

# Martin Eyeglass Project 2014

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When our work was completed on the last day in this village, everything was being packed and Lilliam and I walked to the street to find the W/NP truck for our ride back to the hotel in Rio Blanco. We found the truck and while we were waiting for Chester to arrive and unlock it, a middle-age woman came to me and started to talk.

I (No Spanish) pointed to Lilliam, who said they were looking for the place to get eye-glasses. We said that this was the place but that our stay here was over and that we had to go. The woman pointed to an older couple, who looked like they were going to keel over, and said that they had walked 4-hours, down a mountain side, to get here, and they had just arrived. We gave them some water bottles, (the food was packed) and I headed back to the school where we had been set up.

The couple (The middle-aged woman turned out to be the daughter of the couple) stayed with Lilliam and I went back to the school building where everything was being packed. And everything was packed including simple eye charts and the auto refractor used to determine exact eye prescriptions.

I returned to Lilliam and the three Nicaraguans with the bad news. There is nothing I can do, everything is packed and most of it is already in the trucks, I said. The Nicaraguans seemed to understand and walked off. While Lilliam and I stood by the truck and tried to figure out something we could do, the trio returned. They were looking at me but talking to Lilliam and asked, Where are you going? We said that we were returning to our hotel Rio Blanco because we were going to continue the eye-glass project at a school in Rio Blanco tomorrow.

They asked if they could come with us to Rio Blanco, saying that they had friends or relatives there and would spend the night with them.

By then the trucks were coming down the path towards us, completely loaded and ready for the 1 1/2 hour trip back to Rio Blanco, never going over 20 mph, on a pot-holed, half washed-out road. I stopped the lead truck and told the story to everyone as fast as possible, saying that I could stand in the back of our truck (Nicaraguan style) to make room for the three Nicaraguans, who were watching all of this activity very intently, but we had to, or should do something.



Fortunately, Moises, Mirna, Chester and the guy from the coordinating NGO took over, discussed the situation, and determined that the Nicaraguans would ride in the NGO truck at the head of the caravan. The Nicaraguans got into the NGO truck, put their walking sticks in the bed of that truck and off to Rio Blanco we went.

Early the next day we setup the project components - vision testing, eye glass inventory, seating, food, water etc.- in the rooms and shaded areas of a walled-in school building near the hotel. About 50 people at a time were let in through the stockade-like gate to keep the flow of people somewhat orderly. Once we were set up, and the first group of people were let in, I looked for 'our' Nicaraguans, but didn't see them. So I went outside the gate, and there they were! The line outside the walls of the school was approximately two hundred people, which never got shorter until we had to shut down at the end of the day. Using hand-gestures, I said, follow me. The four of us went inside, through the registration process and to the front of the line to see Dr. Martin, who personally checks the eyes of each person after being registered. During dinner at the hotel the previous night everyone from W/NP and the coordinating NGO knew about this older couple and their 4-hour trek down a mountain side, and were looking forward to seeing them - they had become special.



The rest of the story is typical - they got glasses that work for them. In one of these pictures, the woman is telling us that all of us are going to heaven. Once they were heading out to the streets of Rio Blanco, wearing their new glasses, Lilliam and I 'found' some Cordobas and dollars they must have dropped and returned the money to them so they could safely return to their home and keep them going for a month or two. (Somehow a bus connects Rio Blanco and the village where we met).



The first thing she read with her new glasses

