



Health, Hunger and Humanity in Brazil

My club's first involvement with Brazil was when I was selected as a G.S.E. Team Leader. Later I returned with the aid of a Volunteer Service Grant to assist in the completion of 8 Matching Grant Applications for projects in District 4670, mainly for orphanages in the Porto Alegre Region, including one with the R.C. of Cachoeirinha, whose initiative to clean the River Gravataí started the 3.H process. To be awarded a 3.H Grant, which is in excess of \$300,000, there has to have been a successful Matching Grant between two clubs or districts during the previous 5 years.

The River Gravataí is 80K long, with the final 20K, which passes through several city centres, being heavily polluted. At present effluence from the favelas drains directly into the river. The objectives of the 3 year multi million pounds project are to clean and reduce the pollution in the lower reaches of the river to eventually make the waters suitable for drinking by some one million poor people, assisted by the provision of water extraction plants, water treatment centres and a sewerage treatment system. \$100 million dollars has already been provided by the State for the latter facility, with another \$100 million promised and the State and City Halls will pay for these other facilities.

The objectives will be achieved most importantly by Education and Awareness in the community, secondly with Rotarians creating teams from the community to collect rubbish from the river, its tributaries and banks, next by the planting of 20,000 native trees to stabilize the banks and finally by enforcement of the anti pollution laws by the Water Environment Police, whose task also is to prevent rice farmers from taking water from the upper reaches of the river when the level is too low during the Summer. At present, the river level is so high during the Winter that parts of the cities in the lower reaches are flooded. A \$20 million dam, paid for by the City Halls, will be constructed in the upper reaches to spread the waters into a swamp area in the Winter, but will not operate during the Summer.

I recently spent 3 weeks in Brazil as the project International Coordinator for the 3H project, supported

for 3 days by our club President Roger and his wife Mary, whose presence was much appreciated in Brazil and later by Mike Sanders, the District Communication Chairman, who will create a professional video depicting the problems as they exist now and in 3 years time the solutions that have been achieved. I was most impressed by how the 9 clubs involved in Brazil are working very hard together and I am convinced the project will be a success. I really felt that these were excellent examples of 'Rotary leading the Way' and 'Rotary making a Difference'.

However, our efforts received a temporary setback, when on the Thursday of the final week in Brazil, Mike and I were passengers in a 20 foot flat bottom boat, with a powerful outboard engine, travelling back from the site of the proposed dam, when the boat capsized in alligator infested waters, some 80 yards from the bank. Two of the 5 in the boat were injured, one with two deep gouges in his legs, with both requiring hospital treatment and a £4,000 video camera and other personal effects now lie at the bottom of the river. It took some time to reach the bank as there was a strong current pulling us back towards the middle of the river and on reaching the bank we were confronted with heavy overhanging branches in the water. We had previously been warned that the banks were infected with rattle snakes, but fortunately saw none.

I visited 10 Rotary Clubs and several Mayors and their Committees, giving talks on the project in Portuguese. Also visits were made to Schools, where I gave away a number of Premiership Football shirts to children nominated for their efforts and Head Teachers agreed to include the river problems and the environment in the curriculum. It was also agreed that each of the 20,000 trees will have the name of a child on it, which will make the children feel they are part of the project and respect it. Similarly, the creation of teams in the favelas to correctly dispose of their garbage, will hopefully make the occupants feel that they are an important part of the project.

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and District 1110 International Chairman.