

2007 JULY - AUGUST EDITION

the

CARIBBEAN *Connection*

THE WEST INDIES MISSION COUPLES' NEWSLETTER

Message from the Mission President

Dear Couples,

It is no surprise to me that on the very month the mission split, 106 souls were baptized making last month a very "white" Christmas in July. This has never happened before in July. It did occur last December making that our first "white Christmas" in the Caribbean.

What is it about the West Indies that is different now? We believe it is due to the climate being created by couples. Never until last Fall has the mission had such an influx of couples. You have each overcome what Elder Oaks shared with us are the six F's that prevent many couples from serving: fear, family concerns, finding the right mission opportunity, financial concerns, fun (worrying about missing the toys) and faith (lack of).

Elder Hales, in a conference talk about couples, focused on faith by saying that only through a trial of our faith can we receive the miraculous blessing we seek for ourselves and our families. "For if there be no faith among the children of men, God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith." (Ether 12:2)

We love to receive your reports describing the experiences you are having. Your families are appreciating the blessings of having grandpar-

ents serve missions. In two weeks, we will have a couples conference (patterned after the format of a zone conference). The highlight of the conference will be a session called "best practices." In this we hope you will each share your successes. In preparation for the conference think about what works best for you in the following areas:

- supporting the missionaries
- training the members
- retention
- uplifting the family at home
- coping with challenges



Isn't it fun being on a mission with the companion you chose? Can you tell your friends back home about such fun and encourage them to come replace you at the end of your mission? Miracles brought you here. Miracles surround you. (You are recording them in your journals, aren't you?) And now, miracles await you and your friends who join you in this service.

Thank you for making this the great mission that it is. See you at the conference in August.

With love and appreciation,

President and Sister Robison



ELDER AND SISTER WALL

The Walls finish their mission in just a few days. We wish them all the best as they prepare to return to home and family. They write about a few highlights of their mission in Guyana:

- One of our goals was to read Preach My Gospel, a resource not available when we served our last mission. We have now read it cover to cover, studying each referenced scripture in depth. During companion study, we have had some enlightening moments because of its clear, concise, and inspired words. We grew to appreciate this valuable, lifelong study guide!
- Serving in a country where “first plans” usually don’t work, we have learned to follow the spirit, be willing to follow “another plan” and allow ourselves to be instruments in the Lord’s hands. He has made it possible for us to teach and testify daily – to newly-made friends, neighbors, landlords, shop owners, and people we meet on our early morning walks. Elder Wall has been privileged to baptize some we have taught. We experienced at least one miracle every day! **Picture #1**
- The Church in Canje District is new – only 8 years old. Thinking of how mature the Church was back in 1838, has helped us to be more understanding of the members here and their need for nourishment of the good word of God. One insightful member, pointed out that a major difference is, however, that the saints in 1838 did not have all the resources that we have today. We have been blessed to see the construction of one new building, the purchase and renovation of another, and the creation of two new branches. We joined with members in their excitement of an open house, the singing of a 60-voice choir, and the dedication of the new East Canje Branch building. Members of the New Amsterdam Branch are looking forward to dedication of their building this coming September. **Picture #2**
- Our “Scripture Power” Primary project was very rewarding. We presented each Primary child and leader in the District with a personal copy of the scriptures. Included in the front was the picture and testimony of each child from our home ward Primary, who had saved pennies to donate the books. It took a lot of time and effort, but seeing the smiles on the faces of the children and their leaders (in South America and in the United States) was so worth it! **Picture #3**
- Sister Wall loved getting to know the Relief Society sisters as they shared their joys, sorrows and testimonies at our apartment and in their homes. They accepted and loved her, and laughed when she “hammed it up” in fashion shows and other

parties. One enrichment night they planned a surprise party for her. She opened the door and 50 sisters called out “Happy Bird-day”. With hugs, kisses and thank you’s, each sister expressed her love, and she for them. Love knows no boundaries in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! **Picture #4**

- A personal goal for Sister Wall was to see if, beginning from scratch, she could get some of the youth prepared to play the hymns in their branches. As they presented recitals along the way, she realized she was teaching more than just music as these young people grew in confidence and ability. The Lord blessed them with the vision of what they could accomplish, and seven are now able to play and conduct the hymns. **Picture #5**
- One Elders Quorum President came to our reading class each week. Our eyes and hearts were brimming the first time he haltingly and carefully read the sacrament prayer. He now does it with relative ease, but the same level of spirituality.
- The first five months of our mission, were spent training leaders in Georgetown. When we were reassigned to Berbice, we continued the training in Georgetown by traveling each week from New Amsterdam – crossing the 3-mile-wide Berbice river on a ferry and driving 60 miles of winding road, shared with cows, horses, goats, donkeys, and chickens. We looked at the river crossing as our “weekend cruise.” We often made the trip during rainstorms and learned the true significance of the Guyanese expression, “it’s raining all the animals.” How rewarding it has been to receive calls from those we trained during that time, asking for continued guidance and clarification. **Picture #6**
- Once established in Berbice, we ceased our trips to Georgetown but replaced them with additional leadership training and member firesides in three of the four Berbice branches. For the past eight months Elder Wall has served as President of the East Canje Branch, an experience that has brought us very close to many of the members and friends of the Church. One of the highlights has been seeing the first branch president in Canje reactivated and strengthened to a point where he is a major factor in the training of all newly called members in branch leadership. The Branch continues to grow and enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of their new building.

Counsel for those who remain:

- “...all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” D&C 122:7
- “There are many rules for success, but none of them work unless you do.”
- “Do what you can with what you have where you are.

MARV AND PAM COLEMAN

Elder and Sister Coleman were married in 1985 in Clearwater, Florida. Brother Coleman has 4 adult children from a previous marriage and Sister Coleman has no children. Brother Coleman retired from Indiana Bell Telephone in 1988, after 33+ years of service with that organization, and Sister Coleman left her job with the Indiana Supreme Court. They traveled in their travel trailer for a short time and in 1989, they settled in Mesa, Arizona. Sister Coleman then finished a college degree and became a human resource professional. Brother Coleman completed the program to become a Golf Professional. In 2002, they left their jobs and moved to Michigan to care for Brother Coleman's legally blind mother and in 2005 she decided to move and live with her other son in Mississippi. The Coleman's happily moved back to Arizona.



In June 1997, Brother and Sister Coleman were baptized and in July of 1998 they went to the Temple to be sealed. Their conversion story is a special one that they usually share as their first talk in a new ward or branch. It takes about 30-40 minutes to tell the whole story. Brother Coleman has held several callings, Stake Missionary, First Counselor in the Elders Quorum Presidency, Assistant Clerk to the Stake Executive Secretary, Second Counselor in the High Priest Group, Ward Mission Leader, Young Mens' President, Branch Mission Leader, First Counselor in the Branch Presidency and Second Counselor in the High Priest Group. Sister Coleman has served as a Stake Missionary, Relief Society Teacher twice, Relief Society Education Counselor twice, Counselor in the Young Womens' Presidency and the Primary Presidency. And now the Colemans are serving in the West Indies Mission on the island of St. Maarten.

DON AND SHARON PLATT



Elder and Sister Platt were both raised in Alberta, Canada, although she was born in Victoria, British Columbia. They lived in the same stake, and she knew his sister and family but didn't meet her future husband until he had returned from his mission.

They both have Bachelor's Degrees in Education from the University of Calgary. He taught high school, and he also taught school for five years in Samoa. His last several years were spent teaching in a Hutterite or Hutterite Colony in Alberta. They are similar to Amish or Mennonites.

The Platts have eight children, three of whom are deceased, and 14 grandchildren. They grew up in the Church and have great grandparents who crossed the plains with the pioneers, some in the Martin Handcart Company.

They came to the West Indies Mission, not because someone recruited them like many of us, but because the Lord wants them here. They filled out their mission papers and left the place of service up to the Lord. This is their third mission. They served first in Alberta, and their second mission was in Mongolia.

The Platts have only been in Guyana a couple of weeks, with more than the usual amount of frustrations with housing, Internet (rarely works), phones (not working). But they are adapting well and demonstrating the patience we learn of necessity in this wonderful Caribbean.

PAUL AND GERRY UYLEMAN

Our newest couple to arrive in the mission is Elder and Sister Uyleman, who are serving in Suriname. He was born in Indonesia but raised in The Netherlands. His mother is German and father, Dutch. Sister Uyleman was born and raised in The Netherlands. They met each other at a dance when they were in their early twenties. As they tell it, she smiled at him and he was hooked.

It was after they had been married and had two children that LDS missionaries knocked on their door and introduced the gospel to them. They wanted the best for their sons in the way of religious training and to give them a good life and recognized the truth. He had been Catholic and she, Presbyterian. They were baptized in 1980.

Both sons served missions in England and are now married and live in the Bay Area of California. The Uylemans have 6 grandchildren, 4 boys and 2 girls.

His career was in the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, which gave him an opportunity to experience living in several countries around the world, including Angola in Africa and also New Guinea. Sister Uyleman was able to go with her husband for a year to Israel, where they lived in Tiberius 6 months and then Damascus for six months. His military unit was part of the United Nations force in the Golan Heights.

As many Europeans, they speak several languages: French, German, Italian, English, as well as their native Dutch.

This mission to the West Indies is their second. They previously served in the Belgium Brussels Mission but in their home country, a part of that mission, in leadership.

Two years ago they moved to Provo, where he taught physical education, namely tennis and swimming, and where he studied exercise physiology. They left Provo to come to the West Indies and serve the Lord in this part of his vineyard.



AUGUST 2007 COUPLES CONFERENCE

Proposed Schedule

Thursday

1:30 – Benihana for lunch

3:00-6:00 Business session at the mission home – topics to cover:

- travel, customs
- finance
- medical – Naegles
- vehicles
- area books, maps
- confidentiality
- collecting history/conversion stories
- teaching with Elders
- emphasizing tithing

6:00-8:00 – games (or dancing class from McGhies) and dinner

Friday

9:00-12:00 – Best Practices

12:00 – lunch

1:00-5:00 – Golf or computer session

- potential computer topics:
- saving, downsizing, emailing photos and using picasa
- accessing and downloading material from the mission website
- finding and downloading written and audio talks from the church and BYU website
- how to use itunes to download talks and TV shows
- accessing BYU TV
- simple spreadsheets
- making scrapbook pages using Word - great to send home to grandchildren
- making slideshows to music
- blogging

5:00-8:00 – dinner and a movie – The Work and the Glory 3

Two heart-warming experiences heard from the Elders on working with their companions:

- *It helps to have your companion be your best friend, implying you can make it so;*
- *As a trainer, think of your companion as the Savior sees him and as the Savior would treat him no matter the difficulties.*

Correction: In the May *Caribbean Connection*, the Leavitts wrote about two photos that didn't get in. Here are the photos, making the narrative clear. They wrote: "We are enjoying Grenada... We



have had a wedding which the Branch did and as you can see Elder Leavitt was asked by the bride to walk her down the aisle..."

And "Our Elders are working hard... The Elders had a visitor the other night. They lost it when the zone leaders called and had a hard time going to sleep. They found it the next day and were glad to get rid of it..."



Clarification: Sister Sherwood wrote in the May *Caribbean Connection*, "With 6 children, 5 children by marriage and 15 grandchildren, her life is wonderfully full of joy and happiness!" We weren't clear on how many children, so we asked. This is her reply: "That did not come out quite right! I meant, we have 6 children, 5 are married, and we consider their spouses our children also!"