Houston, 1:38 p.m.

Depart Houston, 5:45 p.m.—Arrive Quito, 11:03 p.m.

At the Quito airport we went through Customs and Immigration and finally were met by Christian and our driver, who drove us to our hotel, Dan International Hotel. We arrived there at approximately 1:00 a.m.

It was a long day of travelling.



Sunday, 10/16

We started the day with breakfast at 8:30 a.m., which consisted of eggs, bread, cheese, fruit juice, and coffee. We left that morning at 9:30 a.m. for Lisa's Daycare. The drive took about 1 1/2 hours. Victor Vargas and a few others met us at our hotel and also went to the daycare. Lisa's Daycare is in the Andes mountains, near the Pichincha volcano. When we arrived, they took us to their church for a short service. Children came and did a program about faith like a mustard seed, I think. They sang some songs and invited us to sing a song. We sang "Jesus Loves Me." We went back to the daycare for some presentations from Victor and the daycare workers. We gave them a suitcase of clothes and stuffed animals that the St. Paul, Waterloo Sunday School class made for them. They fed us lunch. We had some sort of "mystery meat," corn on the cob, potatoes, and beans that tasted like lima beans. We were given a spoon to eat our meal. We also had an herbal tea, which was quite good.

After our visit to the daycare, we were taken directly to the Qui-to airport to catch a flight to Manta.



Monday, 10/17

### **In the Beginning—Mary Beth—Tosagua**

We awoke to a partially cloudy morning that showed through the windows of our hotel. As we gathered around our tables, we had breakfast together while sharing in conversation as we continued to learn more about one another. Family and job responsibilities were among the topics around the table. Eggs, banana-cheese bread and delicious orange juice were among our breakfast items. Those who enjoyed a cup of coffee found themselves trying to discover just the right combination of instant coffee granules, hot water and warm milk to put into their cups.

After breakfast was finished and we gathered up our things, we climbed into a van to head to the work site with our driver, Victor, at the helm. As we traveled the dirt-covered streets, people were out and about, heading to work, to shop, or to simply hang out talking with others in town.

When we first arrived, our maestro for the week, Freddy Dalyado, greeted us and welcomed us to the work site. We met the family whose home we would be working on for the next five days. They were Señor Roque Sebastián García Cedeño and Señora Sandra Mariela Muñoz Alcivar, along with their son, Rodolfo García Muñoz.

After Kent Lytle, our Illinois South guide, and Christian Jesus Gutierrez Rois, our Ecuadoran interpreter, met with maestro Freddy to discover what we could do to begin, we laced up our shoes and boots, got on our gloves, and set out to get some supplies that were stored away. We worked at moving dirt from the site with shovels and wheelbarrows, working as fast and as hard as we could. Mike was an excellent worker, despite being challenged as he used a very short-handled shovel. (As the days unfolded, Kent would be able to get some long-handled shovels made that worked much better for those who were “taller.”)

Dwight used his woodworking skills and built two sawhorses—without plans or measurements. (Later these sawhorses would be used for a variety of needs: legs for tables for Vacation Bible School, cutting lumber and tying rebar.) Patrick and Dwight worked on cutting rebar poles while sitting down. You might guess, the group teased them about “sitting down on the job.”



Monday, 10/17 (continued)

Later Linda joined in on this task, as several hundred pieces of rebar were needed. As you might guess, the group teased them about “sitting down on the job.”

Our lunch was soup, rice, and fish along with some delicious juice. The weather remained partially cloudy, which allowed the temperature to remain warm but not too hot. Unfortunately the change in his environment had Patrick feeling under the weather, so he returned to the hotel to rest. (The good news was that he was able to join us later for dinner as he began to feel better.)

After lunch we continued our tasks of shoveling and moving dirt. Several of us began working on tying rebar, which is not a difficult task but a tricky one learn nonetheless. Thankfully, our Ecuadoran coworkers were patient with us as we learned to navigate the wire in and around the rebar. Cindy took the opportunity to try to remember and practice her Spanish that she learned more than thirty years ago.

In the latter part of the afternoon, we hosted a Vacation Bible School at the site. Several church members of the local congregation organized Bible stories, led songs, and had activities for the children. Jane and Jessica, along with our Ecuadoran interpreter Eric Soledispa, led the children in playing several games. Although language could have been a barrier, the smiles, laughter and hugs were universal. Between 25-30 children were able to enjoy this experience.

Those of us who had been on the trip in February 2011 were able to see Ottita Maria, whose house we worked on during that mission trip. It was great to see that she had established her business in her home, where she worked sewing and making outfits each day. After our first day at the site was completed, we climbed into the van and went back to our hotel, where we were grateful for warm running water so that we could wash off the dust and dirt. We later enjoyed our evening meal together, where I offered this reflection:

## Holy Ground

### *Holy Ground*

*Where you are standing...*

*standing as bricks are unloaded,  
standing as dirt is piled into wheelbarrow,  
standing as rebar is tied,  
standing in tennis shoes and steel-toed boots,  
sandals made for dress, not for hard work, or no shoes at all.*

### *Holy Ground*

*Here and there;*

*completed house that we got to see,  
where there was none.*

### *Holy Ground*

*From piles of dirt, stones, rocks  
moved from here to there and perhaps back again.*

*Ecuadoran and American feet  
together*

*blessed, as one*

*one people, one ground,  
one body,  
one Holy Ground.*

*Do not underestimate the power of your presence.*

*Young and not-so-young,  
big and small,  
each shovel full  
each rebar tied  
each rebar cut  
each barrow carried*

*Done with love,*

*love of God and neighbor and stranger.*

*Slow and steady is the race*

*we are to run.*

*Good and faithful servants,*

*Where you are standing is Holy Ground.*

Tuesday, 10/18

### Patrick—Tosagua

The day started off very well. It was slightly overcast, but the temperature was still in the 70's. The hustle and bustle in the streets was already in full swing. All kinds of produce and supplies were on the streets, going by on bicycles, motorbikes, and vintage small pickups. Children in their pressed uniforms were passing on their way to school, both on foot and standing up in the back of pickups.

I was glad to be going to work on the Habitat home today. On Monday I went back to the hotel early to answer the call of the “royal throne.” But today was a new day, and I hoped that I could hang in there. The day clicked by—digging, digging, and more digging. When we weren't digging, we pounded the ground and rock to prepare it for concrete. I was almost out of the woods, close to four and quitting time. It seemed I would make it to the end. Only one more task of the day—to sit on the ground and tie together the rebar for the concrete we would pour the following day. It was then that I noticed the sting that would come to be called the “rosh,” still rather pleased with myself for surviving the day. I would finish the day with the gang and celebrate with some Ecuador-brewed beer in large brown bottles at only one US dollar per beer. I crossed the road to buy our beer like John Wayne in *High Noon*. I loved more than anything that day drinking the cold beer in the fellowship of our hard-working crew. As day turned into night, the strong would stay up late, playing “Spoons” and “Rob Your Neighbor.” I was not one of the strong with the “rosh” in full-blown flame and the pains in my body too many to mention. I retired after dinner to my room. Going to bed after a relaxing shower was in order. But there would be no sleeping in all of Tosagua that night or, at least, in the Gold Standard Hotel in which we stayed. Our crew—that is, the “ones left standing”—were so loud with their laughter, crying, and screaming that rolled through the hotel like thunder. I could not help but laugh along with them from the second floor, secure under the mosquito net that adorned the bed. At one point hearing Pastor Mary Beth's contagious laughter brought me to my feet with aspirations of joining the fun. But once on my feet, it was clear there was no place for me to go but back to bed, and that was the end of one very hard but glorious day.



Wednesday, 10/19

### Jane—Tosagua

Following breakfast we all headed to the job site to continue our work. The morning was spent shoveling lots of rock and sand into the forms to be used in making the “mezcla” and then hauling the concrete wheelbarrow by wheelbarrow to be poured into the foundation.

Normally the floor of the house is poured on Wednesday morning and the afternoon is free to allow the floor to set without our walking on it. This time, however, the team started from the very beginning on the house and had to dig the foundations, etc. first. We weren't ready to pour the floor yet, but Kent offered us the chance to spend the afternoon at the beach anyway. The team then divided with some staying at the job site and others going to the beach. Dwight, Kent, Mary Beth, and Mike continued shoveling and hauling the concrete all afternoon while Christian, Cindy, Erick, Jane, Jessica, Linda, and Patrick enjoyed some downtime playing in the big waves of the Pacific Ocean. There were lots of unique shells on the beach, including quite a few whole sand dollars. Following a walk on the beach, Cindy, Linda, and Jessica went back in for one last dip which was enjoyable UNTIL Linda was stung by jellyfish. She was a real trooper and said it only stung for about a ½ hour and then got better.

During our breaks and travel time, we continued to work on our Spanish. The challenge of the week was learning to correctly say “excuse me” (desculpe). The Ecuadorans really got a good laugh listening to us try to say it the right way!

The evening brought even more laughs while we played Pass the Trash and Spoons, of course using American rules! In the absence of spoons, we used granola bars. The bars were just plain granola after the game, but it was fun!

This was the first game of the World Series and the Cardinals won 3–2! We retired for a good night's sleep to prepare to go at it again in the morning!



Thursday, 10/20

Linda—Tosagua

Thursday morning we started our morning with eggs with cheese, garlic toast, papaya, banana, juice, and coffee. It was also laundry day. We left for the site at 8:00 a.m. At the site we leveled off the floor and prepared them for concrete. We also started building a wall. Cindy, Jessica, and I worked on the wall. Roque Sebastián also built a section of a wall. We poured concrete into four of the pillars. There was lots of mortar mixing, concrete mixing, tamping, shoveling, and wheel-barrowing. As always, there was rebar to wire. Today was Jane's birthday. We celebrated with a cake for her at lunch AND a cake for her at dinner. We sang "Happy Birthday" to her both times. The cakes were very good with a caramel flavor, raisins and spices. We had beef potato soup, rice (of course), and what looked like beef cube steak. It was good. It was another hot day.

Jessica got to go to a local Catholic school from 2–5 p.m. with Erick. They spoke to a couple of classes about their family values and then played soccer.

The President of Habitat, Ximena, came that evening. She had dinner with us. Supper was good again. We had salad, tomato, mashed potatoes, rice and chicken. After dinner, we went to church. The pastor's daughter led the beginning of the service with song and scripture. We sang five songs, and three of the songs we knew—"Lord, I Lift Your Name On High," "Open the Eyes of My Heart," and Here I Am to Worship." Patrick read scripture in English. Erick translated. We each introduced ourselves and said something we like about Ecuador. Patrick gave a short sermon, and the pastor of the church gave a short sermon. The pastor invited Jane and Walter, a man who had been working with us all week, to come forward. Walter's birthday was on Wednesday. We sang an Ecuadoran version of "Happy Birthday," and Patrick prayed for Walter, and the other pastor prayed for Jane. It was a beautiful service. The pastor also asked Jessica to stand, and he said that she was an example to young people because she had worked hard all week.

On the way back to the hotel, we stopped to let some use the telephone and some use the computer/Internet. When we got back to our hotel, there were kids there waiting to see Jessica. We all talked outside until about 10:00 p.m. and then went into our rooms for some much-needed sleep. It was a good day.



Friday, 10/21

### Cindy—Tosagua

On Friday morning, we had juice, bananas, eggs, and “chicken cheese” sandwiches. Ximena joined us, and I did the devotion and prayer. When we arrived at the build site, the workers were already tying the rebar with wire for the floor. Most of the group spent about 2 1/2 hours helping finish the floor. Afterwards we helped spread sand over the rebar to fill in the gaps. I helped water down the floor with a water hose.

The cement mixer was started up at about 11:00 a.m., but after trying to mix the first load, it broke apart and would not tilt, so it could dump only into the wheelbarrows. Maestro called a very tall welder to come and weld a part together, after it was dragged down a side street to where the welder was. We all rested while this was being done. The mixer was brought back. It poured one load, and then died again. The workers went down the street, and it took eight guys to drag another mixer to the work site, as a tire was flat on the mixer. This mixer wouldn't work properly either, because the belt kept falling off.

A lunch of fish, rice, tomatoes, a cheese-type soup, and lemonade was brought to us. After lunch it was decided that the cement would be mixed by hand. Wheelbarrows of rock and sand were mixed on four concrete forms laying on the ground. Everybody worked hard to mix and move the concrete to the house for the floor, where Maestro and Jacinto finished it. The children arrived, and Jane played games with them after they sang songs.

When the concrete was done, a dog ran across and left his paw prints in the cement. We finished the floor at about 5:30 p.m. We took a group picture and boarded the bus. Jessica, Pat, and Christian rode a taxi back because Patrick was too wet to ride the bus. (He had poured water on himself to cool off.) Several of us enjoyed Pilsner beer back at the hotel.

Dinner was served with our guests being the family, work crew and members of Habitat. I did a devotion and prayer. Before dinner was served, our group shared what this trip meant to them and what they could change if they could. We had shrimp, rice, and plantain for dinner. Our dessert was jello with a little scoop of ice cream. After dinner many thank you's and gifts were exchanged. We all received a gift from the family and a photo certificate and a box with a hat from Habitat. Hugs and pictures followed. After goodbyes were said, we brought the clothes that we were donating down from our rooms. Some of us walked to a Karaoke bar and enjoyed drinks and Ecuadoran music and videos.



Saturday, 10/22

### Dwight—Quito

The build portion of our trip was over, and it was time to leave our Tosagua friends and head back to Quito. We left the hotel parking lot at 6:00 a.m. sharp, just as planned (Actually we were about 10 minutes late, like always, but it sounds better the other way.) for the bus ride to the Manta airport. It almost never works to take good pictures from a moving vehicle, but we couldn't help trying to get a few more good shots of the countryside.

Once in Quito we boarded another bus for what most of us thought was a short drive to a marketplace. It wasn't. The beautiful town of Otavalo was about two hours away. The short night left us tired, but for those who could stay awake, the mountain scenery was spectacular. On our arrival we enjoyed a great lunch at a small restaurant/ hostel.

From there it was just a short walk to the market, where there were rows and rows of vendors selling Ecuadoran-made goods. Kent turned some of the group loose with money (What was he thinking?) to buy some of the Ecuadoran goods to display and sell at various UCC functions. We all loaded up on gifts for our families and souvenirs for ourselves, including a sporty pair of pants Mike spotted. I'm not sure what really drives purchases like this, but I strongly suspect it was the lack of oxygen in the thin mountain air. Whatever the reason, expect Mike to look sharp at upcoming Red Bud social events.

We then went back to Quito for supper at Pizza Hut, where we met Christian's twin brother David, David's wife Vivian, and their sons, Mathais and Nicholas. Pastor Poole's futile attempt to communicate in Spanish with Mathais was hilarious to the fun-loving kid, but the two of them formed an instant friendship, and we all had a great evening.

By this time the lack of sleep had caught up with everyone, so the only thing we could do was get back to our rooms and crash for the night. Like the rest of the trip, it was a long and memorable day. With so much to see and absorb, it was hard to take it all in.



Sunday, 10/23

### Mike—Quito

Breakfast was to be at 8:00 a.m. in Hotel Dan. We all arrived to locked doors and eventually learned the restaurant lady had failed to show. Walked one block to tiny coffee shop. Ordered café and clerk said, “cappacino.” Mike said, “No, café.” She responded, “cappacino.” Mike said, “No, café.” The clerk said, “Cappacino?” Mike gave in, “Si, dos cappacino!” All the while Dwight kept telling Mike he did NOT want cappacino.

We hurried to 9:00 a.m. church at Iglesia Evangelica Luterana del Ecuador. We were running a little late, so we hurried to arrive “just in time”—to find out the service had been changed to 10:00! We blamed Christian for doing that but learned a lady had actually e-mailed Kent, so it was HIS fault! The subtle shrug of his shoulders showed how deeply he cared.

Church service was special, as it was Reformation Sunday. The church, which normally hosts separate Spanish, English and German services, combined today into one service with alternating pastors and languages. We actually sat through THREE sermons! (Patrick and Mary Beth were discreetly fist-pumping!) After service, Kent headed for a meeting with a man about a group wanting to build playgrounds with Habitat and the rest went to Mitad del Mundo (center of the world) and saw the Equator.

From there, we traveled to the Quito chapter of the Kiwanis Club to meet the Chuquiragua chapter ladies and the high school and university girls they sponsor. Everyone was very moved. (The girls were so thankful and hopeful.)

Then we went to the Center for Integrated Family Services for a tour by Helen Brown. Her personal life story and her work are extraordinary. She received a Master’s degree at age 68. We went with the Browns to have dinner at the home of the Center’s director, Graciela, and her husband. It was a beautiful home, and a very elegant traditional Ecuadorian meal was served by Graciela and her husband. To bed!



Monday, 10/24

Another day of flying. We had to leave Hotel Dan by 4:30 a.m., so we all started our day early!

The airport was crowded when we got there. As we were on our way to our gate, someone from Delta Airlines asked for our boarding passes. We were informed that Cindy was “randomly” selected to have her luggage searched. After Cindy checked in at the gate, she was escorted to where her luggage would be searched. Boarding for our flight began, and we waited and waited for Cindy. Some of us boarded the plane, and some stayed behind to wait for Cindy. Finally, Cindy came back to the gate and was able to board. She was very frustrated, angry, upset and frazzled from the search, which could have gone a lot faster if the employees doing the search would have stopped joking and sitting around and actually searched her stuff so she could board the plane. At that point, we all were ready to get back home.

The flight from Quito to Houston was good, but there was another long delay at the Houston Airport. Linda’s ears were bothering her, and she was anxious to get home, so she changed her ticket so that she could get a direct flight from Houston to St. Louis that afternoon. The rest of the group flew from Houston to Chicago and then Chicago to St. Louis, with a one-hour delay in Chicago.

The group made it back to Waterloo around 11:30 p.m. After a long, long day of traveling and an exciting, eventful 10 days in Ecuador, it was good to be home again.

