

Some say I am a perfectionist when it comes to writing Newsletters. Maybe I am. But I say it is a hard thing to be a perfectionist at something where skill and experience is lacking. I could just send out the bullet points and pictures. Nothing else. But when I sit down and write my thoughts, my prayers, my joys and my sorrows to you, even though it is not the easiest thing for me, (let alone for you to read) I am much more satisfied with the feeling that I have done my best at keeping those who care about me honestly informed about my life. I am glad to do it.

În Româniă. It is difficult to believe that it has been only three months since leaving Sweden. Somehow it seems that it has been much longer. I suppose that can be quite normal when so many new things are experienced in so short a time.



After meeting Ebbe & Elke Beck, and the rest of the Purtatorii de Faclie (PDF) team, I moved in with Familiă Palade, a host family whom Ebbe and Elke found for me to stay with for the first month of my time in Romania. Really they are a wonderful family who opened their home to me for those first weeks, and made me one of the family, as much as they were able to. Alex, the father, has been a missionary in Romania with Campus Crusade for about 20 years, and really has a powerful witness to the students and young men and women of Braşov. Simona, the mother of the family, doesn't speak hardly a word of English, and is a very busy woman raising her two boys, Timi and David, and her headstrong but very cute

little three year old girl, Esthera.

During that time I also started my introduction to the Romanian language through twice a week lessons with Kristina, a university student who in the past helped PDF with various things, and now has volunteered her time to help me start to learn the language. An opportunity which I wish I could have taken better advantage of. You will see a little farther down what made it difficult. One very neat way which I got to experience Romanian culture in its rural form, was when the Palade's took me with them up north to Moldavia, to celebrate Orthodox Easter with Alex's parents in



a village called Bacau. We were just there for a couple of days, but it was a neat experience, to meet his parents, to have Senior Palade kill me at chess, and to enjoy some real old country Romanian cuisine. Very delicious indeed.

Something which has been eye opening to me about the Christians here, is that for many of them, persecution is something that they know all too intimately. Having grown up in the Orthodox Tradition, many are rejected from their family and home community as a "cultist" once they receive Christ. And while some families are reconciled together through Christ, many remain with broken and even hostile relations between parents and their children. A sad reality which only the healing power of God can fix. Praise God with me for the healing in the Palade family, and pray also that God would bring Alex's parents to Himself in a marvelous way!



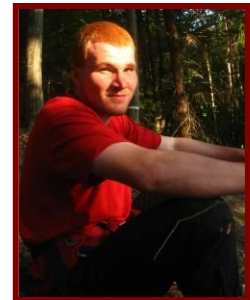
The People. The reason why it was often difficult to take advantage of the language training was primarily due to my mind and concentration being pulled in so many directions at once, especially during that first month. Most every day, I would leave my host family early in the morning, either to go to the office to help plan for the ropes course, or to Râşnov (the site of the new Facility) to help with the construction, and to start preparing the site for the ropes course. Thus making it difficult to consistently concentrate on the language, or to even have many opportunities to speak it with the Palade's, as much of the time I was gone. And when at the construction site, the primary language is German, spoken by the fine young men of the construction team. The men whom with I live and work.

Dennis, project manager and general leader of the volunteers



Friedemann, our trained carpenter, always with a smile. He is the first of the three volunteers from Germany.

Lukas, ever the musical one, here for his social service year.



And last but defiantly not least, is der Carsten, who probably does the most of the cooking out of our little band of bachelors. A very important task indeed.

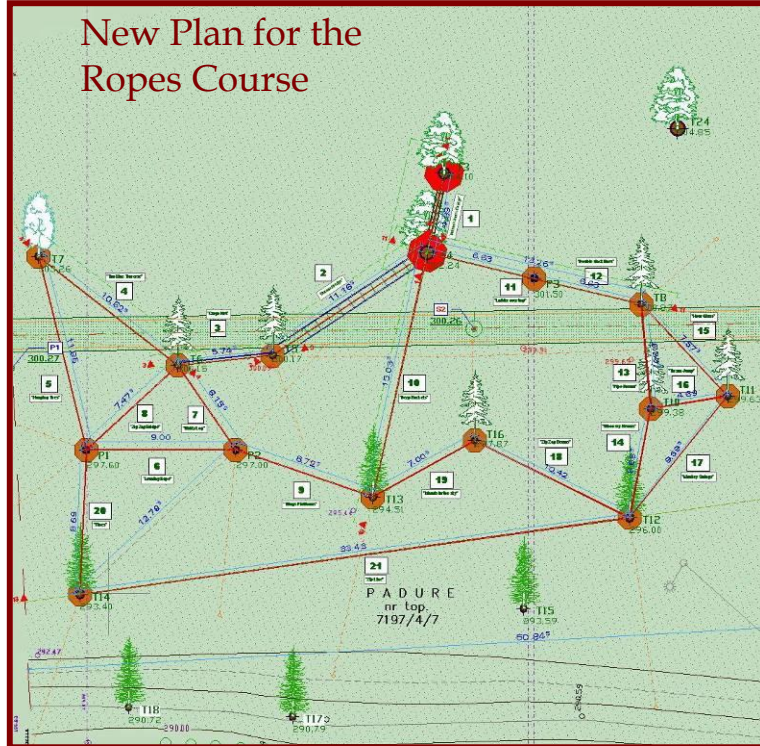


These guys have warmly welcomed me into their fellowship, and have done much to include me in their lives here. I have a great respect for them all. They are all really hard workers, and they do it all for Christ, and for His ministry here. Without their long hours of work in order to make the kitchen and bathroom facilities ready, there wouldn't be any camps this summer. I could write pages of their work and what God has accomplished through them in regards to getting the facility ready for the summer camps. But time restrains. Regardless, I am honored to share their home with them and to call them companions and colleagues in Christ's work.

The other members of the PDF team, Loredana, Florin S, Florin D, Sami, Veronica, Anja, Petra, and of course Ebbe have all worked hard and contributed so much to the preparations of the camps, in many, many ways, but as I work and live with the Germans directly, what they do has a more direct impact on me, and I see their contributions with more regularity. Really, their work ethic has challenged mine at times, and made me look at myself and ask if I live to the same standard. And that is always a good thing, to be challenged to look at oneself, and to examine what are my motives for this and for that. Am I doing my best, or just enough to get by?

Ropes course. As I stated in my previous newsletter, the main purpose in my coming to Romania, is to help with the building of a High Ropes course, and the development of a program for the course in order to effectively use it with the camps as a tool to share the Love of Christ. I will now attempt to give you a brief summery of these last months in respect to that particular project, with all of it's complications, challenges and blessings.

Before I even arrived in Romania, while I was still in Sweden, Joel Vermillion (the program director and good friend of mine back in Sweden) flew down to Romania for a few days, to help Ebbe start to plan and design



the course on paper, as well as offering much advice and experience based knowledge on the construction of a ropes course, also on the facilitation aspects to running a ministry based high challenge activity. He was here for about 3 days, during which time they surveyed the site, planned the stations of the course, and with the help of Sami the architect, put it all into his auto-cad program and made a virtual model of the course.

After Joel flew back to Sweden, he took that information, as well as general information for ropes course construction, which he had accumulated in Sweden, and put together a very inclusive report on the proposed course. Both for Ebbe and me, and also as a document to mail to a church in Seattle, who had made plans to send a team for two weeks to help build the course.

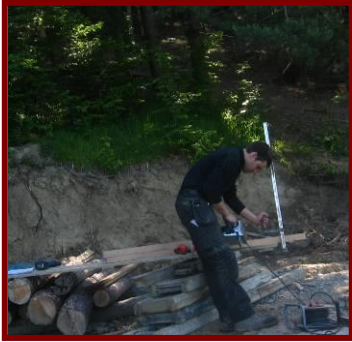
And so when I arrived, the plan was to start with the gathering of materials, and preparation of the site for the course, as well as preparing the trees. But.....

Not longer then one week after I arrived, we found out that there was a dispute over the ownership of the land on which we wanted to build the course. And so the city of Rasnov, wouldn't allow us to build on the proposed site. Hmm, problem. "Welcome to Romanian Bureaucracy Joseph". We had to relocate our Ropes course.

And so we did, we found an area located on property that indisputably belonged to PDF. And thanks to all of the work that Joel and Ebbe did before, all we had to do was to survey the new site, and plug in the new numbers to the program which they had already developed for the old course plan. Ebbe and I brainstormed ideas for the flow, and stations of the course, and then gave the data to Sami, so that he could make the architectural drawings. It all came together quite well, Praise God. And though the site is not as ideal for some reasons, such as the slope is quite steep in some spots, and that we had to install a couple of poles where there aren't adequate trees, there are also advantages to the site, such as it is much closer to the road then the other area, making access much simpler.

And then it was a matter of ordering the materials, which Ebbe took care of, and preparing the site, cleaning out all of the brush and small trees which would be in the way.

From there the project has been developing. A group of Romanian volunteers came for a weekend and helped with the preparation of the site, and another group helped us raise one of the big poles into position.



Timo Gerle, a carpenter from Germany, who also has a history with the Bible School in Sweden, came for two weeks and was a huge help to get started on the construction of the oak platforms. Together we designed and built three platforms and started on the fourth before he had to go back to Germany. The following week, three Americans,

Dave, Kevin, and Will came from Bethany church in Seattle for one week and helped us raise the second pole, install belay cables and build two of the stations, a Cargo Net, and Hanging Tires. They were a joy to work with and it was fun to hear American voices and humor again.

After the American team left, I had a few days vacation, and then the summer camps started. And because we used the three elements of the course that we have with the camps, and because I was involved with the first camp in other ways, I haven't had time to continue the progress on the course until now.

This next week I will have one or two guys who are here for a construction camp, and we will continue the work.

My hope is that by November, the course will consist of 9 stations and a Zip line. But that has a lot to do with how much help I will have, as we don't have any more groups planned specifically to help with the Ropes course, and Ebbe has many other responsibilities on his plate.



Camps. We have had two of the big summer camps this month, and I got to help out with the first quite a bit, which was really a neat experience. It was a German speaking camp, for the Lutheran German minority living in Transylvania. And so I didn't get to practice much Romanian, but my comprehension of German improved a bit. The theme of the camps this summer is based from the Jules Vern book, Around the world in 80 days and the kids had a blast visiting the different countries and continents, as each day of the camp they were in a different country. Great fun. And by the end of the week, about 8 of the kids talked with their leaders about wanting to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Praise God!

As my Deutsch is schrecklich, I didn't have a group of my own, but my role was just to do whatever they needed help doing, helping in the kitchen, cleaning the bathrooms, helping with the camp fire and stick bread, and trying unsuccessfully to unplug the septic system with Friedemann. (Great story!) As well as being responsible for the Ropes course activity. Yes, we did the ropes course with the group. And it would not have worked at all without those three German boys, Friedemann, Carsten and Lukas. They did a great job facilitating the course, considering the short amount of training and preparation given them.



It was really a nice feeling to see the kids having fun and learning lessons from the course after these months of work we have put into it.

Life. I suppose that by now, most of you have heard that I have a girlfriend. News tends to travel, even in international circles. And though I won't go into details here of our relationship, you may feel free to write me if you are curious, or have questions about her. For now I will tell you that 5 days before I left for Romania, I asked eSther Fahim, the ladies RA at the School in Sweden to be my girlfriend, and she blew me away with a yes! As you can imagine, this new development has played a role on my thought life, email life, skype life, sleep life, eating life, reading life, working life, playing life, praying life, and just about any other aspect of life you can think of. And as we are pursuing this relationship, God has been using her to teach me things that hadn't even been on my radar till now. He really is a Good God, with a sense of humor.

Probably the biggest lesson God has been trying to knock into me, with varying success, is that of wisdom. Something which I had not really ever given much thought to. What is wisdom? How is it applied to life? In what areas am I wise? In what areas am I not? I had given those questions thought in other contexts perhaps, but not really from the angle of wisdom. Having a girlfriend (especially one so fine as eSther) does wonders at helping you to think about things like this.

And so I brought with me from Sweden some lectures on wisdom by Scott Walt. And have thoroughly enjoyed listening to his thoughts and observations on Godly wisdom. I have also been challenged to read and study the book of Proverbs, and James. I want to study Ecclesiastes, but haven't up to now. Definitely wisdom is a worthwhile topic of study and discussion. And one with which I have only begun to scratch the surface.

So...You, faithful reader have either stuck with me through the end, or just skimmed over the pictures to read the last paragraph. Regardless, I will end with what you can do to help me, now that I have taken 10 minutes of your life.

Please pray for me! As I wrote in my summery page,

- For my relationship with God, that I would allow him to grow and mature me.
- That He would give me a gift for the languages.
- That he would increase my love for the people here.
- For living arrangements for the Fall and Winter, as we will have to move out of the apartment we are currently living in.
- Pray for eSther and me as we grow closer while so far away.
- Praise him for the financial support which Lazy mountain has agreed to give, as well as the money which has come from all of you guys.
- Praise him for the work he has done and continues to do through the Camps this summer.

Please let me know how you are!

Send me a note; even if just to let me know you are still alive, it is nice to know what you guys are up to as well!

Until next time,

Grace and peace,

Joseph Whipple
July 2, 2008
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