

Chapter Six – by Kay Hively

After the Taylor family was settled, Doug made friends with other American boys. There were many things to do, but, best of all, Doug liked boxing and swimming at the beach. All of the boys who lived in American housing near the hospital had chores. The most important chore was keeping the area around their homes clean and free of water.

It was several weeks before Doug got to see the canal. Because of the sickness, not much work was being done. But he did notice new equipment arriving, and as the doctors began to conquer yellow fever and malaria, work started again.

Early one morning a small wagon came to pick up Doug and his father. The driver was a native of Panama. He brought his son, Mario, a boy about Doug's age. The two boys sat in the back of the wagon. Mario spoke very good English so they were able to talk together.

Mario told Doug about the canal and about the people who were doing the work. He said the work was hard and dangerous. As they rode along, Doug saw the small huts where many of the canal workers lived. Their houses were small but clean, and their little yards were nice. Mario said that in the workers' neighborhoods they were cleaning up just as Doug was doing up at the hospital and where the doctors lived.

Soon the wagon stopped on a high bluff that overlooked the big ditch. Hundreds of men were working to remove the dirt. Near the place where the wagon stopped was a tent with a large red cross. This was the hospital tent. Dr. Taylor went immediately to the tent to treat those who were sick or injured.

While they waited, Doug and his new friend watched the men working in the valley. Mario pointed out a big new steam shovel that was taking giant bites out of the earth. Mario said

this was a new American shovel that had just come to help. Now, Mario explained, work was moving faster.

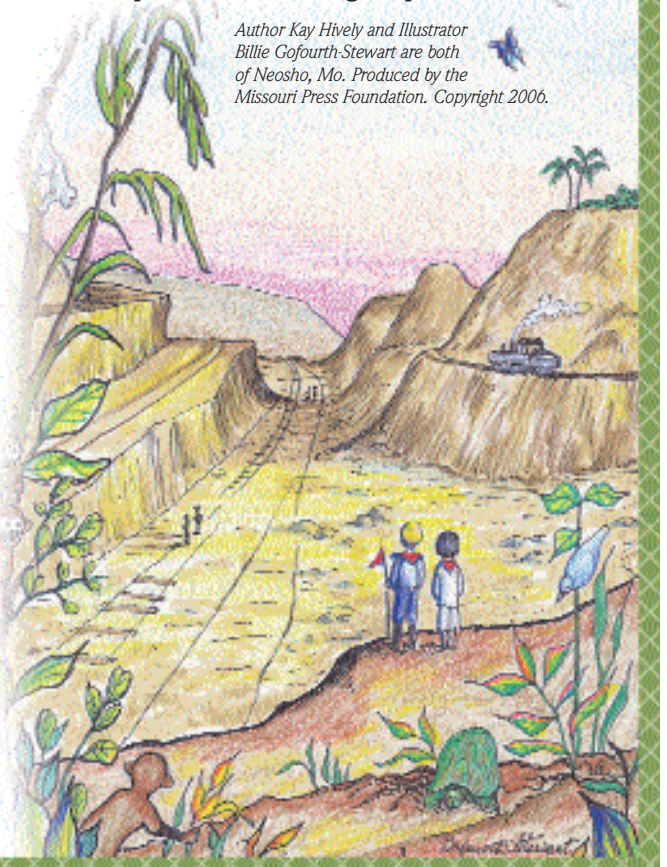
As the two boys rode back to the hospital grounds, Doug asked Mario if he would come and visit some day. Mario said on Sundays he could come. Doug promised to teach Mario how to box if Mario would teach him some Spanish words.

When Doug told his mother about his new friend, she was happy that he had made friends with a local boy. She also reminded him that school was about to start. She said he would go to a school that had been opened for American children.

Doug had almost forgotten about school. He had been seeing and doing and learning so much about the new country where he was living that school seemed a million miles away. But it wasn't a million miles away, it was only three days away.

Next Week: Chapter Seven – A Big Surprise

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both of Neosho, Mo. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation. Copyright 2006.



Things to Think About and Do

- Doug wants to learn another language. Do you know two languages? Do you know anyone who speaks Spanish? Have someone teach you to say "Thank you,"- and "How are you" in Spanish.
- The new steam shovel the boys saw was called a Bucyrus steam shovel. It could dig up five cubic yards of dirt and rock in one scoop. Write the definition of a cubic yard, and then make a small-scale sketch of the dimensions of five cubic yards.
- Boxing and swimming were sports Doug enjoyed while in Panama. Using the sports section, make a chart listing all the sports covered in your newspaper and how many stories are written on each. Which is the most popular right now?

STANDARDS: G1:9; G2:3; G1:8; CA7; SS6; SS7; M2; S1