

Greetings from Honduras—finally! The ship is in an Alabama drydock, all 265 feet of it completely out of the water, with gaping holes torched in the hull while workers weld over what's rusted away since our last shipyard visit. I, meanwhile, am living in the Honduras town the ship will tie up in next month. By the time it sails down here to meet the group of sixteen Discipleship Training School students I flew down with last week, it ought to be a little more seaworthy, ready for another cycle of hard work and hot weather. Although I have a suspicion my porthole will still leak.

The students in this DTS are handling very well the little peculiarities of life with Mercy Ships as they've transitioned from lecture phase to outreach. Their last few weeks of classes on board were livened up by the total absence of heat on the ship while the HVAC systems were worked on. At least one crew member was sighted typing in ski gloves while outside temperatures dipped below freezing at night. They expressed a fair amount of interest when the local YMCA offered us free hot showers and sauna use. Then, of course, they were rapidly introduced to the little peculiarities of Central American weather (somewhat hotter), as well as of Central American cuisine (tasty, but it's still beans three times a day), not to mention the effects thereof on the North American digestive tract. I will withhold the usual details, but I will say that we are very thankful we do have two bathrooms for the twenty of us living in this house, because they both often have running water for flushing. Between the occasional scorpion in the kitchen, the armies of ants marching through whenever it rains long enough, and the sand flies (two hundred and sixty-four bites on one person is the current record), I'm getting used to life in Latin America again. The funniest thing is that I kind of like it. Perhaps it's because I learn something new every time. Did you know that geckos, when living in your walls, periodically make strange chirping noises at night, for reasons known only to themselves? Personally, I had not been aware of this.

If you've eaten a Dole banana lately, very likely it was trucked past this house on its way to yours. The town we're in has about two thousand people, but it adjoins the second-largest port facility in Honduras. There is one church, which is vibrant and growing, and we're finding ways to get involved with their work. People have already told the four of us on staff how much they appreciate what the students have been doing in town. Mainly it's been a lot of praying and planning thus far, but there's no shortage of need, as ever. We can't do much for the physical need until the ship gets here, but spiritually and socially things are different. I knew from past experience in Honduras that it was common for men to have children by three or four different women, and for women to have children by the time they're fourteen or fifteen years old, but it seems worse here. We met a nineteen-year-old the other day who has two kids aged seven and eight.

So, please pray for our students as they continue to get connected in town—just today, for instance, the local school invited us to come in soon and teach about healthy family life. We also hope to include some AIDS education, a frighteningly real need for innocent children and adults alike. But no amount of social work can really touch the most basic issues, and people here seem to be realizing more and more that—simplistic as it sounds—only when they turn to God are their deepest needs filled and the problems in their society begun to be addressed. In this tiny town, people in the church tell us, the effects on civic life have been startlingly apparent as more and more of their neighbors have been coming to that realization. It's exciting to be here watching, available as tools to help it happen! I'll be here in Honduras for almost five months this time, but there'll be time for fun as well. The ship should arrive around the last week of March to begin its own outreach, and I'll move back on board to become the warehouse manager again, organizing the ship's medical supplies. Thank you for your kindness in helping to keep me here, in reaching out through me. I wish you could see all this for yourself!

Jeremy