

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LX

March/April 2017

Number 3



*Ken & Joan Jensen
Director*

ALONG THE WAY . . .

When one of these EMU Newsletters gets mailed as late as this one, I have an unrealistic fantasy that someone out there on our mailing list has been longing for its receipt to the same measure with which I have guilt and embarrassment for being so tardy with its publication. (If per chance any of you *have* been pining for its arrival, *please* let me know!) One of the worst aspects of being the sole editor of these newsletters is that there is absolutely no one else to blame when they are dilatory. Though my imagination is fertile enough to produce an impressive list of reasons for being belated, I lack the sanguiinity that any of you could be so graciously gullible. I do apologize to the Davis family since it is the report of their trip to Uruguay with Joan and me that has been delayed in its distribution to their family and friends.

Another important news item that has been delayed is the account of the death of **Tim Bixby's father** on February 26. **Bob Bixby** was not an EMU missionary, but he was a good friend and closely related to our mission through his son. Two days after we returned home from Uruguay, Tim, **Ruth**, and their four children were living at our house after a hurried trip from France. The Bixby clan is rather large and few homes (or even hotels) can accommodate a full gathering of these folks; so, it was a blessing for Joan and me to have "our" Bixbys staying
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ANOTHER PRODIGIOUS STEP FORWARD

by Ken Jensen, director of EMU International

In mid-February, five Americans from South Carolina traded thirteen days of winter for the like number of days of summer as they flew from Charlotte, NC, to Montevideo, Uruguay. Surprisingly, there was very little climate difference between embarkment and disembarkment either way, though the temperatures in Uruguay climbed significantly during our sojourn there. Although the *casita* at **Camp Emmanuel** does not have A/C, at least all the vehicles we used were equipped with this fabulous system. (Strangely, the camp office is the only edifice at camp that sports A/C!) Thankfully, all buildings and cabins are graced with good fans. When a substantial weather front moved through southern Uruguay, during the last few days of our residence at camp in Guazuvirá, we did receive a blessed relief from the heat.

These Americans did not fly to Uruguay for the sun and sand as most vacationers do. Even though the beach is only one kilometer down a dirt road from Camp Emmanuel, none of the Yankees spent much time on the sandy shore. This was actually a "work trip" for all five of us.

Since **Jeff Davis** has been training with me to become the next director of EMU, I have had the goal that not only Jeff, but also his wife **Joanna**, would meet the Uruguayan family of EMU. In February of 2016, Jeff accompanied me to Uruguay for the Family Camp and Workers' Conference, and a tour of our churches. February 2017 was the last summer camp season for Joanna to meet almost all of our missionaries in a short period of time before Jeff is scheduled to become director. Knowing Joanna's aversion to flying, I was afraid we might have to abduct her to get her on the plane. (My own wife had the same antipathy towards flying, and now she is a willing globetrotter!) A lack of mission funds precluded purchasing a ticket for **Hannah**, the Davises' 16-year-old daughter. I wrote to **Pedro Donzé**, the camp director, and asked if Hannah could work in the kitchen during our two weeks at camp. With his approval, Hannah then sent out a letter to friends and family to raise funds for the ticket, since it was then a legitimate mission trip for her.

Our flight to Uruguay was historically par, though we were packed to the gills with supplies and items for various missionaries and the camp – which is also par. At customs, our boxes and suitcases were extensively checked twice due to some electrical tools. I figured they would take away the box of copper oxide we had to kill roots in the septic system at Camp Emmanuel – something that has become a huge and costly problem. But they didn't even question that item.

We were met by three drivers. Vehicles in Uruguay, even the "large" ones, do not have much luggage space. Also, our troop was splitting into two groups. **Joan and I** and most of the luggage was loaded into the mission's new Fiat king-cab truck. The bed is 4x4 and the second row of seats is far from spacious. Though it's a 5-person vehicle, only 2 people can sit comfortably in it! **Carlos and Beatriz** (she is the camp's secretary) loaded their car – trunk and back seat, too – and delivered it to the *casita* at camp. Jeff, Joanna, and Hannah were driven to the mission house in Montevideo by **Chicha Rodríguez**, where the Davises spent Saturday afternoon through Sunday evening with **the Steel family**.

The Davises' stay in Montevideo was to maximize their ministry experiences during our short time in Uruguay. On Saturday evening, Jeff spoke at the weekly **Calvary Temple** youth meeting. Early the next morning the Davises accompanied the hospital visitation group on their rounds at

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*Jeff, Joanna, & Hannah Davis on
Cerro San Antonio in Piriápolis*

ALONG THE WAY...*(continued from page 1)*

The Tim Bixby family leaving for Greenville, SC, from France for Bob's funeral

with us from Wednesday to Sunday. Although many of you may already know the story surrounding Bob's passing, and even though he and Bonnie served as missionaries with another organization, I want to present portions of an email that Tim sent out while he was still in France. This account is both convicting and inspiring to me, and I trust you will find it a blessing:

Pastor Robert (Bob) Bixby



Dad preached his last sermon on Hebrews 12:18-29, and the scripture reading of the day was 1 Thessalonians 4. Feeling chest pain, he first lay down. Then, because the pain persisted, he

went and told mom that he wanted to go to the hospital to get it checked out. Mom wanted to go with him, but since a church meal was in process and Mom was busy serving, he insisted he would be fine and would call her as soon as he got to the hospital. One of the teenage girls in the church told us he smiled and waved to them as he drove off. Mom never got a call, so we went looking for him about 20 minutes later. Less than a mile away, God gave him the presence of mind to pull the car off the road. A man on a bicycle rode by and saw him with his head lying forward on the steering wheel. By the time Mom arrived with Prudence, who was driving her, the emergency vehicles were there, but God had already taken Dad's spirit into His presence. Nearly the whole church was still gathered, so together they grieved the loss of their friend and pastor of more than 20 years.

Sunday was his favorite day of the week, and preaching and teaching his favorite activity. That he got to preach—and preach well—is a special blessing. The fact that he died while the church family was still gathered, yet he was not on the church premises, is also something for which Mom gives thanks. Dad had often talked about wanting to finish well. By God's grace, he did.

On that Sunday afternoon when church members were gathered around Mom grieving, Ulises, a member in the church, took the "Daily Light," that Dad always read to guests, and said, "I know what Robert would do if he were here. He would read us Scripture." So, he followed his pastor's example and did the same. (This story makes me cry to write it out!) Dad left us all a good example, a model for us and our children to follow. How thankful we all are to have good memories—a blessing that not everyone has.

Dad had a very encouraging trip to Chad less than a month ago where he spent more than two weeks teaching nearly 200 church leaders. He came home exhilarated, saying the trip could not have gone better. Not only did he feel a unique sense of usefulness ministering as an "older" pastor to men who were very eager to learn from him, but he had told both Mom and me at different times how he felt God had given him a real specific victory regarding his own internal spiritual stability. Dad was definitely on a "high," experiencing special intimacy with the Lord and joy in Him. God was preparing him.

Dad and Mom knew their time in Bordeaux was drawing to a close. Their mission board's policy was requiring them to retire out of active ministry. What to do for the church they would leave behind, and what to do themselves during "retirement," was the biggest burden they had been bearing. That burden has been removed from his shoulders.

Mom is fully aware that the long-term implications and grief cannot be processed at this time. She accepts that as a grace from God and is trying to work through everything one stage at a time—the funeral plans being the first. That being true, she has been commenting on all the little and big details that demonstrate to us God's good providence. She has not said one accusatory thing about God but has praised Him through her grief for His goodness.

Tears keep coming easily to my eyes, at seeing a picture, remembering a story, reading a note that someone has written, etc. Our biggest sadness is for our future, especially the thought that my children will no longer have him as a grandfather. However, none of us grieves for Papi/Dad/Robert. We have no doubt he is with the Lord, awake, conscious, and rejoicing in the presence of our Savior.

During the public school break in February, the Cole family drove to Algrange where Michael taught a 4-day, 16-hour course on the Synoptic Gospels at a French Bible institute. They are also praising the Lord for several other blessings. Four people were baptized at the Baptist Church of Saint Denis on the

first Sunday of March, and four others will be baptized on the first Sunday of April. The Coles also found out that Liz was granted her 10-year residency card and that Michael's should be issued shortly. At the end of April, the Coles will travel to southern France to participate in a retreat for the Baptist Church of Pessac.

The day the Davises and we arrived back in South Carolina (March 6), the Bible college (FEBU) in Uruguay had their opening service for the start of another year of classes. I do not have the statistics for new and returning students, but from the photo there seems to be a good group. John Mark and Deborah Steel, and Matias and Kristine Espinel are among the teachers this semester. Pray that the students will remain faithful to attending classes and studying, and that the student body will grow.



Faculty and students at the first semester opening of FEBU on March 6, 2017

Returning home at the beginning of March, Ted Allston completed two weeks of traveling and teaching in India with Billy Judson. While Ted was there, Billy and Saritha Judson moved to a more suitable apartment in Hyderabad. Besides other projects, Billy is planning a 360 Conference for women in August and a 360 Conference for men in November. Billy would also like to visit the USA in May to present his ministry in some churches in order to raise much needed support. Back to Ted: He will travel to Kenya to speak at a pastors' conference April 3-16. Then from May 18 to June 4, he, and possibly Marla, will go to Togo for another teaching opportunity.

Pray for our missionaries as they have special meetings for Easter. This is an especially good opportunity to present the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for your continued interest in and prayers for the ministries of EMU International. It is because of the Easter message that we do what we do. Jesus Christ is the only hope for salvation from our sins and estrangement from Yahweh God. May we never lose sight of why God has left us on this earth. ☩

Another Prodigious Step Forward (continued from page 1)

the children's and women's wards at a major hospital several blocks from the mission house. After the hospital visitation, Chicha drove the Davises to the *feria* in downtown Montevideo where they were able to observe the open market meetings that are directed by evangelist **Juan Gonzalez** every Sunday morning. This street market is still touted as the largest open-air market in South America. Hannah got involved handing out tracts to passersby as the singing and preaching were going on. After lunch at the home of **Ursula Thiessen** and Chicha, along with **Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira and his family**, and a short siesta, Jeff preached at the evening service of Calvary Temple of Montevideo. After the service and a time of fellowship, Pedro Donzé drove the Davises to Camp Emmanuel – stopping to buy pizza for supper and bread for breakfast on the way to camp.



Hannah distributing tracts at the Feria

Meanwhile, Joan and I spent a relatively restful weekend at camp. Without a vehicle, there were few places we could go. Joan unpacked the boxes we brought to Uruguay for others, and separated the goods into their appropriate destination piles. I spent many productive hours obsessing over which of the two *casita* bedrooms would be best for the Davises. Thankfully, Joan put an end to my misery by making the right decision, which worked out great for the next two weeks!

The opening session of the **Workers' Conference** got off to a late start on Monday morning due to some tardy arrivals, but not late enough to throw off the whole morning schedule, and Jeff had plenty of time for his premier lesson. Strangely enough, Jeff's subject for the 9-lesson series was "How to Study the Bible." Though the audience

consisted of veteran missionaries, the material was geared for just such a group. One main emphasis was for them to be encouraged to teach these things to those they minister to. There was also a workshop each day where there was interaction between Jeff and our missionaries on a particular subject. The feedback I received concerning the lessons was very good.



Ricardo, Mayka, & baby Gabriel

It was encouraging to see Jeff and Joanna fellowshiping with our missionaries. Unfortunately, for a number of reasons, several of our missionary wives were not able to attend, so Joanna was not able to meet all of our ladies. The best reason for missing the conference was given by **Mayka Windmoller**: after 14 years of marriage she gave birth to their first child, **Gabriel**, on February 16 – the Thursday before the conference began. Her husband, **Ricardo**, was also explicable absent from the conference.

Linguistically, **Hannah** was thrown into the deep-end-of-the-pool as she worked in the kitchen and dining room with all Uruguayans, only one of whom spoke some English. From the looks of things, they all got along well. (Besides working in the kitchen in the PM hours, Joanna kept Hannah's homeschooling going in the mornings.)

Jeff ended up with a little more "director-in-training" work than either he or I anticipated at the beginning of the week. After lunch on Monday, the **Uruguayan Board of Directors – the Junta** – had its first (and last for me) meeting of the 3-day conference. There are always plenty of matters to discuss, so this was not unusual to begin having Junta meetings on

Day One. Our two primary topics were, for me, rather stressful. The Candy Land royalties are down another \$20,000 over last year's more than \$20,000 decrease. **Pedro Donzé** is our office administrator in Uruguay, and he is the person most responsible for presenting figures for the new budget each year. These income decreases are like being told that you have to drive further with less gas using the same vehicle. At the same time, there is a great need to hire someone to help Pedro at the camp and in the office. We have a couple who are capable and willing to do the work, but there are no funds to pay them or rent a place for them to live. To say the least, there were no good or workable answers to any of our problems. (And, yes, we had all been praying about these things for quite a while.) Anyway, the point is that my **Trigeminal Neuralgia** began to make itself known in a rather unpleasant way. From then until the end of the Workers' Conference, I had to keep a low profile to prevent further exacerbation of the T.N. During the conference, it is my custom to interview as many of our missionaries as I can to receive a personal update on their ministries. Though I was unable to handle the interviews, Jeff and Joan filled in as Jeff interviewed one of the men who was there without his wife, and Joan interviewed the single women. By the beginning of Family Camp the next week, I was able to once again engage in the interview process, something that is (almost) always a blessing.

Thursday was a rest day for Jeff and his family at camp. Joan and I were slated to visit three of our missionary families and see the new houses they were either building or already living in. I opted out of this day-long venture at the last minute and remained in my room resting while **Chicha** drove **Joan** to visit **the Oliveras** in Pando, **the Diazes** in San Fernando, and **the Espinels** in Montevideo, including lunch with **Ursula, Chicha, and Julia Alvarez**. Joan took plenty of pictures and gave me a report of her visits. It is a blessing to see how the Lord has and is providing privately owned houses for these families.

Friday was a bit different. Joan and the Davises wanted to visit the little resort town of **Piriápolis**, about 30 minutes from Guazuvirá, which Jeff had visited last year. The Fiat truck was available to us, but I was the only one who knew the area, including the mountain Pan de Azucar (Sugar Loaf). This mountain is one of my favorite places in Uruguay, and I have hiked it several times. However, on this excursion I had two new experiences. We first drove to the top of Cerro San Antonio, which overlooks the city's beautiful bay, and even Punta del Este can be seen in the distance. We then did some window shopping before buying ice cream cones along the water front. What was new for me was then visiting the **Palacio de Piria**, the home of the wealthy baron who founded the town. The "palace" is now a museum, which leaves much to be desired, though still somewhat interesting. We also took a walking tour of the zoo at the base



Jeff used all 3 of our regular translators during his 2 weeks of preaching: Matias for Workers' Conference, John Mark for part of the Family Camp, & Chicha for the end of Family Camp and preaching in churches

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Another Prodigious Step Forward *(continued from page 3)*

of Pan de Azucar. The animals housed here are all indigenous to Uruguay. Did you know that the largest rodents in the world live in this tiny Republic?

On Saturday, Chicha picked up the Davises at camp and drove them to **Treinta y Tres** where **Rubito Rodriguez** pastors Calvary Temple of "33." He and his wife **Marita** and daughter **Vicky** live in the upstairs parsonage, where the Davises stayed for the next two nights. Jeff spoke at the Saturday night youth meeting and at church the next day. On Sunday they also drove out to Camp Bethel to take a look at EMU's second largest camp facility in Uruguay.

On Monday morning Chicha and the Davises returned to Camp Emmanuel where **Family Camp** had already started. Family Camp at Camp Emmanuel always starts on the Monday of Carnival, and the date for Carnival is set by the government. This year that Monday was February 27, so late in the season that some schools were scheduled to start before the week was out! This is THE major summer vacation in Uruguay, so the government seems to have really blown it this year! The number of campers was lower this year than is normal, but a nice group made it out for the whole week, while some folks came for one, two, or three days.

Tradition now has it at Camp Emmanuel that when we have an English speaker as a guest teacher, there will also be a Spanish



Above: 2017 Family Camp

Below: Kitchen staff & Uruguay missionaries (Jeff took the photo)



Pastor Gustavo & Alejandra de Oliveira

preacher for one of the sessions – usually in the evening. Of course, Jeff was the English teacher, but he was given the evening service, and the Spanish teacher was **Pastor Gustavo de Oliveira**, who took the morning hour. It was a relaxing week unless you were into soccer or some other energetic sport. I chose doing a few interviews and taking siestas!

For our last lunch in Uruguay, Joan and I took the Davises, Donzès, and Beatriz and Carlos to a quaint restaurant in a neighboring town – La Florista – for a lunch of chivitos, one of my favorite Uruguayan menu items, and most Americans agree. The afternoon was spent packing for our evening flight home and cleaning the *casita*.

Although my personal plans did not turn out as I had hoped, this trip to Uruguay was a major step forward for Jeff and Joanna as they were able to interact with our missionaries in Uruguay. We ask for your prayers as Jeff and I continue to work together. ✝



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