

## Medical Practicum Report

Cúsapin, Panama, 1982, Wabash Plain Dealer

In makeshift clinics set up in schools or churches a Manchester College team provided medical and dental care to the Guaymi Indians of Panama during the January term.

The crew, led by chemistry professor Ed Miller, included eight pre-med students, North Manchester dentist Dr. William Hankee, and medical doctor David Fouts, Lutherville, Md.

The medical team visited eight villages surrounding their headquarters in the village of Cúsapin, located on an isolated peninsula in the Caribbean Sea.

In the tropical area where there were no roads, no automobiles, no phones and no newspapers the college group assisted while doctors gave 300 dental and 625 medical examinations. They also provided dental instruction, medicines and vitamins.

Miller said one purpose of the January term trip was the development of a world view. Noting that most of the world's people live in Third World countries, Miller said, "The standard of living is very different than we're used to. The environment we grew up in is an exception to the rule."

Science students do not have many opportunities to be involved in January trips, Miller said. "The trip provided involvement in something very much related to their field and was useful in delivering care to those in isolated communities.

"We tried to travel cheaply," Miller said explaining that both doctors and students paid their own expenses. The group took sleeping bags and backpacks, sometimes staying in moderate cost hotels and camping out at the clinic sites.

"It was a work camp situation," Miller said, adding that they sometimes had beds and sometimes did not.

The trip required lengthy preparation in getting medical supplies together, Miller said. Some supplies were provided by the Brethren Service Center at New Windsor, Md. Hankee and Fouts obtained other supplies from pharmaceutical and medical supply houses. Still other supplies were purchased.

The retail value of the vitamin supplements, medicines for intestinal parasites, Kwell for shin infections, antibiotics, dental syringes, needles, anesthetics, and dental instruments was about \$3000, Miller said.

Many area churches, groups and individuals contributed to the cost of the supplies.

The medical entourage took more than 1,000 toothbrushes and gave them out while demonstrating how to properly use them.

Group headquarters was a United Methodist mission at Cúsapin. The mission personnel arranged food, transportation, clinic locations and sleeping arrangements.

The clinics became a community social event. All the villagers gathered as the students and doctors came in. They watched as their neighbors had checkups, or as their teeth were examined.

Sometimes students held up sheets to make a private examining area for the doctor. Some of the work was done outside in order to take advantage of the sunlight.

Most of the travel between villages was by large dugout canoes with outboard motors. Sometimes the Manchester group walked over hilly terrain, made muddy by the frequent rains.

Most of the villages the group visited had no electricity. In Cúsapin, a diesel generator was operated for two or three hours at night to provide electricity.

The travelers included two local students, Ryan Piper, Claypool, and Cathy Gilbert, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Art Gilbert, North Manchester.

Paula Lehman, PD Reporter