

Saturday, January 3, 2009

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After a long wait, we finally boarded the plane at 3am to fly to San Pedro on flight TA575. The duration for this flight is four hours and thirty minutes. On the flight, I started to feel trapped and sick from motion sickness. However, I somehow manage to sleep for about 45 minutes and concentrated on watching the movie screen.

At 6:20pm (Honduras time), the plane landed in San Pedro. At the airport, there was confusion with the people arriving and departing from the same airplane. It was a minor problem. The other problem is the long line for registration to enter Honduras. After the registration, I saw a Wendy's in the airport. Wendy's is really international!! The next thing that I noticed was that the temperature of San Pedro is much warmer than New York City. Many students started to strip some layers of clothes to accommodate the huge temperature change. While we waited in the airport, we were greeted by Hondurans and other Cornellians. We met Antonio (Honduran), John (Cornellian), and Tamar (Cornellian). After exchanging our dollars to lempira (\$1.00 = 18.50 lempira), I sat at the table in the airport and listened to Eladio explaining his documentary video.

Finally, Monroe solve how to leave the airport by using one pickup truck along with two large blue vans (max= 15 individuals per van). From the airport, we travelled to Copan. Copan is a very touristy place. Beside the large tourist population, the small town is very pretty with cobblestone roads. To get to Copan, I had to endure a four hours van ride. Sitting for a long period of time is no problem, but sitting in a moving vehicle entailed a big problem for me. Motion sickness!!! During the long drive, I was in between Nadia (left) and Lalo (right). Being tight around people is not a problem; my major problem is my motion sickness in addition to the rocky and bumpy roads. It was torture. Luckily, I was awarded for my pain with great sceneries of Honduras.

At 12:30pm, we arrived at the Hotel Calle Real (651-4770, 651-4230). To my surprise, the hotel was cleaner than what I anticipated. My room number was 14 which is a double room. At first, I had no roommate. While I sat in my lonely room, I asked myself why I come on this trip. Why? I was confused. I hate long ride, which is why I don't like travelling else I am the driver. As I continue to ask why, I became homesick. Instead of making myself more homesick, I took a nap and spaced out for 15 minutes.

After my nap, I met up with the rest of AguaClara group to go to lunch in Copan. The food at the restaurant is muy bien. Even through the food was great, my wonders of why I came on this trip remains to be a blur. Hopefully, during this trip, I will figure out something.

Next, we traveled to the rural side of Copan and saw how the rural people got their water from a stream in the high hills/mountains of rural Copan. The community fenced in the area to protect the stream. Some communities member come the steam to get the water for daily need. However, some families have their own water filter from past water projects in the area. Even they have the filter, some families are not buying the chlorine for the filter...so is the water okay to drink???

The guide always explained that he got his water filter because his father worked for a Rotary water program. Since his father worked for the program, his father got water filters from all his children. Other families did not get water filter because they moved into the area after the termination of the program. The original residents in the area do not share the water filter with other families. Even through this small community is built within the junglelike wood, I noticed that one family had a television. In addition, they are able to watch many channels. I can't help but wonder how they afforded a TV and the monthly cable bill. The TV seems to be out of place because everything else in the government built house was necessities and not luxury. If these people can afford TV, they should be able to pay for clean water. The guide explained that the community is very concerned with their water and they are willing to improve the water quality. From this guide, I sensed that he really cares for clean water. However, I also sense that there is a split in the communities.

After climbing the mountain, we had to climb back down. On the way down, I could not help it but take photo of the gorgeous mountains painted within the floating clouds. Every scene also seems to be a perfect picture in a distance. As a look closer to the area around my feet, I noticed a lot of candy wrappers. Clean water is not the only issue in this small community. Littering also seems to be the issue.

Around dinner time, the AguaClara group broke apart and went separate ways for free time. I tagged along with Henry and Nadia and wondered around the tourists' streets of Copan. Copan is a beautiful place in the morning and night. In addition, it is a place full of spirits, music, and many artifacts. Every street is decorated with tables for exquisite jewelries and pottery. There are so much to see. Words cannot fully describe the atmosphere of Copan until one comes to visit the area. For dinner, Henry, Nadia and I settled with Llama del Bosque (651-4431). As we got to our seats, we noticed that Monroe and his family have already ordered their meals. There was a slight awkward moment because Henry made a weird face and laugh.

Despite of this, we sat down at another table. It was not long until we met other AguaClara members (Kelvin, John, Eladio (Lalo), Jeff, and Rustom). Instead of sitting at two separate tables, we moved the tables and sat together. As usual, Henry was the loud one. I am not complaining, I really enjoy his company. With Henry, there is always laughter and fun. Unlike me, I am a mute with new acquaintances. I hate to stand out, but I also hate to be boring. I guess I am just cursed.

For dinner, I ordered a plate with chips and meat without cheese. It was good except it took a long time. During the wait, everyone talked to each other while I remained mainly silent at my corner of the table. When will I break out of my circle?

As the wait time continued to extend, Nadia went to check on our food. The waitress assured us that she did not forget us by passing out the tortilla. Everyone ate the tortilla because they were very hungry. It turned out that the tortillas are part of a dish that Nadia, Henry, Lalo, and I ordered. Oh well. When our dishes got passed out, I accidentally ate some of Henry's cheese dish. Oh well, Henry is easy going. Before the night came to the end, we followed the music and ended up at a small circus. Since the circus cost only twenty-five lempira, we decided to watch the show. I was expecting to see some clowns and animals (ducks, dogs, chickens, etc). To my surprise, the beginning of the show consisted of three little girls dancing and wiggling their lower bodies to the music.

Afterward a little boy came out acting like a mucho man with a taller girl and clownlike man. After this weird act, a woman with bells on her clothing came out and danced with mainly her rear end. As she moved her hips, rear, and body, the audience cheered. The last act that I saw was three clowns who pretend to be women washing clothes. One of the clowns also pretended to be pregnant with an abnormal bagged tummy. During the process of washing their clothes, the two clowns on the sides tired to gang up of the middle clown.

Despite their efforts the middle clown managed to avoid each hit. At the end, each of the wet cloth hit side clown. As the circus continued, some of AguaClara members and I decided to head back to the hotel and call it a day. At first, there was a little confusion of whether or not we can go out. However, this was quickly solved because we were leaving and not coming back in. When I reach the hotel, Nadia became my roommate. It was not lonely in the night.