

6-3-04

Mike is still restricted to Greece. Maria is on her second Bulgarian mission trip. Dad is helping the kids with their Greek final exams. Mom is ministering to orphans and women in Bulgaria. Maria returns this evening and Mike heads to Athens for another work team. Rollo and Melva Cain, Art McGuiness, and Andrew Hancock comprised last week's work team. They worked very hard and completed the Good Country Weekend Ministry Center. The next team is from the UK. They will build housing units for the Olympic teams. Those units will be disassembled and shipped to Bulgaria in September for siding on a new church there. Praise the Lord for the chain reaction of ministry. Pray with us for these new developments.

This past month, our computer has been down. So forgive us for loosing touch. We have been quiet busy.

From our last newsletter (snail mail) the soap opera of living in another country:

“Government bureaucracy is one of missionary’s greatest frustrations. Currently, I (Michael) **am trapped in Greece**. On March 30, I applied for my Greek residence permit to be renewed and spoke with Vasilis for one hour about the Lord, America, and our humanitarian work in the Balkans. I requested speedy processing because of my frequent travels outside of Greece. Current renewal delays are from 6 months to one year. Without the permit, I can leave Greece, but would not be allowed to re-enter. On April 6, I went to the regional office (the next level of bureaucracy) at 8:15 am all the visitor numbers had been handed out. After Easter on April 13, I went again to the regional office at 7.00 am and received visitor number one for 12.00 noon. At 12.30 Pastor Sakis, FM NGO president, and I presented our case to the director for exception. She said with a written request, your application will be processed a.s.a.p. and they would call next week to come before the committee with your wife. “20 days after the committee, you will have your permit by mid May.” At 2.00 pm we finished from the regional office with confidence something might happen. Back at the local office, Vasilis said that he had not sent my file in, but don’t worry he would send it by the end of the week (April 16) and everything would be OK. The next week came and went, but no phone call. Yesterday, I went back to Vasilis. He said he had a lot of work and he would send my file to the regional office by May 4. So goes the saga of government paper work. We, the victims, get frustrated. Until the permit comes through, all trips to Kosovo, Bulgaria, FYR Macedonia, and anywhere else are on hold.”

Since then, we have been very busy with preparing for the last work team and working with the team long and hard to finish the project. Finally after Monday’s holiday, I spent Tuesday at the regional office starting at 7.00 am. I was told that they remember my case (a small surprise), but they had misplaced my file (no surprise). They said come back on Thursday and we will set up the appointment. I went back this morning and waited with 50 other persons from 7.00 until 8.00 pm to get my number to see the office person at 12.00 noon. After waiting an hour, they announced that yesterday the public employees voted to strike so they would not be serving the public today. Tomorrow, I leave for Athens. So either Maria will have to go next week (poor Maria), or I will go on the 14th of June. Thanks for praying. Fortunately, travels outside of Greece can be done by others – Maria, Pastor Sakis, Ruth, and others.

Our next email will fill you in more about the other fun and exciting news. Many have asked about the residence matter so we wanted to update you. Our hopes are that by mid July it will be resolved.

Pray for a permit for an outreach center for the Olympics in Athens. Pray the kids giving Greek final exams this month. Pray for doors wide open in Bulgaria. Pray for work teams and new summer workers. Pray for Mike and Maria too.

Love,

The Longs

From Thessaloniki, Greece