

From Ship to Shore...

August 2003



Hello from Belize!

Oh, I wish I could have you all come visit the ship in Dangriga, Belize! We have been here for a week already, and I can already tell that it will be difficult to leave. The country is absolutely beautiful with its lush plants overgrowing every area man hasn't touched, and its friendly culture full of smiling people everywhere. Just to give you a small picture of my home for the next few months, the dock is set very far apart from the city of Dangriga. The closest thing to us is a house located a mile away, and the nearest store is 3 miles away in town. Most of the country of Belize is considered a jungle, and the area we are in is a swamp. I have met more tropical animals walking on the single road to town than I ever wanted!



I have met several Belizeans so far, and have to say that they are some of the warmest, friendliest people I have met. I walked into town with a group from the ship on my second night in Belize, and we were delighted to find that almost everyone we met along the way greeted us with big smiles and waves. The community here is very open in the sense that when people are not working, a lot of time is spent outside the house, just visiting with neighbors or whoever happens to come by.

And like most Latin American cultures there is always more than enough time to spend visiting with people, just building relationships. I think we can learn a thing or two from them 😊

I heard a message in a local church just this morning that reminded me of what I am doing here in Belize, working with the *Caribbean Mercy*. The pastor referred to a passage from the Bible, John 13:34-35, where Jesus said to His disciples shortly before He was crucified, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." How applicable these words are to my situation! The people that I will be meeting and befriending here have heard the message of the Gospel numerous times, in numerous forms. Several short-term missions teams have come here so that the natives are almost "overevangelized". Many have accepted the offer of salvation, many

have rejected it altogether, but perhaps many more have become jaded to it. But Jesus put it so clearly to His disciples – *Love* will make the difference. My duty...no, my *privilege* here in Belize is to love these people. Before all of the services we can provide for them in medical surgeries, construction projects, and the like, we need to start with love. That is quite a challenge, to love others as Jesus loves us. But with His power and grace, that is the challenge I need to rise to! Please pray for me as I discern the most appropriate ways to show that love to people. I do not want to be offensive with my American mindsets, but instead want to meet them in their cultural context.

One of the key things that we will be doing here will be interceding in prayer for this country and city. Please join me in praying for the churches, that they would grow and remain strong in a spiritually difficult culture. The Christians here are fighting against a lot of paganism and voodoo worship.

I thank God for my family and friends back home, and know that I wouldn't be able to be doing this without you all and the support you have been to me. Thank you!



Love,
Katie