



# marhenke markings



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**Hot Springs Village. AR**

**March 2017**

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Dear Friends and Family,

During the latter part of February, Sonya and I (Larry) travelled to Guatemala. Visiting with Guatemalan friends after entering and before leaving the country and working with our four Cuneneco coworkers in Cunén was great. It had been over two years since I had last been to Guatemala, and four years since I'd been to Cunén.

My main reason for going to Guatemala with Sonya was because of her health. A few months ago she was found to be quite anemic, and although she has been under doctors' care, the anemia hadn't improved. Also, she has a hereditary condition called hemochromatosis, which means her body stores iron rather than processing it correctly. That made treating the anemia rather complicated. A few days before the trip she received an infusion of iron, which gradually helped her feel stronger during our time in the mountains of Guatemala. We decided that I should go with her in case any issues related to her health arose while there.

The main focus of this trip was to check the hymns that our Cuneneco coworkers have been translating from Spanish to their own language, and we got a lot done while we were there. This was my first time to check their hymn translation work, and I made the following observations: First, the overall quality of their work is very good. Secondly, there are some hymn verses that are seemingly impossible to translate into Cuneneco, and there are some Biblical and religious expressions and imagery that are foreign to the Cuneneco way of thinking. So, they have to take the basic idea and come up with culturally relevant ways to express the concepts. I commend them for their creativity! On another note, Sonya and I really enjoyed the hymn checking.

The team has been working two hours a day, six days a week on hymn translation. We began with that schedule to accommodate other work activities and the literacy classes that they each held. We asked them to focus exclusively on hymn translation a year ago to help expedite the process. It is still very difficult work and continues to go slowly. While we were there, Sonya and I decided to increase their working hours each week from 12 to 20, in order to finish by the end of the year. Since this is the only formal work that Rosa (a widow like Dominga), Gilberto, and Domingo have at the present time, the extra income will be most welcomed by them. (Last year Dominga got a job with "Save the Children" in Cunén, so she works with the team when she can now.)

As with most of our trips to Guatemala "there's always something" that makes the time or the journey more challenging than expected. This time, two major things arose. First, the trip from Antigua Guatemala to Cunén took ten hours rather than the usual four! Part of the problem was a peaceful demonstration on the Pan American highway that caused a three hour delay. Because of that delay we had to stop a second time for a meal and ended up driving the last two hours in the dark on bad and winding mountain roads, something we have always tried to avoid. Those bad roads were very hard on me physically. I am seriously looking into the possibility of flying to a nearby town on the next trip.

The second inconvenience was a rather abrupt notice to vacate the team's office where they have worked happily for the past two and a half years. The landlord appeared at 4:00 pm Friday afternoon and said that he had new renters who were going to pay him two and half times the rent our team was paying. So he told us to vacate the place by 6:00 pm when the new renters would arrive. Since there was no written contract, there was nothing we could do.

Thankfully, we were able to occupy a very nice second floor veranda at our hotel for our work on Saturday and half a day on Sunday. (Remember, the people in Cunén go to market on Sunday mornings, and have church services Sunday evenings.) Then, after a week of making do at Gilberto's home on the patio, the team found a room to rent in the home of Cecilia, a young woman who had worked for us about eight years ago doing data entry.

Since it has been about five years since I last wrote one of our newsletters, I want to share something important with you. After finishing the preparations for the publication of the Cuenteco New Testament in late 2012, I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. When the possibility of recording the Cuenteco New Testament arose shortly thereafter, my response to Sonya was, "This is a great opportunity, but I can't do it right now. If it is going to be done, then you will have to do it."

Sonya "picked up the ball and ran with it," and God has blessed her efforts. That was the point of our role reversal. Before, I was the more active one involved in this Project, and Sonya ably supported and assisted me. Since late 2012, she has been the more active one and I have tried to ably support and assist her. She has done admirably in this lead role, and I am very proud of her. The successes of the audio recording and listening groups, the literacy classes, the dubbing of the *Jesus* film, and now the translation of hymns into Cuenteco are due mainly to her guidance and supervision. Well done, Sonya!

Now, unfortunately, we are once again nearly at the end of our financial resources. However, in the past, when we have been in this kind of position, God has provided the funds needed through the generosity of people like you, and we have every confidence that God will do that again.

Finally, during the 25 years that we have been working in this Project, we continue to be amazed by what God has done in this Project, and we are exceeding grateful to Him. But also, none of this would have been possible without your prayer and financial support. That, in my book, makes us a pretty awesome team. Whatever successes have been accomplished, you have been a vital part of them. We have said it before, but we want to say it again: We could never have done any of this without your teamwork. Thank you again. May God bless you for your partnership with us.

Together in His service,

*Larry, and for Sonya*



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