

Julie Williams

Belize Update

May 30, 2008

Friday, May 30th

The rainy season has finally come here to Belize. As I write now, the rain is coming down hard with the cool breeze blowing a mist of rain through the slatted windows of my classroom. It is extremely refreshing after going without rain for so many months. Yesterday, I paused class midway through so that we could watch the rain approaching the campus as it traveled across the cane fields. Everyone was quite excited as the cool wind and dark skies came our way. The white, dusty dry roads have now been replaced with slick and muddy ones. As my students told me yesterday, "Miss, you were asking for rain, so don't complain now!"

The days are flying by at an unreal speed, and I am seeking to grab onto them and slow them down. We have finished our last days of official classes, and next week will be a review week. Then the following week students will take their finals in all subject areas, and they will be done with their first year of high school. It seems like these students just arrived at Cornerstone. It seems like just yesterday they were a group of shy, voiceless first formers learning the basics of English. And now it is all I can do to keep them from shouting out answers. They have grown so much as a class, and with their growth my growth has come as well.

We took our class trip two weeks ago. My homeroom students had worked diligently all year long to raise funds and save money. All of their hard work paid off, and we enjoyed an incredible trip. I left my house at 3:15 a.m. on that Friday and drove to meet the bus in one of the villages. After picking up all the students we traveled down south to St. Herman's Cave, which is a large underground cave system. After an hour and half of hiking through the cave, the students were still bursting with energy and my chaperones were ready for their first nap of the day. From there we went to a resort called Banana Bank where we ate lunch and went horseback riding. The students seemed to think it was funny to come up behind my horse and slap it on the rear. Needless to say, my horse ran for the whole hour ride, and I had a good bit of trouble walking straight after that ride. After the horseback ride we went to an ecopark, where the students were able to swim. And we ended the evening with dinner at a restaurant on the way home. It was teacher's day on the day of our trip, and the students surprised the other teachers and me with a special program. They had prepared a time of worship and prayer for the whole group. This time was so special and moved me to tears. After the time of worship I was in charge of closing us in prayer and could hardly make it through the prayer without sobbing. Seeing my students worshipping our Creator and listening to them sing touched my heart. It was an emotional evening for me and for them, and

there were lots of tears shed on the bus ride home.

This past week Dora, Enrique and Gloria planned a going away bonfire for Erica and me. They built a bonfire in Gloria's backyard and had planned a "program," as they called it, for us. They had created poems for each of us, a prayer about us and a song about our leaving Belize. Needless to say, there were more tears. All three of them shared about how much studying God's Word together has changed them, and it was encouraging to see them putting into words their beliefs and clearly stating their passion and love for Christ. Of all of the things I have become involved in here in Belize, I will miss this the most.

The packing up process has begun, and I am taking it slowly. My house is beginning to empty out, and each time I have people over I send them home with a bag of food, clothes or other belongings. It is interesting to have to condense my life here to two suitcases and a carryon. It reminds me so much of how unimportant my belongings are.

June 11th is coming extremely quick. In some ways I dread that day. I dread the final goodbyes, the tears and leaving my home. But in other ways it is such an exciting day. I look forward to seeing my family and friends, to being back at a solid church and to beginning a new chapter of life. God is sovereign and has a master plan for me. He is bringing me back to Niceville, and I am excited to see what He has in store for me there.

Thank you very much for your continual prayers. Please pray these next few weeks in particular that God would provide me with emotional strength, and that I would continue to lean on Him in this time of change.

Yours in Him,

Julie Williams