

Correspondence with Betty Campbell Whitehurst

9/4/16

Dear Sam,

After a busy Sunday, here I am again. Fortunately, the second part of the storm that had been predicted did not arrive -- it's out to sea now, although folks in New England are apparently in for some major flooding. We were very fortunate to have just one very rainy, very windy day.

I would be honored to have the memoir I sent you to be included in the UNC's Wilson Library. The book of memoirs it came from is entitled Our Life Story: Blessed by God Through Mission, by Walter A. Whitehurst and Betty C. Whitehurst. Even though it is a limited edition (100 copies) intended for just our family members and close friends, it is copyrighted in our names and even has an ISBN: 9781-58535-256-2. It was published by In His Steps Publishing, Statesboro, GA, in 2012. As one of the authors (and with my husband's approval as well) you have permission to share my story with the library and also to use it in your dissertation.

Thank you for your heartfelt praise for what I wrote about my time in Cuba, and for including it in your research. If you have any more questions I will be happy to do what I can to answer them -- and I will put the documents I mentioned earlier in the mail on Tuesday. I wish you well as you work on the dissertation, and would love to hear from you once you are in Chile about some of your experiences there.

Blessings,

Betty

In response to your questions:

What was the name of the Sugar Company and why did they give permission to start a Methodist Mission?

**The sugar mill was known as Central Báguanos. I do not know the name of the sugar company, only that it was owned by a company from Spain. It is still operating, but has been renamed by the present government Central López Peña.**

Was the curfew of 9PM in Báguanos only for young men?

**According to my journal, that was the case. I am not sure what the age limit would have been, but if there were workers in the sugar mill who had to begin or end their shifts after 9PM, I would think they would have been issued some kind of pass in order to walk to or from their work at the mill.**

Why had you been against women preachers? How did your conception of gender roles change during your experience in Cuba?

**In the 1950s, the Methodist Church and many others had rules forbidding ordaining women as preachers. However, women who were missionaries were exempt from those rules, and observing Eulalia Cook in action made me realize that a woman could be as effective as a man in evangelizing, establishing churches, and overseeing a larger parish consisting of many churches in a widespread area. (Eulalia Cook González, who had married quite late in life and was already widowed at the time, went with my husband and me to Báguanos on our first Cuba mission team in 1995. She was quite elderly at the time, and not in good health, and her caretaker accompanied her so she would not be a burden to the team. On several days she sat on the front porch of the parsonage, which had been our missionary residence, and people lined up for several blocks waiting their turn to step onto the porch and greet her. Older people reminisced with her about their times together, while young people would say "I've heard wonderful things about you all my life from my grandparents." At one point Walt said to Eulalia, "Tell me about your call into the ministry," and she replied, "I wasn't called -- I was pushed!" As there were no pastors in the entire region when she went there in the 1940s, it was necessary for her to be ordained as a minister.)**

How were you treated differently as an American in Cuba? As a woman? Did you operate with a greater air of security?

**As an American, I felt I was safer than the average Cuban because Fulgencio Batista and his supporters were very much dependent on the good will of the U.S. government. As a woman, I tried to be cautious about being out at night unless it was with a group of people. I did not think too much about my personal security because I trusted that God would take care of me. (Which He did!)**

9/7/16

1) How were you viewed in the town where you were located? I'm interested to understand what it was like being both a respected member of the community and a foreigner at the same time.

**It is hard to explain how I believe I was viewed. Certainly with a great deal of respect, which I attribute to the good reputation established by Eulalia Cook, who was such a caring and helpful person to everyone she met as well as being a truly effective preacher, pastor, organizer, and someone everyone looked up to. Because I was younger, I felt very close to the young people in the church and community -- we did a lot of fun things together, and I felt I was really a part of the group. Being a foreigner did not seem to matter to the Cubans who received me into their homes and their friendship.**

2) I'm trying to understand how the mission ended up in Báguanos. Why did the Spanish sugar company donate land to the Methodist Church?

**One of the papers I sent you in today's mail has a thorough explanation of how the mission ended up in Báguanos. I never thought about why the Spanish sugar company donated land to the Methodist Church, but I would imagine they felt the church would help promote a positive atmosphere among the workers. The entire town belonged to the sugar company; there were no privately owned homes within the town limits, although there were some just outside of town who owned their own property. The stores, movie theater, park, etc. were also owned by the company. I learned first-hand what it was like to live in a "company town" -- and also the meaning of a song Tennessee Ernie Ford used to sing, "I owe my soul to the company store." During the off-season when the sugar mill was closed, workers charged their purchases at the company store. If the "zafra" (sugar cane season) was not long enough for them to earn enough to pay off their past bills, they went deeper and deeper into debt.**

3) Why do you think the revolution adopted an anti-American rhetoric. I'm curious because you said, you never felt like you didn't belong in Cuba. From your lens how did the language and anti-"yankee" sentiment evolve? Was it in response to the actions of the US government, U.S. interests within Cuba, something else?

**The anti-American rhetoric was not very noticeable that first year after the Revolution, and I left before it got to the point where the missionaries were recalled by our Board of Global Ministries. There was probably some resentment against our government for having supported Batista, but mostly I believe that it was a reaction to our government's refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the Castro government, which caused Cuba to seek assistance from Russia and become a part of that side of the Cold War. And of course the fact that all of the farms and businesses were expropriated made the U.S. business community pressured our government to have nothing to do with Cuba. This is not a scholarly, well researched response, just a gut reaction from someone who had great hopes for the future of Cuba and saw them fade away as our two countries became bitter antagonists.**