

TO ALL THE PRIOR MEMBERS OF CITA  
From Clark Slone - May 29, 2005

I wanted to write something for a while and feel it is now the time. If it is possible for you, please give me a moment of your time.

First of all I want to give a brief rundown of the last 32 years here in Italy. I will not speak for the CITA ITALY #2 team, but only for the one that I am a part of. I know some were surprised that the work still existed in its original state or that it exists at all. Others had some idea but until Jim put this website together things were rather vague on what is or was happening here.

I know you've probably looked at our website ([www.citaitaly.com](http://www.citaitaly.com)), so I won't get into the present happenings. I do want to share some things that might be of interest to those that functioned in the team and has a certain understanding of what we are doing. Also for the reason I am writing this letter.

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First of all, our basic structure hasn't changed a lot. Of course we have improved many things to make the moves easier and raise our families with a certain amount of normalcy. I guess it will never be 'real' normal here but we try to squeeze in as much normality as possible.

We still have wake up and formation in the morning and also formation before the meeting at night to have a time of prayer. We are still broken up into four families and have daily Bible studies. Our real ministry is the big tent and the street evangelization. We do have a lot of other things like skits and special ministry but we are basically the tent and the streets. We move about every three months.

We do not hand out the "New Manna" for street distribution and do not take any kind of collections on the streets, even though we pass out truck loads of Gospel tracts and Bibles for free. But we do have a paper that we put together four times a year called, 'Grido di Battiglia' (Battle Cry). This is only for Italian speaking believers and we send it through the mail. We translate good articles and also at times, articles written by team members or myself. We also put news about camp life and what is happening in the cities where we are and the other teams around the world.

There are about 90 people but that number changes a little from time to time as we have some who come for help and stay for a short time. They can number from five to ten brethren at a time. In the summer it is not unusual to have two hundred or more quests. Many who visit are past members and come for some nostalgia or just to be with us on their vacations. It is always a blessing to keep in contact with the 'oldies' and they help and are a blessing around camp.

Being that so many years have passed, of course, we are not the same as when we were in our teens and twenties. In fact some are staring middle fifties and sixty in the face. This makes up a good core of the group. But we have no intention of slowing down until the Lord comes with His kingdom or He simply stops providing. He hasn't so far as you can see so... forward we go! But I would be lying to say things are just hunky dory. We have passed through many raging waters as a team. We never thought we would have to confront some of the issues that we have faced and are presently in our lives. For example: children of married couples in the team. Educating them has always been a job, especially when it is cross-cultural. Also the team kids growing up and marrying, not to mention some leaving to go to college. Also, having the blessing of seeing a number staying on and being a part of the team. We have also had our kids marry other kids in other teams. An example is Vital's daughter in Spain married an El Salvadorian who was the adopted son of Pedro and Laila. Paul and Julienne Schafer's daughter, Cassia, is marrying a brother from the #2 team here in Italy at the end of July. Our son, Todd, married Angela Vinci from south Italy who was also in the team. And the story is just starting.

Unfortunately our sons chose not to stay in the team after serving here for nine years after they decided to stay, however now they've been gone five years from the ministry. Our oldest son, Grant, is always here visiting, as it seems he has a hard time staying away from the team. Dealing with grand kids is also a joy and an adventure. We have really made the circle of life around here. At times we didn't know how to do it and at times we have seen miracles to get us through some real hard times. However, we go forward, day-by-day and receiving grace and wisdom when it is necessary, to do what has to be done to evangelize Italy.

As you probably know Bill has been gone for over a decade. He fell pretty hard spiritually and needs prayer to say the least. I think most are aware of his condition.

We started our newest work in Kazakhstan last year. It has been doing good and they just got a big tent in these months to hold meetings.

We still divide up into teams to visit all the churches in an area every Sunday, and also during the week when we have special invitations. Being there are so few churches at times, we really have to go long distances. For example, here at Valmontone there is not one fellowship in town. When I go looking for Evangelical churches in the different towns that I am unfamiliar with, it can be trying. Usually it is just a room with a very small plaque out front that says "Culto Evangelico" (in Italian 'culto' means religious worship). And they can be hard to find. Many times when you ask for directions (my wife hates getting out of the car and asking) they send you to some Jehovah Witness hall. I often say that it will be great in heaven as I won't have to look so hard for Brethren and I won't always be lost in some Italian narrow back street.

We have developed these units, that we call 'containers' because that is what they look like from the outside. However they are quite comfortable for living quarters and to work out of. We have about sixty-three units and I hope that we are just about finished building them. When we lived in tents and camper, people called us gypsies. Now, with the containers, they think we are earthquake victims. You just can't win sometimes when it comes to public opinion. It seems when we think we are finished someone gets married or a kid out grows his families' container home and need a place of his/her own, or a need arises for another unit. When will it end?

Everything is in these units: schools, office, kitchen, work equipment tools, single's quarters, married couples and families, etc. and so, for the move, we just have to take down the tent as everything else is in the units and we just load them on the back of flatbeds and drive to the next city. I say 'just' but in reality it normally takes anywhere from ten to fourteen days to get everything moved and set back up. The sisters, usually, only help to take down the tent and then to set it back up. That's good... as many are grandmas or just about to be, so it's not as easy as it was in the beginning. But they still look pretty good...just a little wrinkled.

We've seen much fruit over these years and this pushes us onward. I stopped counting the campaigns and cities years ago, but, believe me, there has been a lot! Many pastors and leaders in the country have roots of their salvation that go back to the tent. Wherever we go, there seems to be somebody that was saved under the tent.

I went to the train station to buy an English newspaper and when I asked the vendor where they were, he motioned to the area where they sell the porno magazines, which is usually a very big part of the stand. I saw the Herald Tribune right in the middle of all this porno. I looked in both directions and then went to the section for the paper and as I reached for it, I heard someone yell in the distance, "Pace, fratello Clark!" (Pace means Peace in Italian and this is the way believers greet one another instead of saying hello). I froze in my tracks and turned slowly to see a brother that I had not seen in years. He grabbed me in a big bear hug and shouted with joy that he had gotten saved in the tent many years before. I was encouraged but when he asked what I was doing in front of this stand, I just stuttered and pointed to the English newspaper. Meeting believers, who had gotten saved under the tent, happens frequently, so this motivates us to continue on with the tent ministry. (It is just embarrassing having to explain why you are in front of a stand that also sells porno magazines).

Making disciples is still our priority even though because of our age we attract older people at times. We just had an older couple from England join, who are in their mid-fifties. They are a cute couple and really want to spend the rest of their lives on the field. They make me feel young... but just a little.

We just put up our new big top. I remember in Torino in 1975 I was looking at the big top and thought what will I ever do if you don't come back Jesus and we need another tent. I asked Him to please not put me through the test. Now I am looking at our sixth tent for this team and it is beautiful. GOD IS GREAT! It seems the Lord wants us to go on for a while longer. The last tent lasted over ten years. What to say, I'll be sixty four and my grand daughter will be bugging me about getting married when this one needs changing. Maybe the kingdom of God will come first or maybe not but that's ok too.

Sue is doing pretty good, she's better preserved than me. She went for a physical and the doctor said she was fit as a fish, (a saying in Italian for perfect health). I asked, "Didn't he say anything about your weight"? She replied, "Yes, the doctor told me that I was overweight but he also said it was my age so that's okay". I thought, "Only an Italian doctor would give that diagnosis". Praise God, she is ok and flipping around like a fish! And I'm okay, just a little ugly.

We've got three large trucks and two separate cranes for loading at one point and unloading at our destination. Two of the trucks have double beds and can take two containers (23FT. & 25FT.) each. One truck just hauls one at a time. We can haul five at a time and so you can imagine how many runs we do back and forth. I had a major wreck a number of years ago, (it happened on Sue's birthday), so they put me in retirement as a driver of the big rigs. I was almost used to send a bunch of disciples in the team to heaven.

The team is made up of about 90 full-time brethren and two full-time dogs and one part-time dog.

There are four passenger vans that take out two to three teams in the morning to evangelize and after the four o'clock Bible study usually two teams will go out. They have a pre-designated plaza where permission has been previously acquired and they do open-air street meetings and tract distribution and also one on one witnessing. At times, we go to the hospitals to visit the sick and take the Gospel message. Sometime we get permission to go to the mental hospitals and I always fear they won't let the team back out... Ha! Ha!

We do the same rotation for kitchen duties. There is a kitchen container and a separate container where we wash the dishes. Everybody gets their turn for doing the dishes. Also the shower is cleaned daily on a rotation basis. We have a crew that takes care of the toilets (turkish-style toilets) also on a daily basis, which are also in containers.

Now I come to my point: I pray I gave a good explanation of some of the realities we are living in as I am sure you remember some of them. I write this letter as I know you would relate to the way we do things and why we do them better than any body else. YOU HAVE LIVED OUR DAILY REALITY. Also a fact is that we have been going day by day for over thirty-two years by faith. This hasn't changed since our conception. We still have no guarantee of tomorrow...but, who does? And... no pensions (I have a great walking stick). Also I want to say that the team is really a fine bunch of folks (not to exaggerate too much) because everyone will sacrifice for the good of others and when belt tightening is needed ,they respond beautifully, not to speak of the normal pressures that comes with community living and the constant moving from city to city.

We still have trouble finding lots to move to and authorities can be really the devil when they want to be. In fact, this is happening now, in reference to the city where we want to go next. We have some brothers that just go from city to city trying to get permission to enter the area and also for the street meeting permission. As it was when you were in the team there is still pressure of getting kicked off a lot and harassment about our presence in an area. Some things never change and getting water and sewage hook up with electricity can make you really scratch your head and ask for more grace. But God has always come through, it is just at times we get a little nervous. We are still, after all these years, very dependant on the Hand of God sustaining us moment by moment. We have no place to go back to, so we have always to go forward. Not only to provide physically but spiritually and the spiritual fortitude to put up with one another which can be intense at times. I have learned the art of 'loosing it' silently and yelling 'quietly' so to not let the brethren who live in the container beside me, know what's going on or to question my patience and spirituality.

I want to ask that you pray for us as you are someone who can identify with what I am saying and have known it first-hand. I am asking for fervent beseeching of the Lord. If you ask me to be more specific, by explaining what to pray for, I guess our future EXISTENCE would be a good start and go on to everything else that was a problem for you when you were in the team. I am a fervent believer in prayer and I know God listens intently to those who are serious in their petition before the throne room of God. Write down our names and put it on your frig or somewhere else that you see often. I did all this writing for an important reason, I believe we still exist because prayer has went up to the Lord for us over the years by many dear believers. Make a promise to yourself to prayer for us and please don't forget us, okay? I have to get to the meeting as we are having baptisms and a special concert tonight. If you have any questions just drop me a line. Also please pass this letter around to anybody that you know who was in the team, I would appreciate it.

I pray this finds you doing well in the Lord. Hope to hear from you.

Love, Clark Slone CITA Italy 1