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When I was nine, I first met Dr. Behrhorst. The circumstances were very frightening for me. My little sister was sick with dysentery and was in the Behrhorst hospital for four days. I stayed with her all the time. When Dr. Behrhorst checked on her, he asked me how I was, too. He gave me a little pat on the head, and I realized that all gringos didn't hurt us. That's what we had always believed, that gringos would hurt us and even steal children. Some years later, I came to see that not only did this Gringo Doctor not hurt us, he really helped us in Chimaltenango immensely. If there is one thing that I believe he gave us, it was hope. He inspired hope and helped us believe in ourselves and our abilities to make our own lives better.

When I was 15, I was given a great break in my life: I was accepted in a fairly new program, IDAPS, designed to train rural health technicians. We learned techniques of community socio-economic diagnosis and how to formulate participatory solutions to community problems; we learned about nutrition and maternal and infant health; and we got some basic primary health care skills, too. I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> graduating class; now there have been 30, I believe. I'll never forget that when we were graduating, a telegram arrived from Dr. Behrhorst in Chimaltenango—my home town!—congratulating the school and the graduates, saying that he knew we would be making a difference in the health of rural Guatemalans in the future.

When I graduated in 1975, I was assigned work in Santa Cruz la Laguna, through the Ministry of Health. That was a dead-end job. Nobody came to our health center because we really didn't offer any services. I couldn't sit in the office day after day with nothing to do, so I went out to communities and began practicing what I had learned as a Rural Health Technician.

All of that changed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 1976, with the great Earthquake. I walked away from that health center, bound and determined to make my way back to Chimaltenango because I was worried about my family. Thank God they were all alive.

From there I walked over to the Health Center in Chimaltenango, and volunteered my services. The director said, "We need all the help we can get. We have refuge centers growing and the possibilities for the spread of disease are serious. Can you get us more technicians like yourself?" I put an emergency call on the radio, and more technicians came.

We built latrines in the refuge center at Los Aposentos. Our workers were 12 prisoners, released for this effort; three police guarded them. This latrine project seemed to be a good idea, but unfortunately, not everybody was accustomed to using latrines; instead, their habits were increasing contamination, not reducing it. I went to Dr. Behrhorst for suggestions on what to do. As busy as he was with all the needs at the Hospital, he took the time to get me some filmstrips and a projector. These were animated educational pieces about latrines and personal hygiene. We did an intense job of health education there at the refuge center, thanks to the Behrhorst filmstrips!

I had a lot of unexpected experiences as a Rural Health Technician due to the earthquake. As a result, the Public Health director in Chimaltenango requested my transfer from Sololá, and I have focused in this area ever since. One of the main efforts has been in potable water projects, through an organization called Saruch, which was founded by Dr. Behrhorst along with Agua del Pueblo and the Ministry of Health (Public Health). The 80's were to be the Decade of Water, and we were doing our part here in Chimaltenango. I was very young, but I became the leader of Saruch. For various reasons, Saruch became a project of Behrhorst alone and I became the water engineer. I am very proud of the projects we built, with very few financial resources. We were small-scale, because we had to wait for one community to pay back the loans Behrhorst had extended for the water project before we could start another. But by 1981, we inaugurated then the largest water project in Central America, involving 4 communities in the department.

I will never forget that day and the terrific celebration. During the afternoon, Dr. Behrhorst pulled me aside, told me how happy and proud he was of me and the work, and how he felt so deeply about improving the well-being of rural people, and also said something very ominous. He said, "Ruben, do you see those two beautiful volcanoes? I have lived here many years now looking at those volcanoes, and one day, I will die here. This is where I want to be buried."

Since that time, I have continued my work as a Rural Health Technician with various organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. I have been mayor of Chimaltenango and I am once again a candidate. I do private consulting too and if there are any issues that concern me they are twofold: (1) The increasing dependency of people on organizations or the government to help them rather than their looking to their own resources first, as Dr. Behrhorst taught me. (2) We need more opportunities for young people to be productively involved in society. These are two improvements that I am focusing on now.