

Jan 29, 2007

Greeting to all,

I arrived safely in Liberia late in the evening Jan 18th. After a small welcoming dinner at the Lutheran Church of Liberia Compound in Monrovia, we spent the night at a guest house a few blocks away. After 2 days in the air it is always a special treat to sleep horizontal.

Thursday we spent the morning doing some business for this year's construction project and supply shopping for our team before starting our long journey in the bush to Curran Hospital, Zorzor. About 3 hours up country we stopped at Phebe Hospital to say hello and drop off a few things. It is great to visit old friends in the Phebe area.

Wanting to reach Curran Hospital by sun down and realizing we had another 2 hours of rough dirt road ahead of us, we cut our social time short and headed off for Curran Hospital.

With no rain since November the trip to Zorzor was plenty dusty. Bouncing along the dusty road, spending as much time off your seat as on it, every time we passed another vehicle everyone would hurry to shut windows to avoid the choking cloud of red dust.

After finally reaching Curran Hospital, I received the neatest return greeting from 3 little children that live in the neighborhood. They ran up to me and threw their arms around my legs and said.... "Gary ... we glade you come back".

Our porch was adorned with palm branches woven into arches decorated with little white flowers. This is a traditional Liberian way of welcoming honored guests.

These are the precious moments that make the long dusty ride back in the bush worthwhile.

I am sorry to say I just missed a very special occasion at Curran Hospital. Jan 9<sup>th</sup> President Ellen Sirleaf arrived at Curran to celebrate the rededication of Curran Lutheran Hospital. It was quite a special day for the people of Zorzor and even more precious for the employees of Curran to shake the hand of their president. It would have been nice to meet her but maybe later.

I spent Fri, Sat, and Monday working with Jim Foster putting our plans together for this year's construction project and talking with carpenters, masons, and electricians negotiating contracts. The major portion of this year's work will be the roofing of the remaining portion of Curran Hospital, close to 9,500 sq. ft.

Tuesday, our first real day of construction, we had 37 people working. By knock off time Saturday we have made over 40 trusses and 20 of these set in place in the surgical wing. Not bad for 5 days of work. Praise God!!!

Since we are moving so fast, it has been a struggle keeping the carpenters supplied with lumber and masons supplied with blocks, and sand. Thursday Jim had to make an emergency run to a village about 15 miles away to get some lumber we were out of.

Probably one of the greatest challenges doing a job like this, being over 5 hours away from your suppliers, is timely procurement of building material. Getting building materials here, keeping your workers happy and productive and keeping workmanship up.....is a huge, sometimes nearly impossible, task.

Is all this hassle worth it??

I remember being here at Curran Hospital in 2005 to do an assessment of a renovation, not knowing God had planned for me to be part of it in 2006 and 2007. But Tuesday noon on our first day of construction, sitting overlooking the hospital with our 37 workers eating rice and soup, I could get a good perspective of the finished half of the hospital completed last year right aside of the yet destroyed hospital area that is our work this year.

Is all this hassle worth it??

Ask the 10,913 outpatients that were treated here at Curran in 2006!!

Ask the mothers of the 222 babies that were born here at Curran in 2006!!

Ask the 1890 people that were treated for malaria at Curran in 2006!!

Is all this hassle worth it?? It certainly is!!

Gosh! I am embarrassed to even mention my small inconvenience.

Without question.....this is where HE wants me!!

Please pray for our productivity bringing Curran back to life and growing relationships with our workers.

Please pray for safety in the work place and traveling on the road.

Thanks for your support and prayers.

In HIS service.....gary