

From: [Nathan Whittemore](#)

To: [Loja Mission List](#)

Sent: Monday, April 18, 2005 9:30 AM

Subject: [lojamission] 6 1/2 months

Brothers and Sisters,

We have gotten to the halfway point of our time here in Cuenca. It is so hard to believe we have been here in Ecuador for 6 1/2 months already. In less than half a year we will be leaving this beautiful city and going to Loja. We have so many things we have to get done between now and then that it feels like we need more time. We will be traveling to Loja in May to begin the next phase of our time in Cuenca. Now we need to be looking into housing situations. Do we buy, do we rent, do we build? Do we live in town or out of town, what is the bus system near where we might live? Does it cost a lot for a cab ride home? If so, how much and how will that effect our transportation budget? These are just a few of the questions we need to be answering over the next few months along with many, many others. Please allow your prayers to center around these things as you remember us here and the work we are doing for the Lord.

We were able to experience our first funeral yesterday. We have some good friends that live around the corner who have not only been coming to our soup night but have been good friends through all other days of the week. They have taken a liking to Elysia and have been good for our spirits. Her grandmother died at 6 in the morning after being sick for a while. We went to the wake and just sat quietly with the others and held their shoulders as tears were exchanged. In times like these, there really isn't anything you can say to comfort. But just us being there made a difference in their lives as they have made in ours.

While we were at the cemetery, Jim, Nathan and I took advantage of this culture experience and walked through looking at the similarities and differences of it. The majority of the caskets are placed in tombs stacked upward from the ground. It is different walking through walls and walls of tombs. The caskets are placed in these tombs and then sealed with cement. Then there is a place on the external side of the sealed cement for a memorial. Most often we saw silk flowers with a name, date of death, and often pictures, candles, and other special memorable items special to the families. We were here on a Sunday and we believe that the weekends are popular days for visiting. There were many people here this day and it gave the graveyard a park like environment. There is a lot of stone walkways and manicured flowerbeds, mixed in with benches and water fountains and such.

There is a very different aspect of this cemetery that is very culturally different. If for whatever reason the rent is not paid on the tomb of the deceased, the cemetery has the rights to remove the casket from the tomb, and bury the deceased within a communal burial site. We understand that at this time the caskets are burned. It was eerie to walk the area of the cemetery and see the empty caskets stacked loosely in an back area of the yard. This will be a picture imprinted on my mind for years to come. But I will admit, for me it was interesting to experience.

Jim has kept in good contact with Michele and I will report that she is doing well and her spirits seem to remain high under the circumstances. We are surviving well here on the home side. It was a nice surprise when I found out that Jim and Nathan had almost two full weeks off of school. This allowed them to be home with me and the kids and gave me a lot more time for full recovery. It has been over 4 weeks now since my surgery and I feel almost fully back to normal. However after a full day of working, I sleep extremely well at night!. Nathan still gets up with the kids in the morning for me and I will try this week to re adjust my schedule back to normal. Thank every one of your for your continual prayers for full recovery and a calmness as we are without Michele. God is good all the time, all the time God is good!

You all are in my thoughts this day. My prayer is that you all are seeking to be more and more like Christ every day. Seeking his face and looking for how you can serve Him.

Love sincerely,
Carina