

Lloyd Monroe Gives Up His Practice and Follows His Heart to Guatamala as a Missionary

GUATEMALA CITY — Guatemalan officials said they would abandon communities buried by landslides and declare them mass graveyards as reports of devastation trickled in from some of the more than 100 communities cut off from the outside world after killer mudslides.

Guatemala's death toll from torrential rains last week associated with Hurricane Stan stood at 652; 384 were missing.

The worst-hit communities will be abandoned and declared graveyards, officials said, after they stopped most efforts to dig out increasingly decomposed bodies.

"Panabaj will no longer exist," said Mayor Diego Esquina, referring to the Mayan hamlet on the shores of Lake Atitlan covered by a half-mile wide mudflow as much as 15 to 20 feet thick. "We are asking that it be declared a cemetery. We are tired, we no longer know where to dig."

Esquina said about 250 people remained missing. The bodies found were buried in mass graves.

— REPORT BY THE
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Just a few months after arriving in Guatemala as a Christian missionary, mudslides that devastated parts of Guatemala handed Lloyd Monroe a bigger opportunity than he had dreamed of to minister to the people in his new home. He, wife Melanie and sons Daniel and Asa, are now living in Panajachel, just across Lake Atitlan from areas that no longer exist—except as mud-covered graveyards.

The 1982 College of Law graduate left his successful practice, his home and its comforts to make a difference. Now, he has a better chance than ever to do just that.

Monroe received his undergraduate degree from Florida State, *magna cum laude*, and was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa scholastic honorary society. He received his J.D. with high honors and was selected for the Order of the Coif.

He grew up on the family farm in Waukeelah, Florida,

not far from the capital city, and was the first to attend college. He said he went to law school because his dad lost a local election.

"My father unsuccessfully ran for sheriff in Jefferson County in 1976," Monroe said. "Had he won, I would most likely have transferred to University of Florida, majored in agriculture and helped him and my brothers with the farm. Instead, I could now major in history, go to law school and become a lawyer."

In the 1980s, Monroe's mother made several mission trips to Haiti, and in 1999 Melanie Monroe went to Cuba. He accompanied her the next year on the first of what would be many mission trips to the island nation. He said it changed their ideas about what a church and being a Christian is all about.

"Many Americans are semi-spoiled to spoiled comfort/security seekers," Monroe said. "Unfortunately, many folks in church are that same way and

attend out of some sense of duty and as 'consumers.' We want soft seats, a good (and short) sermon, good music and familiar fellowship, but we don't want to be challenged too much or taken out of our comfort zone. That doesn't square much with the faith adventure, which includes discomfort and even danger, laid out in the Bible."

In Cuba, he witnessed a joy that was not affected by circumstances. "These people had no political freedom, no medicine, little food, two or three sets of clothes and earned about \$7 per month," Monroe said. "But they had a joy and love for God, each other and for us that was contagious. The Christian faith thrives amongst discomfort, not comfort."

Monroe also made several trips to Guatemala over the next few years before making a final visit in 2004 with brother-in-law Bill Smith to confirm the need and get some discernment as to whether he should really give up his law practice and their good life in the states. His answer started with lost luggage.

"Our six suitcases of medicine, ministry material, dental supplies, etc., were lost by the airline. That caused us to return to Guatemala City three days after arriving to retrieve the luggage," he said. "A friend of ours invited us to attend a mission service that evening where she helps with music. After a touching musical service, the seminarian pastor went to his Genesis 12 scripture text and



Lloyd Monroe in native dress with a family he befriended in Guatemala.



Lloyd Monroe and wife Melanie in Guatemala.

faith that doesn't shy away from contemporary culture."

Monroe said the ministry includes a Christian coffee house and nightclub for expatriates, and feeding and clothing programs for the poor. "We want to live out our faith through lives of service," he

read in Spanish. I couldn't follow and opened my Bible. Bill was no longer translating but just sitting there, wet-eyed and grinning, as I read it: "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you... and you will be a blessing.' I felt like a bug on God's microscope slide."

A successful trial lawyer and partner at Coppins, Monroe, Adkins, Dincman & Spellman, P.A., in Tallahassee, Monroe officially transitioned to "of counsel" status in the firm on August 1 and began full-time work with Porch de Salomon, which he and his family started with his sister, Suzanne Smith and her husband, Bill. The name means Solomon's porch, which is a reference to the Bible's description of Solomon's Temple in Acts 5 as a place to meet and prepare to take Christ's message to the world.

The ministry is designed to reach Panajachel's large population of expatriates – those temporarily or permanently in a country and culture other than that of their upbringing and/or legal residence – and to mobilize volunteer teams and individuals who come to minister to the indigenous population.

"Many of the expats, whether American or European, are suspicious of or even opposed to organized religion," he said. "With that in mind, we hope to minimize religiosity and maximize authentic, service-oriented

said. "We can help provide resources for and meet the tremendous humanitarian needs in the surrounding indigenous villages."

Financial support for the ministry comes from a variety of sources. "We are not on anyone's payroll and serve as volunteers," Monroe said. "My firm is paying modest 'residuals' to me for seven years and we have rented out our barn, loft apartment and horse pasture back home. We just cashed in life insurance and are dipping into our savings. The Smiths have a super-micro coffee roasting business back home which is being operated by a friend; perhaps it will again turn a profit soon."

The ministry also is supported by a number of churches and individual donors, some of whom have pledged monthly support.

Lloyd Monroe said they plan on staying indefinitely, with two visits a year back home to stay in touch with friends and family, especially daughter Hannah, who is in college.

He said while he is no longer practicing law, his legal career helped make this all possible. "It paid the bills, with some left over for 23 years," he said. "The 'left-over' is now helping support our family, still, as well as our ministry."

For more information, visit www.porchdesalomon.org.

Jim and Anne Corrigan's Gift Encourages Excellence on Moot Court



Jim Corrigan credits his experience on the College of Law's Moot Court team for kick-starting his successful career as a litigator. He is convinced that, along with his good grades, the Moot Court entry on his resume influenced the prestigious Orlando firm of Maguire, Voorhis & Wells to hire him into its trial section right out of law school.

The 1973 grad recalls with great fondness the years he spent in Moot Court with classmates Mel Martinez, Ken Connor, Bill Jennings, Danny Kepner and Chris Hart. Corrigan says that Connor, a year ahead of him and Martinez, is fond of telling the two that he "sired them from a legal embryo and made them everything they

are." Martinez and Corrigan still refer to Connor as "Sire."

Corrigan and Martinez, now a U.S. senator, teamed up their first year, 1972, with Professor Bill VanDerCreek as coach and won Best Brief in the state competition.

Almost 33 years later, Corrigan and his wife, Anne, have created the James and Anne Corrigan Endowment for Moot Court with a gift of \$100,000.

"Now that I have the opportunity to help the Moot Court team, I'm happy to do it," said Corrigan, founding partner in the Pensacola firm of Corrigan & Janes, where he practices medical malpractice, personal injury, wrongful death and product liability law. "I know how expensive it is to travel."

Professor Nat Stern, the John W. and Ashley E. Frost Professor, who serves as the team's faculty sponsor, said: "This is a wonderful gift that should help the Moot Court Team extend its success in state and national competitions.

"The breadth of purposes for which endowment funds can be employed will allow the dean to direct them to their optimal use. For example, all of our teams that have won a national competition in recent years have benefited from the presence of their coach at the competition. The funds for coaches' travel from the Endowment of Excellence will enable us to continue to provide that invaluable support."

Similarly, Stern said, the availability of scholarships from the endowment will bolster the team's ability to compete by alleviating financial pressures that can interfere with team members' preparations. "All of us who are associated with the Team are deeply grateful to Jim and Anne for their extraordinary generosity."