



Pictured above: Jackie Rito in San Antonio, Texas  
July, 2011

Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011 ended my two week FCV San Antonio experience. On this last day, Sister Maureen took me to a client's home who had just arrived from an extended stay at a facility. She had had a stroke and was now on the road to recovery. The place was out of the way, beyond the city confines of San Antonio, but Maureen drove determinedly even after the directions didn't seem right. After a phone call, back on the right track, we jostled down a dirt road and approached the house. A "Welcome Home Mama" sign sprawled in red paint settled gingerly among the dried grasses too long without even a drop of moisture. When I entered, I was greeted warmly by two women who were caring for "mama" (we will call her "Mary" for this story.)



Conversation usually doesn't flow easily for me, yet, I felt compelled to engage, encouraged by their hospitality and earnest smiles. Maureen and I entered Mary's room. She was weak, distant and barely responsive.

Maureen asked me to get her radio/CD-player plunged in the middle of her car's trunk under blankets, boxes and packages. After a brief excavation, it emerged exactly where she had indicated. With boom box in hand, I entered the patient's room as her eyes fixed on the ceiling. Maureen gently eased her into discussion. "She loves this music." Maureen handed me a CD which I placed in its position, ready to soothe and bring her mind to another place. As I left the room for Maureen to begin her therapeutic massage, the patient managed to breathe out, "I love Maureen. She's wonderful."

I left the room and asked if I could take photos of the landscape outside. The two caretakers consented and I creaked open the screen door and went outside with the vast Texas sky, dry grass swaying in searing breezes and dark clouds overhead, teasing about the possibility of rain.

Before the end of the morning, it did indeed sprinkle a bit on some areas of San Antonio, easing the drought where chance decided. When I re-entered the house, Maureen had completed her massage and I heard voices from the room. There was Mary, now responsive, eyes darting around the room, focusing on those around her, and her voice sounded clear and distinct as she bragged about the trophies and photos of her athletic daughter. In a matter of minutes, Sister Maureen had created nothing short of a miracle.

Franciscan Common Venture gave me a vacant, white canvas. Within me I found a variety of colors and media to paint two weeks (not without doubts) questions of others and mostly of me. What has remained is a fairly abstract picture in mixed media with its meaning possibly unable to be understood by many, but infinitely clear to me. The final moments in San Antonio helped me to realize how with faith, perseverance and purpose in the best of intentions, one small miracle after another can follow our steps.

Article written by Jacqueline Jill Rito  
Hicksville, NY