

Sat 18th

I picked up Trevor and we headed to the airport. This is the first day of travelling to Paraguay. The longest part of the journey wasn't the 11 ½ hr flight from Amsterdam to Brazil it's all the waiting in between flights, any advice I would give to those who wish to participate in this charity is to stretch the legs often or your calf's will seize up, ouch!. Apart from that it was a pleasant journey.

Sun 19th – Mon 20th

We finally arrived in Asuncion the capital of Paraguay in the early hours. Trevor and I were exhausted after a day and a ½ of travelling. Dave and Jim met us at the airport where a warm welcome was there for us. Trevor and I were given the first day in Paraguay to catch up on some much needed rest and for me to become familiar with the my new surroundings .one of the first things I realised was that the guys that have been here before have developed a strong relationship with the locals. This eased my anticipation about meeting the locals as they all treated me with the utmost respect and friendliness. However I was still feeling anxious and a bit like a fish out of water but I suppose that's to be expected when participating in something completely different to what you're used to. We met with peter and Anna and again were treated as if I had always known them. I was learning of what's going to happen in days to come. By the end of the day getting to know the locals and having an intimate relationship with a balcony(yes I got locked



out)

I went to bed feeling at ease and more confident about the people and place that I am going to be in for close on three weeks.

Tue 21st

The first day on the job we started the day with an interview with press then a dinner with the strangers club which I felt was a meet and greet with the power of Asuncion. After that we went to Fernando de la Mora and I got my first taste of what life is like as a volunteer fire fighter, it definitely a eye opener. It was clear to see almost immediately what our purpose was in being here. We trained about 20 – 30 students on RTA procedures and b.a. I was really impressed to the enthusiasm and passion these students have for fire fighting, but saddened that they deal with all of the same incidents we do in Britain but do it with NO government funding no pay and most of all little or no equipment..

Wed 22nd

We were training at the air force along with some fire fighters that wished to come along. I didn't know what to expect when we first got there, it was quite intimidating surrounded by guys with guns that didn't speak your language but after ten minutes in the kind Paraguayan nature shone through again and made training much more pleasurable. After a brief introduction a 0900h of who we are we went straight into the first part of the course. Trevor and I took the lesson on BA we ask them to demonstrate how they know there way around a BA set. After they demonstrated that we then showed them the correct procedures and safety aspects of the set. They were all really enthusiastic. After the theory input of a set we then took them into the drill square to let them see the physical demands wearing a set can have on a wearer. The student were asked to get in teams of two run down the yard to the grass edge then down on their fronts and move along then on their knees then in a crouched position., all positions a fire fighter might have to adopt. The air force guys seemed to really enjoy this and made it a competition for them against the fire fighters that came along as well. After everyone had a chance at performing the drills we had debrief where everyone could all appreciate how quickly wearing a set can affect you physically. We then had lunch. The second part of the course was fireman ship skills. More students had turned up numbers were up to about 50 – 60 so we split the groups; Trevor took the newcomers to the class room to cover what we did in the morning. Dave and I took half for hose running and Jim to the other half appliance training. For hose running, we talked about the basic characteristics of hoses and demonstrated how to roll out hose and to under run it and roll it back up again, every one had the chance to use the techniques and again made it challenging by having a competition to see which group can finish first but with the best hose. Then after that we showed them the running connection. We then swapped groups and we trained the other half. Once both groups had been shown both parts we took a short break. After the break Trevor's group joined the rest to catch up. Some of the initial group had to leave for tests. The training continued into hose running and BA from dismounting the appliance. Once everyone had preformed the tasks we had debrief with the guys. We were pleased with the hard work and effort that they had put in. when we got back to the hotel we had a debrief between the four of us, we were all happy with today's courses and that we are looking forward to tomorrow.

Thurs 23rd

A follow on from yesterday we started straight into training we trained on b.a search procedures we blanked out face masks and had every one perform the proper search

procedures. We then moved on to an orientation exercise with blanked out masks and noise to distract the wearer in their task to get to a placed cone. It was a good exercise and help to demonstrate to the fire fighters how easy it is to lose your way no matter how well you know the lay out when your senses are limited. After a short brief on today's and yesterday's training we then proceeded to the training ground to put into practice the search procedures in a aircraft simulation with casualties and blanked out face masks. On the training ground we showed them proper door entry procedures. Initially the students seemed to forget the procedures we have just shown them and it was quite disappointing to see so we had a debrief and explained what was going wrong then we broke for lunch. During lunch the four of us went to help the air force with their appliance, they were having difficulties with water delivery; it turned out to be the primer. I was able to use my skills that I have gained from my job at the airport and pass on some knowledge. I was astonished to see how limited their equipment and skills were in comparison to airports not just in Britain but across the world. After lunch we went back to the jump yard and trained on stairway procedures and door entry procedures in and around an aircraft. The energy and enthusiasm from the air force guys was really inspiring they have a real thirst for this stuff. After everyone had training on the procedures, it was time for them to show us all the skills they had learned over the two days in a big exercise, consisting of two aircraft colliding into each another and then in to the terminal building. They had casualties, stairs, rooms, fire fighting and hose running all incorporated in the exercise. The final exam as it were went very well all four of us were pleased with the efforts and performance of the students, we had a debrief and then headed back to the hangar to have a well earned celebration and informal chat with the students.

Fri 24th

Today's plans fell through, so we had time to see a little bit more of the capitol city. We went to the market that was similar to a Turkish market however a lot more cramped, a major fire hazard. So we were getting picked up about five pm to travel to our next fire station called ybycui that was approx 4 hrs drive, a tip for those going to Paraguay when they say they will pick you up at 5 they will be there at 6 or 7. This time around none of the group knew the fire station that we were going to so it was going to be a new experience for everyone. We arrived three hours late and it was clear we were out of the city boundaries the poverty was evident. A warm welcome was met for us and we were shown around the vehicle that was donated to them by IFRA it happened to be the same machine that Dave learned to drive in. as they had no time for training as it was late we had tea with the fire fighters and a few drinks at night. We headed back to the inn where we were staying that had a TV but the only channel that was worth watching was 16.

Sat 25

The next day we started our training after having break fast at the station. Just before we started training Jenny took us around the community to show us what she and her team are doing to help raise awareness and money for the fire station. It was apparent that they had a very close community. We went to the local hospital that was little more than a shed. We met the doctor and nurse and had a look round, it was quite upsetting to see the little equipment they had, 1 oxygen cylinder and a cabinet a little bit bigger than a bathroom cabinet, no defibrillators. The nearest one was 3hrs drive away. We decided to chip in and get one for them and their gratitude was

unmeasured. After that we went to the local school where we were doing the training as the schools are not in during the afternoon. Three stations I think it was from the area came along consisting of about 30 -40 fire fighters. We trained them on ba procedures (search, stair, door etc) and then later on to RTA procedures we finished the training with an exercise on an RTA and a house fire. At the debrief we picked up on the mistakes that were made but the students all preformed well and listened to and the seemed to acknowledge the constructive criticism. I was in the house (outer school building) as they were entering and monitored their procedures for door and fire fighting skills. After the big exercises we took them back inside to teach them on things that they could make themselves to ad to their equipment as they had little or non at all, things like chocks and blocks for rta that can be made out of wood. One of the fire stations only had a Vauxhall car as a fire appliance that broke down intermittently. After the training we headed back to get ready for Jennie 40th birthday party she wanted us in our kilts, the night was fantastic we showed them strip the willow and they showed us their national dress and dance it was great. The food and company were and will be for a long time a pleasant memory. British people could learn a lot from their hospitality. The people here are so humble will give you everything even though they have nothing.



Sun 26th

After such a good night we were feeling a bit rough. Before we headed back to Asuncion jenny wanted to show us a bit of the history of Paraguay so we took a drive into the forest nearby and was shown the ruins of the first iron works on south America, we were told a little history of the tri war and how the works came into fruition. After that we took in some sites of the waterfalls it was all very interesting and nice. We then started the long drive back to the city half way there the vehicle had a blow out and we had to wait to get picked up. On they way back I didn't feel to great I think I had to much rich meat as it was so tasty but I don't eat a lot of meat so I don't think my stomach coped very well.

Mon 27th

Travelled to encarnacion went to no1 company assisted with an RTA. Afterwards we had a radio interview. Then got a call to assist with suspected heart attack, then another radio interview, trained twelve students on search procedures then had an excise, Then checked their Volvo equipment.



Tue 28th

Got picked up at hotel, taken to a rta , afterwards had a TV interview and radio, met with the head of operation services. Went and did a risk assessment on 2 supermarkets a petrol station and a school and a hospital all were very poor. Visited Capt. Miranda. Held exercise at local works 32 students trained on BA and casualty handling.

Wed 29th – going home

The remainder of our time was spent doing presentations and interviews with local press, we travelled about a bit seeing other stations with the National Commandant Hans, he was huge, German but very kind. We went seeing the equipment they had or lack of it and showed safety aspects of the stuff they had. The group felt that we were wasting a lot of our time meeting people and seeing things near the end rather than training people. We did however met up with a station that the guys new of before a girl named Eva who had an accident that she had to get nine surgeries and counting for it they met her in the hospital one of the other trips they had. She was up and about on the mend it was nice for me to see and to get an incite to what the guys have experienced in previous years. I decided to give her my ppe to encourage her once fit and well to return to the service. Again words can't describe the gratitude I received. We had a thank you dinner with our translators. After all the travelling and visiting

was done we had a lunch with the head guys that were helping our cause and I was given a medal and certificates honouring me into their brigade it was all very touching. Soon after that it was time for us to leave Paraguay I could sit and right a book solely on the 2-3 weeks I was there, it was an experience of a lifetime it gave me a new perspective I would recommend anyone to do this, words cant describe the array of emotions you will go through but it will definitely change you.