

Guatemala April 2, 2013

Arrived very early, airport nearly empty. Chatting with woman bound for Galapagos. I commented that some people make the mistake of checking their medicines. She blanched. She'd checked her medicine. Me foot in mouth, backpedal... "Oh these days they don't lose luggage like they used to."

Airport time is different. It's already boarding time - seems like I just got here.

In LA, about 40 young LDS missionaries, boys in suits, girls in dresses. Going on a 2-yr mission to Guatemala. Look about 20 yrs old. Full of excitement. Reminds me of my Peace Corps experience. Except they're going to proselytize (was I doing the same?). The girls' name tags all said "Hermana" (sister) & the boys' said "Elder" which seems hyperbolic, given their youth. On the plane I sat next to - I kid you not - "Sister Vroom". As they boarded, they threatened to break into hymns, further reminding me of the Kumbaya scene in "Airplane".

Slept an hour on LAX airport floor (buttpad for pillow & cloth wrap for blanket). Woke chilled.

Slept ~4[#] hours on plane with minor awakenings for stiffness (stool, lumbar pad, inflatable pillow worked like a charm - & window seat). Woke to a ribbon of sunrise on the horizon, dim shapes of volcanoes below.

6 AM The airport was quiet & clean. Free carts at baggage claim. Baggage arrived quickly. Immigration was fast & I didn't have to go through customs. The shuttle to Antigua is right outside the airport door (to the right) & appears to run whenever it's full. The driver who I think spoke only Spanish - was listening to religious testimonials. The city was just waking up - it was about 7 when the shuttle left. The smog looked & smelled thick, with busses belching black smoke. But the city itself appeared clean, with no litter or graffiti. Lots of Taco Bells, a Walmart sign, a mix of third world & modern storefronts.

The ~~roads~~ Traffic was heavy, with motos weaving through. Only three of us in the shuttle. No seatbelts.

45 minutes to Antigua, with not much break in development. Purple bougainvillea, women with bowls of corn on their heads. The "chicken busses" (decorated city busses) are often quite beautiful. Pedestrians & school kids walk on the highway shoulders.

I'm traveling with about 70 lbs. of donations including a 50-pound duffel. I was worried about how I'd get it to the hotel, but the shuttle dropped me at the hotel & carried it inside! I'm staying at Casa Jacaranda, which appears pretty empty. I have my own room. It's about 6x15 feet with a twin bed, bench, & shelf. A bare bulb is the light. There appear to be no outlets. The walls are a cheery yellow. The window looks onto a brick wall. The bed ~~is~~ is comfortable - I crashed for two hours. Awoke at 9:15 Seattle time, 10:15 local time.

Freshened up, emailed Grant, checked out the Casa. Nice garden w/ tables out back. It's very clean.

Went out looking for lunch. It's quite warm, breezy, hazy. Can see the outline of a volcano

close by. Lunch at Cafe Colonial: scrambled eggs, fried plantains, black beans, cheese, crema, bread fruit. Q25, about \$3. The plantains were especially yummy. I was hungry! Sitting by the door, with a nice breeze, watching the world go by, lots of gringos but also lots of locals. So far I'm the only gringo in this restaurant.

Walked to Parque Central. Kids getting out of school in uniforms. Park is clean, surrounded by beautiful buildings. Lots of school kids, a few women selling trinkets. Decide to head back to Casa to see if I can find someone to hang out with via Meetup or AirBnB. It doesn't seem like there's enough to do here for 2 days. On the way back saw glowing yellow & white Nuestra Señora de la Merced church. Easter was 3 days ago & the church is still beautifully decorated with roses, gerbera daisies, gold cloths. Soaring music is playing & it's beautiful. Churches, temples, mosques are great places of refuge when traveling. Cool, calm, meditative. Let go of the religion & focus on their holiness.

Put on shorts & sandals & checked email.

Carole sent an email telling me to check out the market. I didn't even know there was a market. It's west of my hostel on a wide blvd. with a tree-filled median. Most of it isn't much, but get to the middle of the actual building & there are fountains & courtyards surrounded by nicer shops. After leaving the market I passed a juice bar I had seen earlier & decided to check it out.

The Guatemalan woman who owns it suggested a mix of mango & two other fruits that are healthy for the pancreas, plus yogurt & nuts. It was delicious. Q20, about \$2.60. Then I began talking with Patricia & Marco, her husband. They're probably mid-60's, have three sons in their mid-30s. They are passionate about healthy food & are vegetarians. They are also pretty new age & we talked about zodiac signs & realizing our full potential as human beings.

I was thrilled to be able to have a conversation like this in Spanish. Hers was easy to understand, his was a bit more difficult (he spoke more quickly). It turns out that today was

* They also believe you should have three bowel movements a day, & told me some ways to train my intestines. Interesting concept to ponder.

their first day in business. They also sell homemade granola (they gave me a sample) & toasted nuts. I loved talking with her, but found his intensity a bit wearisome.* She said it was a bit hotter than usual today. Showed my pictures, which they liked.

By late afternoon it began to cool off. Back to the hotel to change into long pants. Then headed toward the east part of town. (Antigua is divided into quadrants with the Parque as the center.) The first thing I came upon was a beautiful yellow arch. There I ran into the gay couple I'd seen on the shuttle this morning. Took their picture & they took mine. We walked & chatted for a while. A black man & an Argentinian, both from LA. They're staying at a deluxe resort & said it's like a museum.

The ~~troncal~~ I had hoped to find is gone, alas. ~~Barbacoa~~ The area east of the parque is more upscale, with wider, smoother sidewalks. There was a pretty nice view of one of the volcanoes. On the way back I booked a one-hour massage (\$35) at Mayan

Spa for tomorrow afternoon. Decided to go to Rainbow Cafe for dinner & open mic night. Had a wonderful stir fry. It's a young gringo hangout & I'm craving some gringo energy. They're playing "Colin" music. He would love it here. Watched a group of guys about his age drinking beers together. They were idly chatting & all looking at their phones. My how times have changed since my young traveling days.

By the time open mic started, the cafe was pretty full. It's a very nice place, but loud. Left about 9. The streets were surprisingly quiet. Am feeling lonely - adjusting to traveling alone - it's been a while. This hotel is too dark & quiet - there are no people hanging out here. Glad I brought my Netbook - free wifi everywhere.

Forcing myself to stay up until 10 local time, but am tired after last night's disjointed sleep.

Thursday April 4

Slept great, awoken only once by the sonorous voice of someone skipping outside my door. The walls here are paper thin.

Up around 6 - another sunny day. Yogurt, fruit, & granola & o.j. included in free breakfast.

Walking tour (I'm doing it backwards...).

Iglesia de San Francisco (St. Francis) has a beautiful painting with lots of indigenous people. The recently-elected Pope is named (chose the name) Francis, so this church has his picture prominently displayed.

The Antigua is kept very clean & there are many security officers. It's nice that they can pay so many people to take care of the city & provide the jobs.

It's quite warm already...

The public bathrooms (you pay a small fee) are spotless. (My tummy is a bit unhappy.)

There are lots of smokers. Also lots of cell phones. I suspect that plans are a lot cheaper here.

It's very hazy today, which is making it a bit cooler.

This morning at breakfast there was an American guy who's a supervisor at a large Canadian silver mine up near XeXe. He's been here 1.5 years & doesn't really speak Spanish. He travels the world from job to job as a heavy equipment operator. He says he's a "whore" who'll go anywhere for the money. He was kind of loud & in-your-face. He had to rush off before I had a chance to ask him what he does with all the money.

The locals here are very nice. There's very minimal hawking. This place is swarming with tourists yet locals still say hi.

Nim Po't is a traditional arts center with labeled outfits from all over the country. They also sell used huipiles (embroidered & woven blouses). It's worth a gander.

Walked up to Cerro de la Cruz, a big cross on a hill overlooking Antigua & the Agua Volcano.

Many of the restaurants in Lonely Planet don't exist anymore so I settled for the Cafe Condessa ~~near~~ the main square. It's not very good... The potato leek soup was gross, but I ate it.

The sidewalks here are treacherous - you

really have to watch where you're walking. This makes ogling difficult! The streets are very rough cobblestone and serve as built-in traffic calming devices.

I wonder if one reason it's so quiet here at night is b/c many of the locals live in nearby villages & go home at the end of the day.

I haven't seen any men in traditional clothing but many women wear it, & I'm glad because it's beautiful.

Yesterday I found a 10 note on the sidewalk & decided to give it to a beggar. Easier said than done. There aren't that many beggars, and I'm not sure if it's a good idea to give them money. Is it a local custom? Does it create more begging? I finally gave it to a man with a severely handicapped boy in a wheelbarrow. A poor woman saw me & said "Hey, for me!"

It got quite windy in the afternoon. But first, after lunch I went back to the hostel to do email. A group of 13 college students had just arrived from PA & were

being oriented. They'll be doing service work around Antigua for 8 days. It was fun listening in on the orientation.

Before my 4:00 massage I walked to the park & sat for a while, watching the world go by. At 4:00 I went to the Mayan Spa (between Plaza Merced & the Arco). Luz gave me a fantastic 60-minute massage for \$35. I walked back to the hostel, oily, for a shower, but there was no hot water, and I realized I'd brought two conditioners & no shampoo! ~~Luz~~ I did have soap, but didn't want to stand under the cold water, so took a perfunctory sponge bath. Hopefully Opal House will have a shower...

Antigua's altitude is 5000 ft. & apparently can take some getting used to for some people. I have been feeling a bit headachy & lethargic but figured it was the heat & lack of sleep.

Decided to go back to the Rainbow for dinner b/c I love the atmosphere & music & the food & prices. On the way I spotted the cinnamon roll place I'd noticed yesterday, & bought one for my trip tomorrow. They

were handmade by a sweet young woman (her husband makes the bread).

Dinner was fab: roasted vegie baguette sandwich (lots of caramelized onions), chips w/ tomato salsa (no peppers) & a small salad w/ organic veggies. I saved half the bread for tomorrow & splurged on dessert - a huge piece of carrot cake w/ buttercream frosting. Couldn't even finish it - more for breakfast tomorrow. Total about \$9.

Back to hotel, pack, & to bed at 8:30

Friday, April 5

A restless night. Dogs barking, the bed was harder than the night before, the couple in the room next to me (two layers of drywall away) were up talking most of the night. Thank goodness for ear plugs. I found an online alarm clock, but for some reason it woke me up at 10:30 by flashing - maybe it was warning me that my computer was going to sleep. Half awake I reset the alarm & the sleep options. It then went off correctly at 5am. Just getting light at 5:30.

The shuttle arrived at 5:40, a nice van with a few ~~B~~ people already on board. Luggage goes on top. A B-passenger van w/ 12 people, mostly young travelers.

The hiway out of Antigua starts out one lane. There's a parade of busses - so many busses. Clouds of black smoke & diesel fumes. When we ~~finally broke free of~~ There were some attractive parks & neighborhoods outside of the downtown core. Hiway 1 is a two-lane hiway, windy & steep. The windows of the van steamed up, had to wipe with a Kleenex to see out. Along the sides of the hiway was densely packed tin shack shops & light industrial, lots of billboards, lots of color. Thick pollution - if you don't like emissions testing, come here & you will. Gas about \$4.50 per ~~liter~~ ~~gal~~ ~~\$18.20 gal.~~

The rope holding our luggage onto the roof is tap-tapping like tablas. The news is blaring in Spanish on the radio. Views of a cloud-draped volcano. The volcanoes here are young & steep-sided. Ugly towns, ~~the~~ farms, fields, & fertilizer ads. The driver talking on his cell phone as we flew along the very curvy road. (Busses passed us, flying around corners practically on two wheels.) Glad for motion sickness pills & a handhold.

I have seen no bugs so far on this trip - no mosquitoes, no flies. We climbed & climbed, up into fog & grey. Passed a "Tienda Karen" & a "Cafe Karen".

Yesterday the Guatemalan couple in Antigua told me that the reason each village has its own distinct clothing is b/c the conquistadors wanted to be able to tell where people came from, to better control them. The people then developed pride in their distinctive costumes.

At the Para turnoff the sun emerged. We plunged down a steep, windy road toward the lake. Before that(?) we drove through Sololá which was having its Friday market & the place was packed.

Very exciting to finally see Lake Atitlán & the volcanoes! We stopped at a viewpoint for photos. Arrived in Para about 8am. (one hotel guy told me ~~the trip would be~~ was 3.5 hours, the other said 2-2.5. why the discrepancy? It was about 2 hours.)

Para is crowded & ugly - at least the part

I saw. I may try to stay an extra night in San Juan, if I like it better. I took my first tuk tuk ride, to the Godinez bus stop. Part way there I realized that I'd forgotten my pillow in the van! I offered to pay double (10Q, about \$1.30) if he'd take me back to get it. As I grabbed it and climbed back in, he was cracking up about the crazy gringo who paid him double just to get her pillow!

At the Godinez bus stop I chatted with a Mayan woman. She's from San Lucas but lives in the capitol and came home to help her sick mother. She was really nice & asked me lots of questions. I showed her my pictures, which then got passed around the bus. I was the only gringo on the bus. At one point there were twenty of us crammed into the beat up old van, mostly hardworking peasant types in traditional clothes. They were playing great Latin music. As we trundled along I felt surges of joy and realized they are one of the reasons I am addicted to travel. Is it an adrenaline rush at being in the unknown, out of my comfort zone?

In Godinez I managed to carry my heavy bag to a store with a phone. I dialed the number Will had given me & the operator said it didn't exist. I tried again - same message. They pointed me across the street to another shop. The sullen young man behind the counter didn't have a phone to use, only phones to sell.

So I approached a tuk tuk driver to ask if he knew the way to Casa Opalo. He was very friendly & nice, though he did ask for 30Q, which was probably a lot, but still less than \$4. Up the hill we went in his little red tuk tuk, him chattering all the way. He dropped me off at the house but was afraid to stick around because of the "guard dogs" (which turned out to be a friendly old rottweiler & shepherd but serve the purpose of helping to deter thieves).

There was no sign of any people (I knew Will was gone because we'd seen him going

down the hill as we were going up in the tuk tuk). I knew Diane was leading so just walked down the path until I found the school. It's spectacularly sited, with a sweeping view of the lake below. It's in a brand new building they just opened in January. Downstairs is a classroom, upstairs is a playroom. There were about a dozen adorable preschoolers sitting around doing Montessori activities. I sat down and watched & chatted quietly. They proudly wanted to show me everything they were doing. I fell in love with Kevin, a precocious 4-year-old who loves to talk & appears very intelligent. After a while it was snack time on the patio, overlooking the lake. The kids helped make tortillas & beans & juice, then later brushed their teeth & washed their own plates. Then it was time for outside play on the adjacent play area. The boys raced around like crazy. Back in the classroom they learned continents. They were getting tired at the end of 4 hours. Soon it was time to go home. They piled into "Don Guillermo's" yellow tuk tuk. I sat in

front with ^{tiny} Emerson on my lap. Down the steep, rocky driveway we bumped & onto hiway 11, only recently repaired after Hurricane Agatha dumped 3 ft. of rain in 24 hours & washed out most of the road along with towns & people below. Down the road into through Agua Escondida, stopping to drop off one, two, or three kids at a compound where they were met by a mom or grandma & other children.

I asked Diane if she was worried about people beating down her doors for free schooling, & having ^{to} turn away kids. On the contrary, she says it's been a struggle to get kids b/c for several reasons. She says she won't let kids come to school sick (one boy had diarrhea all over her bathroom & patio - not fun to clean up), & some parents get mad about that & won't send their kids back. Many parents won't commit, sending the kids only when the kids feel like coming. Diane tells the parents it's all or nothing. She says parents indulge their kids here, and when Diane sets limits on

behavior, some kids won't come back. There is also the local gossip mill - some people say Diane is going to kidnap the kids.

After our return from town, Will made a huge bowl of guacamole with local chips. More like round pita chips than ~~the~~ tortilla chips, they are thick, not greasy, not too salty, & very crunchy. They have 1000 avocado trees here, 16 different kinds, but Diane doesn't like avocados! They usually sell the fruit to a wholesale picker each year for about \$2 a tree.

We talked about microfinance options for women, & they are very limited. There's a glut of textiles on the market. Diane has given this a lot of thought in the 4 yrs. they've lived here, & has concluded that consumables such as food are the best option. (They bought the property seven years ago & spent 3 yrs. renovating it & raising money.)

After lunch Will & I went back to town to pick up the girls for an afternoon class about girl issues. It was an amazing experience to be part of. Jaquelin (?) talked to the girls about things their mothers, doctors, schools apparently don't, including menstruation & not having

sex too young. Time will tell if the community gets upset about these things being discussed with their daughters. The girls ranged in age from 10-12. Many Mayan girls have babies by the time they're 14 or 15. Often the boy will split. It's common for men to have multiple families & support none of them. This dooms the women & children to lives of poverty.

The girls' class started in the chapel, a soaring space, anchored deep into the earth but with tall windows facing the lake. All of the wood & plaster came from the property. Jaquelin sang songs with the girls & read a few bible verses about their bodies being their temple. She talked about respecting their bodies & not letting boys do what they want with them. After the discussion of menstruation (signs, symptoms, feelings) she asked for questions. At first the girls were shy but soon the questions came in a torrent.

Later we moved to the school where the kids made paper journals & decorated them with stickers — a huge hit!

* I also showed them all my photo albums,
which they loved.

21

After a watermelon snack & a game of pickup sticks*, we drove the girls home. I felt sad saying goodbye to them, not knowing if I'd ever see them again.

Notes from today's conversations with Will & Diane:
coffee rust has apparently killed 70% of the trees in Guatemala, but their 1000 trees have not been affected.

The area is plagued by earthquakes, rain, landslides, deforestation, fires. Firewood is a scarce resource. They had to build a fence & get dogs to protect their trees from being cut for firewood. They want to protect the steep slope from landslides.

I asked Diane if she missed living in the US:
"I don't miss living in a country based on fear."

They have no address & so get no physical mail.
They have an apartment for a woman & kids if someone needs transitional housing due to abuse or to get back on their feet financially.
They get referrals from local & city-based agencies.
There's no one living here now,

Every Feb. a group of doctors comes to do

* A local preacher gave hate sermons against will a Catholic (Diane is Protestant). The preacher left though because after a while people stopped coming.

surgery for a week. The ^{mission} hospital in nearby San Lucas had a nice operating room but no equipment. Dr. B. had a cart full of donated equipment.

They have 70 acres here with coffee & avocados, about 1000 of each. 6 kinds avocado.

The majority of Guatemala's people are indigenous. There are 25 mayan dialects.

This is the best microclimate, with the best coffee in the world. 5-7K feet altitude. They got 600 lbs. this year & sell it stateside. Arabica trees live 75-100 years. Picked in Jan-Feb.

There's a deep religious schism here between Catholics & Evangelicals.* The latter was deliberately introduced by the US govt. to destabilize the country.

NY City ships its garbage to Guatemala.

During dinner of cheese ~~&~~ tortellini & salad ~~&~~ they talked about the challenges of being here. They visited this land "on a lark" & both felt a strong calling to do something to help the kids here.

Will was a podiatrist at Virginia Mason & had been ~~seen~~ "Doctor of the year" that year. Diane was a nurse. They gave up their jobs, & income. They sold their home & took all of their equity & their 401k plans to buy the property (they had to raise another \$350K of the \$450K asking price). The property title was transferred to the Casa Opalo charity they founded.

This undertaking has been much more challenging than they expected. Besides the rigors of working a big farm (they also have turkeys, goats, rabbits, birds, cats, dogs) Will shows me his hands, rough from work & stained by coffee and laughing, says, "these are not surgeon's hands!") they've had to learn Spanish. "Learning a new language in your 50's is hard," Diane says.

Will says they really have no agenda other than to be good neighbors. One of their goals is to hire as many people as possible*, injecting money into the economy while avoiding handouts. They pay 80-90 a day - ntl. minimum wage is 60.

Because Will & Diane get no salaries, & the cost of living here is low, organizational overhead is less than 5%, a plus for donors. Money is the most effective donation because it can go directly to pay worker salaries (unemployment here is 50%) & because it's cheaper to buy things here than in the States & ~~buying~~ buying here supports the local economy. Labor here is cheap - it's 20% of construction costs here vs. 80% in the states.

They have a goal to plant 10,000 trees to restore the land and have 4,000 to go. Fruit, coffee & wood-bearing.

They are now organic. Tenant farmers using massive doses of free or cheap fertilizer* had destroyed the soil & there was huge erosion.

Fertilizer caused an algae bloom a few years ago that turned the lake brown, killed fish, & sickened people who drink lake water (cyanobacteria).

Volunteer workers aren't that helpful because, besides taking jobs from local workers, they aren't effective workers due to the altitude,

next, & steep slopes.

Will deliberately puts together mixed teams of workers on the farm - ~~the~~ Catholic & Evangelical - to show them they can work together.

10% of Guatemalans live in the US (often illegally) & send home remittances, which are 37% of the economy (tourism is 15%). It usually takes a year to pay off the coyote & another 2-3 years to save enough money to come back & build a house.

Although Will & Diane aren't able to host a steady stream of visitors, they occasionally host groups. Although visitors aren't necessarily that helpful, they can learn about local issues - health care, education, family needs, rural farm work - and take that awareness home with them.

Their main cost is teachers. Their #1 funding priority is a school endowment. They also provide backpacks & school supplies to kids.

Jackelyn, a 30-something Mayan woman with teaching & law degrees, works here until she finishes her law thesis. She is wonderful with the kids.

About 30 acres of the property was rented out to tenant farmers. When Will saw how chemical fertilizers were destroying the soil & the lake (he predicted the algae bloom 3 months before it happened) he told the farmers they had to use compost instead if they wanted to keep renting. They all refused, so he reclaimed the land for coffee & avocados.

Junk food is a huge problem here, only adding to malnutrition. Kids call pop "aguia" (water).

Issues that caused them to eventually fence their property & get dogs were: people cutting down trees & stealing avocados & coffee, hunting, loose dogs fighting & pooping, & trash dumping.

PTSD from the war is a big issue.

The goal is for the farm to provide revenue & eventually become self-sufficient.

"The land is becoming healthy again."
"This 70 acres won't be putting fertilizer in the lake."

It's easy to get discouraged. Local people

commonly gossip, lie, steal, & manipulate (sounds like Africa...). Many families are very dysfunctional. Illiteracy & low IQ (due to malnutrition) are rampant. "We're not here to change lives, we're here to be good neighbors."

Saturday, April 6

Planted cypress trees along the drive, & watered several hundred baby coffee & avocado trees. This morning it was clear & the view of the lake & volcanoes was spectacular. Then it began to cloud up - the lake shrouded in fog - & it rained lightly for a while this afternoon, cooling things off. While watering I was serenaded by loud Latin music from the guardian's house.

Diane & Will are like Mike & Ike. She is intense & not afraid to speak her mind, he is mellow and even keel. I can't imagine him yelling at anyone. She readily admits to confronting locals when she's angry.

Thunder about 5:15, everything shrouded in fog. It's coastal fog - the ocean is only 28 miles away. From their house you can see 7 volcanoes,

including one on the Mexican border. They have a wide variety of trees here, including pines & others we have in Washington.

Sunday April 7

Up at 6, helped Will with some computer stuff, went for a short walk around the upper property. Looked way down the steep slopes of the property.

9:30 we piled into their van & drove to Pana. They dropped me off at the boat ramp where I took a "lancha publica" to San Pedro for 25 Q, or about \$4. It's a small wooden boat that rides close to the water. There were about 12 in the boat - it could have held more. It zooms across the lake in 30-40 minutes? (I forgot to check the time when we left.) It was noisy & bumpy yet somehow peaceful. It's very hazy again today, so the towns & houses perched on the steep slopes appeared hazy & ghostlike. In San Pedro I took a tuk tuk to San Juan, perhaps 5 minutes away. I walked to Micaela's shop

& she was waiting for me. She's super nice. Her daughter, Juanita, is 11. We chatted in her shop for a while & then went across the street to her house. I met her mother & some of her brothers (there are 8 kids in the ~~family~~), as well as a brother-in-law & 2 ^{nephews} ~~grandkids~~. The house is cement block with cement floors. They have electricity, running water, & a flush toilet. They have a wood stove & a propane stove. There's a big sink where they wash clothes & dishes. There appear to be 4 bedrooms for 7-9 people, but I have one of them all to myself, & it's big. It has a double bed, an armoire, & a shelf with a flat screen TV, a ~~DVD~~ player, & toys. The family appears relatively well-to-do in terms of material possessions, probably because of homestays, which bring in up to \$75 a week. Lunch was beef soup - caldo de rez - with big chunks of vegetables & a chunk of meat in a flavorful broth served with "tamales," small corn tortillas with no filling. After lunch I went walking with Juanita & tedy, Micaela's precocious 16-year-old nephew. He never stopped talking - he's

very cute. They showed me the boat launch & submerged houses (hurricane Agatha dumped so much water it raised the lake several feet). Lake Atitlan is a caldera from a mega-volcano.

Diane & Will told me that drugs are tolerated in San Pedro because the resulting gringos bring in so much money. Micaela's brother says drug use by gringos is tolerated in San Juan, but ^{drug} not by locals.

After our walk I went for a walk with just Hedy. He took me to his house to show me his puppy & his chick. His dad was there & told me about the virus that's affecting the coffee plants. The compound was so much like Africa, with bare earth, tin roofs, plants growing, an extended family.

Back at the house, we all sat out on the stoop by the road & watched the world go by. Everyone here speaks Tz'utujil, one of three Mayan dialects spoken around the lake. It's a soft language with gutteral

clicks. It's really magical to listen to.

Around 6 or so we went into the house to make tortillas. I wasn't very good at it - the tortillas kept sticking to my hands & tearing.

They make dozens of tortillas every day, cooking them on the wood stove top. Right before dinner Micaela said she had to run an errand and I could come along. The wood stove smoke was getting to me so I gladly went along. There are streetlights but it was dark walking down some of the streets.

She explained that her ^{cousin?} brother was going to cure a boy who'd fractured his foot. Her ^{cousin?} brother is 11. She explained that he was born with this ability & discovered it when he was 8. We walked to nearby Colonia San Juanerita. We entered a small cement house.

In the front room was a woman who looked 80 but was probably 50 or 60. An older boy with Down's Syndrome sat at a table eating cooked greens & tortillas. A young girl stood at the smoky stove making tortillas while a large pot of what was probably beans bubbled. In one of the two bedrooms ~~was~~ a young man with a sore foot, lay on the bed, propped on his elbows.

He had greeted us at the door so was able to walk. Now he was sitting on the bed. Micaela's ^{cousin} brother took what looked like a 2" diameter stone wrapped in a cloth & began to rub it on the foot. When he found the sore spot he rubbed really hard. The patient was wincing with pain. The foot was probably just sprained not fractured & the intense rubbing was probably making the swelling worse. Then he rubbed some kind of ointment on the foot & wrapped it with a cloth. It was an absolutely incredible experience sitting there watching a "curandero de huesos," a traditional bone doctor. Dr. B. had told me how frustrating it is when there are real broken bones, improperly set (or not set at all). People don't go to the medical doctor because it costs more, & they can end up with permanent crippling.

Dinner was fried eggs (cooked directly on the stove top - they ~~rub~~ some kind of powder to make it non-stick) plus black beans & roasted

tomato puree. They set the tomatoes directly on the stove top to blanch, then grind them up with salt & chili (they omitted the latter for mine). It was delicious. Also "pinol" tea - yum.

After dinner we walked to a concert in front of the Catholic church. There are 6 churches here, 1 Catholic & 5 "christian." Juanita says they get along. Today was some kind of church anniversary celebration. When I arrived they were just sweeping up ~~the~~ floral "rugs" on the street. There were piles of fragrant pine needles ~~with~~ mixed with colorful flower petals. The concert was part of the celebration. There was an 11-piece band playing latin-flavored religious music. A 10-foot-tall bank of 12 speakers stood on each side of the stage. The volume was truly phenomenal. I was 50 feet away with earplugs & could barely stand it. But it was so wonderful to see all the people singing, dancing, smiling, young & old. A girl with Down's syndrome was in front of us. Walking back home (we only stayed for about half an hour) the streets were full of people walking, crowds

of young people hanging out. The village is surprisingly well endowed, with a pool, rec center, library, stadium, all very nice. I have seen gringos but not very many & most go elsewhere at night.

Micaela's father, Lucas, is an ever-smiling man, very friendly & welcoming. He works in the coffee fields every morning for an hour & a half. Then he comes home, has breakfast, showers, puts on immaculately clean & pressed pants & shirt & heads to the coffee cooperative office where he works as a tour guide. He says coffee tours are hugely popular. The tours end with coffee sampling. He says his favorite part is making coffee for visitors & ^{he} would love to have a coffee shop.

As for the women, they never stop working. Cooking, dishes, laundry, cleaning are endless. Then they weave too. Micaela's mother, Maria, is 48 but looks 80. She looked so tired last night. She says she goes to bed at 11 & gets up at 5:30. The kids go off to school at 7.

Micaela's sister ^{Ana} comes in the evenings with her almost 2-year-old; he is a typical 2-year-old, into everything & adored by everyone. The ~~MOMA~~ ^{Ana} gets breaks because the whole family ~~she~~ helps watch him. Her husband works in the capital & comes home about once a month. Ana is 28.

Sister Gloria & husband Gerónimo have only one ~~an~~ child, 6-year-old Hedy. I wonder if they use birth control. Gloria is 26.

The wood stove has a chimney but can be a bit smoky. It has to take a toll on the family's health.

There are flies now, probably because I'm in a real house & not a hotel.

The family's water comes from the mountain & not from the lake, plus they have a filter, so there is safe drinking water for me.

This morning Micaela heated water for my bath. The family has a shower but it's cold water. The warm water felt good! The family & their clothes are always spotlessly clean. The women wear beautiful clothes every day, even while cooking & cleaning. Their long, glossy black hair is pulled back in a ponytail, often with a sparkly clip.

cofradias - more like clubs than shrines!

There are several saint's shrines here, including one for St. Simone. The keeper of the shrine died this morning.

One brother told me his dad was an alcoholic for 10 years & now goes to AA meetings. I have seen several drunks on the street here.

To bed at 10 - exhausted - up at 6. Breakfast was a mug of cream of wheat (atol de avena) - delicious - plus tamales with a spicy chicken center, & wood oven-baked bread from the panaderia - dry but good.

Monday April 8

After breakfast walked to San Pedro - about 2 km but took longer to find Rising Minds. Met Kris, Cassy, & Zelaya & discussed ideas for the garden projects they want to do. Looked at the garden plot they're working on. Met a few other volunteers who drifted in. Read email but couldn't send because the internet was too slow. Tuk tuk back to San Juan at 1:00 for lunch of "chow min"! (Spaghetti with ^{chicken} carrots & other vegetables.) It was

Very good.

This morning Micaela told me that her daughter's father never wanted anything to do with Juanita. His parents offered to pay for abortion medicine. They refused to acknowledge Juanita. Micaela filed child support papers but he never paid. Now he's in jail for robbing a tourist in the capital - he was a police officer.

Talking this morning with the other Rising Minds volunteers, I kept wondering how much good we're doing here. San Pedro is a sea of tourists bringing in lots of money but also bringing in drugs, unusual dress & lifestyles, material possessions. San Pedro is bars, hotels, restaurants, & tuk tuks, & disaffected-looking Guatemalan youth. Turns out that only part of the town is gringified.

Everyone has cell phones. The women tuck them into their waistbands. I'm told plans can be 200-300 Q per month, which is \$26-39 - this seems like a lot. Young people use them for music too.

I'm glad I'm staying with a family & not in a hotel hanging out with other travelers all day.

Now I'm in the shop with Juanita. She's doing her homework. Micaela was weaving & watching the news. Now she's eating lunch.

* many women have gold or silver borders around their teeth. I don't know if this is artistry or dentistry.

Around 2:30 a few women began to drift in. All of them (except Micaela's mom) are "viudas" or "widows," meaning their husbands are either dead, gone, or unable to work due to alcoholism, blindness, or other problems. The women are beautiful, with their wrinkled, brown skin, their beautiful clothes, ^{glossy} black hair, & metallic* smiles. I noticed that many of them were chewing gum. They wear hard woven aprons to protect their skirts.

I asked them a few questions about how long they've been in the cooperative, their families, & their dreams for the future (to make enough money to support their families).

I interviewed 4 today. They spoke mostly Tz'utujil.

We finished about 4:30 & I wondered what to do with myself for the rest of the day. There was a brief downpour & then I walked around a bit. The library & park were filled with young people hanging out. The market was closed. I did email in the library - it was surprisingly zippy. Someone plays music through speakers mounted in the adjacent park, creating an

attractive hangout place for teens.

Back at the house I'm sort of hiding in my room, reading, writing, & listening to music. I can hear the sounds of the women "clapping" tortillas, baby Juanito crying, the TV & radio blaring. The evenings could become a bit long. There is no living room here, so no place to sit comfortably except my room. There is no table for eating, just a low counter where 6 or 7 people can eat at a time on low stools. The family eats in shifts. They eat around 7:30.

I had an afternoon snack of two small bananas & half a granola bar.

There are many beautiful murals painted on the town walls & I haven't seen any graffiti.

Dinner was a delicious minestrone-like soup with potatoes & a hard-boiled eggs, & of course tortillas, corn tea to go with - it's delicious. (pinol)

After dinner I showed pictures to the dad. He is a really nice man & very interested in everything.

Then Micaela, Juanita & I walked to sister Gloria's house to ask why her husband's grandma couldn't come to the weaving interviews today. (She is sick.) Gloria was washing clothes by

People use their cell phone as a flashlight.
Brief power outage around 8 pm.

hard, listening to the radio, Hedy was sleeping. The main room of the house has no furniture.

Later Micaela & I sat & chatted. She got pregnant at 17. Later she married a man who became abusive. She was with him for 6 years & they are now separated. She's afraid to remarry because after two bad experiences she doesn't trust men.

Home after 9:30 - tired!

Tuesday April 9

Micaela watches TV to learn Spanish & to find out what's going on. The VP of Guat is a woman!

Cream of wheat for breakfast & tamal (a very soft corn tamale with chicken & tomato in the center - not spicy). On special days they make them - takes all day. Otherwise they ~~buy~~ buy.)

Each woman takes her bowl of corn to be ground at the noisy, dusty mill each day. My family grinds about 8 pounds.

I'm told the municipality poisons stray dogs every 6 months. There are still tons of stray dogs & poop everywhere.

It's still cloudy/hazy every day. The women say it's as if May has come early.

I have not seen ~~very~~ many pregnant women.

This morning I walked to San Pedro & met Kris at Rising minds. We walked to a nearby organic garden & asked many questions. The owner is an old Guatemalan man. He grows many vegetables to sell to restaurants, also herbs. We learned a lot about how he grows them & what he uses for compost & mulch.

We were supposed to Skype with Lauren at 11 but Zalaya wasn't at the office so we went to an internet cafe to call her. No answer. ~~We went back to the o~~ Kris left and I went back to the office. Zalaya was there. Her hotel was full of bedbugs & she had to evacuate & take all her stuff to a laundry. That's why she was late. The internet wasn't working at the office so we went to a nearby cafe to Skype Lauren but she didn't answer.

We then went to a cafe for lunch.

I ate the lunch my family packed for me: tortillas, beans, & eggs wrapped in a handwoven napkin, & two bananas. Yummy.

I went back to the office to type up my notes from this morning & then began walking back to San Juan. A tuk tuk with one other person offered a ride & since it's half price (5Q) if there are two people, I accepted. It ^{was}~~was~~ warm out, but there was a breeze off the lake.

I got back to San Juan about 2:30 & interviewed two more women. One of them works fulltime in a local hotel, so we walked there. It's a nice place on the hill above the boat ramp, with a breeze & view. There is grass, flowers & vegies growing.

Later I walked down to see the medicinal gardens of Lacho. He works in San Marco every day so he wasn't there. I'll try again tomorrow.

Now I'm in the library writing & typing up notes. The library has quite a few books,

but the children's corner & computers are the most popular. Young people here are every bit as addicted to computers (and TV) as in the states. Juanita is taking computer classes.

Juanita told me she's only been to a restaurant once & she had pizza and loved it.

I see teenage boys walking around munching on slices of pizza.

The boys all wear western clothes, & many of the girls. It's cheaper than traditional clothes, thanks to all the used clothes we export.

This town appears surprisingly prosperous.

Homes The TV is almost always on in the family house. It's in another room, but the sound of cartoons drifts out... The boys seem at loose ends in the afternoon. I'm having trouble keeping everybody's names straight.

Dinner was a soup of wild greens with spaghetti & tomatoes. It was quite bitter & I had trouble eating it. After dinner we went to the "Super Quik", the biggest store in town. Micaela bought a big box of corn flakes & what appeared to be packets of ranch dressing. It's interesting to see how they're spending

the money they get from the homestay (she'll get \$75 for the week, or about 80Q a day).

Before dinner I was in my room writing with the door open. A cousin wandered in. He's 10 & has his arm in a sling because he broke his collarbone. I showed him my photos.

On the way home from Super Quik we passed the services for the old man who just died. He was the keeper of the St. Simone "cotradia" (I'm still not sure what this means). He was in a ^{nice} casket that appeared to be open. Speeches & singing have been going on for a while. We can hear the music from the house. They will bury him tomorrow.

This evening mom came into my room with a pile of weavings to show me. They are dish towel size, which is what I was looking for, and they're the bright colors I like. She says they don't sell them in the store because they're made with chemically dyed thread & not plant dye. I felt a little on the spot to buy something, but

luckily it was what I wanted to buy.

Wed April 10

Up at 6:30, nice hot "shower" (it's ironic that the most pleasant shower I've had was in the poorest place I've stayed). Breakfast was corn flakes with warm milk (from powder). Soggy but good. Also half a muffin (pan cillada?). At 8:00 I headed for the bus stop. There I met a young woman who turned out to be one of the workers at the daycare center I was going to in Palestina. A van drove by with space so we hopped in rather than wait for the big bus. First along the lake to San Pablo, then up the mountain to Santa Clara. Kris arrived on the bus from San Pedro a few minutes later, & ~~all three~~ Patricia showed us where to catch the bus/van to Palestina. The whole trip was maybe half an hour & cost 8Q.

Palestina is high above the lake & is a quiet, green agricultural community with dirt trails connecting houses & fields. First we went to the Community Center (aka daycare). Women pay

50 a month to send their kids there from 8-3. An outside organization pays for food. The kids get 2 meals & 2 snacks. They even have a printed menu. After asking a bunch of questions we went across the street to the health center, where we talked to two women working there. They do maternal health & infant checks, vaccinations, contraception, & give out vitamin-fortified cereal for infants & mothers.

After Cecilia, one of the daycare workers, got the older kids from ^{kindergarten} school at 11, she & the kids walked us to Dinora's house to see her garden. Rising Minds gave her seeds & she grows vegetables for her family. Unfortunately most are hybrid seeds so she can't collect the seeds to replant. Rising Minds wants to teach women how to save seeds, but first they need heirloom plants.

Then Dinora & her beautiful mother walked us 20 minutes across the village to her sister's

house to see her garden. She uses chicken manure & her garden is lush, though small. She also sells turtles that her ~~husband~~ husband brings back from the coast. The walk to her house was so beautiful, along dirt trails through coffee com fields & past a few nice houses built by people who worked in the states for a while.

Finally we went back to the daycare center to say goodbye, then began walking down the road to wait for a van. Along the way we met two local school teachers who live in Santa Clara. A minibus came by & squeezed us in. 4 people were hanging off the back.

~~We go~~ It was quite chilly up there & raining very lightly. I hadn't brought a sweater since it's been so warm during the day.

We got to Santa Clara about 1:15. I was hungry & cold. I bought two bananas, not wanting to risk missing the bus if I ordered food somewhere. After half an hour of standing around freezing, we accepted a more expensive ride in the front of a pickup truck (10Q instead of 5). He took us to

San Pablo & then paid a tuk tuk driver to take us back to San Juan & San Pedro. I had told the family I wouldn't be home for lunch but they had saved me some anyway & I was grateful. Spaghetti lightly tossed with tomato.

Then I walked to San Pedro (25 minutes) & am sitting in the nice park in front of the church. ~~The~~ Nice music is playing from the park speakers.

A mentally disabled tiny street boy in Santa Clara asked us for "cash."

The tiendas here are filled with junk food & soda.

Gas is sold by the ~~gallon~~ gallon & is \$4.50 - \$5.

Next I stopped by the Rising Minds office to check in. Saw Cassy & made plans to go to Pangebar on Friday. Then I walked to the Clover restaurant for a 14Q yogurt smoothie & free internet. Typed up half of my notes from today. About 6:30 I left to walk back & it was getting dark. Took about 30 minutes & arrived back in San Juan at 7pm.

The family eats about 7:30. They fed me a mango before dinner. Yummy & messy!

Dinner was fish cooked in water, lime juice, tomato, & salt. The flavor was wonderful but the fish were small & filled with bones, so it wasn't a very satisfying meal. A small amount of fish & a couple of tortillas.

This morning one of the gringos in the van was throwing up on the side of the road. His friends were laughing & taking pictures. I assume he drank too much, but maybe he just had a stomach bug. But it made me embarrassed to be a gringo.

The travelers in San Pedro are a sight to see. Lots of dreadlocks, tattoos, hippie clothes. Lots of hanging out in bars, smoking cigarettes & pot. It's quite a scene. Perhaps one I would have once liked, but no longer.

Sitting on my bed typing, Mama, Micaela, Juanita, & the two younger brothers all come in to hang out. They're fascinated by my little computer. I give them the applets I brought & the Washington calendar. They are very happy.

It's 9:30 & they are just heading out to visit the family of the old woman who died today. Last night they were out til midnight visiting the family of the old man who died a couple of days ago.

Thursday April 11

Up early with my door open, listening to the sounds of the household. Filling the center sink for the day's washing of dishes & clothes.

Kids getting ready for school. The clap clap of tortilla making. One radio playing hymns (mama singing along), then latin music, another blaring rap. The slap of clothes washing, the soape of dishwashing. The rhythmic tzutujil.

I'm constipated, from all the starchy food I guess. Just drank a cup of my tea, hoping for miracles (~~decaf~~ decaf black). Guess it's better than the alternative, so common when traveling.

Kids: Domingo, Juan, Alfredo, Pedro, Victor

Ana, Gloria, Micaela

Nietos: Juana, Itzy, Yoselin Parents: Maria, Lucas

51

For breakfast they gave me cream of wheat, muffins, & tamal. I opted not to eat the latter, ~~claim~~ & instead splurge on the muffin, which means I had no protein for breakfast. The dad & Micaela had eggs. No sue why they didn't offer me any, but I was envious.

I put on clean jeans & t-shirt this morning. I've been feeling very frumpy in my baggy pants, loose from days of wearing. The women here practically shine with cleanliness and are always dressed in beautiful clean clothes. They don't wear the same blouse two days in a row (at least in my family). I've been feeling very frumpy in comparison.

Kris arrived at 10 & met me at the library. I was sitting on a bench reading my Kindle & getting curious stares from people passing by (because of the Kindle). It's warm today but still quite hazy.

After breakfast I had walked ~~to~~ to work with the dad so I would know where it was. After Kris arrived she & I walked there

cooperative name:
 "Cafe La Voz" for \$10 you
 can also take a
 tour that includes
 the fields.

I took the 40Q (\$5) tour of the "Beneficio" where they process the coffee, make compost, & serve coffee. They use coffee hulls, horse & steer manure, & wood ashes to make compost. They also have worm bins with local red worms & coffee pulp. They also buy bags of chicken manure. They apply all of these in rotation ~~&~~ on the coffee fields. They also apply the plain hulls, or pulp. They are 100% organic. The harvest is Nov-March, so we didn't see any processing.

After the tour he made us a coffee sample - it was delicious (alas, it did not solve my constipation as I'd hoped it would).

Kris & I then walked down to Lacho's medicinal garden on the lake. He was not there but his sister gave us a tour of the plants & their uses. They sell herbs to people who come to their house.

Kris came to see Micaela's shop & then I showed her my house. She headed back to San Pedro.

Micaela let me try my hand at

weaving. It's harder than it looks & takes a lot of patience.

Lunch was guacamole, radishes, onion, cucumber with lime & salt plus tortillas. Not very satisfying & I still haven't had any protein today. My tummy is a little sore.

After lunch back to the store to wait for women to come for interviews. Mama came over & invited me to watch her chop beets to make thread dye. The family uses very dull knives & it's a lot of work to cut things up.

She adds the chopped beets & leaves to a pot of water & boils it for about an hour. I'll go back later to watch them dye the thread. They buy skeins of white thread & wash it to remove any chemicals before dyeing.

There are 140 members of the coffee cooperative, both men & women. Each owns their own land & gets paid by their harvest weight. Each can come collect compost anytime. The bags weigh almost 100 pounds and are carried on their backs with a trump line around their forehead.

No women came for interviews. When the beet juice was ready I watched as mama first washed the white thread with water, then soaked it in the dye, then washed it with soap. The dye wasn't even, so she did it again.

Today at breakfast papa introduced his Gloria as his beautiful fat daughter (la gorda bonita).

It's 4:30 & too late to go to San Pedro so I explored San Juan a bit more. I love the traditional oil paintings & have decided to buy one. I found a shop I really like & talked to the woman for a while. It's a cooperative. I'll buy one later after I go to the cash machine.

Now I'm sitting on the dock watching the coots & the fishing boats. It's very peaceful.

What luck. Up pulls a boat & out climbs papa with none other than Lacho, the medicinal herb gardener. He's a super nice young man & we had a nice chat about the difference between hybrid & heirloom seeds.

He had never thought about the importance of giving women "sustainable" seeds. He seems like a ladder type person & I think he'll help disseminate this kind of information.

Another cloudy, cool evening with no sunset. The sunsets here are said to be "phantasmagoric" but I haven't seen one yet.

Today is a day for slowing down & just patiently being. Lots of great things can happen when you do nothing, like getting to watch thread dyeing, trying my hand at weaving, or meeting Lacho.

I was wrong. Sadly there is graffiti in San Juan.

Dinner was eggs with tomato sauce & tortillas:

Ana showed up with baby Jose & her husband, Juan. He's a policeman in Guatemala City (they call it "Guate"). He's very interesting to talk to & we had a long conversation about his work as a crime investigator.

This afternoon I watched a Mexican telenovela with Micaela. I was able to understand most of it & ~~she~~ she filled me in on the rest.

One problem with understanding Spanish is that I have to listen to mama's religious radio station every morning.

Friday, April 12

Yesterday I wandered through the town cemetery, which was dismally unkempt. Today Micaela is wearing a beautiful rose-colored huipile. They use the avocado seed to get the color.

Breakfast was chunks of cold malanga root - a bit chalky & tasteless, - plus steamed bananas - ugh - and cream of wheat. The family has no refrigeration so food just sits around wilting. Mama claims to only buy vegetables once a week, but I suspect she goes more often.

Micaela made me a nice lunch of flavorful black beans, fried eggs & tortillas. I'm tired of tortillas so only ate the beans & eggs. She also wrapped a piece of pan cubileta, the muffins I like, & three bananas.

I took my first chicken bus today. I met Cassy, another volunteer, on the bus. She brought Sedela, a 9-year-old half Guatemalan girl she helps homeschool. On the bus we met Marta, the Director of the children's centers in the aldeas. She happened to be going to Pangebar today & showed us around.

We arrived to find a parade just beginning. It was to celebrate the anniversary of the colegio (private high school). There were dozens of kids playing a variety of instruments. There were three trucks decorated with palm fronds, flowers, & balloons. Girls sat in the back throwing candy & flower petals. The kids from the daycare center had come so we sat with them. The parade wound around for about 30 minutes & was a lot of fun.

Then we walked with the kids, holding hands, back to their center. There are 56 kids ages 1-6 in several pretty ranshackle rooms. The families pay about 40¢ a month & the kids get 2 meals & 2 snacks, paid for by an NGO.

It was very warm in the village today.

Marta walked us over to the health center. Ana was there so I talked to her for quite a while. The nurse, Mario, was busy with patients so we went walking. We saw a dog get hit by a car. There was blood. The dog lay in the road for a while & later was gone.

We ate our sack lunches on a little bench.

Sedela saw two kids from San Pedro in the parade.

We walked back to the clinic and Mario was available. We interviewed him for a while, then said goodbye to him & Ana & headed to the center to catch a van bus. We found one right away & got to Santa Clara just in time to catch the big bus for San Pedro. The next one wouldn't have been for an hour & a half. However, the bus was already packed three to a seat so I had to stand all the way to San Pablo. A bus in front of us was belching ^{dark} black smoke & it was hard to

breathe.

We all got Cassy, Sedela, & I got off in San Juan. I showed them my house, Micaela's shop, & around town a bit. Then we walked back to San Pedro. I said goodbye & headed to an internet cafe. I had a fruit smoothie with kefir, which my stomach should like. I also bought a chocolate chip cookie, since dinner won't be until 7:30. It takes a long time to check my email & type up my notes from the day. I'm barely beginning the latter when the cafe owner announces he's closing. I think it's only 5:00.

I pack up and start walking back. I stop in the central park to write in my journal. I walk back. It's warm & humid. I look for the woman I was going to buy a painting from, but her store is closed. I pass another one & ask the prices. Theirs are cheaper than hers, and just as nice. I buy an 8x10 for about \$13. It's painted by a San Juan artist.

I get back to the house at 6:30. It's smoky & very warm in the house. Loud techno music is blaring from the pharmacy across the street-

some kind of promotion.

Last night the kids were giggling & belly laughing in the other room & it was such a joyful sound.

The women use their aprons as pouches to carry things.

Dinner was a cold garbanzo stew with tomato, grilled fish in a delicious orange sauce & -you guessed it - tortillas.

Turns out Micaela came into my room to show me all of her beautiful huipiles. She has woven them all & embroidered most of them. She dressed me up in the ceremonial traditional huipile, skirt (corte), & belt & Domingo took pictures. What fun! The tight belt is surprisingly comfortable.

Juanita came in & looked at all of my photos. Mama came in & fell asleep on my bed for a minute.

Turns out that Micaela & her parents have each taken out a loan to build a small house on some land they own by the lake. Their plan is to rent them to tourists.

My left knee has been painful in the mornings when I step on it. Thankfully it's fine after that.

There is a boxed microwave on a shelf in my room, waiting for...?

I've concluded that although my family is relatively hygienic, they are messy. There are piles of stuff everywhere. They appear to own a surprising amount of material possessions. Last night papa proudly showed me a gift he'd received from clients: a metal water bottle from the Stanford graduate school of business, still in its cardboard box.

I'm proud that so far I haven't bought any bottled water, refilling my bottle from the family's purified water supply.

There is so much garbage here, like ~~a~~ autumn leaves coating the ground. It's mostly plastic bags & it's ugly & heartbreaking.

Saturday, April 13

Another breakfast of corn flakes in warm milk. Most of the family was there & the dad gave a really touching speech about how

proud they are to be hosting me & how much they'll miss me when I'm gone.

I will miss them too.

Soggy cornflakes aside, Micaela is a very good cook. She enjoys cooking, invents her own recipes, and has a real flair for seasoning.

Before anyone leaves the table they say "Gracias" and everyone responds "provecho."

Ana husband Juan told me that coffee is a fairly recent crop here. He says that before that there were vegetable fields everywhere.

People wrap their babies in warm clothes & blankets even on warm days.

Dads are every bit as doting here as anywhere. People generally speak in quiet voices.

Walked to San Pedro & had a productive garden wrapup meeting with Kris & Cassy over fabulous orange mint limeade at the Home Cafe. Said goodbye to Kris & Cassy & I walked back to the office to sort seeds. Then I said goodbye to Cassy and

went back to Home Cafe for a fabulous lunch of brown bread, hummus, & salad (which I liked despite the presence of beets).

I spent the next three hours typing up the meeting notes & seed inventory, then had a piece of mango pie (think apple pie with whole wheat crust).

There is quite an auditory mix here with each cafe playing its own stuff, everything from trance to reggae to rock.

Decided to take a tuk tuk back so I'd have time to go see the family's lake houses. The tuk tuk guy said 25Q. I laughed & said no it's 10Q. He said OK & off we went. He told me Guatemalans who want to get a U.S. tourist visa must have 90,000Q in the bank.

Got back to San Juan about 5 & walked down to the beach houses with Micaela, her mom, & Lola, the adorable 6-year-old girl who lives in the compound & is somehow related. The houses are almost ready to rent. Cement block with tin roofs, real windows, water & electricity. They're planting a garden as well. We walked a short way through coffee trees down to

the lake. There is tons of garbage under the trees, but the lake front itself was litter-free, thank goodness. Mateo, a Canadian Rising Minds volunteer, has built a beautiful compound of round "bottle houses" right on the lake. It's quite nice down by the lake.

Papa joined us at the house & we headed back to the house, he and mama each carrying a load of firewood (she on her head). Micaela, who is chubby & probably doesn't get much exercise, said she gets out of breath climbing the hill.

Dinner wasn't until about 8:00, but was worth the wait: eggs & another version of Micaela's delicious beans (& tortillas of course). I got to meet brother Victor, home from his police studies in Guatemala.

After dinner Micaela, Juanita, & I went for a stroll around town. Saturday night things are hopping. Lots of street food, young people, music. The church was selling food to raise money & playing loud music to go with.

Back in my room about 9:30, tired after another full day.

Sunday April 14

Up at 6 to get ready to go to the market with Micaela. It's a smallish market with lots of fruit & vegetables as well as chicken, beef, & seafood. Micaela & Gloria bought fresh fish & crabs from the lake. The crabs were alive, the fish flopping.

Breakfast was rice atol with chocolate, a corn tamale, & bread. (Corn, rice, & wheat - does that make a complete protein?)

The cousin from the compound (the healer with the broken collarbone) came over to say goodbye to me, thinking I was leaving today. The family told me he was very sad that I was leaving. I was touched.

Micaela told me that workers clean up dog poop in the streets twice a day.

Some of the family went to church this morning but not all. The churches, and there are many, were going strong with loud live music & singing.

Micaela told me she doesn't like music because her parents wouldn't let her go out when she was a teen - she had to stay

home & do chores. Music for her creates a combination of sadness & disinterest. She has a hint of sadness about her, although she smiles & laughs readily.

She said her parents were really upset when she got pregnant. She did all the laundry, cooking, & cleaning for 10 people because her mom & dad worked in the fields all day.

There are several gringos besides Mateo who live on the lakeshore in San Juan.

I walked to San Pedro to rendezvous with two NPH volunteers - Doris & Ana. I've been corresponding with Doris for a few months & since she won't be at NPH while I'm there we took advantage of the opportunity to meet up. She's a young Austrian woman, & Ana is a young Croatian woman. We didn't have a ton to talk about but it was a nice visit. It was quite nice sitting at a cafe right on the lake with sunshine & a nice breeze blowing.

Now I'm back at Home Cafe eating

a lovely stirfry with brown rice. (The family was disappointed that I won't be home to try the seafood stew they're making for lunch - I can't face any more tiny fish bones...)

About 2 I headed out along the lake to what they call the finca (farm). By sheer luck I bumped into Kris & Patrick heading back to their place and shared their tuk tuk. They lived a mile or two out of town, right on the lake next to the town pool. They pay about \$200 a month for rent. From their porch they have a lovely view of the lake and a breeze. After a short visit I walked back to San Juan about an hour total. It was pretty warm. I found the family hanging out out front or in Micaela's shop. The church benefit event is blaring loudly from the park nearby. It's getting on my nerves so I walked down to the market, sat on ~~the~~ a bench & read.

Back at the house they gave me a snack of pancakes about 6:30. They're made from a mix but were eggy & crepe-like. Served with

local honey-delicious.

I realized that this family owns 4 televisions!

Micaela gave me a handmade scarf as a gift. It's a beautiful plum color, dyed with avocado pit.

The family told me that tattoos are prohibited in Guatemalan culture. If you have one you are a delinquent. They see so many tattoos on travelers that they assume they are normal in our culture. At least 50% of the travelers I see here have them - a much higher percentage than in the states.

Rap music is disarmingly popular here, among teenage boys.

Dinner was, to my dismay, crab & fish. They saved me some from lunch. I could barely gag down the leg meat, but when they opened the body and told me how delicious the yellow part is (eggs) I just couldn't do it and pleaded fullness.

The church benefit is back on full steam. A parade of kids in costumes just passed

by, which everyone enjoyed. People here really know how to throw community events.

Said goodbye to Hedy, Gloria and Gerónimo - I'll see Hedy in the morning.

Monday April 15

Up at 6 to pack - barely fit everything in my suitcase + bag. Said goodbye to the family + took lots of pictures. I felt so ~~sad~~ sad saying goodbye. Micaela came with me to San Pedro, and we said our sad goodbyes.

Breakfast was a chocolate muffin + tea I think, ~~so~~ I left postcards with notes for the young children.

In San Pedro I finally got to meet Lauren, the Rising Minds coordinator, who has been out of town all week. I was able to give her all my files + photos, + debrief her on what I'd been doing all week. She walked me down to the boat + off I went on the approximately 30-minute ride to Panajachel. The lake was smooth as glass. It's still very hazy.

In Panajachel I managed to roll my luggage to Mario's Rooms, where Carole had made me a reservation. It feels like a palace after staying at Micaela's. For \$15 a night I have a room with twin bed, double bed, private bath, hot water (we'll see how hot it is), towels, soap, & a sealed glass of purified water. Also two tables, a lamp, & a TV!

I'm hungry so headed straight to the deli Carole recommended, down by the lake. Along the way two women were selling used huipiles. They had come over from Santiago for the day. They had a purple Santiago Atitlan huipile covered in hand-embroidered flowers & birds, just like the one I had been coveting. They were asking \$200Q (normally they're 450). I said no because it seemed like an impulse buy & I wasn't sure I had room in my luggage or room to display it at home. They followed me down the street, lowering the price with each step. When they got

too 100Q I couldn't resist. Part of me felt guilty for giving them so little ...

The deli has a nice garden atmosphere, although they are playing classical music. Things here are more expensive than San Pedro. My mediocre stir-fry lunch was 52Q.

Walked along the lovely waterfront promenade, then along the river, where families work to separate rocks, gravel, & sand by hand. Vendors & kiosks everywhere, and more aggressive hawking, often in English. A lot of Guatemalan tourists come here. ~~The~~ There are a lot of tacky souvenirs mixed in with nice stuff. A woman offered me a Santiago huipile, a lot like the one I just bought, for 100Q, so I guess that is the going rate.

Back at the hotel I knocked on the door of Room 21. This is where Peter lives, who has the 6 tennis balls Carole gave him for me. He is a big man with midlength^{wavy} hair cascading over a Guatemalan headband, a florid Irish complexion, and a broad nose with flat nostrils. If he had a hunchback he would

very much resemble the Notre Dame Disney character. Unshaven, dandruff spilling down the front of his shirt, his unkempt appearance masks an intelligent interior. He's had a fascinating, if somewhat sad, life, abandoned to boarding schools at a young age by parents who divorced & didn't want him. We had a nice chat & he invited me to dinner, later.

Bought an ice cream, took a HOT shower (bliss) & tried the hotel internet, which didn't work. So found a cafe with wifi & ordered a strawberry liquado (fresh strawberries plus water). At this rate I may not be hungry at dinner time...

Panama is so prosperous compared to San Juan. A thriving Guatemalan middle class, many of whom speak quite a bit of English. Lots of resident ex-pats. Western bakeries & restaurants galore. This one is playing Cal Tjader & Eddie Palmieri.

There are garbage cans along the streets and very little litter. I haven't seen any dog poop. Many vendors wear beautiful trajes & purple head cloths.

Met Pieter for dinner at Guayimbo's, an Uruguayan restaurant that serves huge portions. I had chicken parmesan that was quite tasty. A nice combo was playing latin jazz but it was loud & hard to talk. Pieter had three glasses of wine. I offered to read his novella.

~~Back~~ We chatted about all sorts of philosophical things. It was nice to speak English. He speaks several languages, having lived longterm in Paris & Rome, & elsewhere. He showed me the 103 channels on the hotel TV, including channels in English, French, & German. Two bombs exploded at the Boston marathon today, killing at least three people.

To bed at 10 to read the novella, which is actually quite good.

This afternoon accosted by vendor claiming poverty. She was wearing lip gloss. I resisted her entreaties & Pieter told me that yes, she was probably faking & it's a common ploy.

Tuesday, April 16

Up at 6, read more novella, hotel breakfast (included) of eggs, beans, cheese, & bread.

Arrive at Santiago boat dock at 8:30, the next boat leaves at 9. Hustlers everywhere trying to sell tours. The hustling gets tiring, but if you stay long enough people may know you're a local & leave you alone.

Pieter says the weather is very strange this year. It should be clear & sunny, but instead it's overcast, with muted sunlight. The temperature is pleasant, although it gets chilly at night. I pretty much live in tennis shoes (feet get warm but walking is easier), jeans (which I can roll up if it gets hot), a t-shirt, & a sweatshirt jacket when it gets chilly.

The lake water looks clear & there is no garbage floating around. Signs everywhere admonish people to take care of the lake. I think the algae bloom a couple of years ago really scared people. Parac used to dump its sewage into the lake but I don't know if

it still does.

Sitting on the boat waiting for departure.

The Mayans around me are often on their cell phones calling or texting.

25Q to Santiago Atitlan - Very few women in western clothes. Market day. Lots of hustlers walking up from the boat ramp - mostly they want to take me to see St. Simon, or be a guide. I'm feeling that unpleasant hardheartedness that travelers develop when constantly harangued. You feel you can't even strike up a conversation with a local because they'll want something from you.

The Catholic church is old - 1547. An army of women with brooms is sweeping, resplendent in their ropa tipica. In a side chapel people, mostly women, are praying on their knees on the stone floor, out loud, to something in a coffin (that's not the right word...). It's ironic to think that the Spanish converted these people with brute force & now the Mayans are more fervent Catholics than the Spanish ever were.

Unlike in Mexico, in Guatemala there has been little mixing of Mayan & Spanish blood.

About 25 minutes to Santiago. Some really nice houses (villas) on the lake. The ~~taxis~~ Tuk Tuk (5Q) to the "Casa de Maximón" (Ma-shee-mone, St. Simón). 10Q to take pictures. Hard to describe - lots of colored lights, St Simon draped in ties, a quiet, reverential atmosphere.

Strolled the upstairs market on the way back, saw where the women buy embroidery thread & plastic western clothes & huipil "blanks" to embroider on. Ran the gauntlet of hawkers on the way back to the boat. Bought baby booties for Alex & a woven bracelet for Colin. Still have to find something for Brandon & Kylie.

I don't like buying souvenirs.

Sitting on the boat waiting to go to San Pedro, Spent 1.5 hours here in Santiago, & then to San Marcos.

Listening to teenage boys chatting on the boat about girls, money, & other teenage boy things.

Saw my first disposable diaper in Pana : The boat died on the way to Santiago. Scared everyone for a minute - ~~their~~ there were no lifejackets on that boat - there have been on others.

Pana has recycling bins.

Bought a great & big granola cookie for 15Q. Funny how I'll happily spend 15Q (#2) on a cookie but haggle over a few Q for a handmade souvenir that I'll have forever.

Slow boat to San Pedro, motor sputtering & faltering. Nice to get a closer look at the shoreline. getting windy - it's 12:30.

San Marcos is pretty & tranquil. Lingered only 20 minutes before catching next boat to Pana. Worried about waves. Also worried because I tried to take money out of the cash machine in San Pedro & it said I have insufficient funds...

Bumpy ride back to Para, arriving 1:45. Enjoyed seeing the lake shore. There are many expensive homes.

Transferred some money to my account & was pleased to see there'd been no hanky panky. Bought my shuttle ticket to Antigua at 9:30 tomorrow. Drank a delicious papaya yogurt smoothie, finished souvenir shopping. Got a "Guatever" t-shirt for Brandon, a hairclip & woven purse for Kylie.

Now back at the hotel relaxing until dinner. Saw a hummingbird — green with a white face stripe.

Reading "Just Kids" by Patti Smith, "In a Sunburned Country" by Bill Bryson, "The Night Circus" by Erin Morgenstern, & "Yes, Chef" by Marcus Samuelsson. All good.

Finished Pieter's ~~the~~ novela and thought it was really good.

Back home it's apparently cold & rainy. Here there's a lovely breeze coming in & lots of birds singing.

On the boat today was an American man, probably mid-60's, not what you'd call handsome. He had his iPad & was looking at a website called "TravelingGirls." Wow, there is just about everything online...

At one of our boat stops today (Santa Cruz?) the boat driver dropped his keys in the water. He apparently had a spare set because ~~he~~ started the boat & we started to leave.

There were two scuba divers in the water and one of them found the keys, emerging triumphant from the water. The boat driver asked "how much?" & the diver said "Nothing!"

Everyone was laughing & cheering. It was a moment of shared joy.

Met Pieter for dinner at Chinita's where I had a good-but-nothing-special fried rice with pineapple & a stale cookie. Pieter insisted on paying again. I think he is lonely. He has a small trust fund that allows him to live here without having to worry about money.

Wed. April 17

Up at 6, shower, pack, breakfast. Walk down to the lake to say goodbye. Victor, ~~a heavyset, dwarfish young~~ vendor I met yesterday, follows me doggedly, with his bookmarks & stuffed animals. I pretend he's not only walking with me because he wants to sell me something. I ask him questions. He seems very sweet. I buy two bookmarks for 25¢. He pretends not to have change for 30. I take his picture.

I'm sitting in the restaurant in front of the hotel waiting for my shuttle. Two young guys are chatting at the table next to me. They're worried about money, looking for a cheaper place. Trying to decide what to do with themselves, seeing at loose ends.

The shuttle showed up promptly, picked up a couple more people & we sped to Antigua, arriving in about two hours. By the time they dropped me at the bus stop & the bus to Parramos trundled off it was

about 12:15. They dropped me at the bus stop in Parramos about 12:40. The woman there said it was too far to walk to NPH & the road was too dangerous. One guy told me a tuk tuk would be 5Q. The woman told me there are no tuk tuks. Another woman told me it wasn't far to walk & told me the way, so off I went. It was warm & took 15-20 minutes but wasn't that far. (It took longer because of my luggage.) I passed kids wearing NPH shirts on the way.

At the office they assigned Sogio, one of the older boys, to show me to my room. It's in a really nice guest house with ~~five~~⁴ rooms, each of which has several beds. There are only two people here now, the other is a young german volunteer. My room has a double bed, a bunk bed, & a bathroom, desk, & armoire. The spacious common room has couches, a dining table & chairs, & a kitchen with cereal, bread, milk, & eggs. It also has wifi.

I had hoped to eat lunch with the boys but when I asked, Sergio pointed me at the cereal instead.

So after a big bowl of cereal, I walked up to the office to ask when I could see the boys. Pedro is away at a soccer game but Mynor was in his afternoon carpentry workshop. First Vilma, ~~#~~ one of the staff members, showed me the blacksmith shop (loud!), ^{the cooking class} the bakery, & the sewing workshop. Then she took me to the carpentry shop. Apparently they don't tell the kids anyone is coming - they want it to be a surprise. There are more girls than boys in carpentry.

Mynor seemed happy to see me. He was marking out a piece of wood to cut for a science project. He is 15.

~~#~~ Vilma told me that he has broken some rules & they may not let me take him out to dinner.

He gave me a tour of the facilities: school, library, football field, medical clinic, office, kids' houses, visitor houses. The whole

area is fenced. There are also vegetable fields & a cafeteria. There are about 280 kids living here & others who come here for school. (Low-income kids.)

Vilma tells me the kids get up at 4 am, breakfast at 6, school at 7, lunch at 1, workshops ~~at~~ until 5, dinner at 6, bed at 8. Besides carpentry, sewing, cooking, bread making, & blacksmithing, the kids can also choose music.

After our tour Mynor & I sat on a bench & I gave him the gifts from Kelly. He loved the t-shirt ("Cowboys Just Do It") & Texas baseball hat. He liked the photo book too. And the colored pencils. And the Left, Right, Center game. There was also a yo-yo, frisbie, glue stick, tennis ball, & picture book of Texas. He also liked the Aplets & Cottlets.

He talks fast & is hard to understand. After some hearty laughter at my misunderstanding him I figured out that he wanted to listen to my music. I got my mp3 player &^{we} each put in one ear bud.

To my surprise he liked Alison Kraus & Elton John. (He usually listens to rap.) He scrolled through the songs quickly, trying to translate the titles into Spanish. About 5:15 he went off to have free time before dinner. During our conversation he told me that one of his godparents gave him an mp3 player but he accidentally washed it when he was doing his laundry. Then he told me he wanted to ask me something but because I wasn't his real godmother he was embarrassed. I knew what he wanted to ask me (for an mp3 player) but didn't prompt him.

It rained hard for a while before dinner. At 6 I went to the cafeteria & it was empty. I saw groups of kids milling around down by their houses. After a while they began drifting up so I waited by the door. Several of the teenage boys clustered around me to ask questions. After a while there was no sign of Mynor so they took me in to eat.

* and warm pineapple juice - they call it tea-yum!

85

The kids bring their own plates to each meal and wash them afterward. They stand in line for food ladled out of big vats.

Tonight was rice, black beans, pork with green beans, and tortillas (thin ones - yay - I like them so much better than the thick ones).* The pork was from one of their pigs. It was gelatinous-looking, as if it was all skin. I offered it to the boy across from me, a really nice boy about 16. His Spanish was easy to understand. The boy next to him was listening to music & singing along happily. "He wants to be a singer," my friend told me. Next to me sat a boy who can hear but can't speak. He tried to tell me something with pantomime. My friend patiently translated and was very kind to the mute boy. He was trying to tell me that they had butchered their own pigs. I wonder why he doesn't carry a tablet so he can write notes?

At dinner I met the new priest. He's from Chicago & seems very nice.

After dinner Mynor walked me down to Pedro's house but he still wasn't back from his

soccer game. Then Mynor & I went strolling while he worked up the courage to ask me his question. As I suspected he wants an mp3 player. I explained that godparents weren't supposed to give such big gifts. He said ~~he~~ it could be just "between us." I told him it was against ~~the~~ the rules and I always follow rules even if I don't like them. The priest told me that kids aren't supposed to ask for gifts.

It seems that Mynor has a rebellious streak. I imagine him getting in a lot of trouble if he didn't live here.

The kids have to wear dress shoes all day & can only wear tennies shoes for sports. Mynor says he wishes he could wear tennis shoes all the time.

Vilma told me that on their birthdays the kids each get an identical gift pack with some special food items. If their godparents send them money they get that too.

It turns out I'm sharing the guest house with an older Dutch volunteer & not the young German woman I'd seen earlier. She comes here for 3 months, goes home for 4 months & repeats. She was a helper in the baby house for 10 years & now works with the young boys. She says that Pedro is adorable.

Thursday April 18

Up at 6. No lights or water this morning - I was told this is unusual. Cereal for breakfast but no way to make tea. Walked to cafeteria and found Pedro right away. Breakfast is black beans, white roll, and warm milk with coffee. Pedro is very sweet, quiet with a soft smile. The kids were eating outside. I sat with Pedro while he ate and many of his friends came over to meet me. Breakfast dishes go in a pile for someone to wash.

After breakfast we walked to school & got in line with his class. Today they had an assembly called "Acto Civico." ~~The~~ The students

stood in groups in the courtyard while a few teachers & students stood on a balcony & spoke (it was hard to hear with no electricity for the PA system). They sang the Guatemalan National Anthem (it's very long), a student read a prayer, students carried out flags, they said a pledge, sang a long hymn. Kids began fidgeting - so did I. At the end they recognized kids who are doing especially well in high school, calling them up onto the balcony for applause.

Then we went into Pedro's class. There are only 10 students. The teacher is a heavyset woman in tight jeans & low-cut boots. She doesn't smile much. There is an extra desk for me. Pedro put it next to his.

It's a chilly morning. It's warming up outside but is still chilly in the cement classroom.

The kids missed computer time due to the assembly. The next subject was Lectura. The kids drew a picture of the

book they read yesterday, "Marta y la Bicicleta".
Pedro draws well.

Next is math. Pedro is an eager student, pays attention, & readily responds to the teacher's prompts. The kids write down everything the teacher puts on the board. This seems like a good way to reinforce what they're learning: Today they're working on addition. They don't have their addition tables memorized yet & are still counting on their fingers.

The teacher said she lost her pen & Pedro offered her his.

Pedro was counting both numbers & his hands & getting lost so I showed him how to add only the second number with his fingers & he was very happy.

The kids practiced adding two numbers in a column but for homework she gave them three numbers.

At 9:00 the kids had a snack (yogurt & a roll) & recess. I met Pedro's 15-year-old brother, David. During the religion class that followed I went to see the vegetable garden.

of the animals. There is a ton of garbage strewn around, much of it piled inside chain link cages. They apparently have lots of animals, including cows, pigs, chickens, rabbits, goats, but I only saw a few. The animal pens appear to be extensive but I couldn't see how to access them.

The water pump isn't working so older students are helping to haul water for the kitchen & bathrooms.

The younger kids help tend the vegetable gardens. Paid staff helps & also maintains the grounds.

No signs of recycling here.

Pedro's classroom is chaos. No wonder he's so behind in reading. The teacher sits at her desk doing nothing & looking bored while the kids run around screaming. It's very loud. One boy keeps slamming the door. Another drew all over his face with a marker. Pedro is bored & sleepy but to his credit keeps busy with drawing & doesn't join in the leaping about.

When the teacher does teach anything she gives brief instructions & then leaves the kids to copy their books. They're supposed to copy all of the instructions, including the drawings, which leaves no time for answering the questions. I don't know if her teaching style is typical.

During the 11:15 recess Pedro wanted to go to the library. He chose a picture book. He read a few pages out loud & his reading is very rough. I'm afraid the books I brought for him will be too advanced.

I'm taking a break from the classroom & will meet Pedro for lunch.

Mynor's "house uncle" told me that Mynor stole food from a girl who needs a special diet & that's why he's being punished & can't come to dinner tonight. I'm just as glad because his Spanish is so hard to understand.

Lunch was rice, whitebeans in tomato ^{sauce} juice, green beans, & hibiscus juice. Afterward we sat on my front porch to open presents. He really loved everything, especially the ~~one~~

colored pencils, glue stick, yoyo, apllets & cottets, baseball hat, & t-shirt.

Now he's washing clothes & after that we'll work on homework.

I stayed in the house all afternoon & Pedro never reappeared. I took a short nap & read a lot. About 6:00 he showed up looking adorable in his new t-shirt & baseball cap. We walked over to town & found the restaurant one of the volunteers, Ana, recommended. The boys had hamburgers, french fries, salad, & fruit shakes. David ate the second half of my burger. They ate the salad first! They polished off every drop of food & then they split a strawberry banana crepe with ice cream & chocolate. We played several round of Left Center Right, which they enjoyed. The restaurant had a big-screen TV. Distracting but it made it less difficult to find things to talk about. First we watched

The Simpsons (dubbed in Spanish) & then Animal Planet, which was both enjoyable & educational. On the walk home Pedro held my hand in one hand & my flashlight in the other. At the door of his house he gave me a hug.

Back at the guest house Jolce told me the electricity would be going off soon so they can fix the water pump. She & I had a nice chat. It turns out that she found funds^{her own & friends'} to operate on a boy who was left as an infant with club feet & other physical problems. He is now about 10 & is able to walk & write. He is doing really well in school.

The electricity went off about 8:30. Bed at 9. Turns out that both David & Mynor have been to the U.S. with NPH tours, in the orchestra. Mynor went to AZ, WI, & MN. David says he only went to MN.

Friday, April 19

Up at 5 to pack & say goodbye. To the dining hall at 6. Pedro gave me a photo of him with his three siblings. He brought his game in case we had time to play at breakfast. He brought his yoyo to show me the tricks he's learning. He told me he'll miss me. After breakfast he washed his dishes & brushed his teeth & we walked to the schoolyard to line up. He gave me a big hug & we said goodbye. It was so sad. I gave him the last of my coins - a few d.

I couldn't find Mynor at breakfast but saw him in the schoolyard. I noticed that he has a tattoo on his chest - maybe it's temporary... He was very brave & acted like my leaving was no big deal. He shook my hand & hurried off.

I went back to the house to finish packing. Joke was there with two of the Montessori teachers, eating breakfast. We talked about their frustrations with the

school system here. One is Guatemalan & one is German but has been here for 10 years.

I said goodbye to them & went to the office to pay the \$25 transport fee to the airport. Vilma gave me an NPH t-shirt as a parting gift.

At 9:15 Oscar pulled up to drive me to the airport. He's a very friendly guy. He was a "tío" (house uncle) for 10 years before becoming a chauffeur. With stopping for gas it took 90 minutes to get to the airport (the airport is in the middle of a very congested city because the city has grown up around it).

It took about 30 min. to get through emigración & security & to my gate. They took away the tiny nail scissors that TSA doesn't care about.

The AC is broken & it's roasting in here. They have a few fans set up. Too bad they didn't include operable windows.