

## Journal Gazette Interview re January Med. Pract, 1997

By Dell Ford: Professor takes crew on international house calls, Mar 31, 1997

In late January, Ed Miller returned from a three-week health care delivery program in Mulukukú, Nicaragua. Accompanying the Manchester College chemistry professor were nine students, five physicians, two dentists, a pharmacist and two registered nurses.

For all of the students and some of the professionals, the visit to the Atlantic Coastal Plain village was a first-time experience. For Miller, 63, it was *déjà vu*, business as usual trip No. 15 to a Central American or Caribbean country for humanitarian purposes.

It all began, he says seated comfortable at his Hall of Science office desk, with a telephone call from one college campus pastor to another.

“DePauw University had done a medical/construction program (in Central America) for a couple of years. The DePauw chaplain telephoned the Manchester campus pastor saying they’d had requests for health care delivery in a rural area.” Miller remembers thinking this would be a good off-campus opportunity for Manchester College health science majors. So, in 1981, the man who loves to travel packed his bags and was off to Guatemala with doctors, dentists and students.

“It went really well in Guatemala,” Miller happily reports, “and we’ve just kept doing it.”

In ensuing years, the Manchester College health providers have worked in village clinics in Panama, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

It’s Miller’s intent to “remain with Nicaragua. It’s one of the neediest countries in Central America and we have a wonderful support base. Community leaders have everything organized. We stay in a school, the cots are in place, mosquito netting is hung, and there are people to cook meals and do laundry.”

Miller doesn’t have difficulty filling a trip roster. “I get them to go once (medical professionals) and it’s easier to get them a second time.” He’s not bragging, just telling it like it is.

Any student can go but, Miller says, it’s mostly biology or chemistry majors planning a career in some area of health care. Making the 1997 trip were seven Manchester students and one each from Earlham College and McPherson College, Kan. All but two of the professionals are Manchester alumni and some are former Miller students.

Manchester College has a three-week January term during which students are enrolled full time in only one course.

“That’s when we go (to Nicaragua),” Miller says. “It’s a Manchester medical practicum course and participating students earn three credit hours.”

Miller and his entourage of health care providers fly out of Indianapolis and proceed to Managua by way of Houston. After a few days’ orientation in the Nicaraguan capital, they travel to Mulukukú, making the 12-hour trip in a Mercedes cattle truck.

This year the Mercedes truck was transportation for 26 team members, four college-age Nicaraguan English translators, and food supplies including sacks of corn, rice, beans, sugar and coffee, as well as bananas and “wonderful pineapple.”

The clinic, Miller says, is set up with a medical, dental and pharmacy area. Students rotate in the three areas and observe “but as they and the doctors and dentists become comfortable, students assist. They may hold a flashlight for a dentist and, under the dentist’s supervision, some have extracted teeth. They give injections and assist with examinations.”

Miller’s wife, Martha, accompanies him on the health provider trips. The two met at Manchester College where both earned undergraduate degrees (hers was in home economics, his in chemistry). Ed Miller returned to the North Manchester campus as an instructor in 1960 after completing a Ph.D. program in chemistry at Cornell University. The summer after Ed and Martha Miller got their bachelor’s degrees they spent six weeks in Ecuador helping build a community center under auspices of Church of the Brethren.

The Millers, who have two children, Michele Bever and Michael, have been globe trotters ever since the experience in Ecuador. One long trip took the family to the central Philippines for a year where Ed taught while on sabbatical from Manchester College.

Will he continue his clinic work in Nicaragua?

“I don’t know,” he says softly. Then, breaking into a broad grin, he says. “I’m planning to do it a couple years yet.”