



Submitted

This photo of Dr. Byron Leidtke, taken in Honduras in 2000, exemplifies the primitive conditions in which the dentist practices his missionary work.

SMILES

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They reached a much neglected area on the Mosquito Coast after flying out of Ohio and boarding four different planes, riding in a Jeep and then traveled down the Rio Negro River by a shallow hollowed boat made from a log with a small motor on the back.

"I'll never forget my first trip and 28 of us waiting to board a tri-cycle airplane. The man had to pour fluid in the hydraulic cylinder in an effort to get it started. It caught fire and he just waited for the fire to go out. We then boarded. It was quite scary," Leidtke said. "We also circled for several minutes to get various animals to scatter so we can land."

Once on the ground, they got into a Jeep with a wench on the front and rode on dirt paths, traveling up muddy mountains to reach the village. "It is about 20 miles but it takes hours to get there and there is no such thing as guard rails," Leidtke said.

Once there, it was on to pick up supplies which was also a difficult task. "There are many people involved to coordinate the trips and to get as many supplies to the villagers as possible," Leidtke said.

There was always a goal to supply as many people as they can with clean water, too. With weight limits on airlines and difficulty reaching El Castillo, it was a challenge to get as many supplies in as possible.

Many people from various surrounding villages received word the missionaries were coming and traveled on foot, horse or by canoe for miles to get help. "They are waiting in line before sunrise," said Leidtke, "and dressed in their best clothes to show respect."

Work included serving 50 to 60 patients a day, which lasted up to 11 hours. Today's technology and modern life was left in the United States. It was not uncommon for chickens to run between Leidtke's legs as he worked on patients that had never been treated by a doctor.

Dental care is different but appreciated by the Hondurans. Some were frightened and had severe dental problems but waited for hours to find relief. Leidtke performed 640

extractions and saw 160 people on one of his trips.

Chocolate isn't found in El Castillo. The local comfort food is sugarcane, which they suck for a sweet snack. Toothbrushes were handed out and baking soda was used to improvise for toothpaste.

Leidtke said the villagers he's helped were poor but happy. They washed clothes by hand and lived a very simple life with families having a few chickens. They shared with other families in raising a pig and cow. Food is cooked on open fires. Fruit trees helped nourish the families. Soap and toothpaste were a luxury and medical doctors and dentists were virtually non-existent and welcomed when they made the trip to share their skills and generosity.

The homes were small and the floors were dirt packed. Some villagers made their own cement blocks. Tree limbs were placed horizontal to support the thatch roofs with branches lying across the top. There were no windows, little privacy and no screens to fight off the horrendous mosquitoes. There was no refrigeration or electricity.

Leidtke's makeshift dental chair was a rocking chair on cement blocks. A flashlight is used to supply dental lights. Toothbrushes, which are mysterious and a pure luxury, are handed out.

Leidtke laughs when he thinks about his lack of speaking much Spanish. After saying "muy bien" to several of the patients, thinking he was saying hello, he was told he was saying, "I am good." Abracadabra became his famous command for "open your mouth." "It worked," he said with a chuckle.

Leidtke smiles when he talks about his fond memories. "It just feels good to help them," he said.

Leidtke's last trip to the village was in 2007. Another trip is planned for 2010. "What's good about retirement?" Leidtke asked

And many will agree... it's okay for Dr. Byron Leidtke to say "muy bien."

The Liberty Dental Mission is a 501C3 nonprofit entity. Volunteers and contributors are always needed. Contact Dr. Byron and Mrs. Leidtke at 740-369-7956 or e-mail ByronLeidl@juno.com.

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GM CEO

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A person familiar with Chrysler's management said the company has been given no indication that the government will require any changes at the Auburn Hills, Mich., company, which has been led by former Home Depot chief Robert Nardelli since August 2007. The person also spoke on condition of anonymity because Obama's plan has not been made public.

Wagoner, 56, has repeatedly said he felt it was better for the company if he led it through the crisis, but he has faced sharp criticism on Capitol Hill for what many lawmakers regard as years of missteps, mistakes and arrogance by the Big Three automakers.

Wagoner joined GM in 1977, serving in several capacities in the U.S., Brazil and Europe. He became president and chief executive in 2000 and has served as chairman and CEO since May 2003.

Obama said Sunday that GM and Chrysler and all those with a stake in their survival need to take more hard steps to help the struggling automakers restructure for the future. In an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" broadcast Sunday, Obama said the companies must do more to receive additional financial aid from the government.

"They're not there yet," he said. A person familiar with Obama's plans said last week they would go deeper than what the Bush administration demanded when it approved the initial loans last year.

Wagoner, in an interview with The Associated Press in December, had declined

to speculate on suggestions from some members of Congress that GM's leadership team should step down as part of any rescue package.

"I'm doing what I do because it adds a lot of value to the company," Wagoner said in a Dec. 4 interview as GM sought federal aid from the Bush administration. "It's not clear to me that experience in this industry should be viewed as a negative but I'm going to do what's right for the company and I'll do it in consultation with the (GM) board (of directors)."

Wagoner has been credited by auto industry analysts with doing more to restructure the giant bureaucratic automaker than any other executive. But given that he has been at GM's helm for so long, many of his critics say he moved far too slowly to take on the United Auto Workers and shrink the company as its market share tumbled.

While GM has improved its cars in the last two years, critics say the company relied for too long on sales of pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles for its profits and was unprepared for a drastic market shift when gasoline prices hit \$4 per gallon last year.

During the Congressional debate over whether to give GM and Chrysler loans last year, many lawmakers criticized Wagoner, including Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., chairman of the Banking Committee.

He accused automakers' top management of having a "head-in-the-sand" approach to problems and said Wagoner "has to move on" as part of a government-run restructuring that should be a condition of financial life support for the auto industry.

David Cole, chairman of the Center for

Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Mich., said Sunday that Wagoner's departure gives the government a rationale to provide additional aid to the automaker. He was not surprised by the move, but said he is disappointed because he considers Wagoner a capable leader.

"I think that as a condition for further government support, this helps give them a little cover with the public," Cole said. "Essentially he's taking one for the team."

Cole noted that other automakers have been shaking up management as well. He pointed to Toyota Motor Corp., whose president, Katsuaki Watanabe, recently said he would be stepping down as the Japanese automaker weathers financial difficulty. Also, France's biggest carmaker, PSA Peugeot-Citroen, abruptly ousted CEO Christian Streiff on Sunday, saying "exceptional difficulties" confronting the auto industry require new management at the top.

Cole said Nardelli's departure is less likely than Wagoner's because Nardelli is "relatively new" to the automaker, with less than two years at the helm.

Many GM executives likely will be disappointed at Wagoner's departure, Cole said.

"They had great affection for Rick — someone that's fair, that acts like a coach, that holds people's feet to the fire but has a good understanding of human behavior," Cole said.

Associated Press Writer Ken Thomas reported from Washington, D.C. AP Auto Writer Dan Strumpf contributed from New York.

HELP

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Wagoner's resignation came as the president was set to announce a plan Monday for the government to provide more money in exchange for tough concessions from union workers, bondholders and others. Lawmakers were expected to get briefed on the plan Sunday evening.

"We think we can have a successful U.S. auto industry. But it's got to be one that's realistically designed to weather this storm and to emerge — at the other end — much more lean, mean, and competitive than it currently is," Obama said.

GM and Chrysler are surviving on \$17.4 billion in government loans. They have been hard hit by the economic downturn and the worst decline in auto

sales in 27 years. GM is seeking \$16.6 billion more; Chrysler wants \$5 billion more.

Obama said the government would require a "set of sacrifices" from all parties involved, management, labor, shareholders, creditors, suppliers, dealers. Everybody's gonna have to come to the table and say it's important for us to take serious restructuring steps now in order to preserve a brighter future down the road."

Both companies are trying to reduce their debt by two-thirds and persuade the United Auto Workers union to accept several cost-cutting measures.

General Motors said in a statement that it expected a decision soon but "it would not be appropriate for us to speculate on the content of any announcement."

Very little was being done in negotiations with debtholders and the union ahead of Obama's

announcement, a person briefed on the GM talks said Sunday. This person did not want to be identified because the negotiations are private.

Under the terms of a loan agreement reached during the Bush administration, GM and Chrysler are pushing the UAW to accept shares of stock in exchange for half of the payments into a union-run trust fund for retiree health care. They also want labor costs from the union to be competitive with Japanese automakers with U.S. operations.

Neither GM nor Chrysler have deals with the union on the trust funding or concessions from their debtholders and the administration has been trying to accelerate those efforts.

GM and Chrysler employ about 140,000 workers in the U.S.

Members of the president's auto industry task force have said

bankruptcy could be an option for GM and Chrysler if their management, workers, creditors and shareholders failed to make sacrifices. The conditions could be more stringent than the loan terms set by the outgoing Bush administration in December, officials have said.

GM and Chrysler face a Tuesday deadline to submit completed restructuring plans, but neither company is expected to finish their work. The administration's plan would be designed to accelerate those efforts.

GM owes roughly \$28 billion to bondholders. Chrysler owes about \$7 billion in first- and second-term debt, mainly to banks. GM owes about \$20 billion to its retiree health care trust, while Chrysler owes \$10.6 billion.

AP Auto Writer Tom Krisher in Detroit contributed to this report.

Gambling market challenges Ohio casino backers

Associated Press

COLUMBUS — A plan to put casinos in four Ohio cities would saturate the regional market that includes 27 casinos in surrounding states, raising questions about whether Ohio stands to reap any economic benefit, some gambling experts say.

New casinos would likely keep Ohio gamblers in the state instead of driving to West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan or Indiana, said William Thompson, a public administration professor at the University of Las Vegas who has written books about the industry.

"But on the other hand, Ohio will not be realizing a great economic windfall because it will only be Ohio people gambling," Thompson said. "It's not going to be a tourist attraction, filling up hotels."

Penn National Gaming, one of the backers of the Ohio plan, says the concept will work because casinos in Cleveland, Columbus Cincinnati and Toledo would be

jewels in prime downtown locations.

"This proposal has been specifically designed for Ohio to compete," said Eric Schippers, vice president of Penn National Gaming. Many casinos in Pennsylvania and Indiana are in rural areas or just outside major cities, he said.

Supporters are aiming to put the issue before Ohio voters on the November ballot. The proposal, also backed by Cleveland Cavaliers majority owner Dan Gilbert, would allow the state to take a 33 percent cut off the top of revenues and redistribute the money to Ohio's 88 counties. The plan also promises to create 20,000 jobs.

It's a long-shot bet, but it could pay off big for all involved — or not, said gambling expert Joseph Weinert, vice president of Spectrum Gaming in New Jersey.

"Right now, I would not want to be a casino investor. The stocks for some of these companies are penny stocks," he said.

"But the backers in Ohio are not looking at the current economic landscape, they are looking at the horizon two or three years out," Weinert said. "I don't think any of them would be wanting to put a shovel in the ground right now."

Two West Virginia casinos are losing money and have laid off workers following the 2006 addition of slot casinos in Pennsylvania, which lured gamblers away from the Mountain State.

Most of Pennsylvania's casinos are thriving, but two of Detroit's three casinos are in severe debt, while the city itself is saddled with a mounting \$300 million deficit. While the casinos contribute income to the city, it hasn't been enough to offset Detroit's fiscal troubles.

Detroit drew gamblers back from casinos in Windsor, Ontario, in Canada. "But they didn't help their economy," Thompson said. "So you really have to ask the question: What is the gambling going to do for Ohio?"

Delaware library levy information meetings set

Staff reports

The Delaware County District Library will get the word out about the May 5 library levy at its upcoming public information meetings set April 6-9.

The series of meetings are an opportunity to learn the basic facts, why the library is requesting the levy, plans for the funds and why the additional monies are important. "We are looking forward to sharing information and having a meaningful dia-

logue with the public about the importance of this levy,"

Delaware County District Library director Mary Jane Santos said.

Meetings have been scheduled for the following dates and locations throughout the county:

• 7 p.m., April 6, Orange Township Hall, 1680 E. Orange Road, Lewis Center

• 7 p.m., April 7, Ostrander Library Branch, 75 N. Fourth St., Ostrander

• 7 p.m., April 8, Main Library Branch, 84 E. Winter

St., Delaware

• 7 p.m., April 9, Powell

Library Branch, 460 S.

Liberty Road, Powell

newsroom@delgazette.com

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