

28 Aug (AM)

Dear Mother and Daddy,

I actually feel funny writing with a typewriter--it has been so long now that I have been in my office and been at a typewriter. For over a month I have been in town at the shop every single waking hour unless somewhere else in some other urgent out-of-office event, like a session meeting of the church.

The reason has been simply that the shop was in a crisis of opportunity. We had to produce or close up, let slide the first real commercial challenge, one which could open many doors for the future. Things don't simply run along on an even keel. In this period the employment at the shop has gone from four to ten, all former students of the Institute, all trying to move on in their studies, all of the keenest we have ever had.

This influx of additional "resident" students has brought one, Toribio Mendez who is very much in need of help during this month ahead; and it is simultaneously clear that the shop itself is not over the hump but is rather in a serious way still, not in ~~the~~ design, planning or production anymore, but in accounting and billing. We simply won't get any money in to run on if we don't turn over clear and complete accounts (since we are on a cost-plus contract).

All of this both explains why I have not written to anyone (the shipment has been hung up in Miami for 3 weeks, and I have known this but have not even answered the letters--this letter is literally the only one I have written). And it will now make clear why we cannot come home right away. It is our hope to come in December, with a solid achievement behind us in records and reports, and not to let that dangle over into the next year as we have done this past time and as has been one of our big problems this year.

Samuel R. Rea, the Goodwill director, has been gone until today. His work with the records of the InterAmerican School has been nothing short of the most outstanding single contribution any volunteer worker has ever made. It is a beautiful beautiful job, and it ~~is~~ is a real inspiration to me to do the same thorough job of the other similar areas in our work down here. It even inspires me to try again to organize my own office--beyond the accounting area. Fortunately I have had for some years now all of my money matters in a tight system of bookkeeping. But I am at this point way behind in the posting of the original records and his coming has been in perfect timing to save me from going further in that direction.

He can mail this in L.A. or Stockton to hurry it up a bit. Please do forgive me for being so behind, but I do hope you can postpone your reservations in the motel. Tell us how this works out, please. Forgive me again. We hope to be home by Christmas if not sooner.

*all my love as ever.*

*Ralph*

(to continue: Presb is the 5th to 7th of Aug. On the 5th there is a meeting of all those interested in cooperatives. I am inviting Antonio up for that meeting, and he'll no doubt go up to San Pedro with the new presbytery that night. We'll talk on the brass-tacks level. I'll be glad to get your ideas before that time. But I'll sign this off now.

For one thing there is nothing I can do to advance my age sufficiently to be an elder to most of these men. I have tried to be an equal to Candelario and Inés. I am certainly with no difficulty a patrón to all the younger men who are studying and working under the Institute program. But I have not, by age alone, fitted into the category that these people all needed and sought.

Now in their desperation for this kind of authority they are thrashing around and things are coming apart at the seams. For my part I would have been very willing for the Pecks to have retired here still as part of the Presbytery--and there is every ecclesiastical ground for this. The idea of exile has to do with program and they have been ultra correct in avoiding any interference on that level. But in the matter of simple solidity in Christian homes, I have no doubt that God has not intended that the older members of the community should be exiled. However, this is all very hypothetical since it is not likely that the national church would permit Dudley to maintain his membership in the Presbytery as any retired U.S. minister would. His participation as a pastor emeritus in the internal personal relations of the congregation even as a "presence" has been correspondingly limited. The time Juan Marroquin (the Monrovia elder) seized some of Silvestre's territory and Silvestre in anger injured one of his children. It was very proper I felt for Dudley to be the one sought out by Juan Marroquin and for a man his own age-level to speak to him of Christ and his conduct.

But of course "la realidad de la situación" is that the Presbytery will no doubt have another big to-do about my deficiencies as a pastor (just as they the last meeting accused me of abducting Lencho's daughter). For me to resign will make some feel happy and others feel a bit guilty and will not resolve the basic power-vacuum at all. Elesterio may become the big man in a new Nee-sponsored church, Lencho is apparently thinking along those lines and has participated in some cultor already on that basis. Let those two struggle away, etc.

My inclination is to go ahead with what I began a month ago-- in fact ever since Synod. To recompose the three-pastor situation in which no one race or culture has top control, neither indian, latin or northamerican: by bringing in Antonio Marroquin as the latin. (\$15 per month from each of the following five: the Comité Consistorial, the church, the Institute, the woodshop, and his own trucking business). This would not affect Patrocínio's relationship to the church. Antonio is one of the most understanding of the latin pastors in the country, is fully in accord with the idea of combining work and ministry, and secular and Bible education. He is a sound man, and by no means a weak man. And, he is trying to find another spot; he asked me first about possibilities here.

I believe this would firm up the situation here, and strengthen it all around. Please do pray about this and give me what ideas come to you. Next Tuesday is the Comité Consistorial (I presented the idea as something to pray about last month), next week is the Consistorio, too. The following week is the Presbytery.

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P.S. Since writing yesterday and not getting a chance to send the letter to you, a few more pieces of data enter the picture. Apparently, from what Fernin's mother, Carmin says, Fernin was really very, very rough on Meeh. Meeh is, she says, (Carmin) going to move to the capital with the three youngest, abandon one of the deaf-mutes in a government institution, etc. (Alejandra has been crying for two days..)

Then Delfina came by. She says that a petition with about 15 signatures, including those of three elders, Juan Romero, Raymundo Elias, and Juan Marroquin, has been sent to the Presbytery. I don't know what about, but I imagine that it has to do with the lack of firing people who are under discipline, and, in general, the lack of order here.

Delfina says that Eleuterio is absolutely beside himself these days, in castigating the church for its lack of authority, and that he is eager to be fired and to take up with Noe, etc. "Con don Raúl no se arregle nada.." "dah, para que llevar cosas al Consistorio, ahí no hay autoridad.."

He has never been a member of the Consistorio, has always tended to dismiss it, to consider himself a separate power (consciously or unconsciously). Now with younger men than ever on the Consistorio, and with no one in the group acting as the big patrón, it is truly like a classroom without a teacher.

I can recall similar circumstances after the death of Alexander the Great, after the banishment of Napoleon, etc. The second-level men all stood taller and there was an inevitable rivalry between them. The Pecks, try as hard as they might, could not escape being the patronos, and the people looked to them for the move off an eyebrow to indicate which way to go. The church government and center government was all there, but the pelo blanco carried the day where necessary. This was inevitable. The evangélicos who came out of the world huddled to this very considerable and substantial moral force, and it was a blessed thing, while it lasted.

whether or not it were possible for me to fit into this chair of authority is an academic question now. I have never aspired (nor did the Pecks, no doubt) to this kind of sway over the community. At first not knowing the people well, later not wanting to see them put off trusting even more in the simple order of the church, I have tried to avoid the situation where I would be called on to settle an issue. Eleuterio has called on us in desperation more than once to keep Santos' family together, and we have always, a bit reluctantly, taken over this fole, since he did not look "up" to anyone else. In many things people have looked up to us, especially in technical things. But we have tried to see that the people trusted in their own elders and in their "own" consistorio, etc. in all matters of discipline and behaviour.

But in the absence of the older order of things, the second-level men, and all under them, have indeed suffered a severe, though not sudden shock. The patroncitos that were left behind are Eleuterio, Lencho, Virgilio, Candelario, Inés, you and myself. More than any other I could have asserted my authority, so to speak, and perhaps have carried the day. But neither here nor in Guatemalan in general, do I believe it is time for a gringo to hold things together in that way.