

Date: October 26, 2003
Location: Pucon, Chile
Subject: Update #11 – Ponderings & Council en Pucon

Dear Friends and Family,

Just wanted to start off my eleventh update from abroad with a song of praise...

*If You say go, we will go
If You say wait, we will wait
If You say step out on the water
And they say it can't be done
We'll fix our eyes on You and we will come*

*Your ways are higher than our ways
And plans that You have laid
Are good and true
If You call us to the fire
You will not withdraw Your hand
We'll gaze into the flames and look for You*

- *If You Say Go*, Diane Thiel, Vineyard Music 2002

Reflecting on my past ten updates and considering that I only have about 6 weeks left here in South America, I've been having lots of different thoughts running through my head these days. Thoughts about my future and questions about what I'm doing down here and whether or not I'm really living this life purposefully and according to God's will. Maybe it's that I need to grow up and my teenage days are ticking away... and that I recently was watching a *Friends* episode in which they recalled turning thirty... in Joey's words... "<looking up> Why are you doing this to us, God?" =) Oh well, another decade before I can relate with that. =D (And what's thirty when I want to live to be 120 if God wills? =P)

As I think about my travels to date and the places I would like to see in the remaining six weeks, I find a bit of conflict in my motives. For one, I want to experience as much of South America as possible because I tell myself that I'll probably never be down here again. On the other hand, I have no idea where God will send me in the future just as I had no idea that He would send me to be here today. Whatever His will may be for my life, I think I just want to follow and obey. =) Even if it seems impossible or irrational, I just want to be able to say "Here I am, send me" and obey no matter the costs. When it's all said and done, I hope I can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return." – 2nd Timothy 4:7-8 NLT

Anyway, I supposed that's enough of me blabbering and you just want to see some pictures. =)



<left> This first image is almost completely unrelated to the rest of this update. I suppose it's only related because I found these over the past weekend. =) Mmm... *Hobby*... it's a "barra de caramelo, maní y nougat recubierta con sabor a chocolate". Amazing resemblance to Snickers chocolate bars. =P

However, it definitely doesn't taste as good and I would not recommend it to anyone. =)

Anyway, after returning early Tuesday morning from Buenos Aires and spending the rest of the day asleep in my two classes, I found myself packing on Wednesday because I had to carry all my gear to all my classes Thursday because we left for Pucon immediately after my last class. That was definitely a non-studying week. =)

So this past weekend was spent in the 9th region of Chile in and around the city of Pucon on a trip sponsored by our Council program. About 30 of us and two of our directors took the all night bus south to arrive Friday morning to spend the weekend having fun. =)



<right> Two of our program directors and myself by the *Rio Turbio* in Pucon (left to right: Mauricio, Dan & Hector).



<left> The landscapes in the ninth region of Pucon were definitely a wonderfully green change from the barren deserts of the north or the urban settings of Santiago or Buenos Aires. =)

Green trees, blue skies, white clouds, and clear waters proclaiming the existence of a magnificent Creator who arranged everything so magnificently and who loves me so much! =)

<right> On Friday, our tour started by taking us to see the *Ojos de Caburgua* where the waters from the Caburgua Lake flow into a river.



<left> Our next stop took us to the Caburgua Lake where Lucas and I decided to try to walk in water. It was a lot easier

than trying to walk on it, but I hope I'd have faith to step out when Jesus asks! =)

<right> While at the lake, we took a quick boat ride from which we were surrounded by green trees and green water!



<above> A small little sandy beach amidst the green trees and green waters of the lake. It was a very peaceful little place that got more and more beautiful as the sun lit up the waters through the overcast skies. =)



After the lake, our tour took us to see a series of three waterfalls. The entire region around Pucon is filled with lakes and waterfalls among other natural wonders. Many of these waterfalls are fed by the melting ice and snow from the mountains and volcano nearby and additionally from the constant rain that falls in the region.

<left> As expected, here I am standing in front of the first waterfall we saw. =)

<below> Not only did we take pictures in front of this waterfall, Lucas and I took a plunge into the icy cold waters! =) NIKO, anyone? =D



After trekking to see the rest of the waterfalls, we ran into a bunch of kids. =)

<below> One of the kids jumping off a log.



<right> Baby animals are cute... albeit a bit smelly. =D I think they like grass and nibbling on my fingers and jeans. =)



Our last stop on this tour took us to some natural thermal baths which had several pools of varying heat by a river of cold refreshing water enabling us to experience both extremes by taking a few steps. =)

<right> View of the green scenery surrounding the thermal baths, the flowing river, and the huts by the pools.

About half of the Council group came to Pucon this weekend and of that half, only



half went on the day tour the first day. The other group went on the same tour on Sunday.

<left> About a quarter of the Council group in Santiago this semester enjoying the thermal baths to end the day. =)

On Saturday, many of us planned to climb *Volcan Villarica* to see the smoking crater at the top, but the weather impeded any such expedition. Instead of climbing the volcano, many of us opted to explore the nearby Volcanic Caves formed by lava escaping the high pressure beneath the surface.



<above> Our group braved the freezing cold weather to reach the entrance of the caves.

<left> Once we arrived at the entrance of the caves, we left behind the natural light for the darkness underneath the earth's surface.

When the artificial lighting inside the caves was turned off, we were left in absolute darkness in which we could see absolutely nothing.

<right> Before ascending back to the surface, we took a group picture in our lovely hard hats that protected us from the sharp volcanic rocks making up the walls and from the dripping water from the rain pouring down outside.



like they were coated in chocolate... mmm... wish I'd had a Snickers bar... =D

<right> Anyway, when we finally emerged from the earth, we discovered that the rain had begun to freeze and that hail and snow were falling from the sky! Just a friendly reminder of the freezing cold winter I'll be heading back to in Philadelphia when I get back... and it'll have just gotten warm and beautiful here in Santiago... <sigh> missing my favorite season of Autumn again to go directly from Summer to Winter... =)

<left> Chocolate, anyone? =) There were many different kinds of minerals and rock that made up the walls, ceiling and floors of the volcanic caverns.

This part of the caves really looked





On the last day of our Council sponsored trip to Pucon, a group of us went white-water rafting in Class III-IV rapids. It was too wet and wild to take my camera so all I have are pictures before and after... I don't think I need to invest \$100-200 on a waterproof kit thing to be able to take pictures in the water once in a million times. =)

<left> Our group suited up in neoprene suits and life vests preparing to get on our rafts. =)

<right> In the twilight hours before we left to return to Santiago, the sky finally cleared up allowing us a good view of *Volcan Villarica* through the trees. The impressive volcano was covered with clean white snow and a small cloud of smoke was hovering above the crater at the top. =)



Anyway, I hope you're having as much fun reading my updates and looking at the pictures as I am writing them. =)

As my last 6 weeks here fly by, I don't know how many more places I'll get to visit or how many more updates I'll be able to share with you. I'll be spending the next week or two trying to get all my final papers done as I think I have at least 50 pages to write... all the work just seems to come in right at the end! =)

Once again, thanks for taking the time to read my updates and for remembering me in your prayers! Looking forward to the next time I'll see each of you and sharing about what's been going on since I last saw you! =)

- Dan