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Roses Bloom Even in Darkness

By J.M. Kliewer

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it’s not.” Dr. Seuss

As I stepped off my plane from Miami to San Pedro Sula, Honduras, I felt a blanket of heat that you can find only hours north of the Equator. Still, the blanket that covered me as I walked out of the flight gate was of a heavier nature than just heat.

Suddenly, I was in a whole new world from the one that I had departed. This would be my second time in San Pedro Sula, but the system shock still had the same impact on me.

The poverty was apparent from the very first glance I obtained. Children in rags would come and beg the passengers of every arriving flight for any spare food or money that could be given away. Hundreds of Hondurans congregated outside of the secure area, hoping to pick up any available loose



TIME TO PLAY! Katherine, age nine, laughs while watching the nightly soccer game. (Kliewer photo).



SUNDAY MORNING AFFECTION! Sisters Astrid and Sihan show a little love for each other after a church service. The girls are religious and regularly attend a church on the other side of the city. (Kliewer photo).

change so that they could feed their families that night.

A bus took us from the airport to our final destination, Our Little Roses, a home for young girls who have been severely abused.

The ride to Our Little Roses may have only taken twenty minutes, but as I looked out the window it felt like a lifetime.

There were men with shotguns strolling around as though the their firearms were no more conspicuous than a bag of groceries.

There were more children begging at the windows of cars.

There were heaps of garbage

randomly littering the side of the road, and pollution was filling my lungs all the while.

As the small group of volunteers I had come with dismounted our bus inside of the razor-wire protected walls of Our Little Roses, all sixty of the girls that O.L.R. cares for rushed up to greet us.

The smiles on their faces couldn't have been any bigger had it been Christmas morning. Their laughs and exuberant nature left the complete chaos of the world outside the walls of Our Little Roses a distant memory.

We ten teenage volunteers from the group were dragged mercilessly

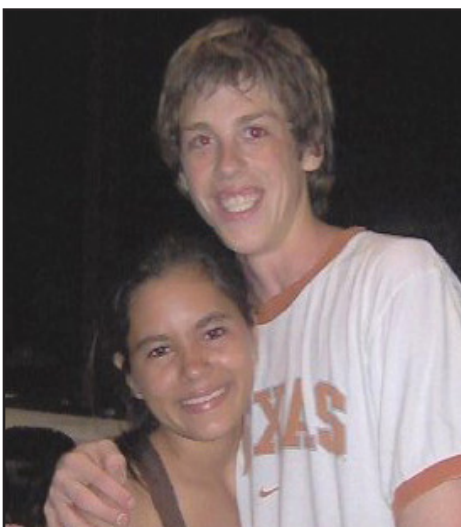
to the area the girls had designated for their soccer games every night.

Before I even knew what was happening, I was being made a fool by a nine-year old girl who carried the soccer ball on her feet as though it were another appendage.

Two weeks of painting houses and tutoring these girls, who were trying to learn both English and Spanish to prepare themselves to have a brighter future than the dark past that they came from, left all of us exhausted.

Still, through buckets of sweat, hundreds of aches, and thousands of pains, we still found time to designate at least six hours of our day to spend with the girls.

Their smiles kept everything else off our minds, and every night I marveled at how these girls could make the best out of any situation that was presented to them. They were living in a place that most Americans wouldn't find fit for their pets, but still they never showed any signs of wear or tear.



ALL SMILES! Senior Matt Kliever and sixteen year old Brenda congregate on Matt's last night in Honduras. (Kliever photo).



SEEING DOUBLE! Twins Ana Cecilia and Ana Ruth spend time with their friend Sihan as they are about to be called in for bedtime. All of the girls are nine years old and good students at school. (Kliever photo).

At the end of our sojourn, the girls lined up for one last hug with us, and they cried as we stepped onto the bus that would shuttle us to the airport.

It tore at my heart, watching the girls' smiles fade in front of my

eyes.

Not only had I never seen anything break their spirits, but the tears that they shed that day made me yearn to help them all just a little bit more than I had already done.

Our Little Roses

- ✦ Founded by Dr. Diana Frade in 1988
- ✦ Began with only 26 girls living in the home, and is now home to 76 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras
- ✦ Girls who have lived at the home have gone on to become dentists, pilots, and high ranking people in the Honduran military
- ✦ OLR houses girls from infancy to early adulthood.

How Can You Help?

By J.M. Kliever

Our Little Roses is a non-profit organization, and survives by donations from people just like us.

These girls have come out of dark pasts and still manage to shine brightly. However, without the help of sponsors, these girls would be cast right back into the poverty they came from.

The home is always in need of sponsors for girls. It is a rewarding process, in which you to write letters to the girls, send them Christmas presents, and help pay for their school and clothing every month.

My family has been sponsoring a sixteen year-old girl named Brenda for a little over a year now, and **does** make a difference to the girls. They don't have any strong family ties, and their sponsors are extremely important to them.

If you would like information about the steps that you can take to bring a little bit more cheer into these girls lives, you can call me at 620-855-3139, or visit the Our Little Roses website at www.ourlittleroses.org.



LEND A HELPING HAND!