

Logsdon student translates memoirs of medical missionary

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ABILENE—Logsdon Seminary student Javier Vargas understands the importance of using talents for God’s glory. That’s why he used his gift for language studies to take on a project others rejected.

Vargas, who is originally from Colombia, translated [*White Witch Doctor*](#), the memoirs of medical missionary Daniel I. Gruver, from English to Spanish.

In the book, Gruver shares memories of his 50 years as a missionary doctor among the indigenous Kuna people in Panama. Gruver died before he was able to translate the book to Spanish.

Medical terms, indigenous language

His son, Daniel Marcus Gruver, reached out to multiple groups and individuals to translate the book, but none completed the project.

“One look at the medical and indigenous Kuna terms, and it would be put to the side and forgotten,” Gruver said.

Vargas not only accepted the challenge with enthusiasm, but also volunteered his time and effort. He meticulously investigated the meaning of medical terms and explored the cultural nuances of various words to offer the most accurate translation.



Medical missionary Daniel Gruver worked among the Kuna people of Panama for 50 years. Logsdon Seminary student Javier Vargas translated his memoirs from English to Spanish. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Gruver family)

“Over the next eight to nine months Javier won over our hearts with his commitment and dedication,” Gruver said. “With prayer and hard work, he was able to very accurately portray the true heart of a missionary.”

Gruver expressed deep gratitude for the translator’s selfless efforts as he prepared to deliver [*El Cantador Doctor Blanco*](#), Spanish translations of his father’s book, to the Kuna people.

“The people that I grew up with in Panama and that worked and served with my father—those that he healed and lives he saved—can now have a copy of the book they have been asking for in Spanish,” he said.

God granted a desire to serve

When asked what prompted his voluntary service, Vargas said God had

granted him a heart of compassion and the desire to serve with the abilities God had given him.

When the responsibilities of school, his job, his family and translating became stressful, Vargas remembered why he decided to translate the book in the first place.



Daniel Gruver served 50 years as a medical missionary among the indigenous Kuna people in Panama. He described his experiences in “White Witch Doctor.” He died before he was able to translate the book from English to Spanish. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Gruver family)

“An image came to my mind, and it was a person from the indigenous community reading it to their community in a language they could understand. And that made me keep going,” he said. “As Dr. Gruver brought physical and spiritual healing to a community that he and his wife did not know before, we as students can carry in our backpack our desires to serve others in the unique time we have, today.”

Vargas is in the second year of Logsdon's dual degree program that leads to a Master of Arts in Family Ministry and Master of Arts in Clinical Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy.

After his anticipated graduation in May 2021, he plans to serve in an organization that works with senior adults.

"I would like to explore more about adult development and contribute to those inspirational people in their stages of life," he said.

"It is enough to have them close, listen to them and have gratitude for the wonderful work of God in each one of them. Honoring them is also a way of honoring the memory of my father, who had made plans to visit his granddaughters here in the States, but due to health issues, he passed away a few years ago."

Vargas also hopes to continue translating materials into Spanish for the Latino community and writing original works of his own.

"Today I look at my hands, and I remember that I still have them to continue blessing others, just as this nation has done to me," he said.

When translating *White Witch Doctor*, Vargas reflected, "You do not write for yourself, knowing that one day you will not be able to read it. You write so that others can go through your writings and see the world that you went through yesterday."