



<p><b><i>Venezuela Introduction</i></b>          March 2001</p> <p>Part 01, Ch. 35 CRF Media Chronicles</p>	<p><b>Final:</b> 11/25/12  <b>Time:</b> 4:50</p> <p>© 2012 Carl and Arline Ryan</p>
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**Carl:** In March 20001, we visited the area around Coro and Merida, Venezuela. These were two strikingly different places and people groups.

Coro, located along the northwestern coast, is part of the oil exporting industry. It is a city with many business and professional people who are the focus of the mission work.

**Overlay:** Coro

In many respects, the accommodations, lifestyle and homes mirrors that of progressive Midwestern United States cities.

The Bennett's have developed a strong outreach program. Their target group is in Coro as well as in the smaller city of Punto Fijo up the windswept peninsula 50 miles North of Coro. Punto Fijo has the world's largest oil refinery and Venezuela is the United States' single greatest source of petroleum.

**Overlay:** Punto Fijo

**Arline:** Prior to our arrival the missionaries prepared detailed plans, a draft script and filming schedule. This planning enabled us to cover a lot of ground during the short time we were there. It was much appreciated; however, in retrospect, the script seemed cold and void of spontaneity. Needless to say, many modifications were made along the way.

On our day off, we drove a short distance inland to a beautiful park with waterfalls, lush vegetation and, of course, a Catholic shrine.

After completing the work in Coro, we flew to Caracas and boarded a small plane for the short ride up to the Andes Mountains and the city of Merida. With over 300,000 people, this is the most popular tourist destination in Venezuela.

**Overlay:** Merida

The scenery is spectacular. Along the Trans Andean Highway is the 14,000 ft. pass, Pico El Aguila.

**Overlay:** Pico El Aguila

**Carl:** Ken Blackwood and the Andean Agriculture Team work mainly in the rural areas ... a world apart from the life in Merida.

**Overlay:** Ken and Allison Blackwood

In these places, the farming practices are often primitive, the soil is rocky and fields situated on steep mountain slopes. Much of their outreach work involves developing better farming practices including cultivation, fertilization and types of crops.

The roads are crooked and steep, the population density low and travel is often by foot or bus. For us, we went by car up a series of switchbacks to the town of **Pueblo Nuevo**. Several effective outreach centers have been developed in the area.

**Overlay:** Pueblo Nuevo

**Arline:** **Gavidia**, is one of many remote villages at an elevation of 12,000 feet about 50 miles from Merida but it takes about two hours over a narrow mountain road to make the trip.

**Overlay:** Julio in his bodega - Gavidia

For our return trip home, airline delays gave us an overnight stop on the vacation resort island of Aruba. This was a real treat for both of us as we pretended, ... at the airline's expense, ... to be rich tourists on a Caribbean cruise.

**Overlay:** Aruba

The two chapters of the Venezuela mission work, ... originally published and distributed on VHS tape, ... were recently re-mastered for inclusion on Blu-ray disc.

**Overlay:** CRF Media © Filmed: 2001, 2012



## *The Way in the Desert*

Ch. 36 (11:33) Filmed March 2001

**Gilbert and Aurora:** *Welcome to Coro! We are Gilbert and Aurora Rodriguez, merchants in the city of Coro and we would like to tell you about our state and its people.*

**Arline/Carl:** Gilbert and Aurora make their home in Coro, the capital of the state of Falcon. The city of Coro is located on the northern coast of Venezuela about 6 hours west of the capital of Caracas. Falcon is a very hot and dry region and is called the Land of the Winds. It is known for the Medanos, more than 200 acres of towering sand dunes that separate the two major population centers of Coro and Punto Fijo.

Punto Fijo, 50 miles North of Coro, is a young, bustling city established less than 40 years ago whose lifeblood is

petroleum. The major employer is PDVSA, the Venezuelan petroleum company. The well being of the people, in large measure, fluctuates with the price of oil. Located here is the world's largest refinery and the United States' single greatest source of petroleum.

Unlike Punto Fijo, Coro has ancient roots. Founded in 1527, it was the first settlement of Spanish conquistadors in the Western Hemisphere. The United Nations has designated Coro as a center of cultural heritage in the new world.

The streets, homes, and businesses of Coro reflect this heritage. Its people have traditional values. They are educated, cultured, proud and independently confident.

The cathedral spire marks the center of town and appears prominently on tourist brochures. Throughout the city, the steeples of countless churches identify places of worship. In the plaza is a monument containing the original cross that the Spanish priests carried ashore in the sixteenth century.

From all appearances, Coro is a religious city. Many people take time to offer prayers in their churches. Yet the faces of the people reflect the loneliness and lack of hope they feel. The church focuses on the Christ child or Christ on the cross. Little is mentioned of the resurrected and reigning Lord. Thus, the people have not heard the message of hope and joy that He offers.

In addition, the church has allowed its message to be adulterated by the culture. For example, many committed church members go to this desert shrine to pray to their dead ancestors and ask for their help.

On the other hand, if life is not going well, a trip may be made to purchase some special potions. Not uncommon would be a visit to a local *bruja*, or witch, to receive a word of advice.. Spiritism, witchcraft, and idolatry all prevail.

Most of the professional class recognize the futility of the traditional religion and have abandoned it for the pursuit of fame, fortune, and success. In whatever free time they have, they seek some form of diversion to fill the emptiness of their lives.

**Gilbert:** *My family, the Rodriguez clan, consists of 6 brothers and 2 sisters. It is no different from the average professional family.*

**Carl:** These brothers and sisters are successful in their careers. They work hard and have tremendous respect for their parents but the family basically has no time for God. They are more concerned with making money. They are more concerned with saving face in the community. They do not want to associate with the evangelicals who are looked down upon as second-class citizens.

**Carl:** There are very few evangelical churches in Falcon. Most are small, Pentecostal groups situated almost exclusively in the poorer neighborhoods. Also located on the edge of Coro are a few other growing evangelical congregations.

But now there is hope for the professionals of Falcon. Missionaries, Mike and Jan Bennett, professionals themselves, have come to Venezuela with a burden to reach their colleagues for Christ.

A mission team has been formed consisting of International Mission Board Missionaries, Mike and Jan, and four Venezuelan couples, all of whom are committed to sharing the gospel with their fellow professionals of Falcon.

The team is called UPE, the Union of Successful Professionals. The goal is to share the gospel with the professionals of the State of Falcon so that they will become disciplined followers of Jesus Christ. This must be done in a manner that addresses their felt needs. The desire of the Team is that these new followers of Jesus will favorably impact their society and form the basis of a church planting movement.

To make contacts with professionals, Jan Bennett teaches English as a second language classes where English is taught using the Gospel of Mark. In this way, the Gospel is heard and English is learned at the same time. Conferences are also sponsored that address topics of interest to professionals – how to be successful, how to manage time, how to diminish stress and how to enhance communication in one's business and personal life. At the close of the conferences, professionals are invited to attend weekly seminars where the topics are discussed in greater detail and from a Biblical perspective. At the end of the seminars, participants are invited to attend an evangelistic Bible study if they are interested in deepening their spiritual life.

Finally, new believers are incorporated into weekly cell groups. From these cell groups, new churches will emerge where professionals will feel comfortable to attend and to invite their family and friends. Some people have accepted the Lord and been baptized.

The cell groups come together on Sunday for worship, prayer and the study of God's Word.

One person whose life has been changed is Reina. Listen to her testimony. **(Reina's comments here)**

Alejandro is an ophthalmologist who has also invited Jesus into his life. **(Alejandro's comments here)**

Professionals from all walks of life are being attracted to this new ministry. The ministry touches felt needs; it is non-confrontational; and through it the professional is able to see, for the first time in his or her life, that the Bible has relevance to everyday life. Professionals are learning that they can have true meaning and purpose in life through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Aurora:** *We cannot do this ministry alone. The needs are too many and the resources are too few. We need your help so that our family, and hundreds of others just like it, can be reached with the gospel message.*

**Mike and Jan:** *Would you be willing to help us and our friends in Falcon? You can begin today by committing to be a prayer partner. Give us your name and address or e-mail and we will send you our newsletters so you can lift up the professionals of Falcon to our Father's throne of grace.*

*If you are a professional, would you consider coming to Falcon for a week or two and sharing your testimony with your colleagues here? In this way, they can see that one can be successful and a Christian at the same time.*

*Please continue your generous giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering and Cooperative Program. Your offerings will continue to support us and provide funds for other personnel to come and work along side us.*

*In conclusion, we want to share with you a promise that God has given us from His Word in regard to our ministry. "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." Will you join us in this ministry?*

*I am making a way in the desert.*



## ***Breaking Soil For the Harvest***

Ch. 37 (11:47) Filmed March 2001

OPENING SCENE: Oxen plowing

It is difficult to get the soil to produce a crop here in the Andes Mountains of Venezuela. The soil is rocky. The fields are small and located on steep slopes. Water must be piped to the fields for irrigation.

SCENE 2 – MÉRIDA:

Flight to Mérida – view of city

Within view of many of these small farms is the city of Mérida ... a modern city of over 300,000 people that is

punctuated by busy streets, large Catholic churches and constant reminders of the national hero, Simon Bolivar. Even the currency of the country, the Bolivares, is named for this hero. A large university is also located here.

The First Baptist Church of Mérida is located on the edge of the city. This is the largest Baptist church in the State of Mérida. Pastor Samuel Burgos and his congregation are reaching out to both the city and surrounding communities. Other national Baptist churches also strive to tell the good news that Jesus is THE Savior not just A savior.

Mérida is the most popular tourist destination in Venezuela. This popularity is easily understood by simply looking around.

(transition to road in mountains, calf on slope/observatory)

Among the spectacular scenery in this land is this 14,000 ft. mountain pass along the Trans Andean Highway called Pico El Aguila, which means the "Eagle's Peak". Nearby in the clear mountain air is the world-class observatory of Llano el Hato. The 16,500 ft. mountain of Pico Bolivar can be seen from the city.

The Venezuelan Andes occupy a land area that stretches across rugged mountains some 150 miles in length. Unfortunately, these mountains pose many obstacles to modernization, transportation, and communication. Many of the isolated pueblos are accessible only in four-wheel-drive vehicles because of steep, narrow, crooked, and poorly maintained roads. Mudslides are common in the rainy season. A few of these villages are accessible only on foot or by mule packs.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in each and every sector of the three Andean states. What about the farmers that must farm the steep slopes of these mountains ... those that must till these fields to plant potatoes, onions, cabbage, corn, broccoli, tomatoes, plantains, and coffee. They seem a world apart from the life in Mérida. They are the ones that must work with the oxen or horses, fertilize the plants, irrigate their crops, and worry about getting the produce to market. The farmers must face a gauntlet of roadblocks, detours, and bribes to be able to cultivate and market their produce.

Generations of isolation have made the Andeans a very family-oriented people. Their extended family is the single most important thing to the Andeans. Relatives are their closest friends and coworkers. The Andeans tend to live, work, worship, and play as an extended family. One's future employment, social standing, and education usually depend upon one's family relations.

The farmers have a deep spiritual conviction. We see this along the roadsides, in their homes, out in the middle of a dry river but this conviction is empty. The churches are empty. The parish priest is seldom at the church. Andeans have mixed their folk superstitions with Roman Catholicism. The unifying theme is a radical devotion to Mary. Andeans also worship various patron saints including El Doctor in the hope for a better life.

(transition to plow)

Tools must be used to expose the empty religious practices and allow the farmers to recognize that their greatest need is to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. One of the tools is providing help with their farming.

Listen to Ovidio Robledo, President of the Sower Agricultural Foundation as he tells us about this.

(interview with Ovidio with background pictures)

(scenes soil test/Gonzalez farm)

The Sower Foundation is making soil tests available for the farmers on these slopes. With a better understanding of the soil

and crop practices, professional agricultural people in the U.S. will be able to provide sound advice on how to improve their crop yield.

The effectiveness of this evangelistic tool was clearly demonstrated during the visit to videotape this soil test when Eli Gonzalez, the owner of the field expressed an interest in knowing why these men were helping him in this way. This opening gave the opportunity to share the Gospel. He asked that these new friends return to his farm.

(scenes of Ken and Alison)

Another tool is teaching English to school children as well as adults. Listen as Ken and Alison Blackwood work with some children in the town of Chiguara.

(scenes of Bible study at Emilio's house in Chiguara)

Progress is slow in these villages. Few evangelical Christians can be found. Emilio and his family are probably the only evangelicals among the 20,000 to 30,000 residents of Chiguará. This family lives in a small home on a narrow street in town. After a long illness, Emilio's wife recently died. Emilio is now left with the responsibility of raising his five children. Without money, without the finer things of life, without a momma...they have Christ here. Pray that this young man will continue to be a strong witness for Christ. The Bible study still meets in his home each week.

After traveling up another series of switchbacks, the visitor is greeted with a surprise -- the town of Pueblo Nuevo.

(Ken, Ovidio, James Pueblo Nuevo Plaza – comments by James)

Part of meeting these needs is getting to know the people in this mountain pueblo. There are farmers, store keepers, school children, and others gathered near the Plaza where the Catholic Church is located. This SOIL BREAKING provides a place for future planting of the SEEDS of the GOSPEL.

(scenes around town with people)

(Alison teaching class Pueblo Nuevo/background of street/church/entrance door)

Alison also teaches a weekly ESL class in the school in Pueblo Nuevo. The classroom just happens to be in a room at the back of the Catholic Church. These children are eager to learn English. Pray for Alison as she drives here each week.

(scenes from Gavidia)

Many villages are located on the slopes as well as in the valleys of these mountains. Gavidia, with a population of approximately 300, is one of these remote villages nestled in the Chama River Valley. As part of starting a work here, volunteers are needed who are willing to spend time sharing God's love with these people. The town is located about 50 miles from Mérida at an elevation of 12,000 feet. The trip from Mérida requires about 2 hours over a narrow mountain road.

(scenes from the store)

This small bodega is the center of community activity. Julio Torres showed us inside his store.

(scene of sign posts)

The sign here indicates that several other villages much like this one are nearby.

(scenes from Mitibibó) Any Ryan did narration for this portion.

Several people from the United States recently came to our little village of Mitibibó and taught the children how to play basketball. They also taught stories from the Bible.

My husband and I, my children, and my grandchildren live in this house. We pray daily to the Blessed Mother for our family and the hope of a better life for this beautiful little granddaughter.

(scenes of Irene's family)

CLOSING SCENES:

(comments Ken and Ovidio from prayer overlook)

(Faces)

(Overlay following questions as they are asked.)

*Will you PRAY?*

(Faces)

*Will you GIVE?*

(Faces)

*Will you GO?*

(OVERLAY --scenes of oxen plowing)

Andean Agriculture Team

Mérida, Venezuela

Forrest and Becky Bohlen

Ken and Alison Blackwood

James and Penny Hensley

Ovidio and Maribety Robledo

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(Faces)

*WILL YOU GIVE?*

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