

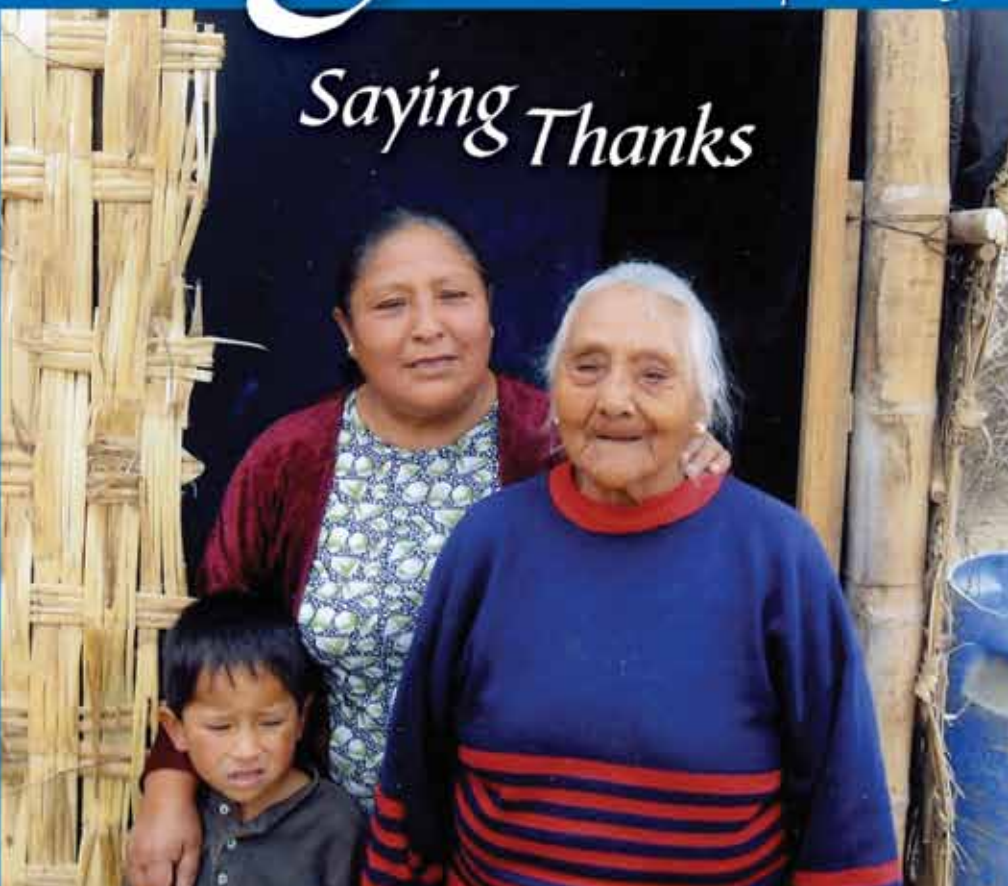
AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



September 2013

Saying Thanks



Successful journeys



What do a WestJet pilot from Edmonton and a priest from Australia have in common? They don't know each other, they are both engineers who have gone on to other careers and at roughly the same time they embarked on successful journeys that had strong connections to our Canadian Oblates.

Bruce Edwards, a WestJet pilot and engineer from Edmonton, took the Barcaza for a test drive down the Napa River in Peru this spring. This brought to a very successful conclusion the story of the Barcaza that has graced these pages for the last year. The Barcaza, you may recall, is a boat that was desperately in need of help, internally and externally, before it could be used to haul ailing folk, medical assistance and supplies up and down the Napa River in Peru. Bruce's assessment of the repairs and the 'new' Barcaza can be found inside.

While this issue begins with a focus on South America, it ends with the story of another successful journey. Many of those who read *Oblate Spirit* have had the good fortune to meet with and listen to Gerry Conlan, OMI, as he journeyed across Canada. Gerry is an Australian toiling at the Lacombe Canada mission in Kenya. He came to say thank you to Canadians for everything they have done for the Kenya missions. He considers himself the "poor" missionary, mostly because he returned to Kenya much richer in experience after meeting so many outstanding Canadians.

So we begin. As you enter these pages, sit back, relax and enjoy this little trip around the world.

John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Cover photo: "This elderly woman now has a home." – Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI

A medical success story

BY MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

YESTERDAY

PERU – In 1986 the priest-physicians Jack MacCarthy of the American Norbertine Fathers and Maurice Schroeder of the Canadian Oblates took charge of the medical work in Santa Clotilde in the remote north-eastern Peruvian Amazon. Thus began the hospital work now known as the Santa Clotilde Hospital, which, from rudimentary beginnings more than 25 years ago has grown apace with the population and demands of the area.

TODAY

The medical work includes the Rural Hospital and 13 outlying medical posts serving more than 25,000 people, mostly indigenous, spread over 700 kilometres of river (between the Napo and its tributaries) in some 100 villages. This network functions under a

Volunteer ophthalmologist



formal agreement (or “*convenio*”) between the church (represented by the local Bishop) and the Ministry of Health, under whose terms the church, as owner of the infrastructure and land, is charged with the direction of the medical operation of the network.

Fr. MacCarthy has been the medical director since 1986. Currently there are some four or five doctors in the hospital and the zone, including Peruvian doctors contracted by the Ministry of Health or those fulfilling their compulsory rural service, and volunteers from Canada and the U.S. There are more than 80 health workers in the system, over half paid by the ministry. Medicines for HIV, vaccines and logistic support are provided by the ministry. A government health insurance program provides an additional but limited support.

That part of the essential service that is beyond the possibilities of the Ministry of Health (including transferal services of patients both in Iquitos and in Lima for tertiary level care) is provided by the donations through the church (the principle ones being donations from the Norbertine Fathers and from donations received through MAMI in Canada) totaling two-thirds of the operational budget.



New surgery suite, 2012



Young health professionals

TOMORROW

We are now in a transition phase from what has been under the “priest-physicians” to what we can foresee it to be for the future, a future we look forward to as promising, although different.

First of all the doctors will be working a much shorter term than in the past, and provisions for their families must be made.

In 2010 we formed a Civil Association called “PANGO” giving juridical status to the church-related element of the convenio.

Under “PANGO” in 2010 we were able to legalize all our non-ministry workers and we contracted the first Peruvian doctor as the assistant medical director for a three-year period (2011 – 2014).

We have developed and reinforced a workers’ administration group of long-term local workers for much of the day-to-day administration.

We have developed strategic alliances with many support groups, principally the University Faculties of Medicine of Loyola, Chicago and the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. They are providing much volunteer medical service and research into health problems of the area.

The Mission Doctors' Association (MDA) of Los Angeles has committed the support of a husband-wife team of physicians for three years (2014 – 2016).

The GTR (Rural Telecommunications Group) of the Pontifical Catholic University in Lima has established a remarkable Wi-Fi communication system in all the posts of our network connected to the reference hospital in Iquitos for tele-medicine consults.

Our biggest immediate challenges are:

- drafting a renewal of the *convenio* with the government Ministry of Health for 2014 that will provide for a harmonious collaboration of the various participants who make up the Santa Clotilde Hospital work,
- developing sustainable financing through projects and grants, also strengthening relations with local government and the local commercial community to this end,
- addressing the environmental issues of contamination of the water and food chain (fish) for the local populations, including educating the village health workers about precautionary measures they can take in their communities,
- strengthening the communication bonds at all levels of the interacting elements of our health care system,
- promoting the human dignity and rights of the people who rely on our health system.

Someone has described our medical work as a “hybrid”, combining elements of private and public, of church and state, of national and international. I think the description is accurate. I also believe that very element of hybridity has been the key to its success for more than 25 years, and will continue to be for the next 25 if we can keep all the elements in play.

That's what we're trying to do. We hope we can continue to count on your part in it.

(Schroeder is Mission Superior of the Delegation of Peru)

Building a better home

BY DAVID AND KAREN SAX

Peru had a major earthquake at Ica in 2007, leaving thousands of families homeless. This is a cyclical issue given the cyclical nature of earthquakes in Peru. The only recourse these families have is to migrate to an area that has nothing on it and build a shack made of bamboo posts, woven rattan sheets for walls and a blue tarp for a roof. Whole settlements spring up in which thousands of refugees attempt to keep alive their hope of having a secure and solid house for their families.

One such place is about a 15-minute car ride on a dusty road outside of Pueblo Nuevo in Chincha Alta. Here, Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, has a team of 40 people working to build earthquake-proof homes with the refugees of the earthquake. Typically, homes in the area are built of adobe or fired clay bricks, but these are still susceptible to the power of earthquakes.

AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI supports this building project by providing money to purchase bags of cement, iron rebar and bamboo for roofing. A team of volunteers and regular workers make cement blocks from the sand extracted from the Oblate gravel pit, and the bags of cement are stored at El Ranchero, the Oblate compound. The sand is extracted by shovel



and wheelbarrow, and then shifted into different piles of sand, rock and fill before being transported by truck to El Ranchero. Here Santiago and Walter, two of the regular organizers, will make cement and fill the metal forms for the bricks. Every day during the week volunteers help to make 500 bricks. The bricks bake in the sun for several weeks and are eventually trucked to a building site once the preparation work has been completed.

On the building site, volunteers and the recipient of the house prepare the space by leveling the ground and digging a trench one-metre deep for the footing in which is placed the iron reinforcement structures. Every two metres a vertical iron support column is tied into the foundation.

Cement is made on site and most family members who will be living in the house help by hauling pails of water from the canals far away. Once the foundation cement is cured the bricks are cemented in place, row upon row between the columns. Each row has a steel strap cemented into the row that is attached to the vertical support column. It is the knitting together of each row to the columns and the columns to the foundation that provides the strength to withstand an earthquake. Once the bricks are in place, wooden forms are placed





on the support columns and cement is poured into them. A single slanting roof is finally added. This roof is made of bamboo joists covered by woven rattan sheets with a slurry of cement as a cap.

The occupants of the house are responsible for putting in windows, doors, inner walls and plastering the bricks. Each sturdy structure is a testament to the resilience and creativity of the families living within. Many are painted with bright colors and decorated with pride.

From life-changing to life-saving

When Blaise MacQuarrie, OMI, and his crew arrive at work each day making bricks and building houses, they are helping improve the lives and living conditions of many poor people in Peru. They create, they build, but every so often their days are filled with shock and surprise ... like the two days when they saved two young lives.

“Recently members of my work team went to start building a new house,” Blaise wrote. “Upon arriving at the shack they found the door closed. They knocked but got no response so they pushed the tin door open and went in to start the work.

They saw a child – a nine-year-old boy– on the dirt floor with foam coming from his little mouth.

“They recognized the child had taken some rat poison, as a little package was found nearby. They immediately took the child to the hospital and the doctors there did a fast job of pumping out the poison. Thank God, the child was saved.

“We found out later why this child did this. He was being bullied at school.”

But there was more a few days later.

“My team went to their other place to build, and they also found the door closed and locked. A neighbor had a key to the house where the team was to start work, and opened the door of the shack.

“They found a 15-year-old youth slumped in a chair with froth coming from his mouth. He, too, was rushed to hospital just in time for the doctors to pump out the rat poison.

“This young man felt no love from his step-father and this went on for a year. But, the step-father realized his great mistake and asked pardon from his step-child. From then on things changed for the better.”

Better seems to be a word that follows Brother Blaise around. So does success.



“In less than five years we have built 425 concrete houses and three chapels,” he explained.

“God, indeed, has blessed us and our noble apostolate by providing good souls like yourselves. We have not lost one day’s work in these past 22 years and to think we do not have a vacation during the year. But the men who work with me know that our work is based on charity and that the funds that reach me actually are funds to be used in buying the materials for construction and not for vacations. These men are only too glad to have work and they are paid well ... all of them no longer live in shacks because their houses were built as a form of – let’s say – compensation.”

Blaise’s efforts are well recognized by the community. He was recently asked by the town authorities to be the padrino (godfather) of a new park. “That makes a total of four parks where I am the god-father,” he proudly says. “And we even have a small street here with the name Canada.”

Those are just some of the ways people express their gratitude. And it is obviously well deserved.

WANTED: YOUR STORIES!

There are many charities and good causes that solicit your support. Yet for some reason you have chosen to offer the Oblates your prayers, friendship and assistance.

We are curious:

Why did you choose us?

How did you hear about the Oblate missionary work?

How have the Oblates supported, inspired and encouraged you?

What are some of your best memories of Oblates and their missionary work?

Send your stories (and photos) to: lacombemami@sasktel.net



A job well done

BY BRUCE EDWARDS

EDMONTON – Father Maurice (Schroeder, OMI) asked me to fly to Iquitos and provide an opinion on the recent overhaul and refit of the Barcaza. I was already in Peru on a trip to Satipo (in the central jungle). For several years I was the operations manager for Wings of Hope Peru. We operated a floatplane base in Iquitos from 1968 until the mid-1990s. As a pilot I travelled often to Santa Clotilde and other Franciscan missions in the Amazon jungle of Peru. Currently, as a volunteer, I provide support to locate spare parts and tools for our airbase in Satipo.

As far as I can tell the Franciscan brothers built the Barcaza in Indiana around 1972; the boat is a traditional Amazon River boat design. For the last two years the boat was out of service in Santa Clotilde. While in Iquitos I met and spoke with three of the key persons involved in the rebuild. Victor is the long-time captain who has been working on the river his entire adult life. Natividad is the mechanic who directed the overhaul, especially the engine and gearbox. Javier is our logistics expert based in Santa Clotilde. He was responsible for overall project management. The team knows the Barcaza inside and





out. They bring a lot of energy, pride and a sense of commitment to the project. After talking to all of them I am confident that we have the resources to keep the Barcaza operating safely in the long term.

The fact that the Barcaza operated successfully for so long speaks volumes about the quality of the original design. The technology is very appropriate to the Alto Napo River. The Barcaza can operate on shallow tributaries but is also comfortable on the open Amazon River. The mechanical systems are simple and easily maintained using basic tools.

Most of the hull sheathing was replaced. The workers also flattened the hull in order to improve stability. Several other major modifications included relocating the fuel tank and extending the forward deck. Natividad rebuilt the diesel engine using parts purchased locally in Iquitos. The engine is a three-cylinder French diesel. This engine is based on old technology but since it runs at low speed it lasts a long time. This type of engine is also fuel efficient. Only 90 gallons of diesel is burned on the three-day run from Iquitos to Santa



Clotilde. There is no complex electrical or control system and the engine can be maintained using basic tools.

All controls including the rudder, throttle and gearbox are simple mechanical systems using cables, rods and chains. A new gearbox control mechanism was installed as the older system was difficult to use. The rest of the Barcaza was basically gutted and completely rebuilt. Most of the wood was replaced. The electrical system is all new with wiring run through protective PVC conduit.

We took the Barcaza out for a run on the Amazon. Frankly, it was a beautiful day. The engine ran well and the boat felt stable and easy to control. This is obviously an older boat but we have a maintenance plan and with proper care we should see many more years of service. We expect the Barcaza will be in Iquitos once a month for any required repairs or inspection. Our team led by Javier, Victor and Natividad have the energy, knowledge and wisdom to keep the Barcaza running.

Thank you for your support. The Barcaza is a beacon of hope for all who live along the Napo River.

(Edwards is an engineer and pilot with WestJet.)

A successful voyage!

BY MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

The Barcaza, a 47-ton riverboat capable of carrying 50 passengers, is a mainstay in the life of the community of Santa Clotilde and the villages of the Rio Napo for health, education, community development, protection of the environment, and transportation of people and produce.

We are happy to report that the Barcaza Project is completed and we thank you for making it possible. To sum up what was a very efficient repair job:

- 1) Feb. 22, 2013: The Barcaza takes a “limping” trip from Santa Clotilde to Iquitos where it enters dry dock.
- 2) Feb. 22 to March 22: The repair of the hull and engine proceed in dry dock.
- 3) March 22 to May 2: Barcaza leaves dry dock for the water where work on the superior structure continues: cabins, bunks, furnishings, kitchen, bathrooms, etc.
- 4) May 3: The demonstration run of the finished Barcaza in the Iquitos bay with Fr. Jack MacCarthy and Bruce Edwards of Edmonton. Edwards is an engineer by profession and a WestJet pilot.
- 5) May 13 – May 16: The Barcaza leaves the port of Iquitos for the three-day trip to Santa Clotilde, arriving without problems, to everyone’s satisfaction.

We wish to share the satisfaction of this accomplishment with all of you and congratulate all who made it possible, first yourselves, then the capable people locally who brought it off.

Since arriving in Santa Clotilde the Barcaza has been busy engaged in activities of the mission. It was on a week’s pastoral trip up river. The morning this was written, it left port at 6 a.m. with a team of 10 health workers from the Centro de Salud on a 10-day vaccinating and medical trip to the some 20 villages up-river halfway to Ecuador. Its facilities make these trips much more efficient in every way.



Joe Devlin, OMI

A 50-year journey

BY JOE DEVLIN, OMI

When I recall the past, I can honestly say the people of God have been marvellously blessed.

In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII asked the religious congregations of Canada to send 10 per cent of their personnel to Latin America. I was ordained to the priesthood on June 9, 1963, and was on the list to answer the Holy Father's request.

Five of us were assigned to the missions in Peru: Fathers Clarence Lavigne, Joe Kane, Otto Rollheiser, Neil Macaulay, and myself. We left in October and travelled from New York by boat. We passed by the Panama Canal and arrived in Lima on November 1.

After studying the language for three and a half months, we were distributed among the three existing parishes along the coast of Peru. I went with Neil Macaulay to the parish of Our Lord of the Miracles in Comas. The pastor was Andre Gousy, OMI.

The parish, which consisted of about 60,000 people, was spread out along the slope of the hill. The people did not have running water or electricity and the streets were not paved. Along with the celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, there was a shortage of food. And so there were 10 Mothers Clubs that were used for the distribution of food rations.

That changed in 1969. We developed a pilot project to bring water into the district. We organized the parish into groups. The parish was organized into sectors. There were a total of 10 sectors each with a block leader. It took a year to form the organization of the parish. During that year we had the chance to buy the material that consisted of eight-inch pipes.

We got a friend to sign a paper saying that he would pay in case we did not get the money. On a Saturday in October of the first week, 1,000 people showed up, each with pick and shovel, ready to dig a ditch to bury the pipes. The pipes were laid; they were tested, and covered up. Now the loan had to be paid. That's when the miracle happened. We received a cheque for \$100,000 from the Canadian Government.

At that time, there was a military coup, and the government accepted to continue the project. By 1974 the military brought in machines and laid out the streets. The people now had water and electricity in their homes. The parish continued to grow to about 120,000 people. At one time we had 12 religious on the team. We had 90 catechists teaching the students. We had 15 celebrations of the Word.

Eventually the parish was sub-divided into three parishes.

We left the parish in the hands of the Diocesan clergy and have gone on to other commitments.

I was in Comas for a total of 20 years. I spent 18 years in Chinchá, nine years in the jungle and two years in pre-novitiate.

And now it is time for a little rest and recovery in Canada.



Gerry Conlan, OMI

Observations from a Canadian tour

(Gerry Conlan, OMI, an Australian missionary serving at the Canadian Oblate mission in Kenya, recently completed a lengthy tour of Canada, where he made approximately 75 presentations at 59 locations in 20 communities. Following are his observations.)

THE “POOR” MISSIONARY IN CANADA

I came from Kenya with small bags of tea to say thank you to our bonza (Australian word meaning *brilliant*) supporters and friends in Canada. But I went home richer than I came, including the fact that my fitted shirts are a lot tighter now than when I arrived! I go home richer because the welcome and encouragement received was such a rich blessing for our mission.

People really want to help, and really want to know what

we are doing. The real blessing of the “Mission Awareness Tour” is that people now feel more connected, more interested and more concerned for the people we serve in Kenya. One man asked, “How much does a water bore-hole cost?” I told him and two weeks later a cheque arrived. That tells me people are focused in a practical sense, and they want real ideas and real solutions to help the poor, rather than “global” plans. One elderly lady said: “it’s great to know where all the money has gone!”

This fits in well with the Oblate desire to empower people, and not to make them dependent. In other words, we try not to do for the people what they can do themselves. For example, we try to avoid looking after specific children or orphans in need, because this requires them to make a small sacrifice to look after a child in need, compared to trying to build a school. In addition, helping each other is an essential part of growing closer to God, so if we do their work for them, we restrict their spiritual growth.

At times it was hard to realize I was a poor missionary as I flew on a private charter plane for one part of the trip (free of charge) and was chauffeured around in a Mercedes Benz for another part! On another occasion I was encouraged to ride on a Ski-doo.

An opportunity arose to go underground at the Mt. Polley mine in BC, and I couldn’t say ‘no’. (Note: Fr. Gerry was a mining engineer in a previous life!) It had been at least 15 years since I was underground, but I felt right at home, and the old habits came back naturally: watching the ‘backs’ (tunnel roof) for danger and at the same



Gerry Conlan, OMI,
in the mine

time not falling over in the water and rocks on the floor. I met the underground workers at their workplace and they were happy for the work I was doing and allowed me to pick up a drill machine again (60 kg) ... now that felt heavier than I recall ... but I guess I'm 51 now and the last time I swung one around I was only 30!

The journey began in Saskatchewan in April. As I stepped out of the airport I hoped that the people would be warmer than the snow-covered ground that greeted me. It didn't take long to realize that the locals were safe, when I was greeted by Lady Di (Diane Lepage), Executive Director of AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI, and her husband Bernard (either she was worried I might be dangerous or she wanted a bag man to help with the tea). With a big hug and laugh, I was welcomed to Saskatoon. (Did you know one inch of rain holds the same amount of water as 15 inches of powdery snow?)

After four days on the road I needed a good sleep, and then we got cracking on preparing the presentation. After some Canadian hospitality at the farm, and a Ski-doo ride, I started the Mission Awareness Tour at St. Walburg/Paradise Hill. Eugene Warnke, OMI, generously chauffeured me around. On the way out we ran into a snowstorm, so we slowed down for fear of ice forming on the road. After Saturday evening mass

at Paradise Hill, we drove back to St. Walburg in a snowstorm. The parishioners were very welcoming and it was obvious they were very fond of Richard Doll, OMI, their parish priest who had spent 33 years in South Africa. Richard welcomed us warmly and we swapped a few stories about Africa. I was very impressed by the picture collages in the presbytery: one per year, highlighting the happy couples he has married for the last 12



Gerry Conlan, OMI,
fighting the cold



Richard Doll, OMI, Gerry Conlan, OMI and altar servers

years. For such a small country town, it was amazing how many there were for each year. Thanks Fr. Richard for a gentle and inspiring leadership model of your parish: the love of your parishioners says a lot about your care for them.

It was encouraging to hear so many parishioners praising the Oblates in their parishes. At St. Walburg, they live in fear of losing their beloved Fr. Doll. A woman at St. Charles Parish in Edmonton said: "We love our Oblate priests; they are so down to earth and good preachers." (Lucky they don't have me!)

On the second weekend of the Tour, I experienced the loyalty of people in Macklin, who have not had an Oblate priest for several years ... but they still love the Oblates and still support our missions. That is a real testament to the esteem in which the locals hold the Oblates as their former pastors. It probably helps that so many are related to former and current Oblates ... especially the Rolheiser and Stang clans. There was a serious irony when I was greeted by the current parish priest: Fr Augustine Ebido from Nigeria. He was a man of hospitality and got up early to cook an omelette for breakfast. Thanks Father.

The locals were very generous and took me out to supper

in the evening. There was a lot of chit-chat after mass as the locals were true country folk, just like when I grew up on a farm in Australia. Building community is about enjoying each other's company and making time to be together.

May 2: It was with some reluctance that I left the friendly clutches of Saskatchewan and headed west. Fr. Eugene drove me to the Oblates in Alberta, but we stopped in Unity for a day, hosted by the lovely Yvonne who had recently visited us in Kenya (but I think she looked after us better than I looked after her in Kenya!). We did a presentation at the school and also the parish community in the evening. It always encourages my faith when people make a sacrifice to come out and listen to a visiting speaker. Fr. Johnny Mangalath was also very accommodating and graciously took us out for supper.

I must say that Fr. Eugene and I had great laughter discussing the names of towns as we criss-crossed Saskatchewan ... someone obviously had a sense of humour many years ago!

St. Albert was a great place to meet Oblates (Mike, Dan, Ken, Louis, Albert, and many others). There were presentations at the parishes of St. Charles (Edmonton) and St. Albert, and the people were very welcoming and interested in the mission work. There were many presentations at the Catholic schools during the week, and it was so encouraging to see the



concern and interest of young people for justice and compassion for people less fortunate than themselves. I have been very impressed by the Oblate Associates in Canada ... faith-filled people who are down to earth and real family members of the Oblate communities. I remember what a blessing it was to meet two of them, Dan and Joanne Freidt, who are both school principals. At their schools, I was so impressed by their dedication to the well-being of the children and the practical integration of our faith in the lives of the staff and children. Great stuff ... now, don't weaken! It is a great reminder that I'm not the only "Man on a Mission" ... there are many missionaries in Canada and half of them don't wear a collar or carry a big Oblate cross.

In St. Albert, I was blessed by a day with the Brother Anthony Oblate community, and participated in a vocation reflection exercise facilitated by Ken Thorson, OMI – well done on an excellent exercise, by the way – but by the end of the day I was exhausted by all the 'reflectioning'! Not to worry, as this was washed away afterwards by some good old Oblate hospitality. Thanks to Garry La Boucane, OMI (Superior), and all those who did the groundwork for my visit.

May 10: My journey from Edmonton to Prince George, BC, was ironic ... me the young man assigned an 84-year-old guide! When I introduced him, the people at St. Mary's Parish in Prince George thought it was hilarious and erupted into applause and laughter for Lester Kaufmann, OMI.

Our first stop was at Hinton, where there are still many faithful Oblate supporters, even after 15 years without a resident Oblate priest. The hospitality reminded me of being back home in Australia – go Paula, Ginnie, Audrey and Jim, Marnie and Larry and Fr. Brian Inglis, CSB (Basilian), who was a very gracious host – thank you! At the presentation there was a wonderful moment of solidarity with the children in Kenya, as a young girl presented me with a gift of money raised by the children in Hinton over the preceding months: *"Please do*

something nice for the poor children.” We will, and thank you. By the way, those country women know how to cook! Thanks for the delicious goodies.

After Hinton we slipped over the border into BC, meandering through the beautiful Rocky Mountains and small lakes. We arrived in Prince George, to an enthusiastic welcome from Fr. Peter Dudek and Fr. Richard Beaudette, OMI and, later, Fr. Andy Takach, OMI. We celebrated three Masses over the weekend, and received a good welcome from the people. On the Sunday afternoon, Fr. Lester continued his journey to Vancouver to visit family, and dropped me at Williams Lake for the underground mine visit. Sheila Colwill (St Augustine’s Parish) met us at Williams Lake and generously hosted us.

May 13: After the underground mine visit, we hitched a free ride into Vancouver on a charter plane. Reconnecting with

Gerry Conlan, OMI



the 2013 MAMI group that toured Kenya was a very ‘social’ affair and cause for much laughter as we recounted the accommodation “privations” in Kenya and remembered some of the people we met, such as “Jack” from Ciokaugu. To Alice and Mary (and their families), I must say a special thank you for adopting me during my time there ... it helped boost my emotional energy for the rest of the trip. The

downside was that my fitted shirts are now stretched shirts!

The Oblate hospitality I received also made me feel like I was at home. One day I was asked to go to Pandosy House for lunch after a presentation to St. Augustine’s School. They didn’t know I was coming and Neysa (Oblate Associate and tour guide extraordinaire) apologized to Fr. Joachim, who replied: “Why are you apologizing, he has just come home for lunch!”

St. Augustine's parish is amazing ... the groups, the volunteers, the staff, the atmosphere. There is energy and hospitality at every turn. The resources you have and use are inspiring. The people were very generous, and I was not expecting the second collection arranged by Fr. Terry McNamara, OMI, because I am on a mission to say thank you. The small bags of tea were well received by the parishioners. Presentations were made at many schools and individual parish groups all over Vancouver.



Archbishop Emeritus Adam Exner, OMI, checks his work

My accommodation was with Archbishop Emeritus Adam Exner, OMI. I assume people thought I needed a strong minder to keep me in line. He is an amazing man, past the age of 80, but still able to climb ladders and paint the interior of the house. As someone remarked, "it's hard to keep a Saskatchewan farm boy down."

Before leaving Vancouver I also had the privilege of mass and breakfast with the editors of the *Oblate Spirit* magazine. Emily and John are faithful supporters of the Kenya Mission and do fantastic work producing the magazine that links our faithful supporters with our missions in Kenya, South America, Canada and elsewhere. As usual, they were full of encouragement, throwing out questions and ideas as we brainstormed ways of improving our relationship with sponsors and friends.

May 22: I literally cruised into Victoria, the capital of BC on Vancouver Island, in a Mercedes Benz – on and off the ferry – thanks Mike and Jo. How will I ever be happy with a Honda trail bike again?! Bill MacDonald, OMI, and the people of St. Patrick's received me so well, as did a group of ex-Oblate priests at a lovely wine-and-cheese evening presentation.

They are still faithful missionaries in their own way. After the Sunday mass presentation, one woman joked: “you must have done a good job Father, because even the Scots have opened their money purses!”

May 28: After Victoria I flew, on WestJet, to Regina to join the Oblate community at the House of Prayer in Fort Qu’Appelle. I mention WestJet to say thank you to them for waiving extra fees for my Travelling Road-show baggage. Glenn Zimmer, OMI, and Lady Di had organized this part of the tour as a respite centre for me, and it was a very peaceful place where I only had one presentation. The hospitality was wonderful, but I think we could pass on the resident woodpecker that banged on my water pipes for 10 minutes at 5 in the morning! I found out later that it was a mating call ... obviously he couldn’t see me, otherwise he would not have wasted his efforts.

While under the tender mercies of the Fort Qu’Appelle team of Margaret and Glenn (and Jane and Felix and Curt), Lady Di came down to meet and chat about how the Mission and Canada can be better connected in a more personal way. We came up with some ideas that we hope to share with you (our readers) in the not too distant future.

June 1: When we hit Manitoba we were greeted by the lovely Sr. Alice, SNJM, who drove three hours to pick me up at the border. There was a solid schedule arranged by the energetic, wise elder, Bernard Pinet, OMI, an MC extraordinaire! I think he was more exhausted running me around than I was by the end of the week. We began at Holy Rosary Parish where the CWL members (especially M. Louise, Maria and Julie) were wonderful hosts and, although small in number, people were very interested and the CWL wants to connect with our famous CWA in Kenya.

The three retirement residences visited were all welcoming places of hospitality, and I shared a few meals full of laughter, as I admonished some of the women “not to be naughty.” It was also a blessing to share a meal with some of my older

Oblate brothers who reminisced about their previous adventures down-under in Australia. I was privileged to meet so many wonderful supporters all wanting to know how Jim Fiori, OMI, was doing in Kenya. But Rose, one elegant woman, stands out. Although her

body is confined to her room, her spirit and mind are so active and in touch with the world, including the people of Kenya. She is a faithful reader of the *Oblate Spirit* magazine and a mission sponsor. Thank you Rose.

I was privileged to spend an hour with Archbishop Albert LeGatt, D.D., in the diocese of St Boniface and later with his mission team. This meeting germinated some opportunities to connect people with our Kenya Mission as well as the possibility of borrowing an idea from the Dominican Republic. The Mission work there has developed commercial greenhouses to produce a tenfold increase in food from the same land area as traditional agriculture. This may be a possibility in our new parish of Kisaju, less than one hour south of Nairobi airport. The area is hot, flat, short of trees, and there is no regular water supply, so we need to be creative to assist the parish development. In addition, there are European companies who may be willing to come and establish the industry based on a supply contract. This would assist the local community to generate revenue for the projects they would like to see happen. Perhaps I am getting ahead of “ourselves;” however, it is through sharing of ideas that Mission can become more creative and effective. In business, leaders brainstorm ideas and most get put in the bin. But, in the process, new ideas and excitement are created.

June 7: Fr. Bernard finally delivered me to the airport for



Gerry Conlan, OMI, and Rose



Gerry Conlan, OMI

a free-points flight to Toronto. I mention the no-cost points flight because I want to assure our faithful supporters that every expense was reduced as much as possible as I moved around Canada. All the Oblate communities and associates have made many sacrifices to

accommodate and transport me around without charge, so that MAMI is spending very little on the process.

On that same Friday evening (Feast of the Sacred Heart), I attended Mass at the Polish Oblate Parish of St. Casimir and, afterwards, met some of the Oblates for coffee. Fr. Jacek, OMI, invited me to celebrate the English mass Sunday morning, and I took the opportunity to thank the parishioners for their support of the OMI Madagascar Mission (Assumption Province), reminding them that missionaries are always happy when they see other missions being supported.

I must say a big thank you to Paul Feeley, OMI, and Vaughn Quinn, OMI, who generously opened their Oblate house to me. While Paul was an excellent chef and did a lot of preparation work before my arrival, Vaughn was like a great coach: welcoming and encouraging, while he himself struggled around the house due to being hit by a car on the street last year. What a great inspiring senior Oblate!

June 11: I travelled with David MacPhee to Ottawa so we could have a good 'gossip' session along the way and catch up on Kenya news (David did a one-year pastoral experience in 2011-2012). After five hours (with one Tim Horton's stop) we reached the Springhurst Oblate Residence. Here we were warmly welcomed by the Oblates and staff. Thanks for the friendly care Melissa, Alfred, Denise, Concha and all the others.

An enjoyable evening was had with a local Francophone family connected to the Oblate Associates in BC, followed by a

presentation to the Oblates and associates around Ottawa. A lot of insightful questions were asked from the Oblates present in regard to culture, church and reasons for hope. One Oblate said: "I knew about the Kenya Mission, but it was like I was hearing it for the first time!" On the weekend, presentations were made at all three masses at St. Joseph's parish. Wow, this is a very welcoming and caring parish. I was inspired by the great missionary work done by the parish to the inner city residents and others through their Food Kitchen and women's support. This place really empowers the people of God, in both liturgy and mission. Well done Andy Boyer, OMI, Chairlady Christine, Eleanor and the whole parish community; and thanks for the inspiration.

June 17: At Our Lady of Fatima Parish, I was expecting a handful of elderly women and was pleasantly surprised by a church with more than 100 people for mass. This interested group asked many good questions

about education, job opportunities, etc. The homily was about 30 seconds long... but everyone remembered it: *"some people are always happy and some always sad. Secret of a happy life is to see the good around us all the time. When it is sunshine: be happy, I can go for a walk. When it rains: be happy, the lawn is getting watered!"* It really touched a chord with me as I have been seeing a lot of good happening all over Canada. Just don't



go to sleep and let the politicians do whatever they want!

June 18: Ed MacNeil, OMI, dropped me at the airport to fly to Halifax for the last stop on the Trans-Canada tour. What a won-



derful host and generous chauffer he was.

I was greeted in Halifax by Gilbert Bertrand, OMI, who ended up playing nursemaid to me as I suffered a very painful neck/back/arm pain for a few days. He was so generous with his time. He has developed a well-organized parish where the people are very involved. Well done to Jackie, Brad and Corrin who did most of the preparation work for me.

We ventured south to the relatively new Oblate parish of St. Joseph's, Bridgewater, where Jim MacDonald, OMI, hosted us. A small group of enthusiastic parishioners came out to listen. Two in the group made statements like: "wow, becoming an Oblate parish has really opened our eyes to mission work in the world." And everyone else supported those comments. The parishioners of St. Clement's are an encouraging bunch, and I even managed to speak with a group of youth who camped overnight in the hall. The air must be really good in Nova Scotia because a man came puffing into the church. I asked him if he was OK. He said, "I'm just getting my breath back, the stairs are demanding at age 87!" He only looked 75. I must confess I did fall in love at St. Clement's with Ginger. But it's OK, she has four legs, not two!

It would be a major sin to finish this article without doing a little jig (Aussie for song and dance) to the MAMI troops in Saskatoon! Lady Di (the Boss!) and the faithful Roberta

Diane Lepage packs tea bags



worked extremely hard, preparing packages of pamphlets, envelopes and gift-bags of Kenya tea for each presentation. I was expecting a rest when I arrived in Saskatoon from Kenya, but they "sweet-talked" me into work after only two days. Their warmth, laughter and

big hugs were a contrast to the cold, snow, ice and rain that greeted me at the Saskatoon airport. Thanks also to the staff at Queen's House in Saskatoon for your patience and kindness.

Coming to Canada was an experience: watching the snow slowly fade away to reveal spring. It was like watching something being born. Giving birth is messy (like the waters breaking, making muddy melting snow), but soon afterwards the green grass springs up quickly, giving new life to the world. I was surprised by the high proportion of immigrant peoples in the churches as I moved around Canada. How the world is changing.

All over Canada I found the local Knights of Columbus groups have been very supportive and encouraging, especially David at St. Augustine's in Vancouver and Carl at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK.

The other stand-out groups visible in parishes were the wonderful CWL, who hosted us in several places, especially Winnipeg and at St. Augustine's in Vancouver.

Perhaps in conclusion I can end with a witty but perhaps truthful quotation from Oscar Wilde: **"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."** For those whose patience I tested, and hospitality prolonged, I thank you for your gentleness and resilience. I'm sure God had a few laughs and will reward you richly for your generosity of spirit.

May God bless our Canadian supporters and all their families.



(For those interested, you may subscribe to Fr. Gerry's homily e-mail for a weekly update on life in the Mission: e-mail your request to gconlan@oblates.com.au)

Gerry Conlan, OMI

The cost of changing the World

BY DIANE LEPAGE

Does *AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI* play a serious role in changing the world? The problems associated with poverty are massive in scale and we are so few. Unfortunately our belief system sometimes unknowingly prevents us from growing.

There are some significant differences in our expectations of non-profit organizations and the economic business world. The following are some examples:

- *Compensation* – difficulty in paying average salaries to staff that help people, but do not question paying exorbitant salaries to those who run companies in the profit-making business who really don't help others in a real meaningful way.
- *Promotion* – struggle with not having every dollar raised go towards the poor, yet businesses spend every dollar possible on advertising.
- *New Ideas* – hesitant to spend money on new ideas because of possible failure. The growth and success of the profit sector is dependent upon taking risks with new ideas.

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- *Time* – impatient with long-term goals. Shareholders in the business world are quite willing to invest time and money for long-term profits.

Why do we think in this counter-productive and very unfair way? Why do we police this ideology by posing the dangerous question of “What percentage of my donation goes towards administration?”

We are led to believe that the less that is spent on overhead, the more money will go towards the mission works that we love and care about deeply. We’ve been taught that the organization that spends 10 per cent on overhead is morally superior to the one that uses 40 per cent. What we fail to recognize is that the organization with a 10-per-cent overhead fee may have raised only \$100, while the one with 40-per-cent operating expenses raised \$10,000 to help the poor.

AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI has an overhead of approximately 22 per cent based on the past five years, and that is partially due to intentionally investing in endeavours of growth and new possibilities. This amount may increase as we continue to explore new ways of assisting the missions to be self-sustainable in years to come. For this to happen we need to prayerfully reconsider our ways of thinking in responding to the needs of the poor and how best to meet these challenges. We want to be a part of changing the world in a real way and we desperately want to help those most in need of its change.



New Board for AMMI/MAMI

Having completed their term as the board of directors on Aug. 15, Oblates John Malazdrewich, Gil Mason and Robert Laroche made way for the next AMMI/MAMI board. Both they and the mission office in Saskatoon wholeheartedly welcome Oblates Ken Forster, James Bleackley and Ken Thorson as the new Board.

Individually and together, the two Kens and Jim bring many years of missionary experience to the Missionary Association. Ken Forster, who now serves as Provincial Superior for the Oblates and Oblate Associates of OMI Lacombe Canada, has served the past six years in inner-city ministry in East Vancouver. Prior to that, Ken spent nine years in Kenya as one of the founders of the Oblate mission there. Throughout his nearly 50 years as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Ken has been passionate about the church being a caring neighbor engaged within the community and its concerns. Most of his ministry has been to support local people to become more active in the mission of the church itself.

Jim Bleackley comes with a Northern Canada missionary

heart. When he was only nine years old, his family moved to the Yukon; Jim's heart and soul



Oblates
Ken Thorson,
Ken Forster and
James Bleackley

have been there ever since, fostering local church community and leadership, along with the economic development of the Northwest. Ordained in 1972, Jim has been pastor of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Whitehorse for the past 15 years, and has served in several key leadership roles within the diocese.

Ken Thorson grew up in Saskatchewan, and was ordained in 1999. He was a key member of the team of Missionaries to Secularity in Birmingham, England. Later he worked in formation and vocation ministries before now accepting to be part of the leadership core team based in Ottawa. For most of life as an Oblate, Ken was actively committed to lay association within the Oblate community, sharing the Oblate charism and mission.

As we welcome these three Oblates, we say a profound thanks to Gil, John and Robert for the past several years of often daily commitment to AMMI/MAMI. Along with deciding upon the hundreds of requests for financial support that come to the Mission Office, the outgoing board has actively collaborated in the oversight and direction of the Missionary Association as it continues to find new ways to bring together people in Canada and in several countries in the world in service of the poor. Thank you, John, Robert and Gil.



John Malazdrewich



Gilbert Mason



Robert Laroche

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