



Missionaries Are Human Too

Glimpses of Life in Mexico

Nancy Perry

(edited and re-issued by Doug Perry, 2008)



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my parents, Gayle and Edna Whitlow. The time and love I invested in authoring this book are but a fraction of what they invested in guiding, nurturing, and shaping my life.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have been helpful and encouraging during the writing of this book. Special acknowledgment, however, is given to Miss Mabel Hale for reading the manuscript and offering helpful grammatical suggestions. For her help in providing maps and illustrations, I am grateful to Mrs. Sharon Faucett and also to the Summer Institute of Linguistics of Mexico City, Mexico. I extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Olan Runnels for reading the manuscript, for his encouragement, and for writing the Foreword.

I am especially indebted to my husband, Bob, for his constant reassurance and advice throughout this writing venture. As is so evident, his experiences form an integral part of the book. Without the patience and understanding of Bob and our two sons, Douglas and David, this book could not have been written.

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FOREWORD

This is a different kind of inspirational book – one that is “down to earth but up to God,” acknowledging that missionaries are people too. Nancy shares her joys and sorrows, her hopes and fears, her triumphs and defeats. She presents life as it really is for her and her family, as well as the way it ought to be, freely owning strengths and weaknesses.

Some folks think that missionaries are angelic beings who live in the world of Christian cliches: trust in God, commit it to the Lord, pray about it. Nancy and Bob have found out that giving this kind of easy advice to a friend or taking it yourself is not always the way to go. It may just be an easy way out instead of getting involved with people and their problems.

I predict that Nancy Perry's commonsense approach will help thousands of people to come to know what a real live missionary is all about. When you finish reading this book at least two things will happen to you. If you haven't been to Mexico, you'll want to go; if you've never thought about being a missionary, you will. It will be fun reading, especially if you are lonesome for a personal relationship with Christ. If you've been afraid to get close to God because He might call you to be a missionary, ready this book anyway.

Here is the missionary book of the future: utterly open in its approach to God, free of threadbare cliches, homespun yet profound, passionately honest.

Olan H. Runnels
Pastor, Swope Park Baptist Church
First Vice-President, Southern Baptist Convention

March 20, 1978.



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INTRODUCTION

During our first four years as Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico, Bob and I have many times wished to be able to share more of our experiences in detail with those people back in the States. Our experiences have run the gamut of emotional levels from joy to sorrow, hilarity to tragedy, exhilaration to frustration. It has not always been easy to immediately experience victory and peace in these widely varied circumstances. Yet both of us can truly say that the Holy Spirit has led us all the way.

Missionaries seem to be a great mystery to many people. We are asked similar questions about missionary life over and over again. Sometimes people want to ask questions so basic and simple that they are embarrassed to voice them.

This book has been written in an effort to show that missionaries are human, too. We share in these pages some of the happenings that have made our lives on the mission field at times interesting, exciting, and challenging; and at times dull, frustrating or discouraging. Volumes have been published with facts and figures about missions. Stirring biographies have been penned. We offer very little herein to that body of literature. Ours is simply an effort to relate a bit of what has happened to a very human family from Missouri after God led them to Mexico.

When a missionary called out by God goes to the field, nothing has necessarily changed about him except his geography. His mission and his responsibilities under God to the people around him are exactly the same as those of any Christian anywhere, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Many discover on the mission field, just as many discover at home, that God is always able to meet every need of His Children. His grace is always sufficient to overcome any obstacle. And His Holy Spirit can consistently fill life with peace and joy and victory.

It is our prayer that through the reading of this book you might once again be impressed with how great Christ is as He lives out His life in His disciples, and also that through your better understanding of what a missionary's life may involve, you might be led to even more faithful prayer support for Christ's missionaries around the world.



I. HOW DOES A MISSIONARY BEGIN?

CONVERSION, CALL AND APPOINTMENT

Bob and I were standing with thirty-seven other men and women on the platform of the Foreign Mission Board's auditorium in Richmond, Virginia, on the evening of July 10, 1973. As our missionary appointment service progressed with introductions, Scripture reading and testimonies, I could hardly grasp the reality of my actually being among the group of new appointees for foreign mission service. My mind flashed back over the years to quickly review how the Lord had brought me to that precious moment in my Christian pilgrimage.

With my acceptance of Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour at age eleven, my Christian experience had an early beginning. There followed seven years of solid Christian nurture and training under the dear, late Pastor T.J. Smith, as well as faithful Sunday School teachers and mission organizations at Winnwood Baptist Church in North Kansas City, Missouri. My parents, of course, played an important role as they instilled in me a love and respect for all people.

There during the appointment service, I recalled having made a public commitment to foreign missions during my freshman year at Southwest Missouri State University, and soon after having become engaged to an "uncalled" math major. Several elderly church people reproached me for "forsaking" God's call to missions. Yet my fiancée Bob Perry and I had sincerely prayed about our decision and felt deeply that we were within God's will when we were married on August 15, 1964.

Before we graduated from the University, Bob felt a definite call to the gospel ministry in May, 1965, and accepted his first pastorate in January of 1966. God was unfolding and revealing His will for us gradually, step by step, as we were ready to follow Him. Two weeks after the birth of Douglas in August, 1967, Bob began three years of studies at Midwestern Baptist Seminary.

Whenever there was a special Missionary Day or planned Foreign Mission Board conference on campus, I would quietly insist that we attend. "But I don't feel God is calling me to serve overseas," Bob would say. "Yes, I know, Dear," I would reply, "but let's go to this meeting anyway." We talked with Foreign Mission Board personnel representatives Bill Marshall, Don Reavis, and Dwight Honeycutt. "Surely by graduation time Bob will feel God's call," I convinced myself. Yet it did not come. With a touch of sadness, I saw other recent graduates leave for appointment and overseas service. "Lord, when are you going to call Bob?" I'd pray. "We're willing and ready to go now, but You must send us." Yet God knew that we were not ready. He had more to teach us before sending us out.

A beautiful tow and a half year pastorate followed at Pisgah Baptist Church in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. We grew to love the people deeply. We bought a lovely home and Douglas entered school. I did not have to work, so was able to be at home after David was born in May of 1971. Thought not without problems and occasional frustrations, our ministry there was a fruitful, enjoyable time, and was a time of great personal growth for both of us. In November of 1972, we completed the Foreign Mission Board's initial information forms for prospective candidates for foreign mission service. In our letter to them, we stated: "As you will note on Bob's information form, he has not yet felt God's definite call to foreign missions. We feel an assurance that God wants us right here at this time. Yet at the same time we feel definitely led to continue our relationship with the Board." It was not until the following May when, without any special missionary conference or stirring sermon, God quietly but firmly spoke to Bob, "Now you are ready to go, my son."

In the following nine weeks prior to our appointment that July evening, there were life histories and doctrinal statements to complete, forms to fill out and personal references to contact. Later there were thorough medical and psychiatric examinations to pass. Now, ten years after experiencing God's definite call to foreign mission service, I was actually being appointed. A whole new and exciting facet of our Christian pilgrimage lay before us.

ORIENTATION

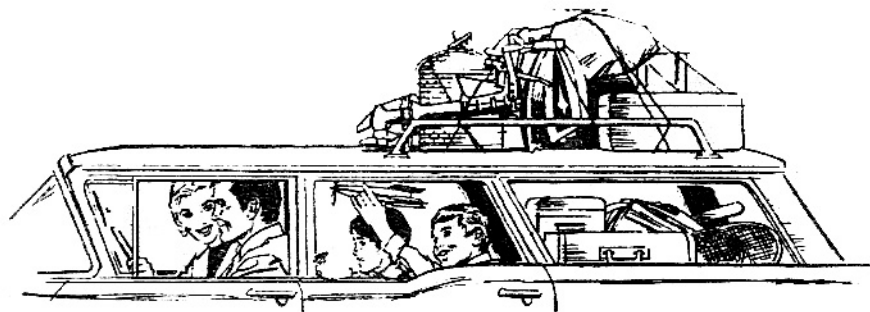
Missionary orientation for fourteen weeks at beautiful Callaway Gardens, Georgia, was an exciting time. While Doug began first grade in the nearby town's public school, two-year old David was cared for in the orientation daycare center. Meanwhile Bob and I sat in classes from eight until three o'clock daily. The myriad of topics which we studied ranged from linguistics, anthropology, literacy techniques, doctrinal studies, and comparative religions to church recreation, puppet making, first aid, and car mechanics. Week-ends were filled with speaking engagements in nearby churches.

Leaving behind an active pastorate in Missouri, we had prayed that God would use us as missionaries in Georgia, rather than just being ministered to through orientation. The Lord answered our prayer.

Soon after our arrival in Georgia, Bob was asked to pastor a group of twenty people meeting in a community building at Melody Lakes, Georgia. Just a few weeks earlier the Walter Skinner family and the W.O. Harrisons had started a Sunday School. That Sunday in November was the first time the group had a preaching service. Nine people went forward during the invitation to become part of the new mission of the Waverly Hall Baptist Church.

During the next few weeks, the group of believers purchased land and installed a mobile chapel on loan from the Columbus Association. There were additions to the church every Sunday. Before we left, we held a week-long revival, and had a baptismal service. How tremendous it was for us to see a church born! How wonderful it was to be allowed to share in those very challenging and strategic weeks. Today Melody Lakes Baptist Church has a membership of sixty-eight, has purchased a building, and has licensed one man to the gospel ministry.

So it was with real joy and excitement that we moved closer to beginning our missionary service in Mexico. The fellowship with other new missionaries was sweet, and as we drove from Callaway Gardens back to Missouri to say our final goodbyes before driving south to the Mexican border, we were mindful of the rest of our orientation group headed to various countries around the world. We were to share a deep interest and involvement in the ministry of others whom we had come to know and to love.



LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Leaving Missouri the day after Christmas in 1973, we gladly left snow and icy winter roads behind us as we traveled south in our newly-assigned mission car to the Mexican border. Since we were entering as tourists, we could take only a minimal amount of personal and household articles, as well as Bob's most precious books and commentaries. We would buy all our furniture and appliances after arriving in the country.

Our crossing into Mexico at Laredo, Texas, signaled the beginning of another phase of our pilgrimage. Driving hour after hour through the barren, arid northern region of Mexico didn't seem to diminish our excitement. Then after over ten hours of driving, we began to notice the countryside change to green mountainous terrain. Our travel guidebook noted that the elevation was over 7,300 feet. By late afternoon we drove into Zacatecas, an old mining town founded in 1546, and now a state capital city. After touring the windy, cold city and its 300-year-old cathedral, we were ready to eat and rest before continuing our trip the following day.

It was a real delight to arrive in balmy Guadalajara, Mexico's second city, after our next day's 200-mile drive. We were enthralled by the spring-like December weather and by multitudes of flowering trees and shrubs. Blooming rose bushes adorned center medians of many wide boulevards. This, then, was to be our home during our year of language study. We could easily praise the Lord for bringing us to such a lovely city in which to begin our missionary career. Would it always be so easy to rejoice and thank God in every situation, I wondered.

Leaving family and friends behind in the States has not been easy. Even though those bonds could not be broken by physical separation, still God understands our need to have people near us to be our friends. So moving into our small, comfortable, two-bedroom furnished apartment in Guadalajara was a delight as fellow missionaries already living in that city came by to help us unload and unpack. One had baked a cake to welcome us. Another drove us around the community to show us the schools, grocery stores and shops.

In the following days, there was always someone offering to assist us, whether to enroll Douglas in first grade at Lincoln School; to hire 30-year-old Lydia, our babysitter who came to care for David every school day; or to take us to church with them. We quickly understood that God does not leave a vacuum in our lives as we seek to follow Him. When He asks us to leave something or someone behind, He is ready to fill the emptiness in His own abundant way.

Thus we began our year in Guadalajara, a city of over one million population. Capital of the state of Jalisco, the city is a mixture of colonial and modern, having been founded about 450 years ago.

Soon Bob and I were engrossed in our Spanish studies with five hours of classwork daily. January passed by quickly. Finally we could communicate on an elementary level. We even learned to think in the metric system, as we ordered hot dogs by the *kilo*, gasoline by the *litro*, and yard goods by the *metro*.

During a February school holiday, we drove five hours to Puerto Vallarta on the Pacific coast to relax on the beaches. Before the trip Bob had taken the car to get the spark plugs changed. Not knowing the word for spark plugs, he had to look it up beforehand in a dictionary. "Bujías," he said aloud to commit the word to memory. Arriving at the garage, he confidently blurted forth in Spanish that he wanted the men to change the car's *brujas*. Chuckles of laughter among the brawny men let him know he had goofed. He had asked them to change the witches!

As ours was a Christian language school, every class began the day with prayer by one of the students. Time after time one classmate would mistakenly ask God to forgive our *pescados*, fish, rather than *pecados*, sins. We trusted the Lord knew what the student really meant.

After only eight weeks of intensive Spanish study, Bob contracted his first major illness – infectious hepatitis. As his body turned yellow from head to toe, our family and close friends hurried to get large injections of gamma globulin which successfully warded off the disease. Being strictly confined to bed for six weeks, with his later activities severely limited, we at first wondered why God would permit this long illness when it was so important that Bob not miss his language classes. Yet as Bob lay recovering, he was soon able to redeem the long hours in Bible study and in reading other devotional materials, as well as keeping up with his studies. He felt the assurance of God's presence, and an excitement about opportunities and open doors for sharing Christ in Mexico. But more than any other emotion, Bob came to feel a deep joy, as his confinement provided a time for spiritual renewal. During those days he wrote to friends, "I have read and re-read Paul's letter to the Philippians, and his repeated theme to, 'Rejoice in

the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! It has thrilled my soul, for Paul wrote that while chained in a Roman prison. Hepatitis isn't nearly that bad, so I find it easy to praise the Lord and rejoice in Him these days.”

In late April, Bob and Doug and I flew with a missionary pilot to Mérida, on the Yucatán peninsula as we sought the Lord's will regarding our field of service following language school. After over ten hours in the air in a four-seater Cessna plane, we were thankful when we saw lights of the Mérida control tower at dusk. By car the same trip would have taken thirty hours of driving each way, and besides, we had been privileged to see Mexico from a different viewpoint from above.

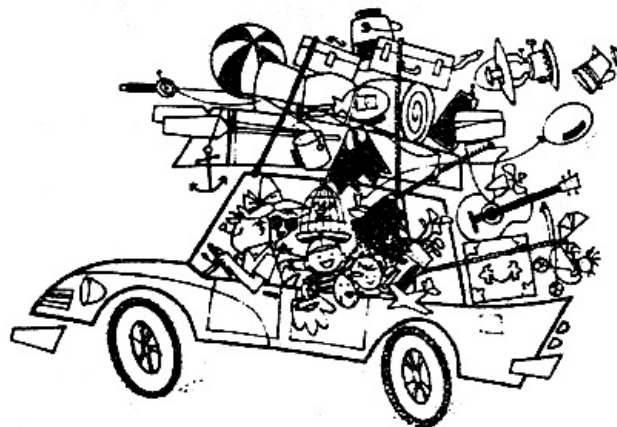
Passing over hours of ancient volcanic mountain ranges; beside famed snowcapped peaks of Popocatepetl, Ixtaccihuatl, and Orizaba; and above the famed archaeological ruins of Teotihuacan and Uxmal filled us with awe. Over the Gulf coast oil fields, over verdant undergrowth and irrigated fields, we were reminded of Mexico's diverse natural resources. Then our minds would return to the challenge of how such an expansive country could ever be reached for Christ.

Brother Aurelio Mandujano, pioneer Mexican missionary to Yucatán and long-time pastor of First Baptist Church of Mérida, was our host for three days to explain the work and needs of the Christian work there. One morning we drove past miles of *henequen* plants under cultivation to attend an associational Women's Missionary Society mission in Cacalchén, a tiny rural Mayan community of white plastered huts with arched thatched roofs. Most of the hymns were sung from a Spanish hymnal, although the local pastor preached to the group in their local Mayan dialect. Many of the women spoke very little Spanish. But the warmth of Christian fellowship was present as we were greeted and accepted into their meeting. We also felt another kind of warmth. It was 109° in the shade in April, and it is August that is their hottest month! Nevertheless we were moved by the needs there and felt it quite likely that God would lead us in that direction. Little did we realize at that time that the Lord had other plans for us.

When we were again back in language school, the summer passed quickly. We became more active as members of La Iglesia Bautista El Mesías, The Messiah Baptist Church, as I taught preschoolers and as Bob preached and sang special numbers from time to time.

During our August annual meeting of the Mexican mission (over seventy-five Southern Baptist missionaries serving throughout the country), agricultural missionary Jim Philpot presented us the need for a field evangelist to work with him in the rural, southern state of Oaxaca. Although we had not visited the area, after much prayer we felt assured that it was God's will for us to work alongside the Philpots in Oaxaca.

With the anticipation of moving to our chosen field of work, we diligently finished the final fifteen weeks of language study and before Christmas, we had packed to move once again.



II. WHERE DOES A MISSIONARY LIVE?



GUADALAJARA

Living in Guadalajara, Mexico, is similar in many respects to living in any large city of over a million people. Large modern supermarkets and lovely shopping centers dot the city; neighborhood laundromats and corner grocery stores make day to day living easier. Well-known American brand names label many canned food products. Several good, private English-speaking schools are available for foreign children. Beautifully landscaped parks, a zoo, theaters and museums provide places to go for amusement, and fine restaurants offer the foreign visitor American cuisine.

Yet one can definitely experience culture shock even in a large, modern foreign city. The language barrier is just one facet of the problem. Cultural standards and value systems differ greatly. Driving patterns and attitudes can be frustrating. Anti-American feelings can be upsetting. Even the frequent stares of the innocently curious can be unnerving. Feeling prejudiced against occasionally can be crushing to a white Anglo-American.

Although we were confronted with many of these situations to some degree, Guadalajara was a perfect transition for us as we passed from a modern U.S. setting to the rustic city of Oaxaca.



OAXACA

The state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico is mostly a mountainous area, although further south the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is low and flat. Its capital city of the same name, Oaxaca, has over 100,000 people, yet remains rustic and colonial in many respects.

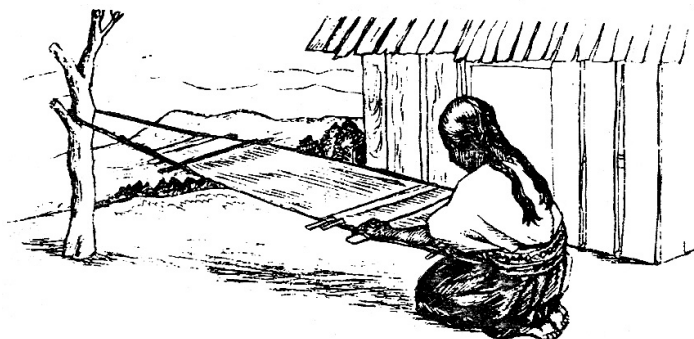
Before moving to Oaxaca we read as much as possible about its history and people. We learned that the Indian population, composed largely of Zapotecs and Mixtecs, speaks over eighty different dialects within five separate language families. Many still do not speak Spanish. High mountains, deep ravines and lack of transportation have perpetuated strong cultural barriers. Shopping in the bustling city market in Oaxaca, one can identify the various groups by the distinctive native dress of each Indian region. For although most women wear a long, loose overblouse, or *huipil*, each town's is distinguishable, whether it be by a certain embroidery design or possibly by the colors woven into the fabric itself.

A woman from Yalalag hurries by in her long white *huipil* with a brightly colored tassel hanging at the neckline. A barefoot Mazateca woman from northern Oaxaca wears a lovely overblouse embroidered with birds and adorned with pink and blue ribbons. Tehuanas, selling smoke-dried fish from the Isthmus, stand proudly. Among the most quickly to be identified by their long colorful skirts ruffled at the bottom, worn with a short waist length embroidered overblouse, these Zapoteca women from the Isthmus have for centuries run family business and commerce while the men work the fields. Necklaces and earrings of real gold coins complete their costume for *fiesta* days.

Within the market's "restaurant" section, two men play lively marimba music to the accompaniment of three guitars. Shoppers are urged to request a special selection which the group gladly plays and sings for a few *pesos* donation. At every doorway in the city's sprawling market section there is a homemade shrine to one of several saints or perhaps to the city's patron saint, the Virgen de la Soledad, the Virgin of Solitude or Loneliness. On a busy street corner a local witch doctor hawks his wares from a portable display. Crowds form to watch live snakes crawl up his arm as he extols the virtues of his herbs, animal skulls and amulets to ward off evil, sickness and death. Sales are brisk as people who have not known Christ reach out to whatever remedy or false answer is offered them.

Poverty is on every hand. Hardship written on every face. Sadness universal.

Although Oaxaca City, 340 miles southeast of Mexico City, lies in a rich agricultural valley, its tourist industries of leather, cotton and wool goods and black pottery are most widely known. Several women are in the city's main *plaza* daily weaving on primitive saddle-back looms to make beautiful, decorative tourist items to sell.



One end of their ancient horizontal loom is fastened to a nearby tree, while the other end is attached to a belt around the waist of the weaver. The native artisan sits on the ground to stretch the loom taut as she weaves with a simple shuttle.

Oaxaca's unsophisticated colonial atmosphere, along with its proximity to several of Mexico's most outstanding archaeological zones of Monte Albán, Mitla, Yagul and others, make it a favorite city for foreign tourists. They can easily distinguish the two prominent classes: the rich, of Spanish heritage and the extremely poor, of Indian heritage. There is, however, a rising middle class of businessmen and professionals as is already so evident in the larger metropolitan areas. While the lower class is usually superstitious and intensely devoted to the Catholic Church and her innumerable saints, the upper class usually avoids all contact with the Church, except for baptisms, confirmations, marriages and funerals.

Our months in Oaxaca afforded us a time to gain new insights regarding church ministries in rural Mexico. Much of what is recounted in the following pages is from our experiences in Oaxaca, where we worked with people in *rancherías*, small towns and cities. With a supply of books and materials from the Baptist Spanish Publishing House, we began a Christian literature ministry. We discovered, as we carried boxes of books into every area we went, that people are hungry for God's Word and other Christian books and teaching helps.

My days were often filled with washing clothes in my wringer-type washing machine, pasteurizing milk purchased from a dusty milk truck, walking six blocks to an open-air market to choose my fresh meat from hanging quarters of beef, and preparing meals for visiting Mexican brethren who had come in from their village to confer with Bob or make purchases in the city. Our children, playing in the dusty, dirt roadway that passed our house, quickly learned to step out of the way of the cattle driver leading his herd to grazing areas, and out of the way of modern trucks carrying five-gallon jars of purified water which they sold at each house.

In the late afternoon we read the daily paper which told of student-administration clashes in the University, worker's strikes in the factories, violent and brutal killings in the city and nearby towns, and of bombings in our downtown business district. Anti-American editorials were frequent. There were days when the problems and uncertainties of our work and surroundings would press down on us.

Then at suppertime we would sing a Spanish chorus to the tune of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" - a chorus which Mexican Baptists often sing before their blessing on the meal:

*Por estos favores que tu nos ha dado
Te damos las gracias, ¡Oh, buen Padre Dios!
De tu buena mano nos das el alimento;
De Ti es nuestra vida, de Ti también salud;
A Ti te alabamos, ¡Oh, buen Padre Dios!*

For these favors that You have given us
We give You thanks, O, great Father God!
From Your good hand comes our food;
From You, our life, from You, our health;
We praise You, O great Father God!

As we sang we would realize again that joy and happiness does not come from our particular circumstances, so much as it comes from serving Jesus, no matter where He may call us to serve.

MEXICO CITY

Mexico, referred to by many as “The Land of Contrasts,” is true to that name. Composed of thirty-one states and a Federal District, and approximately one-fifth the size of the United States, her population of over sixty million people is spread from hot, dry desert areas in the north, to tropical, jungle territory in the southeast. From a 2,000 mile border with the United States, Mexico extends to her southern border with Guatemala and Belize. Ranges of rugged Sierra Madre mountains follow Mexico's eastern and western coastlines to form a giant “V,” ending at the narrow Isthmus of Tehuantepec. From canyons and ravines far larger and deeper than our Grand Canyon to exquisite, snow-capped Mount Orizaba at 18,696 feet, Mexico is unique and beautiful.

Mexico City, the Federal District, combines both pre- and post-Columbian influences and is a great business and industrial center. This capital city, now ranking second in population to Shanghai {in 1975}, is truly one of the world's greatest cities. Even as the country is one of contrasts, so also are there extreme contrasts within the city.

The rich
The poor
The employed
The unemployed
Modern freeways
Dirt side roads
Black limousines
Rusty bicycles
Well-dressed businessmen
Barefoot peasants
The happy city dweller
The miserable misfit
Exclusive department stores
Open-air market stalls
Tall, blond European Mexicans
Short, dark Indian Mexicans
The Christian
The non-Christian

With over 15 million people presently living in Mexico City's metropolitan area and over 1,000 people moving in daily as they seek a better life than that in rural areas. Mexico City's administrators estimate a population of **33 million** by the year 2000. {Actually 19.2 million as of 2005} Even now, 50 percent of the country's population lives within a four hour drive of the city.

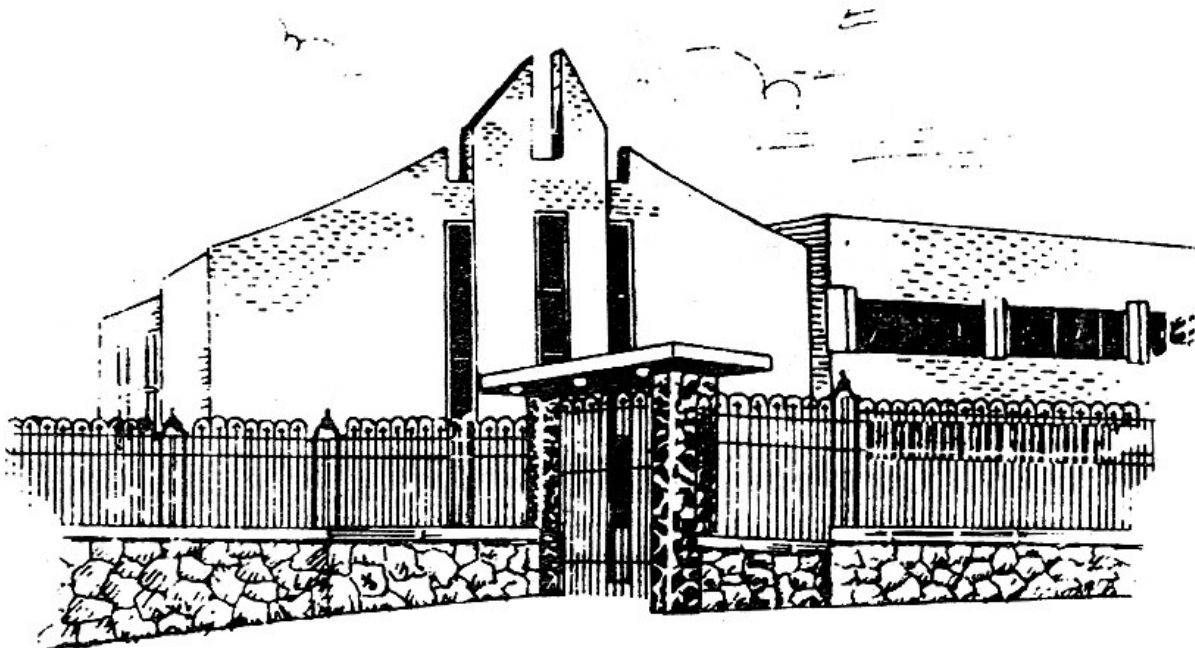
This dynamic city, with an estimated English-speaking population of over 70,000, has been our home for over two years as Bob has served as pastor of the Capital City Baptist Church. We reside in a modern suburb with a Sears department store, Pizza Hut, Burger Boy and Shakey's Pizza Parlor nearby.

Douglas has attended the American School with over 2,600 other students. It's student body is composed of 33% U.S. nationals, 47% Mexican nationals, 15% dual citizens, and the remaining 5% represent twenty-nine other nationalities. With morning classes entirely in English following the U.S. Curriculum and afternoon classes entirely in Spanish following the Mexican curriculum, Doug always has plenty of homework! David has also attended a bilingual school, although its enrollment is almost entirely Mexican.

As pastor of the only English-speaking Baptist congregation in Mexico City (one of only two in the entire country), Bob has attempted to inspire and equip the membership to reach out into every corner of Mexico City as each witnesses daily for Christ. With over 100 members and Sunday morning attendance of around 200, our congregation is composed of English-speaking people from many nations. In recent years, people from England, Yugoslavia, Canada, Ethiopia, Ireland, Australia, Germany, Scotland, Lebanon, New Zealand, Mexico and the United States, as well as other nations have taken an active part in the church's ministry. The diversity of their cultures, occupations, and talents serves beautifully, not only to enrich the fellowship, but also to reach others for Jesus Christ. In a recent Sunday morning worship service, twenty-five individuals stood to share about separate Bible studies, children's meetings, and prayer groups which they were leading or sharing in. What a joy it is to see the Church, God's people, ministering outside the walls of the church building!

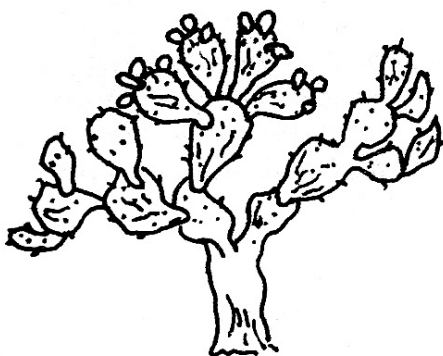
One exciting aspect of our ministry through this church has been a counseling ministry which Bob began in 1977. Through the Christian Family Counseling Service, Bob has devoted many hours each week to private counseling with person from both within the church family and from outside. Whether Mexican or American, people are hurting with personal emotional problems or marital and family conflicts. As Bob counsels with Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, his counseling is always from a Christ-centered Biblically-based approach. Several have accepted Christ in the course of the counseling sessions. Others, who came as Christians, have renewed their relationship with Christ as they have applied the resources of the Holy Spirit to their problems.

It soon became obvious that the need for Christian counseling was tremendous when all available counseling time was taken up without even advertising the service. Saturday morning appointments were scheduled and yet another man accepted the Lord as he and Bob discussed how to resolve marital conflicts in the man's home. Later Bob held a series of group conferences in homes in order to reach more people. All of the sessions, whether on a one-to-one basis or in groups, served to prove once again an age-old truth. Lives are always transformed when people hear and accept God's message of how to live an abundant life in Him.



CAPITAL CITY BAPTIST CHURCH

III. WHAT DOES A MISSIONARY EAT?



CACTUS

Upon our arrival in Guadalajara for a year of language study, we were introduced to the huge Abastos city market. Our eyes were filled with wonder as we looked upon aisle after aisle of unfamiliar fruits and vegetables trucked in from every region of Mexico. Tasting a succulent ripe mango, I immediately vowed to buy at least one new kind of produce each week in an attempt to learn to enjoy all Mexico has to offer in the realm of foodstuffs.

After several weeks of noticing piles of pulpy *nopal*, prickly pear cactus leaves for sale, one afternoon I stopped to watch a woman carefully carving off many thorns covering each pad. I finally decided to try my hand at cooking them. Having invited a Mexican family to dinner that evening, my thinking was that even if Bob and I didn't care for the taste, our Mexican friends, Salvador and Alejandrina Trejo, surely would finish it off. As I paid a few cents for a stack of the cactus pads, I asked the vendor how to prepare them.

"*Señora*," the woman began, "You dice the *nopales*, onions and tomatoes, then fry them all in grease. It is a good vegetable to serve with pork or mixed in scrambled eggs with onions for breakfast. But do not forget to add some *serrano chiles*."

"*Gracis, Señor*," I nodded as I dropped the cactus pads into my shopping bag and moved on to buy some fresh papaya, mangos, pineapple, watermelon, and cantaloupe for a fruit salad. My mind flashed back to my parents in north Missouri on the mid-January day. How they would enjoy this array of garden-ripened fruits during winter's cold, snowy days!

That evening as I prepared the cactus leaves precisely according to the instructions given me in the market, I could not help but wonder how such a food could be so popular. The appearance of the three ingredients in the skillet took on a slimy look as it cooked. Indeed, when I spooned the mixture into a serving dish, its viscous juice discouraged my desire to even taste the concoction. Yet I had followed the recipe as it was given to me, so I unabashedly carried my new dish to the table, along with the other food being served.

I proudly encouraged our guests to finish their first helping of *nopales* and have some more, although my suggestion was virtually, but politely, ignored. When our meal was finished, and we two women were clearing the table, Alejandrina smilingly said, "Posiblemente, Nancy, the next time you cook *nopales*, you might try it another way. You see, they are just like okra, so I boil the chopped cactus for several minutes, pour off the water and rinse it in cold water. Then I do that a second or third time before I add the onion and tomatoes to fry it all together."

"Oh, Alex," I exclaimed. "The market lady forgot to tell me that! Why didn't you say something at the table? It must have been awful!"

"No, Nancy," Alex smiled, "But it was different."



CHICKEN WITH RICE IN THE MARKET

Guadalajara's New Liberty Market, *El Nuevo Mercado Libertad*, situated several blocks from the state capital's downtown area, is a fascinating cross-section of everything typically Mexican. On our initial visit to the bustling, multi-level city market, all five senses were instantly captivated.

Bob parked our car above, on the parking mezzanine from where we were afforded a birds-eye view down into the market itself as we leaned over the guard rail. Spread out over the two lower levels was an iridescent patchwork of colors. Tables and booths were emblazoned with every conceivable sort of product. From the parking balcony the kaleidoscope of colors with the constant movement of buyers and vendors was a grand spectacle to view. One long aisle was lined with brilliant crepe paper flowers, their hues ranging along the entire spectrum from red to violet. A neighboring aisle overflowed with colorful *piñatas* in varied shapes and sizes. A youngster, evidently buying one to fill with fruit and candy for his birthday party, chose a giant pink cartoon character. Judging from the numerous donkey-shaped *piñatas*, we decided they must be favored above the rest.

Glancing down across the open courtyard below, our attention was drawn to the fruit and vegetable section. Fruit stalls held mountains of ripening sweet pineapples from the coast, yellow bananas from the tropical south, luscious red apples from northern Mexico, and emerald green limes. Other stalls were burdened down with familiar watermelons, cantaloupes, green and black avocados and purple grapes, as well as bushels of fresh vegetables. First impressions have always intrigued us, so we expectantly wound down the concrete circular stairs leading to the market floor.

Once on the ground level we were bombarded by a cacophony of sounds. Public buses roared by on every side, few using mufflers. Constant honking of car and taxi horns reverberated between buildings of the congested city. Also emanating from the street were sounds of shrill police whistles and horses neighing as they waited impatiently by their drivers to transport tourists in their picturesque *calandrias*.

Deeper inside the market, the din of street noises diminished, as distinct new sounds around us became more audible. Virtually every vendor would call out to perspective customers passing by. Each merchant had perfected his own style to sell his wares. Some clamored for attention in a complaining tone of voice, while others appealed urgently to the client as if one would buy out of sympathy for the shopkeeper. Frequently they exhorted with authority; yet others would plead in a whining cry, begging

for a sale. An occasional bashful saleswoman would quietly offer in a hushed voice to assist you in choosing from her selection of merchandise. Loud, high-pitched voices could be heard from all sides as scores of people bartered for the best possible price.

Climbing the stairs to the upper level, we heard strains of *mariachi* music coming from the prepared food section. The resonant singing voices of a group of Mexico's famed wandering minstrels echoed throughout the restaurant area as they accompanied their singing with violins, guitars, and trumpets. Following each song, one member would pass among the audience to collect a *peso* or two from each other.

When we entered the market, our sense of smell had been struck with a variety of distinguishable scents: strong, reeking odors emitted by the fresh fish section; a delightful sweetness radiating from aisles of fragrant cut flowers; a repulsive, acrid smell originating in malodorous, contaminated public restrooms; the distinctive, pleasant musky odor of the large leather goods section; as well as the putrid stench leaping from garbage barrels and piles of rotting fruits and vegetables. How incongruous it seemed, seeing such beauty and such squalor co-existing side by side.

We were in the market to get an overview of handicrafts of that region as well as sample the flavor of a Mexican marketplace. Therefore we walked past the cluttered shoe section, down the greasy-smelling used hardware aisle, and on to more tourist-oriented products. Several booths were filled with smooth hand-blown glass from nearby Tlaquepaque, blues and ambers dominating. Another stall held an assortment of glazed pottery from Tonalá, burnished copper from Santa Clara, polished sterling silver jewelry made by artisans in Guadalajara and Taxco, and colorful diamond-shaped yarn *ojo de dios*, god's eyes, of the Huichol Indians. Touching each handmade item brought on a strange sensation, a yearning to get to know and understand the people behind such sensitive works of art. With God's help we would be able to do that in the coming years.

We shopped our way into the restaurant area to sample authentic Mexican dishes whose tantalizing aroma filled the air. Since it was one o'clock in the afternoon, the counter seats were virtually empty for the Mexican lunch hour is somewhere between two and four o'clock. Separate square tiled counters enclosed individual kitchens, each with its stove and sink. Counter-tops were laden with wide, round, basin-like pottery *cazuelas* brimming with palate-pleasing dishes, barely leaving room for hungry patrons to eat. Behind each counter was positioned a heavy-set *cocinera* proudly hawking her culinary wares. One cook seemed especially good-natured. We seated ourselves at her counter.

"*Buenas tardes, Señora,*" we began. "We're new in Guadalajara and want to try some traditional Mexican food. What do you recommend for a voracious appetite?"

With the usual amiability of the Mexican people, she started at one end of the counter describing the contents of each large earthen vessel.

"This, *Señores*, is Jalisco *pozole*, made by simmering hominy, pork head and loin, pig's feet and garlic for several hours. When the broth is served, each person adds shredded lettuce, chopped onion, lemon and sliced radishes. And, of course, some hot *salsa*."

"This pot contains *frijoles refritos*, I can see, *Señora*. My husband really like refried beans. But what is that dish?"

"Ah, *moronga rellena* is one of our favorite *caldos*. To start this soup we first clean hog tripe well and turn it inside out. It is cut into eighteen-inch lengths. After mixing together several quarts of fresh pork blood, diced pork fat, onion, chilis, garlic, and spices like oregano and thyme, marjoram and salt, each section is filled. After tying the ends shut, we must simmer it for about two hours in salt water. It is done when no blood escapes when the casing is pricked with a pin. Sometimes I slice the *rellena* in a thick green tomato sauce, and sometimes in a thin broth like this. It gets its dark color from the cooked blood."

Deciding not to eat *moronga*, Bob quickly pointed to two animal skulls perched atop a giant plate of cooked meat. "And this, *Señora?*" he asked with an inquisitive look.

“That, *Señor*, is *barbacoa de cabra*. Barbequed goat or lamb has long been a favorite throughout Mexico. It is baked in an underground pit and is very tasty. With the brains we make *tacos de sesos*, frying the brain-filled *tortilla* in hot grease. May I fix you some?”

“No, *gracias*,” Bob hastily replied. “Is that not chicken with rice in the pot over there?”

“*Sí, Señor*. With cooked peas and carrots mixed in, *arroz con pollo* is quite good.”

“I would like that, then, with some *frijoles*, please,” he decided aloud. “And a bottle of cola.”

“Is that all, sir? Wouldn't you like a *bistec*?” she asked, indicating a plate of paper-thin raw beef filets. “I can fy you one in just a minute.”

“Yes, please,” Bob answered politely.

“I'll have the same, *Señora*,” I hastened to add, by then quite famished.

Within minutes, the affable cook served our plates accompanied by a side dish of *chiles en vinagre*, a combination of garlic, sliced carrots, onions, cauliflower and *jalapeño* peppers pickled in vinegar. Bob took one cautious bite of *jalapeño*, only to turn red in the face from the sauce's burning juices. Gulping down quantities of cola, he found no relief as tears flowed from his eyes.

“Oh, *Señor*,” declared the cook, laughing sympathetically. “Eat salt to take away the sting. Cola or water does not help.”

Not in a position to reject any suggestion, Bob hurriedly grabbed the nearest salt shaker and quickly coated his tongue. Finding some measure of relief in that treatment, he continued to eat his meal, without hot sauce. It tasted good.

We finished eating as we listened to the loud, lively music of the *mariachis*, so representatives of the vivacious Mexican people. As we talked Bob reflected audibly how pleased he was, despite the *jalapeños*, that God had called us to work in Mexico. I agreed.



WILD BOAR

The rays of the morning sun fell across Bob as he awoke from a sound, undisturbed sleep. It took him a moment to reorient himself to his surroundings. He and the Mexican Christians with him had arrived late the previous night after an exhausting trip on foot through the mountains to this tiny village of Llano de Leon. Today a four-day annual associational meeting among the Baptist brethren would begin. Bob was excited about leading them in a ten-hour lay evangelism training session, and had been praying that some people of that village would become Christians as a result.

Having arrived sleepily after dark, he and the others had only made a cursory inspection of the layout of the tiny secluded mountain village the night before. Now, as he crawled from his sleeping bag on the hard-packed dirt floor of the adobe cabin where they had been quartered, he stepped to the open doorway to capture an overall picture of his surroundings.

There on the small, low plateau was a cluster of houses. Although most had been constructed of locally hand-made bricks, others consisted of only sticks daubed with mud. A few appeared to be of unpainted hand-hewn boards, unsealed against the cold mountain air. The little flat area also held the mission's chapel where they had been so enthusiastically greeted upon their arrival. On beyond was the new one-room government school building, stuccoed and painted white. How incongruous it seemed, complete with its concrete paved basketball court!

Before breakfast Bob followed the path down the lower side of the plateau to the cold mountain stream, passing the few huts that were sprinkled beside the pathway. Quickly he spotted a large rock in the creek bed on which to sit to lather up and shave before he began to bathe. Looking up, he spied several children dotting the mountain descent, perched strategically to observe his entire shaving and bathing ritual. Bob, sitting with his feet in the icy water, was contemplating his troubles when he perceived one of the Mexican *hermanos* also shaving at the water's edge. Bob immediately observed that the man had neither an aerosol can of shaving cream nor a twin-blade razor. His entire shaving kit was one single-edged razor blade that had no doubt served him for several months. There he sat, scraping.

By the time Bob had returned his shaving utensils to the cabin assigned them, the call to breakfast was heard. Following several others to the group, Bob wound down the path off the plateau to a house nestled into the side of the hill. One end and the back of the adobe cabin were built right into the mountainside. The crudely made bricks that had been irregularly laid were capped by a roof of heavy, black corrugated tarpaper. Only one small window and the doorway interrupted the brown monotony of the cabin front. As he followed the men into that place which had been designated the communal dining hall for those four days, two sensations overwhelmed him: the darkness of the room's interior, combined with the thick, pungent odor of smoke from the kitchen fires; and the robust aroma originating from large earthenware *ollas* of food, waiting to be served to the group.

Over twenty men filed into the one long, narrow room, while a similar number waited to be served once the first shift had finished eating. Extended rough-hewn planks had been set on several sawhorses to provide one, long table for the hungry company. The benches were split logs supported by lengthy, sturdy wooden pegs whose sharpened points had been wedged into holes hollowed out near each end of the log.

Quickly and quietly several Indian women moved among the men, serving earthenware bowls filled generously with a watery chicken broth with rice. Garnishing the hot soup were diced onions and sparse pieces of cooked chicken. Mountains of hot, hand-patted *tortillas*, wrapped in large cloth napkins, were placed at intervals along the bare table. The thin corn-flour cakes would serve both as a fork and as bread. Separate serving bowls of cooked black beans and dishes of piquant chili sauce amplified the breakfast menu. Mugs of hot, thick black coffee completed the morning meal. This was breakfast in the Oaxaca mountains.

It was three in the afternoon before they had the mid-day meal. The morning hours had been filled with the opening session of the annual meeting, which included greetings from each congregation represented. There had been singing and preaching, all done with a certain lengthiness, as was the custom, but the fellowship had been good.

Bob's American stomach was relieved when they announced that the *comida* was ready to be served. When it was his turn to be seated, he filled himself on venison, more boiled black *frijoles*, and the omnipresent *tortillas*. Bottled soft drinks, which had been carried into the village on pack mules from San Gabriel six hours away, were a welcomed treat, even though served at room temperature.

Late that night there was another round of home-grown coffee, as well as some bean *tacos* for those who desired it. Thus passed Bob's first full day on the little plateau.

The following November day dawned cold and misty. Clouds draped themselves down over the pine-covered mountains, enclosing the tiny village. It was difficult to leave the warm confines of the sleeping bag. Yet Bob sluggishly got up and dressed for breakfast.

Stepping into the dining hall, his body immediately sensed the warmth from the kitchen's wood fire. The cooking area at the far end of the elongated room was dark except for one narrow ray of light coming in from the vent hole that had been left in the hut's roof. Several women were present, dressed in their usual ankle-length skirts and loose-fitting blouses, with the traditional long *rebozo* wrapped around their shoulders. Their long, black hair was drawn back in braids, intertwined with colorful ribbons. Greeting Bob in their cordial manner, they continued stirring the contents of the clay cookware.

Several of the men were already seated at the table discussing some topic in an enthusiastic, animated manner. Bob, struggling to understand the accelerated discourse, at last caught the subject of their discussion. The men of the village had killed a wild boar, and the group would be enjoying a meal of *jabalí* at lunchtime.

The women at that moment began to serve breakfast. As plate after plate was lowered to the table, the lively conversation subsided until the last man had been served. Then José Maya, one of the Mexican regional missionaries, led the group in offering thanks for the food. Quickly, however, following the "amen," the congenial spirit ignited more dialogue.

"*Hermano* Roberto," began José Maya, "Do you know why they call these scrambled eggs, '*huevos a la bandera mexicana*,' or eggs, Mexican flag style?"

"Well, really I don't," answered Bob. "We have never eaten them prepared this way in Guadalajara where we have been living."

"We call it that because it has red diced tomatoes, green diced chilis, and white diced onion mixed in it." José paused before continuing.

"Now I understand," interrupted Bob. "Those are the colors of the Mexican flag."

"That's right, *Hermano*." But there he left the discussion as the cloth-draped stack of *tortillas* was deposited in front of him. Without hesitating, Brother José snatched up a hot corn patty, and began tearing off a piece with which to shovel up a mouthful of eggs. Soon the *frijoles* were passed around, but this time the ebony beans had been mashed and fried until they were a thick, dry mass. Bob had never been known to refuse *frijoles refritos*, so served himself a big spoonful to accompany his eggs. Minutes later, finishing his breakfast with a last swallow of strong coffee, Bob excused himself and retreated to the seclusion of the quiet cabin to study his Bible a few minutes before the morning business session began.

That day, the second, he was to begin leading the training sessions in lay evangelism. He had been allotted two hours each morning and afternoon to teach personal witnessing techniques to the group. Never before had he made such a long presentation in Spanish, and as he had not even completed the year of language study, he knew that clear communication would be uncertain. Yet in that moment, he prayed a prayer that he had offered in various other situations.

“Lord, it is Your message that I wish to communicate. Please give me the full capacity of my knowledge of Spanish this morning. Call to my mind the words I have learned, and allow me to use Spanish to the best of my ability. Let Your Holy Spirit communicate the message to these people in spite of my errors. In Jesus' name, amen.”

A calming reassurance had taken control of Bob as he stepped from the cabin out along the path to attend the first meeting of the day. He felt fortified by his renewed reliance on God and looked forward confidently to his participation in the meetings.

The misty haze had climbed its way up from the plateau and the warm sunlight brightened the morning air.

At the conclusion of the morning session, once again the group sauntered to the dining hall, discussing along the way the statistics and reports that had just been presented. A representative of the Miahuatlán church had reported that their church sponsored thirty-five missions and twenty-three preaching centers. Their pastor, Carlos Morales, had baptized 160 new members. The state's statistical summary had shown twelve Baptist churches with two having been self-supporting. There were ninety-six mission points. Among the nine national pastors there had been 286 baptisms, bringing the total membership to over 1,500.

The church of Porvenir Ballesteros, located deep in the mountains of the Southwest coast has performed fifty-five baptisms, as well as having shown increases in several other facets of their church program. Several of these present had responded with animated dialogue to Bob's presentation on witnessing, and had lingered in the chapel to talk more with him. But now it was time to eat.

The wild *jabali* had been prepared by roasting on a spit over an open fire. The cooks had tended the wild boar carefully, as they periodically chased away the village's scraggy dogs who had been attracted by the alluring scent of such a delicacy. Inside, in the dark kitchen, two pot-bellied clay *ollas* on the fire contained *sopa de tortilla*. To the meat broth the women had added fried strips of leftover *tortillas*, after the diced onions, tomatoes and green coriander had been simmering for some time. A few minutes before serving, the cooks had remembered to add a sprig of mint leaves. The *yerbabuena* not only added its distinctive flavor, but was thought excellent for the digestion. The pot of black beans had been reheated and the covered stack of warm *tortillas* had already been placed on the planks of the long, make-shift table. All was ready for the voracious appetites of the sixty hungry men.

As the first shift of twenty men was eating at the table, their discussion turned to the reports given earlier in the day by the five associational-sponsored regional missionaries. Perhaps that of Rogelio Vásquez had impressed the group more than any of the others. Working in the rural area of Sola de Vega, *Hermano* Rogelio had continued to work under the pressure of increased persecution. There had been frequent bombings and more than one believer had been killed in recent months. Yet Rogelio's attitude was one of optimism, as he pledged to continue visiting even those villages where the persecution was strongest.

Later that afternoon, as the assembly reconvened, Bob continued his presentation. The brethren were reminded how to share their Christian testimony to include the plan of salvation. Although Bob had been told that almost the entire village population of 150 was Christian, at one point in his talk, he commented, “Now that we have once again reviewed God's plan for man's salvation, perhaps there is someone present this afternoon who would like to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. If you would like to do that now, just lift your hand so that we can pray with you and help you to commit your life to Christ.” Imagine the elation of the group as three adults raised their hands. Thus the meetings graduated from one high point to another there on that little remote plateau in the mountains of Oaxaca.

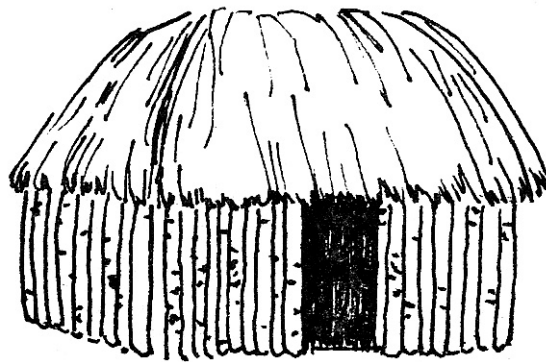
That night there was a special session to ordain a pastor. It was dusk when the people began to filter into the rustic chapel. As the walls were only vertical poles with small sticks woven in horizontally, the mountain people knew to dress warmly. Each entered carrying his Bible and his own hymnal, as has always been the custom in Mexico. Gas lanterns were lit as the singing began. For the next two hours,

the worship service worked to bind the fellowship of believers even closer together as brothers in Christ.

At the conclusion of the lengthy service, a reception was held in honor of the newly ordained pastor. The women had baked sweet bread which was served with cups of *atole*. The thick corn meal broth had been cooked with an abundance of sugar and cinnamon sticks and tasted good on the chilly November night. It was late when the last man had returned to his cabin and the lanterns had been snuffed out.

The final day of meetings was to be no less of an inspiration to those present than the preceding days had been. After the business session filled with plans and budgets for the coming year, Bob directed the *hermanos* to go out from the chapel in groups of three to witness personally to some person who was not a Christian. One group headed down the path and across the creek. Others directed themselves up the mountainsides to visit isolated neighbors. Another knew of a man there in the village and set off in the direction of his hut. A few hours later the group reassembled to report that three persons who had been contacted had accepted the Lord. Needless to say, the group was delighted with the immediate results of their study.

The closing session of the annual meeting, as well as Bob's long journey from the village back to the city of Guadalajara, seemed anti-climactic to the joy of having seen six of the inhabitants of that remote mountain community receive the Lord.



TEN MEALS OF FISH

During the summer of 1975, Bob planned and attended a four-day youth camp in Puerto Escondido, Hidden Port, on the Pacific coast in southern Oaxaca state. It was only 150 linear miles to the south of the city of Oaxaca, but as he was to drive the Carry-all along the rough-hewn unimproved road on what was a tedious seven-hour trip through the mountains, he was thankful for the company of Dr. Robert Fricke, professor of theology at the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary in Mexico City. After the two had discussed the camp's scheduled activities and the Bible studies Professor Fricke was to lead, their talk turned to lighter things.

“You know, Robert, the Mexican fellow who operates the little restaurant where we'll be having the camp assured me of some good meals these next few days,” commented Bob as he rounded yet another curve in the road.

“What do you usually eat when you are out in the churches here in Oaxaca?” asked the Bible study leader.

“Well, I recall barbecued sheep in northern Oaxaca and turkey in mole sauce down on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. However, I imagine we might have a little fish this week, being on the coast.”

“Now, that sounds fine,” remarked Robert. “my wife, Anne, can fix great pan-fried fish in corn meal. I really like that every now and then.”

“Nancy makes good fried fish and corn bread, too, but I really never have cared much for fish. The owner didn't elaborate on his menu plans. But he did say,” Bob concluded, “that whatever it is, he'd serve big helpings. So I suppose we'll do just fine.” Not long afterwards, they drove into Miahuatlán where an excited group of five teenagers was waiting at the Baptist Church to accompany them to the youth retreat. Once all bedrolls were loaded, the young people climbed in and the trip was resumed. Soon the *jóvenes* were egrossed in singing lively choruses and in discussing plans for their next few days at camp.

After a coke stop in the little town of Galera, the campers continued toward Pochutla where there was a Pemex gasoline station. Winding down out of the mountains, the group noticed that dense evergreen coffee trees covered the hills on both sides of the roadway for an hour before they arrived in Pochutla. The plants' white blossoms reminded Bob of the dogwood in his native Missouri Ozarks. Although the men had enjoyed having a paved road the first hour and a half out of Oaxaca until just beyond Miahuatlán, the last four and one-half hours of Pochutla had been on an unsurfaced roadway of powdery-red soil. Owing to their extremely slow speed which allowed no cooling breeze as they traveled along the unreliable road, and due to the intensity of the sun's rays, the group of travelers looked upon their arrival in Pochutla with great relief. Bob wiped his grimy forehead and cheeks with his large white handkerchief, only to realize as he lowered the stained cloth how much of the dusty red soil had clung to his sweaty face.

The highway up the Pacific coast from Pochutla to Puerto Escondido was a straight and paved one which took only another hour of the group's time. As they drove, Bob recalled that he had heard Puerto Escondido referred to as an enchanting, tropical retreat like those to be found in Tahiti, or some other Pacific isle. The town's virgin beaches, with lovely palm groves, had been acclaimed by widely-traveled writers of the Sunday edition's travel section. Readers were always urged to spend their vacation there quickly, before the mammoth hotel chains and airlines invade its charm and quaint loveliness with thousands of foreign tourists.

Travel writers everywhere should have been delighted to know that these two Americans had indeed enjoyed their undiscovered paradise before the promised “invasion”. For soon they drove past a few Army barracks on the low hills overlooking the bay and beheld the lovely Pacific beach stretching out lazily in the speckled shade of the coconut palm trees. Watching for the traditional main *plaza* or *zócalo* indicating the heart of town, Bob steered the car along the lower, old main street around the contour of the bay past tiny shops and a few thatch-roofed houses. The car rumbled past an occasional open-air restaurant or small beach hotel. On either side there were fruit stands displaying the always popular mangos, pineapple slices, peeled whole cucumbers and wedges of melon. Whole coconuts, waiting to be plugged to extract the sweet milk, were piled to one side of the make shift stands.

Sever hours of rough driving had given Bob annoying headache, so they stopped at a tiny, dimly-lit corner drugstore which proudly boasted a newly painted sign, “*Farmacia*,” over its doorway. Swallowing the two aspirin with the help of a room-temperature soft drink. Bob joined the others in the car to continue on to the location of the camp. A few miles up the coastal highway at the turnoff to Bajos de Chila, they turned left off the highway onto another dirt side road which promptly led the tired travelers to a rented campsite on the shore of an inland lake of stagnant, brackish water. How unpleasant it looked in contrast to their view of captivating beaches down the coast. Yet, being the only economical facilities available to house and feed a group of forty young people, Bob had earlier settled on the location.

Looking over the facilities, he saw a very large open-air thatched roof dining area, with rustic tables and benches sprinkled among numerous roof support poles. To the rear an area had been enclosed to form three small rooms which were living quarters for the owner's family. Dingy cloth hung from each doorway to afford a semblance of privacy. The kitchen stood apart at the right edge of the dining area. *Señora* Castillo and her two teen-aged daughters were preparing the afternoon meal at the brick wood stove which bore large earthenware *ollas* of black beans, rice and the main dish – fish soup. Nodding their greeting to the women from their vantage point on the road, the two men walked several yards down the path to inspect a second structure of the same construction, situated on the shore of the contaminated lake. “Here,” explained Bob to Robert Fricke, “we will have our conferences and Bible studies during the day and it can serve as the boys' dormitory at night. All these support poles are perfect to suspend their hammocks from. As for me, I brought my air mattress and sleeping bag. The girls,” he went on, “can sleep up in the dining hall.”

Two old style outhouses with faded fabric doors were visible to the left of the path. Although airy walls of horizontally-laid sticks provided good ventilation, one could have wished for more privacy. Within a few yards stood an antiquated well which would provide drinking water during the retreat

Returning along the trail up an incline, Bob had begun unloading his bedroll and materials when camp owner, *Señor* Castillo approached to greet the men. Following customary introductions, Bob confided in *Señor* Castillo that he and Robert were most anxious to locate bathing facilities to scrub off accumulated grime and soil gathered on their long trip.

“No problem at all,” began the owner. “You notice that little path leading off over there? Just follow it up across the highway and on up the hill. Before long you'll find what you're looking for.”

Climbing up the narrow mountain path, neither Bob nor Robert really knowing what to expect, the two men soon perceived they had arrived at the designated “bath house.” For there, hidden from view until one was right upon it, was nestled a sparkling pool of clear water just a foot deep. One single stream of water fell from above, forming the diminutive waterfall which fed the small, crystal reservoir. Without hesitation the men stepped into the icy-cold water and took turns standing under the shower-head God had so graciously formed in the secluded spot.

Interrupting their refreshing bath, a feminine voice called from the path below. “*Alguién se está bañando?*” “Is anyone bathing?”

“*Sí,*” Bob called out quickly, as the men stepped from the water to dry off and dress. “*Un momento!*”

Moments later, as the two descended the path, they encountered two teenage girls sitting beside the path, waiting their turn to bathe. “How did you know we were there to yell at us?” asked Robert.

“Oh,” replied one, “we didn't. But *Señora* Castillo told us to always call ahead before proceeding beyond this point. Surely you did that, too.”

Not wanting to admit their inadvertent error, both men quickly excused themselves and hurried back to the car.

By then other young people had arrived and a group of over thirty teenagers was lined up in the dining hall waiting for lunch. Presently the line began to file past the serving counter, as *Señora* Castillo served up bowls of fish soup. Bob noticed that those in front had received one big chunk section of fish in their bowl, either the middle or tail end. Yet as he and Robert stepped up to the rustic counter, *Señora* Castillo smiled widely and carefully spooned out two head sections to deposit in their dish. The men understood they were receiving special treatment and accepted their portions with a “*gracias*” and a smile. Had they known at the first meal that they would be so honored for ten more meals, they would have wished to be treated as equals with the young people!

Bob got very little sleep that first night. Although all the young people had taken their hammocks, there were several weathered ones permanently left hanging from the various wooden pillars. However Bob was better prepared – he thought. He unrolled his air mattress and after fifteen minutes of stomping

on the foot pump, succeeded in getting sufficient air into it. Plugging it quickly, he laid his sleeping bag on top. "Now," he thought, "at least I'll get a good night's sleep."

However as soon as his hefty body rested on the sleeping bag, "Pshhhhh..." blew the air mattress. Too tired to attempt to patch it, Bob simply lay there on top of the deflated cushion as it sighed out its last breath of air and hoped that sleep would come quickly. More rapid than sleep, however, came myriads of crawling insects, mosquitoes and renewed sensation of the humid coastal heat. The refreshing diurnal sea breezes had given way to deathly nocturnal stillness. When someone spotted a large poisonous scorpion scurrying across the ground, Bob knew his mind was made up. Despite his exhaustion, he popped up and hastened to claim a dusty, empty hammock nearby. Glancing around the open-air shelter, he noticed that all of the young men, as they perched in their hammocks, were humorously staring at him.

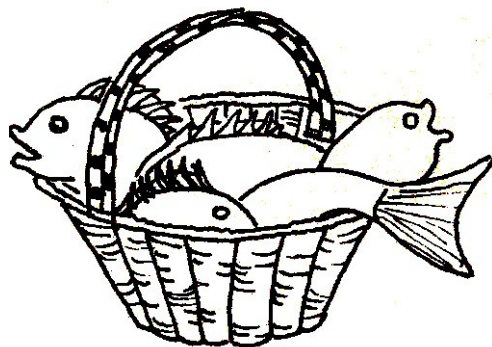
"*Hermano*" called out one teenager "Make sure to get into the hammock diagonally like we are. You cannot sleep well lying straight in it for the curvature of the spine is too great."

With a great deal of effort, Bob finally positioned his weary body crosswise in the length of nylon netting. It seemed an art that had to be learned., Directly above him, dangling from the high thatched roof, was a *henequen* rope. Pulling on it, Bob discovered that he could swing the hammock for a bit of a cooling breeze and to ward off the mosquitoes. That night and the following three, Bob became accustomed to sleeping like all people on the coast.

Four days later when the Carry-all was once again headed north to the comforts of home, the two men reminisced about the past days. "Robert, I about learned the technique of sleeping in a hammock, but if I never see another cooked fish head floating in soup, I'll be all the happier," stated the driver. "I didn't mind the fried fish that once, but boiled fish heads in insipid broth for breakfast, lunch and dinner has been almost too much for my debilitated stomach. Being from Missouri, I was especially unnerved when they served us that heaping plate of mussels boiled in their shells."

"Yes, Bob," replied Robert. "If it hadn't been for the roast pig they served us day before yesterday, I believe I wouldn't have made it through the week."

After six hours of driving, the men stopped again in Miahuatlán to deliver their load of teenagers before traveling the last hour back to Oaxaca. Along the way, as the two hungry Americans recalled their experiences, Bob suddenly remembered that Nancy had sent along a small sack which he had slipped beneath the driver's seat. Reaching down, he pulled out a paper bag and handed it to Robert Fricke. Their delight was indescribable as Robert extracted two small pop-top cans of American vienna sausages! Needless to say, those two thankful men laughed with relief as the Carry-all continued down the highway.



IV. WHERE DOES A MISSIONARY SLEEP?



IN A CARRY-ALL

Missionaries traveling on the field learn to sleep in various circumstances. Sometimes it may be in a lovely hotel room. At other times it might not be quite so comfortable. The week before Easter of 1975, Bob drove south from Oaxaca once again, headed for the little village of San Agustín Loxicha located several hours off the main road. The Baptist mission had invited him to show a series of color movies on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Bob drove into the village in late afternoon, accompanied by a young man who had met him in Miahuatlán to show him the way. Like the Pied Piper of old, Bob's arrival drew the attention of all village children who ran alongside the car until it stopped in front of the mission chapel. "Manis, Manis," they cried, running to announce this white man's arrival to all who would listen.

"Pablo, why are they yelling 'Manis, Manis' at us?", Bob asked his traveling companion.

"You see, *Hermano* Roberto," he explained, "*Hermano* Manis Ruegsegger, a Wycliffe Bible translator, is the only American that has ever come to visit our village. He is tall and blonde like you. The children have mistaken you for Brother Manis."

Soon Pablo was busy assisting Bob in setting up the large, tripod movie screen outside, anchoring it with ropes to the eaves of the mission building to steady it against the wind. After steadying the telescoping legs of the portable projector stand, Bob lifted the bulky 16mm movie projector from the back of the Carry-all to deposit it firmly on its base. Leaving an older teenager there to protect it from curious, probing hands of little villagers, Bob and Pablo then lowered the heavy gas generator from the car. As it sounded like a loud lawn mower, they positioned the machine behind the mission building where the sound would be somewhat muffled. After filling it with gasoline and connecting extension cords, it was time for the service to begin. With all the preparatory activity, along with the loud, free advertising of excited children, a large crowd had already gathered. The mission building was not in the village proper, but along a well-traversed trail at the community's edge. Therefore many non-Christian villagers stopped to watch. Except for small children seated in front on the ground, the audience stood for both singing of hymns as well as for viewing the movie. That was to be the pattern for all four nights' services.

Being only the second white man to go to Loxicha, Bob seemed to fascinate the entire village. After the movie, a few men assisted Bob in carrying all the equipment into the chapel for the night. Then Bob

returned to the Carry-all to spread out his sleeping bag in the back to retire for the night. Glancing out the large windows, he became aware of a swarm of youthful faces gathering around the car, pressing their noses to the window glass to peep inside at the fair-skinned *gringo*.

With a noticeable shrug of his shoulders, Bob simply lay down fully clothed, thinking the curious crowd would soon dissolve. Yet the energetic, wide-awake youngsters had not enjoyed such an exciting evening in the village for many months. They good-naturedly began to rock the huge car from side to side, tap on the windows and even climb upon the hood to peek through the windshield. After almost an hour had passed, with the juveniles still present, Bob finally drifted off to sleep.

The following three days gave Bob opportunity to observe firsthand how life can be in a small Mexican village. As it was Holy Week, many Christians from the surrounding mountains and valleys had walked great distances to see the series of movies. With them they brought their straw *petates* on which to sleep in the Baptist *templo*. The pastor's family lived at the rear of the auditorium, so *Hermana* Martinez, along with other village women, used her kitchen to prepare meals for the group.

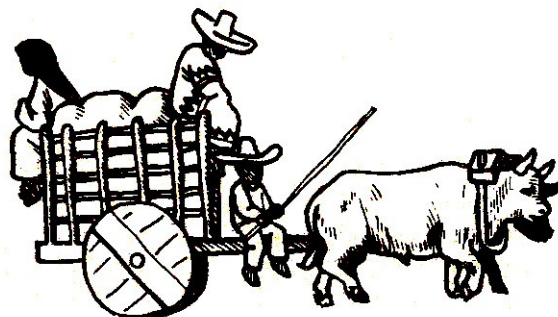
After breakfast some adults went visiting there in the village to invite people to their afternoon preaching services. The movies needed no promotion for that was the first time most of the hamlet's population had seen a movie or such "new-fangled" equipment. It would be years until electricity could be brought to their town. Other Holy Week visitors just enjoyed sitting and sharing new with Christian friends from other villages. Children played marbles in the dirt. The women had no sooner collected breakfast dishes for washing, when they began to prepare the afternoon meal.

Bob had not realized earlier how culturally remote Loxicha was from towns along the main road. Yet when he entered the kitchen to thank the *hermanas* for the meal, he quickly realized that only the pastor's wife understood Spanish. All other women spoke only the Zapotec Loxicha dialect, handed down intact century after century by their Zapotec ancestors dating back before 1000 A.D. As the men went into larger towns to barter or sell their meager produce, they had acquired a workable, but elementary knowledge of Spanish. As a new, white government school graced almost every large village, the school children were rapidly learning Spanish, also as their second language.

Each afternoon the plank pews of the *templo* were filled for a preaching and song service. Bob watched in amusement as the children quietly fought over who would have the privilege of sitting next to their honored light-haired visitor. Once seated on either side of him, they would hesitantly reach over and feel the blonde hairs on his arms. How strange it seemed to them, for Indians have virtually no facial or body hair.

Holy Week was made special for Bob that year through sharing it with the Christians of San Agustín Loxicha. As he prepared to leave, the people gathered around him to express their thanks. Pastor Martinez presented Bob with fifty *pesos*, equaling four dollars, to help buy his gasoline. Knowing of the scarcity of money among the villagers, Bob realized that amount represented real sacrificial giving. Then, Bob was given yet another love gift from his new friends – eighty pounds of bananas.

Yes, Holy Week in Loxicha was very special, for it served to remind Bob once again that Jesus Christ lived, died, and was resurrected for these Indian villagers too.



IN A TEHUANTEPEC HOTEL

“Bob, I really am glad the children and I came along today on this trip to Tehuantepec, but, oh, these mountain curves are making me sick. Can you slow down just a bit?”

“I'm sorry, Nancy. Sure, I'll slow down. Do you have any pills with you for motion sickness? It takes at least four hours to drive from Oaxaca to Tehuantepec, so you really should take some medicine.”

“You know, never in my life did I experience motion sickness till we began driving mountain highways in Oaxaca. I think the heat aggravates it too.”

“It is especially hot today for January,” answered Bob. “After checking into the motel in Tehuantepec, let's drive on south to Salina Cruz on the Pacific Coast. We'll have time before dark to swim a while at the beach. Besides, the boys should enjoy seeing the ocean-going oil tankers that are usually in port, or we can watch the fishing boats unload.”

Through the next hours, we talked over our plans for the weekend, mainly as a way to keep from thinking about the gnawing nausea within me. The little rural church of Buenos Aires had indicated to Bob they they were having a serious problem and had asked him to preside at their church business meeting on Sunday morning.

“You know, Nancy, it hadn't occurred to me that they might also ask me to preach. I possibly should have brought a Spanish sermon along. But, no, surely they won't.”

“Didn't they specify what the problem was,” I asked.

“No, the letter asking me to come was very brief,” replied Bob. “We'll just have to wait and see. Boy, it's hot. I'll sure be ready for an air-conditioned room at the motel tonight.”

Not long afterwards we descended from the mountains, and crossed the flat plains of the Isthmus into the delightful, tropical city of Tehuantepec, famous for its *fiestas* and beautiful women. Down past the Baptist church on the left side of the highway, Bob drove slowly now as we approached the long, narrow bridge spanning the wide, shallow Tehuantepec River. Several women sat on their knees on the rocky beach, as they washed their laundry on boulders at the water's edge. One proud, but poor woman had taken off her only top garment, a loose-fitting overblouse, to wash it. After scrubbing it on the rocks, she stood to hold it out for the coastal wind to dry it quickly before putting it on once again. Little children, laughing and playing, bathed nude in the cool water.

Around the curve, as we drove past a coconut palm grove, Doug shouted, “Look, Mom, see Tarzan climbing the palm tree to get coconuts!” We watched as a dark-skinned young man in bathing trunks lithely scaled a stately palm to cut down the coconuts. His quick, strong movements indicated he had years of experience, and probably had begun as a small child.

Bob parked our car at the Tehuantepec Hotel, and we all climbed out to check in and get dressed for the beach. The motel rooms, though extremely modest and bare, were clean. We, of course, chose one that had an air-conditioner. Two double beds and an old dresser furnished the room. Tattered chenille spread covered the soft mattresses, and a picture of the Virgin Mother adorned one wall.

After turning on the air-conditioner to coll down the hot, humid room in our absence, we headed on to Salina Cruz where we saw all that we had planned. Oceanside cliffs were dotted with titan metal storage tanks for Mexico's petroleum awaiting transfer to huge tankers for overseas shipment. One such tanker was just entering the bay. A small fishing vessel was docked as its crew sorted the day's catch. Supervising the selection of one giant basket of fresh fish, a local restaurant employee quickly paid for his purchase and drove away with the basket anchored in the back of his old pick-up truck. After swimming and building multi-level sand castles, we realized it was dusk and time to drive eleven miles back to Tehuantepec for supper.

As we walked into our motel room, Bob knew we going to have problems, for although the window air conditioner was grinding full force, the room's temperature had not dropped five degrees. By that late in the evening, all other rooms were occupied and we were doomed to spend the humid night with a

crippled air conditioner! Throughout the night Bob persisted in his attempts to thaw out the frosted-over motor, but to no avail. It was quite a sleepless night!

By 6:30 a.m. we were awake and glad the night was past. When the motel restaurant opened at 7:00 a.m., we were their first customers and consumed mountains of hotcakes and bacon, fresh pineapple and melon halves. We knew that the services at Buenos Aires probably would not end until 2:00 p.m.

The church, situated a short distance from the highway in a small *ranchería* was not over twenty miles from Tehuantepec. Since we were traveling on country roads and trails, we knew we should leave early. Even in our mission-owned $\frac{3}{4}$ ton Carry-all, this trip took one and a half hours over rock trails and up dry river beds. We arrived at the small settlement at 9:00 a.m. still overly full from our large breakfast.

“*Hermanos*, welcome!” We were greeted by the Indian pastor as we climbed down from our car. Douglas and David immediately ran to chase some skinny chickens. “Come, *hermanos*, my wife has breakfast all prepared for you. You must eat before the service can begin. The congregation will wait.”

I gulped and looked at Bob. Bob smiled a weak smile and gave me a wink, “*Sí, hermano*, of course,” he answered, “though it is not necessary for you to go to the trouble.”

“But, *hermano*,” replied the man, “it is a privilege! We have killed our fattest chickens for the soup. Come, you must eat!”

Nodding my greeting to all of the settlement's population who had gathered to stare at the white outsiders, I followed Bob into one of the dark dwellings. After we were seated on two child-sized wobbly wooden chairs, a sawhorse table of planks was arranged before us. Large bowls of chicken and rice soup were brought to us. While the *señora* stayed in the open-air kitchen area, her husband brought us stacks of hand-patted *tortillas* and opened bottles of hot Orange Crush for us.

“*Gracias, hermano*, you are very kind.” I said in the formal Mexican way as I accepted my soft drink. Looking down at a chicken leg awaiting me as it floated in the soup, I laughingly prayed silently, “Lord, I know that I have to eat this in order not to offend our hosts. So now You just help the pancakes and syrup, and all the rest I ate earlier to get along with this greasy chicken soup and soft drink. Thank you, Lord.”

I ate; I drank; I smiled; and I survived!

Thanking our hosts again after we had emptied our bowls, we joined the congregation assembled down the hill in a nearby open-air meeting area, somewhat like a brush arbor. The pastor rose, greeted the people assembled, introduced our family, then announced that *Hermano* Perry would now preach the morning message! Bob discovered that he could preach extemporaneously in Spanish!

Following the worship service, I offered to take all the wiggly children out during the business session. Sitting on a low tree stump, I gathered the boys and girls around me as I told Bible stories and shared some illustrated children's books I had with me. Yet my mind wandered frequently as I wished I knew what serious problem was being discussed in the adult's business meeting. I would simply have to wait for Bob to tell me later, I told myself. Whatever the problem, the people could surely resolve it.

After what seemed like hours, their meeting was adjourned. Leaving some books for the pastor's wife to use with the children, we thanked our hosts profusely once again for the fine breakfast and headed for home.

As our car bounced and rumbled back down the dry river bed, Bob answered my question about the business session. “This was one problem I never had to deal with as a pastor in the States,” Bob remarked as he laughed, “and I doubt that it'll ever be a problem back home.”

“What was it, Bob?” I asked, more eager now than ever to know.

“The church members are unhappy with the pastor and feel that his is not fulfilling his obligations.”

“Don't tell me that's new, Honey. We've heard that before.”

“But, Nancy, let me tell you the reason the church feels this way. They want their pastor to hold preaching services every night as well as two services on Sundays, permanently! He says he simply

cannot do it. Since they have never paid him at all, he has to farm to support his family, and just doesn't have the time to prepare not to go to long services every night.”

“What did you say to them?” I asked.

“After everyone had spoken, I really encouraged them in their desire to have nightly services for Bible study and worship. I agreed that the Lord would be pleased. You should have seen their faces light up, Nancy, as I confirmed their idea. All but the pastor, that is. He looked quite disheartened.”

“But Bob, if he has to work ...”

“Then, Nancy, after affirming their need for Bible study, I explained in no uncertain terms that the Scriptures teach that believers are to assist in supporting God's preachers. Then I preached to them on their responsibility to minister also, rather than leaving it all up to the pastor. The preacher, by that time, was sitting up listening attentively as he nodded in agreement.”

“Did the people understand? Did they agree with you?” I asked.

“I believe they did. They voted, in agreement with the pastor, to have him lead four services weekly. The church laymen agreed to lead the rest of the meetings themselves. And not only that, Nancy, but they voted to begin paying the pastor eight dollars a month. As they have never before paid a pastor, even that small amount is an important step for such a little congregation.”

“Bob, they have a lot to learn, but let's pray that those new Christians won't ever loose their zeal for studying God's Word and for worshiping Him.”



V. HOW DOES A MISSIONARY TRAVEL?



BY BUS TO YUCATAN

It felt good to settle down into my assigned seat on the motor coach that would take my friend Helen Griffin and me back to our homes in Mexico City. As the other passengers filed through the bus aisle in search of their seats, I reflected on the past five days.

Although the twenty-one hour bus ride that had brought us to Mérida, Yucatán, earlier in the week had been a long and tiring one, there had been precious hours of sharing between Helen and me. For several weeks we had been looking forward to this trip to the Gulf-shore encampment on the northern tip of the Yucatán peninsula for a spiritual retreat with about eighty young people from all over Mexico. The blessings we had anticipated had become reality through the Bible studies, preaching, songfests, campfires and fellowships during those brief days. Whether swimming in the warm ocean surf with newfound Christian friends, or collecting myriads of colorful seashells while walking along the white sand beach as I counseled a lovely teenager about the “how” and meaning of God's calling, my soul had been refreshed amidst the natural beauty of God's creation. As I sat beneath the stately coconut palm trees swaying in the sea breeze, my Bible study and prayer had sent a revitalizing charge through my body as I felt myself being drawn closer to my Friend.

Helen's soft voice beside me brought my thoughts back to the reality of the present. “Nancy, do you know that prior to our bus trip to come to Mérida, we failed to offer a specific prayer for traveling safety. Yet this evening when my foot stepped onto the stairs to board the bus, for some reason I felt led to whisper a special prayer for our safety on this return trip.” Although we pondered that statement for a minute, her remarks were soon forgotten as we spent the next few night hours sharing our thoughts and impressions of the preceding days' activities. My body, still physically tired from its first few nights' experience at sleeping in a Mexican hammock at the camp, relaxed easily in the firm bus seat. Before midnight we were fast asleep.

At 3:00 a.m., traveling through the lonely, desolate tropical region of Campeche state, I quietly awoke for no obvious reason. Looking forward and then to the rear of the bus, I quickly noticed that all the other passengers remained sound asleep. The next thing that caught my attention was that the bus was traveling at an unusually slow pace. Looking to the front and out beyond the wide windshield to the

pavement, I became alarmed to see that our bus was weaving erratically from one side of the highway to the other. Listening to the boring drone of the motor and its slow accelerations, I soon became convinced that the driver was surely almost asleep. Through my mind raced news headlines of the frequent fatal Mexican bus accidents. "Lord, what would you have me to do? The driver will surely be insulted if I even hint that he is not completely alert." Quietly I awakened Helen and explained the situation to her. "I must go forward and speak to him," I stated. She readily agreed.

Quickly and silently I slipped out of my seat and into the darkened aisle. Stepping over the extended limbs of sleeping passengers who had let their exhausted bodies overflow from their restricting seats, I at last stepped down into the stairwell next to the driver.

"Excuse me, *Señor*," I began, startling the sleepy man, "but could you tell me how much longer until we arrive in Villahermosa." The driver, stretching a bit and sitting more erect in his seat, answered, "Just a half hour, *Senora*, but we are not stopping there. The gas tank is full and we'll be driving straight through until our breakfast stop at 7:00 a.m. this morning." With the sound of our voices, the co-driver who had been sleeping soundly in the front seat, awoke to keep his partner company. I quickly closed our discussion and returned through the cluttered aisle to my seat.

There in the stillness of the early morning hour, I prayed that the driver would somehow stop in Villahermosa to either wake up completely or switch drivers. Asking the Lord to take charge of the situation, I simply trusted it to Him. The next thirty minutes passed slowly as the bus continued its slow, winding journey along the dark, lonely highway, now crossing the state of Tabasco.

Imagine the elation I felt entering the state capital of Villahermosa when our still groggy driver pulled off the highway into the bus line's service yard and got off the bus! Ten minutes later the two uniformed drivers reappeared from a service building to resume the journey. Within minutes the newly-energetic roar of the engine, combined with my special sense of peace, lulled me into a short, but deep slumber.

The rising morning sun startled me into wakefulness only a few minutes before our cross-country motor coach pulled into the terminal for our breakfast stop. I opened my Bible to continue my reading of the Psalms from the Today's English Version. David's prayer of confidence, Psalm 16, became my personal prayer of thanksgiving in that moment.

Protect me, O God; I trust in you for safety.

I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord, all the good things I have come from you." ... You Lord, are all I have, and you give me all I need; my future is in your hands.

How wonderful are your gifts to me; how good they are!

I praise the Lord, because he guides me, and in the night my conscience warns me.

I am always aware of the Lord's presence; he is near and nothing can shake me.

And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure, because you protect me from the power of death,

And the one you love, you will not abandon to the world of the dead.

You will show me the path that leads to life; your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.

-Psalm 16:1,2, 5-11 (TEV)

Helen meanwhile had roused from her sleep. "Oh, Helen," I began excitedly, "May I read you a special message God has given me just now? I have marked today's date and experience here in the margin of my Bible." Then we rejoiced together as I again read the lovely words of Psalm 16.

After our breakfast stop later that morning, I spoke to the driver as I boarded the bus once again for the final leg of our journey. "Didn't you tell me last night that the gas tank was full and that you would not be stopping?" I asked.

"Yes, I did," he said. "Why do you ask?"

Trying to measure my words carefully in order to not offend him, I continued, "I spoke to you in the night because I sensed that you were very tired from driving along that lonely stretch of highway."

"Yes," he replied with surprising frankness. "I was half asleep. Thank you for coming forward to speak to me. I decided that I should stop to have a coke and walk around a bit to wake myself up. That is why we made the extra stop."

I followed Helen on to my seat with a new realization of the magnitude of God's power to move in the hearts of men and to change circumstances for His glory. As the psalmist of old wrote,

*Call to me when trouble comes; I will save you,
and you will praise me.*

-Psalm 50:15 (TEV)



BY NYLON HOSE IN THE DESERT

Mile after mile of cactus and dry sagebrush on a colorless desert passed by our car windows. The unvaried bleached-out landscape stretched out as far as the we could see, broken by neither the presence of people nor towns. Even the never-ending string of power lines extending beyond the distant horizon contributed to our fatigue and boredom. The two children napped as the Chevelle station wagon's air conditioner emitted an incessant, never-varying hum. Virtually no traffic passed by. As the rough surface of the narrow highway made high speeds unsafe, Bob drove tediously west toward our destination of Torreón. His squinting eyes tired quickly as we drove into the late afternoon sun directly ahead of us. The uninteresting sameness of the desert hour after hour anesthetized our senses and a dull weariness bore down heavily upon us.

"The monotony of this afternoon's trip is so very tiresome," I stated drowsily. "Whoever said Mexico is a land of contrasts surely had this expanse of arid desert in mind to compare to the verdant cities further south. The most exciting thing that's happened all afternoon was seeing that large iguana scurry across the highway a few miles back."

"I agree," commented Bob, "but mostly we're just tired from going through customs at the border this morning and from the long drive. I suppose we should have stopped to spend the night back in Saltillo at four o'clock, and not driven these extra 175 miles to Torreón this afternoon. I hated to waste these daylight hours, though, and we'll arrive at the Whitlow's soon after dark."

"People keep telling us never to drive on open roads after nightfall, but I still don't really understand. Of course, since all this area is open range, cows and *burros* could be on the roadway. But one thing has been on my mind."

"What's that?" Bob asked, glad for conversation to ease his boredom.

"That there are no towns or gasoline stations within hours. What if we were to have car trouble?"

"Is that all?" laughed Bob. "This mission car is barely six months old. Granted, we've put almost 10,000 miles on it already, but what could go wrong?"

"I suppose you're right, Honey. Besides, I'm anxious to get to the Whitlow's house. Henry and Betty promised to show us the Baptist Seminary's facilities, but I plan to go to bed early tonight. I'm really worn out."

"It's only another 130 miles. I'll have you there in a couple more hours," Bob assured me.

Our conversation turned again to our visit with the Whitlows. After serving over seven years in Hong Kong as a seminary librarian, "Whit" and his family had been reassigned to serve in an identical position for the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Torreón. Their year of language study in Guadalajara was completed just weeks before our arrival at the school. Since the Seminary was moving to its new campus in Mexico City's northern suburbs in July of 1974, Whit and Betty were to be in Torreón only six months. We were looking forward to our overnight visit with them before their move.

On down the highway we drove, the scenery still devoid of interest to our tired minds and bodies. Douglas slept on, stretched out in a narrow section in the back of the wagon surrounded by our luggage and sacks of stateside groceries. David lay sleeping on the back seat. Within moments, however, all that was to change.

A light flashed red on the car's dashboard. Wrinkles creased Bob's brow.

"What is it, Bob?" I asked.

"Evidently running the air conditioner constantly, along with carrying extra weight in the back, has caused the engine to overheat. We'll have to turn off the air and open the windows despite the desert's heat. Besides it's almost dusk, so the temperature outside will lower rapidly. We'll appreciate the cool evening air."

Quickly he flipped off the air conditioning, yet the insistent red light stayed on. "I'll stop and check under the hood," stated Bob as he decreased our speed to pull off onto the grassy shoulder.

Steam billowed out as he raised the hood. With only a cursory inspection he realized that our new car's fan belt had snapped and had been thrown by the wayside miles back.

"Was I complaining about being bored?" I moaned. "Now what shall we do?"

Before Bob could attempt an answer, a huge semi-trailer truck was lumbering down the highway from behind. His diesel engine emitted a burst of black smoke from its stack as the driver slowed his rig to pull onto the shoulder in front of our car. His engine was left running as the driver stepped back to our car to scrutinize the situation.

"What's the problem?" he asked as he approached us. "Can I do anything to help?"

"*Gracias*," replied Bob, "but I'm afraid not. The fan belt wore out and broke. Our only hope seems to be for a Green Angel tourist patrol car to come by. We've read they carry spare parts."

"Sí, that's true," answered the burly truck driver, "but the last patrol for today has already passed on his regular run until tomorrow morning."

"Well, we're off the highway enough on this straight stretch," Bob thought aloud, "that there's no danger of being hit. We'll just sleep here in the car and wait until tomorrow morning's Green Angel comes by. There's surely no danger."

"Oh, no, *Señor!* There is no danger, but you and I can fix your car. Let me get some rope from my cab."

Seconds later he reappeared with a length of strong sisal rope and wire. He and Bob worked side by side to thread the rope into the groove and then to fasten the rope tightly with wire. All the while the evening was getting more obscure.

"There. Let's try it!" stated the driver triumphantly as they tightened the wire as securely as possible around the rope. "There is a small *rancho* not far ahead on the left. The man there usually has some spare parts for sale. Try to get that far if you can."

"Thank you again," Bob said as he tried to bid the man goodbye.

"But, *Señor*, I shall be following you all the way."

"That's not necessary," insisted Bob. "You have lost a lot of time already and will be late delivering your freight to Torreón."

"No, *Señor*, I insist that you allow me to accompany you. Not that there is any danger, but it is not

pleasant spending a night in the middle of the desert.”

Giving in to the driver's insistence, Bob joined two wide-awake youngsters and me in the car and we headed for the *rancho*. By then the night was black. Creeping along at a snail's pace a few kilometers, we finally pulled up to the *rancho's* door. Our trucker friend parked beside us and, climbing down from his cab, quickly disappeared into the dimly lit building. Bob followed.

Reappearing several minutes later with a fan belt in hand, Bob seemed relieved. I instructed the restless, fidgety children to stay in the car while I got out to hold a large flashlight in position while the men worked to install the belt. Once the belt was installed, the men were more guarded in their optimism. It was too loose.

Setting out once again with the trucker following slowly, our mission car only went ten kilometers before the fan belt detached itself and was lost.

Had I said earlier that the trip was monotonous?

With our hopes dashed and trampled in the dust of the Mexican desert, Bob persisted in urging the truckers to leave us. However the driver, apparently giving no thought to his schedule, would not abandon us to that dangerous solitude.

“But, *Señor*, you have told us each time that we would be in no danger, *verdad?*” Bob asked again in desperation, his spirits drooping lower by the minute.

“*Exactamente*, my friend, but one never knows when an unscrupulous person might happen by who would take advantage of your isolation here in the night. But we will think of something. It should only be another thirty kilometers to the Parras junction. Paila has an all-night Pemex gasoline station and cafe. You would be safe there.”

“How I wish I had a mechanic along,” Bob stated wishfully. “There surely must be some way to devise a makeshift fan belt that would get us twenty miles.”

“Why didn't I remember that earlier?” I asked rhetorically. “Bob, I have known the solution to our problem all along. Last fall during missionary orientation classes in Georgia, you were absent when a mechanic spoke to our group about emergency procedures for car repairs.” I was elated that there was indeed an answer to our dilemma.

“Go on, Nancy, what is it?”

“Well, the mechanic said that the best substitute for a fan belt is a woman's nylon hose,” I replied, thankful that the darkness hid my blushing face.

Bob was incredulous. “Whether it works or not, we have no other recourse. Let's give it a try,” he said in a determined voice.

Quickly I stepped behind our car door to slip off the only pair of pantyhose available. With his pocket knife Bob slashed off one leg of the hose, and the men once again leaned under the hood with the seriousness of two surgeons over an operating table. Knotting the nylon length tightly, we were off again to the accompaniment of the embarrassed giggles of our two little boys. Fifteen kilometers more were covered before it busted. The dash's red warning light flashed on again.

“That's fifteen more kilometers than I would have believed,” commented Bob optimistically. “At least we have one more leg! But let's pray that this one gets us to the Pemex station.” For the fourth time the friendly trucker pulled to the shoulder behind us. A wide grin crossed his face as he approached our car. “Ah, *Señora*, you are a fine mechanic. Now I believe we shall soon get to Parras junction where you can rest and eat.”

“This one will get us there,” Bob declared confidently as they secured the second hose tightly. “Our ordeal is surely about over.”

After what seemed like hours, we spotted the welcome lights of the Pemex station up the highway on our right. We were excited of course, and relieved. Driving along slowly, Bob heard the last nylon hose flip loose. My heart skipped a beat.

“Don't worry, Nancy. We can make it now, I'm sure.”

The red warning light flashed on once more, but Bob inched the car forward at a retarded pace until finally we pulled up under the few bright fluorescent lights left on for an occasional nighttime customer. "Thank you, Lord," I exclaimed aloud.

Our trip from Saltillo to Paila, a distance of eighty miles, had taken us six hours, for it was then ten o'clock. Our faithful friend, the truck driver, had persisted cheerfully for five hours to see that we and our car arrived to a place of safety for the night. His preoccupation and concern for an American family – strangers he'd never see again – was demonstrative of the unselfish, caring attitude of so many Mexicans. His good-humored helpfulness contributed to our ever-growing love and respect for the Mexican people.

Bob offered the trucker a few dollars to show our gratitude. They were accepted reluctantly after Bob insisted. Then the trucker was finally on his way to deliver his freight to Torreón.

Once we went inside the nearly-deserted cafe, the waitress acknowledged the existence of a telephone. After taking our order for supper, she assumed her secondary job as long distance telephone operator, placing a call on a primitive switchboard to the Whitlows in Torreón. She motioned for Bob to take the call inside an antique wooden phone booth in one corner of the dining area. Moments later, Bob returned to our table.

"Betty was at home although Whit was still not back from a church meeting. She assured me that he'd drive out here at daybreak with a new fan belt. Since their mission car is the same make, Whit's spare fan belt will fit perfectly. I assured her we'd be fine here until morning." Meanwhile the waitress served our soft drinks and *quesadillas*. Hot corn *tortillas* filled with melted white cheese tasted especially good as we were famished. Douglas and David completed their meal by eating packaged cream-filled chocolate cupcakes. Finally, at 11:00 p.m. We were ready to bed down in the car to get some rest before morning. After all, I had planned on getting to bed early!

The brisk night air sent a chill through my body as we walked to the car. We had only warm-weather clothing with us and the night was turning cold. An inexpensive 9 x 12 foot carpet we had purchased at the border had been folded and refolded to cover the back of the station wagon. Bob and Douglas, rearranging luggage and sacks of canned goods, crawled into the back and burrowed down between layers of carpet. Although it was so stiff that it didn't conform to the contour of their bodies, it helped greatly to shield them from the cold night air.

Three-year old David climbed into the front seat with me, bringing with him his pillows and baby blankets. Grabbing two of Bob's hanging sport jackets to cover our already-shivering bodies, I snuggled David tightly against my body so that we could help keep one another warm. How I wished for an electric blanket and a way to plug it in! Soon David's teeth quit chattering as he fell into a restless slumber. After a few hours of shivering sleep, I awoke near dawn even colder than before. Reaching back for the last available coverings, I snatched two pair of Bob's slacks from their hanger and haphazardly threw them over David and myself.

We were rescued from our refrigerated prison at 6:00 a.m. when Whit drove into the station. To our pleasant surprise, Betty had sent along a large thermos of hot chocolate. How scrumptiously warm it tasted as we sat in Whit's heated car and relished each sip. Betty had also sent some snack cereals which the children greedily devoured. In no time at all Bob and Whit had installed our new, tight-fitting fan belt and we were on our way to Torreón, ninety-five miles west.

The four of us had an impromptu praise session during the next hour and a half as our mission car sped toward Torreón. We talked of God's watchcare over us and that He surely must have sent the kind truck driver by at the precise moment of our need. And we discussed missionary orientation and its fourteen weeks of fine preparation.

"You know, Bob, my hearing that mechanical presentation was surely no coincidence. Isn't it beautiful how God prepares us ahead of time for needs and problems we will have in the future?"

We spoke of new friends like Whit and Betty who give so freely and unselfishly of themselves.

“Whit left home at 4:30 this morning to bring us the replacement fan belt,” mentioned Bob. “And now he has a long drive back before breakfast. I really appreciate him.”

“I like Aunt Betty 'cause she sent us cereal and hot chocolate,” inserted little David.

Doug giggled, “We should be thankful that Mama was wearing the 'spare part' we needed, too!”

How easy it was, even for children, to praise the Lord for His goodness and protection, His provision for our every need.

Minutes later we drove into the city and soon were parked at the Whitlow's curb. Upon entering the house, we encountered Betty waiting for us with plates of crisp, aromatic bacon and mouth-watering sourdough pancakes. It was an ideal way to end a less-than-ideal night on the desert.

BY PRAYER IN SAN AGUSTIN

The car trip from Oaxaca to the Zapotec Indian village of San Agustín Loxicha to show movies during Holy Week was an especially tedious one, yet not without a special incident to stamp the experience into Bob's memory.

After stopping in Miahuatlán to pick up Pablo, a Christian teenager from the village, Bob had no worry about getting lost along the way. However Pablo was quick to warn him of the difficult, almost impassable dusty road that awaited the Carry-all after leaving the main road they were then traveling, itself only dirt and rock.

“You see, *Hermano*, there is only one truck which travels the road to our village. The owner is my neighbor. Twice a week he makes the trip to Suchixtepec to bring in staples and soft drinks. He is also our bus service. But the road has been shaped by his heavy tires and the ruts may be too deep for your Carry-all.”

Nevertheless, the two continued ahead, confident they would be able to get through somehow. Hours later, Bob turned from the main road onto the single-lane track which would take them four hours later to San Agustín Loxicha, a distance of about forty miles. After two laborious hours of driving, Bob and Pablo came across two young men walking.

“Can we give you a ride?” asked Pablo out the window. “Gracias, we'd appreciate it,” they replied, almost in unison, as they climbed up into the Carry-all. However, in only a few minutes the car suddenly spluttered to a stop, in the middle of nowhere. All Bob's tools had been stolen from the car a few days earlier, so after checking under the hood and being unable to discover anything, Bob suggested to Pablo that they pray about the situation.

Kneeling in front of the car, Bob prayed, “Lord, You know the car won't run and we're helpless to do anything about it. Even if I were sure what were wrong, I have no tools. So Lord, if we are to get to San Agustín, You will have to intervene. Now I firmly believe it is Your Will for us to show these movies about Christ to the villagers there, so I pray that You will fix whatever is wrong with the car so that we can be on our way. Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.”

Bob and Pablo then rose and climbed into the car. The two other riders, a bit bewildered by the turn of events, waited skeptically by the side of the road, a dubious look written on their faces. As the engine turned over on the first attempt, Bob beheld two quite startled and impressed young riders. Quickly they climbed in and the group proceeded on their way. Bob and Pablo were then able to share more dynamically the power and love of God with two strangers. When the riders got out minutes later, they were still awed by the experience. God had used a dirty, clogged gas filter to reinforce the faith of His children and for a witness to two non-believers.



BY FOOT TO LLANO DE LEON

For several weeks Bob had been planning his trip from Guadalajara to the Baptist associational meeting in the southern state of Oaxaca. Upon completing language school two months later, the family would be moving to that area as it was our chosen field of work. Yet the brethren had invited Bob to attend their four day November meeting in the remote village of Llano de León (Plain of the Lion) to lead them in a ten-hour lay evangelism training session. Thus it was that Bob had taken an all-night bus ride from Guadalajara to Mexico City. Fellow missionaries met him at the bus and took him to the capital's International Airport for the flight on to the city of Oaxaca, capital of the state by the same name. There he was met by Jim Philpot, agricultural missionary for Oaxaca since 1969. Retiring early that night, the two men arose at four-thirty the following morning to meet at the bus station with several Mexican Baptist men who would be making the grueling trip with them.

Rumbling out of the city by five-thirty, the crowded second-class bus was already overflowing with people, luggage, and chickens. Even the standing space in the aisle was occupied by short, barefoot Indians gripping tightly onto whatever anchor was available. Outside, the top of the bus was adorned with more luggage and a few hogs tied securely for the bumpy trip ahead.

"The first hour is not bad," declared Jim. "The road is blacktopped until Sola de Vega, but the succeeding eight hours are through rugged mountains over barely passable dirt roads that should be closed. However you will like the people of Llano de León." He continued. "Of the one hundred and fifty people in the isolated mountain village, only fifteen are not Christians. The people have no locks on their doors, as there is no crime. And although most live a hand-to-mouth existence, there is a certain vitality and enthusiasm in their secluded hamlet. Virtually every night the men gather in their chapel building to play their instruments and sing hymns."

The next hours ticked off tediously. There was conversation from time to time, although once the bus left the paved highway and was skidding over the loose gravel of the hand-built roadbed, most of the passengers' attention was on either the driver or on the precipices falling away at the roadway's edge. There had been recent landslides which had carried dirt and rocks down the embankment in quantity. Yet the decrepit bus would recklessly maneuver its way through or around the rubble, scarcely slowing its speed. The driver seemed to hasten from one dangerous mountain curve to the next, as if gripped by the subconscious death wish. Then there would follow short stretches of road to offer some relief to the nervous stomachs of those aboard. Bob became fascinated by the strange-sounding Indian dialect he heard spoken from various corners of the bus. These were the descendants of the ancient Mixteco tribe. He recalled that over forty per cent of Oaxaca's population is almost pure Indian, conserving many of the customs and the language of their ancestors, and that many thousands still do not speak Spanish. Bob had learned earlier that over eighty distinct dialects are spoken just in the state of Oaxaca. And he had not even finished one year of Spanish language study! How will all these people ever be reached with the gospel, he thought. It was then that he overheard the Baptist *hermano* in the seat behind him telling

his seatmate about Jesus Christ and His power to change lives. “Yes,” reflected Bob, “that is still the best way. Simply telling another what Christ has done in our life, and how each can accept Him for himself.”

Not long afterwards, at three o’clock in the afternoon, the clamorous rickety bus skidded to an abrupt halt in the little mountain town of San Gabriel Mixtepec. The fifteen weary men of the group worked their way through the crowded aisle and thrust themselves thankfully out onto the *tierra firme* once again. Some hastened to scale the outside ladder at the rear of the bus to lower their remaining baggage from above, before the vehicle once again rattled on its way further south to the Pacific coast.

Several men were there to welcome them and to serve as their guides for the duration of the trip on foot. After the lengthy initial greetings and handshakes, the fatigued group was escorted to the nearby Baptist mission of San Gabriel where a few kind *hermanas* had graciously prepared an ample meal for them to enjoy before continuing on the roughest part of their journey.

With *gusto* the men ate the turkey meat covered with the traditional thick, reddish-brown *mole* sauce; huge servings of black beans; and innumerable large, cornflour *tortillas*, as they quenched their thirst with the ubiquitous bottled *refrescos*.

The Mexican missionary for the region soon interrupted their fellowship, however. “*Hermanos*, we must get started. We have a six hour trek ahead of us, and even now we will be forced to travel after nightfall.” Hurriedly the revived travelers expressed their gratitude to the men and women of San Gabriel for their hospitality and went out again into the dusty street.

Having regained their strength to some degree, they braced themselves for the grueling hike ahead. They had been told about the thin thread the Indians called a path, that wound its way precariously around the contour of the pine-sprinkled mountains. And the Indians had related graphic descriptions of their encounters with the wild boar, the *jabalí*, which inhabited that region. Never did one travel in those mountains after dark if it could be avoided.

As their *huarache*-sandalled indigenous guides brought forth two horses, the regional missionary reminded them. “We must get across the Río Verde before sunset. It would be risky to wade through the river after dark. Let’s travel as fast as possible.” The men quickly decided among themselves which two would begin the hard trip on horseback. “Every little while we can switch riders,” stated one *hermano*. “He who is not accustomed to treading these rugged mountain paths will tire easily.”

Thus they began the second and last leg of their pilgrimage to the Associational meeting in Llano de León.

After three hours of tedious travel, the group worked its way down the side of yet another mountain and followed the sinewy path as it wound its way along the river bank until it led straight into the swift river. There at the water’s edge at dusk Bob was fortunate to be on one of the horses. Those two on horseback forded the river with little trouble, although the water reached the top of the saddle. Those on foot quickly slipped off their shoes and trousers, and balancing their clothes and bedrolls on their heads, they entered the cold, chest-high waters to wade the fifty yards across. It made a strange-looking procession.

Following the hard three-hour walk, the cold water was invigorating and seemed to revive the men’s physically exhausted bodies. Nevertheless, they were thankful when the last man had safely emerged on the opposite shore. Never in his life had Bob experienced such a trip. But the most dangerous part was yet to come.

The sun had set as the expedition twisted straight back up another mountain from the riverbank. Within an hour the caravan had ascended into the thick low-hung clouds of the southern Sierra Madres. Bob had by now conceded the horse to another comrade, and was on foot once again. He had seen the apprehension written on the faces of their guides at sundown and ultimately decided to question one of them further. “*Hermano*,” he began as they traveled upwards, “Are you really worried about our traveling on the night?”

“*Sí, Hermano Roberto,*” he replied. “Since there are many of us, I am not so worried about the wild *jabali*’s attack. Yet even during daylight one does not travel these trails without risk. And tonight there is not even the welcome light of the moon to help us.” Before continuing his explanation, the short, agile Indian shone one of the few flashlights among the group out into the darkness to his right. “*Hermano,* from now on until we reach our village, there are *barrancas* and ravines hundreds of feet deep just inches from our trail. The heavy fog causes extra slipperiness on the rocks and recent rains have caused new landslides. *Sí, Hermano,* I am a little worried, but *Dios mediante,* we shall arrive safely within a few hours.”

Presently the path widened enough that the riders of the two mounts were switched, and Bob once again was privileged to ride. Mopping his wet face with his already damp handkerchief, and slapping his rain-soaked cowboy hat against his leg to release a small portion of the moisture, he tried to relax his tired, tense body. Yet he found himself working along with the unfortunate mare as both strained every muscle to fight their way together over the rocky, muddy trail. Occasionally the horse would stumble on the loose, wet rocks and almost lose her footing. Each step had to be taken with care. Meanwhile Bob strained his eyes, trying to pierce the darkness as he watched for washouts in the trail that might send both horse and rider falling into the deep chasms far below.

Then amidst the murky darkness, the words of a beloved Psalm memorized during college days filled Bob’s soul.

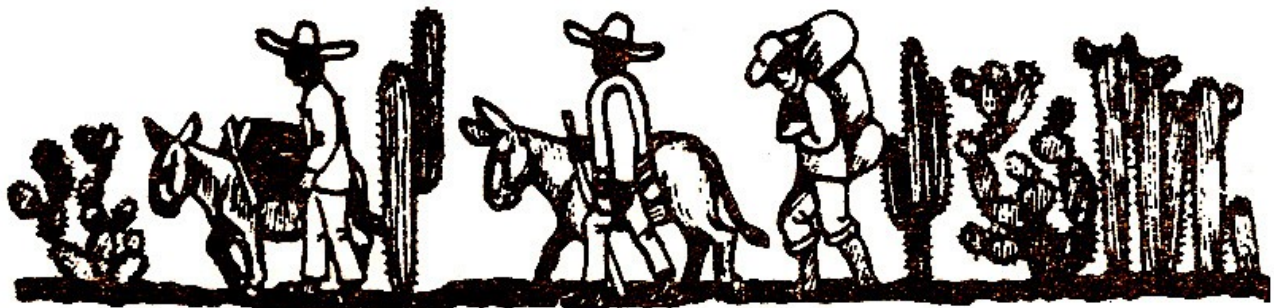
I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From whence shall my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth,
He will not allow your foot to slip.
He who keeps you will not slumber.

-Psalm 121: 1-3 (NAS)

The next two hours passed with amazing rapidity. Soon the hikers began their final descent. With yet another thirty minutes of winding trail ahead of them, they could hear strains of familiar hymns being sung energetically on the plateau below them. That which sounded like trumpet music reached their ears as the dim twinkling of gas lanterns became evident through the opaque night air, signaling the comfort and safety of the mission building. Then they trod down and crossed a little rippling creek and climbed one last time to the mountain plateau which accommodated the majority of the village’s population.

The drowsy exhausted company of travelers was enthusiastically welcomed by the crowd of believers in the mission chapel at ten o’clock that night. As the singing continued to the accompaniment of guitars, as well as an accordion and a trumpet, the men were escorted to a cabin where they were left to crawl wearily into their sleeping bags.

Barely had the singing resumed when Bob and the others were sound asleep.



TRAVELING IN FIRST GEAR

A discussion of travel in Mexico would not be complete without mention being made of our daily travel experiences the last two years in the metropolitan areas of Mexico City. With a population of over 15 million people utilizing the city's modern freeway systems, there are inevitable and seemingly insurmountable problems. Many Mexicans joke about the terrible traffic situation which is worsening daily. One of their favorites goes something like this.

"Here in Mexico City we have a first-class freeway."

"Why is it first?"

"Because the traffic moves so slowly, you never get a chance to shift into second."

The joke would be funnier if it were not so true. Many traveling Americans are stunned by our seemingly never-ceasing rush-hour traffic. Several widely traveled visitors have assured us that ours is possibly the worst traffic situation in the world. The city's frantic efforts to expand its excellent subway and public transportation systems seems to have come too late. The number of vehicles on the road combined with the Mexicans' driving personality work together to provide a constant frustration for those who will allow it to unnerve them.

Our mission home is fifteen miles north of the Capital City Baptist Church. Although on Sunday mornings the trip can be made in twenty minutes, the same distance usually takes at least one hour in weekday morning or evening traffic. Many committee meetings, held in members' homes, may require a fifty-mile trip, as members are scattered to all corners of the giant metropolitan area.

Facing this kind of travel situation daily poses a real challenge to practical Christianity. Negative qualities of impatience, rudeness, anger, or a revengeful spirit are constantly manifested by freeway drivers. "How can we as Christians not be drawn into these reactions?" we ask ourselves. Several things have proven effective as we search for ways to redeem the hours necessarily spent in traffic.

Whenever possible we invite other church members living nearby to ride with us to church functions. Visiting and getting to know each other better makes the time pass more quickly. As our church promotes enrollment in the Bible Memory Association's organized plan for Scripture memorization, Bob and I found our time behind the wheel an ideal opportunity to further our knowledge of the Scriptures. This helped lead us naturally into making those hours a time for singing hymns and for prayer – eyes open, of course. We found it not so very difficult to be courteous to fellow drivers, and patient when traffic stalls indefinitely when our minds are on the Lord.

No matter whether today's missionary is traveling through jungles or deserts, mountains or plains, areas of political unrest or through the densely populated asphalt jungles of the world's metropolitan areas, Satan is always there in one form or another. Dangers, obstacles and frustrating circumstances seem ever-present, but one thing is certain. Our loving and protecting God is also present, and it is He who gives victory and safety in travel.



VI. WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A MISSIONARY KID?

AN MK CLIMBS OVER ANCIENT MAYAN PYRAMIDS

What's it like to be a missionary kid in Mexico?

An MK

Climbs over ancient Mayan pyramids, and rides in modern crowded subways.

Eats chicken soup for breakfast in a mountain village, and eats Colonel Sanders Kentucky-fried chicken in Mexico City.

Helps Mom purify all the fruit and vegetables in iodine water, then drinks dirty water from the front yard hose when she's not looking.

Rides horseback down a mountainside, and rides an elevator to the top of a skyscraper to look down on the tiny cars in the streets below.

An MK

Meets new friends and classmates from all over the world, yet forgets what his own cousins look like.

Gets typhoid fever even though they made him get shots just last year.

Picks Mom a bouquet of giant poinsettia blooms in January, while he tries to remember what snow is like.

Knows firsthand the geography of his adopted country far better than he will ever know that of the United States.

An MK

Sees parts of the world most people only dream of.

Rides in airplanes and builds sand castles at the seashore.

Lives in seven houses in five years and attends six schools.

Plants peanuts in Oaxaca, but has to move before harvest time.

An MK

Watches his dog give birth to puppies, then hurries to a swimming lesson.

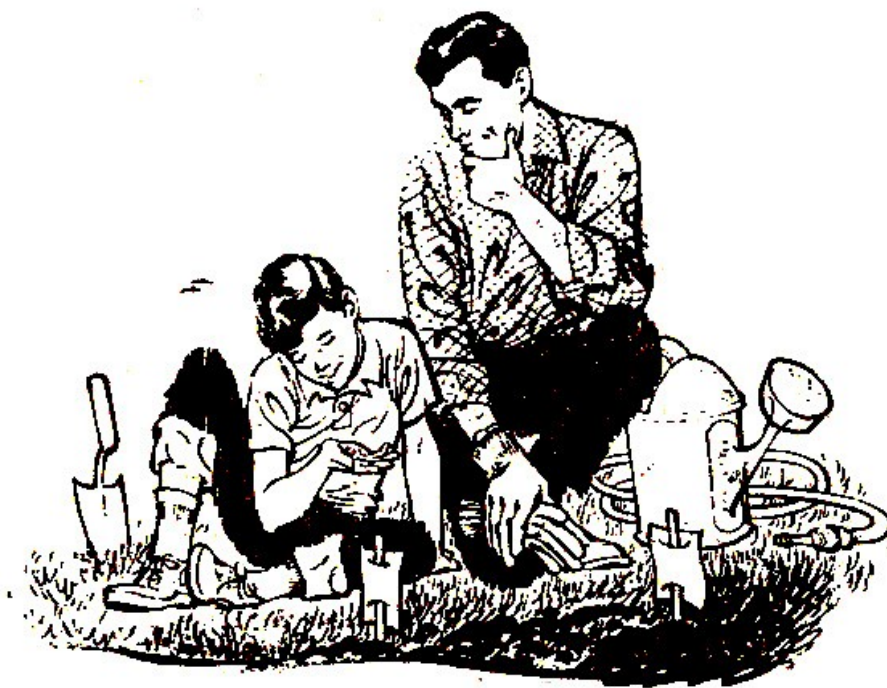
Jumps up and down with joy when he gets a personal letter from Grammy and Grand-dad

Struggles to readjust to U.S. culture while home on furlough, and

When back in the United States and is asked, "Do you like spaghetti? Answers, "I don't know. How do you play that game?"

An MK

Is a very special child of God.



AS SEEN BY THEIR FATHER

Within three months of our arrival in Guadalajara, Mexico, Bob contracted the debilitating liver disease, infectious hepatitis. Although he was bedfast, the children and I were administered painful gamma globulin shots and returned to our regular activities. After walking home one day from my language school classes just ten blocks from our furnished apartment, I went directly in to visit with Bob, who was lying in bed just as he had for several weeks.

“Hi, Honey. How do you feel this afternoon?” I asked, fluffing up his pillow.

“Nancy,” he began, “today has been a great day! I’ve been looking forward to sharing something with you. Do you have time to talk?”

“Sure,” I said. “The boys are outside playing with the neighborhood children.”

“That’s just it, Sweetheart, our boys. Again this morning I found myself concerned about how they would adjust here in Mexico, but in the midst of my preoccupation I heard sounds of children playing. Sitting up to look out the window, I watched as Douglas and David chattered and played with Mexican friends there in the yard. They weren’t having any problems whatsoever in communicating. Just then, I realized how the Lord really has equipped children to adjust and to adapt to situations that seem so difficult to us.” Bob hesitated as he handed me two sheets of notebook paper. “Nancy, written there is what I was able to express of how I really felt today.”

As I sat on the side of the bed, reading Bob’s impressions of our boys and their relationship to God, I was moved to a deeper level to joy and thanksgiving for His provisions in every area of our lives. Trusting that these personal thoughts of a father to his sons might also speak to others of God’s faithfulness, I include them here.



MY THREE-YEAR-OLD MK
[To David from Dad]

You are a charmer,
with yellow hair that captures the attention
and affection of every *muchacha*,
and a ready smile that is as contagious as measles.

What sounds to me like a recording played too fast,
you understand perfectly and
the foreign sounds that I practice painfully
roll easily from you three-year-old lips.

“Culture shock” has no significance for you.
Likewise you seem not to know about
pessimism and prejudice, and
your anger can only endure a few fleeting seconds.

How soon will you learn these things? And from whom?

You are so impressionable, little one,
that everything that touches you leaves a dent,
but you are so flexible that you bend
with blows that nearly break me.

God made you so magnificently
that learning to be a missionary
is easier for you
than learning to tie your shoes.

- Robert L. Perry

MY SIX-YEAR-OLD MK
[To Doug from Dad]

I hope to do something great for the Lord,
but He has given you potential, my son,
to accomplish things grander
than I can envision.

The difficult adjustments of becoming
bi-lingual and bi-cultural
seem natural and simple steps
for you.

At age six you have seen places
and experienced things
that I had not at age twenty-six

I see you becoming strong of body and quick of mind,
and already a sensitive Christian spirit and
self-disciplined responsibility
are beginning to take shape in you.

God is clearly molding you for His purpose
through every circumstance and event.
I humbly accept my part in you development,
recognizing that the greatest investment of
myself in service God,
may be that which I invest in you.

-Robert L. Perry

LYING IN A HOSPITAL BED

Lying in the hospital bed with intravenous fluids being administered to him, Douglas seemed so small and angelic as he slept. So much had happened since the previous afternoon when Doug was happily climbing in the big rubber-plant tree in front of our apartment. Although I had warned him about the dangers of falling down into the sharp, broken concrete slabs jutting upward from the sidewalk where roots had grown, how can a mother keep a seven-year-old from climbing trees?

As the morning light shone through the hospital room window, I arose from where I had kept vigil throughout the night and I gently held Doug's limp hand in mine. Once again I retraced the circumstances of the evening before, as I had done so many times throughout the night as nurses came and went, checking on Douglas.

When we found Doug lying semi-conscious on the sidewalk pavement with a head concussion from his fall, we quickly decided to drive him to our Mexico-American Baptist Hospital. There our family doctor examined him and immediately called in a neurologist to conduct tests and x-rays. Although it was soon discovered that Doug's skull was not fractured, they insisted on watching him through the night.

"Bob, one of us needs to get David from the neighbors and stay with him at home tonight since we left him crying with fright about his big brother. Shall I go or you?"

"I will, Nancy. It's too late at night for you to drive across the city alone. I'll be over here first thing in the morning, but call me if you need me," he said as he walked toward the door.

"Bob," I hesitated. "I have really tried not to get upset and overly worried about how Doug will come through this, but then I catch myself crying and fretting to God about it. First you were so sick and now this. I feel so helpless."

"Let's pray together before I go," Bob said, taking my hand as we stood at the foot of Doug's bed.

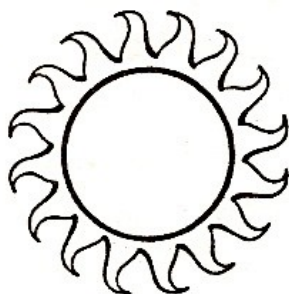
"Father," Bob began, "we honestly don't understand why You allowed this to happen to Douglas. We left our home and families to come to the mission field to serve You here. Did You bring us only to get diseases and to see our children suffer? Now, Father, we're having trouble just now finding peace in this, and I suppose we are feeling sorry for ourselves. So Lord, help us to center our thoughts on Your goodness and mercy. We know that Douglas is already a Christian and no matter what happens, he'll go to heaven. Thank You for that. But, God, restore in Nancy and me a sense of joy and peace just now. Help us to have thankful hearts and to praise You. We ask this of You, Father, in Jesus' name, amen."

"Amen," I added, wiping tears from my cheeks.

Then Bob had gone about I was left alone in the darkened room to watch over our son throughout the night. Yet I wasn't alone. God was very much with me through those hours, reassuring me of His love and of His watchcare over our family.

Now morning, I heard a noise in the doorway and I looked up from my place at Doug's side to see Bob entering the room. His face radiated a special peace as he greeted me. "It's going to be all right, Nancy," he stated as he took Doug's other hand in his. But before I could answer, I was interrupted.

"Hi, Mama. Hi, Daddy," Doug smiled. "Gee, I'm hungry!"



HAVING A NIGHTMARE

It was a Monday evening like any other that August in Mexico City. Following the evening meal, each family member had become engrossed in his particular activity. As I washed the dishes and straightened the kitchen, the two children went to play in their room. Bob was reading in the den.

Not many minutes had passed before six-year-old David, realizing it was about bedtime, sheepishly opened the door to the den. Hesitantly he entered, whimpering softly.

“What is it, David?” asked his father, scooping up his little son to deposit him on his lap.

“Remember that bad dream I had last night,” David began, now crying aloud. “Tonight I’ll have another one and I’m scared, Daddy.”

“David, you needn’t be afraid. I’m here and I’ll take care of you. And the Lord is with us and He always takes care of us.”

“But, Daddy, sometimes God’s with me, and sometimes He’s with someone else.”

“No, He’s with all of us all the time,” assured his father.

“How many is He? One or a hundred?”

“Just one, Son, but He’s everywhere at the same time.”

“How can He do that?”

“He’s a Spirit, David, He’s not like we are, He can be with all His children no matter where they are in the world.”

Father and son walked hand in hand into David’s bedroom. Bob gently tucked the covers around his young son.

“Daddy, let’s pray so I won’t be afraid.” Bob prayed that God would give both boys a good night’s sleep and that they would awaken rested and happy in the morning.

“I want to pray too,” David stated, his sniffling now stopped. “Dear Lord, thank You for everything You do for us. Thank You that Jesus is a soldier, a strong soldier to take care of us. Nobody is stronger than Him. Help me not to be scared and not to have bad dreams tonight. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

“Daddy, Jesus is like a soldier to guard us, right?”

“Yes, Son.”

“Day and night, right?”

“Yes, all the time.”

“He never even takes one eye off of us, does He?”

“No, He doesn’t.”

“Goodnight, Daddy.”

“Goodnight, David.”

WITH THE CHICKEN POX

David is now almost seven. He is still a charming little extrovert with a happy mischievous disposition. David has made a very open and genuine response to Christ to the best of his present understanding and awareness. He prays for people and asks us to pray for him when he has a problem.

David recently contracted chicken pox.

After trying unsuccessfully to sleep for several hours one night, he climbed from his bed and entered the living room crying.

“Daddy, my chicken pox itches and I can’t sleep.”

“I’m sorry, Son. Did Mom give you some medicine earlier?”

“Yes, but it didn’t help. I can’t go to sleep.”

“I know you’re uncomfortable, David, but I really don’t know what to do to help you. Let’s go sit on your bed and ask God to help you.”

”OK, Daddy,” replied his trusting young son.

Once sitting side by side on David’s bed, Bob began, “Dear Lord. You know how much I love David, but we know that You love him even more because he is Your child just as he is mine. We believe in Your power to help us get well and to make us feel better, so I pray that You will be with David right now. Let him know that You are with him and that You love him this evening. Help him to get a good night’s sleep. And thank You, Lord, that we have a warm house and a comfortable bed to sleep in. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.”

“Thank you, Daddy.”

“You’re welcome, Son. Good night.”

As Bob rose to leave the room, confident that he had handled the situation well, David’s sobbing voice presented him with one of those probing theological questions. “But Dad, sometimes even when we pray, things still don’t come out right!” Challenged by such a logical and basic question, Bob paused as he thought how to respond to David in simple and forthright terms.

“That’s true, David. Sometimes God might make us well right away to show us He has the power to make us well, but sometimes He wants to show us that He can give us patience or strength to go through a bad time. But either way, David, He loves you and He’s with you.”

“I’ll close my eyes, but I don’t think I’m going to sleep.”

“I think you’ll be able to sleep. See you in the morning, Son.”

“Good night, Daddy.”

Should I stop there and lead the reader to believe that David slept peacefully all night long? David had a rough night with the chicken pox. Yet, although he didn’t sleep much, he didn’t cry or get upset again during the night. For God had once again used a missionary to minister within his own family. Isn’t that where missions begin?

VII. WHO ARE A MISSIONARY'S FRIENDS?



MEXICAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

Chatting with another new missionary, Minnie Hicks, as we walked home from language school just three weeks after arriving in Guadalajara, she commented, “Nancy, this afternoon I’m to attend a birthday party for two women who attend our church. Why don’t you come with me!”

“Great,” I answered without hesitation. “I’m anxious to see how Mexicans celebrate special occasions. May I take David along?”

“Sure,” replied Minnie. “Three-year-olds always like a party! We’ll leave in an hour.”

After picking up several Mexican women at the church, Minnie directed the car out of the city limits to one of many new *colonias* or subdivisions. As we drove along we left behind concrete pavement for cobblestone, then cobblestone for dirt and dust.

“*Hermana* Minnie,” spoke up our companion in the front seat, “someone has evidently dumped their trash here on the main road into the area, but there is another way around to your left.”

The rough alternate “road” threatened to scrape the bottom of the car at every move, but we finally found the little one-room adobe brick house we were seeking and, parking our car in the unfinished street, we got out. I lifted David up and over an open drainage ditch a few yards from the front door of the humble dwelling. As the family’s open well was near their front door, I led David inside the house with me.

“*Bienvenidas, hermanas,*” chimed two women as they quit stirring their simmering pots to welcome us. Adding the traditionally Mexican statement, “*Están en su casa*” similar to our “Make yourself at home,” they encouraged us to be seated.

Sunshine flooded through the open doorway and two small windows, dispelling the darkness of the house. The family had tiled the floor of the front half where the kitchen and living area were. Two old,

full-sized beds and dressers on a hard-packed dirt floor completed the furnishings of the house. As a borrowed rickety bench was carried in from the neighbors to add to the existing two homemade, straight-back chairs, several of us were seated. Others took their place sitting on the side of a bed. David sat on the floor playing quietly with two scrawny kittens.

When all nine women had been seated, the pastor's wife who had accompanied us led in a Bible study of Psalm 90. After prayer and several hymns, the group decided to go on visitation while our hostess finished preparing refreshments.

As we walked several blocks down dusty paths, the pastor's wife explained to Minnie and me, "As three of our active church families live in this *colonia*, our church has begun a mission here. Over there you can see the two-room adobe mission building that is almost completed. We want to visit a family now to invite them to come to mission services."

By then we had arrived at the home of the prospect. Several tiny children had already scurried inside to announce our group's arrival, so the *senora* soon appeared in her doorway and graciously invited everyone inside. Shooing five little pre-schoolers out of the house, she pulled up two long, hand-built benches for us to sit on. I noticed that the sole provision for their family's sleeping was two hammocks tied back until needed later that night. As I saw no open well nearby, David hurried back outside to play with the children and chickens.

"*Señora*," began the woman in our group who lived close by, "we have just begun to hold religious services nearby. We have Bible study for children and for *adultos*. We hope that you and your family will come."

"I have heard the singing," replied our smiling hostess, "and my children have told me there were several of their friends who went last Sunday. They want to go too. That is unusual, for never before have they liked to go to Mass with me."

"Then you will come?" asked one of our group.

"Yes, we will be there this Sunday morning, but my husband will not want to go."

"We will be praying for him," said the pastor's wife.

After we had prayer for the family and the new mission, each woman shook hands with their new friend and filed out the narrow doorway and into the bright sunshine.

"Thank you for coming," called the *señora* behind us.

We trod back down the footpath to continue our birthday celebration. When we were once again seated in our hostess' home, she served each person a fried flat *tortilla* spread with chicken salad mixed with peas and carrots. The crunchy *tostada*, as this snack is called, tasted good after our walk in the warm January sun. Small bottles of Pepsi completed the refreshments. Even David had seconds of the hot chicken salad, this time served on less expensive saltine crackers.

We concluded our party by singing a hearty round of *Feliz Cumpleaños*, their traditional Christian birthday song, and with a special prayer for the two *hermanas* celebrating a birthday. We then piled into Minnie's mission-owned station wagon for the trip back.

After leaving the Mexican women back at their church, Minnie and I had time to reflect on our afternoon's activity as we drove home.

"Minnie, two things impressed me today," I began. "First, the warmth with which you and I were received and included in their plans. And second, and more important, was how happy those Christian women are even though they live in such humble surroundings. I believe we Americans too often let materialistic matters govern our degree of happiness. Today I have seen real joy in the Lord in the lives of women not bound by materialistic concerns. It has been a refreshing lesson for me. Thank you for bringing me along."

LITTLE CHILDREN

“*Señora Nancy, Señora Nancy,*” an excited voice called out. Glancing up from unloading our luggage from the Suburban Carry-all that was our assigned mission vehicle, I watched little nine-year-old Julieta skipping up the sidewalk to our house in Oaxaca. We had just returned from a business trip to Mexico City, located seven hours to the north. Returning with us were three friends, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Taylor and Miss Pamela Cowling, who had flown in from Missouri to visit us.



“*Hola, Julieta,*” I called with a smile to the approaching figure of my little neighbor. As Julieta stopped before me, her large, brown eyes suddenly became serious as she hesitantly went on, “*Señora Nancy, you have been gone and you have missed my birthday party.*”

Instantly I felt sad at not having been able to be there to share that party with this petite, brown Indian friend. Even though she lived right across the street from our new, two-story rented missionary home, her life was so completely different than ours. Julieta's house, where she lived with her mother and six brothers and sisters, was made of scraps of tin, cardboard, bricks or of anything else that might be useful which the family members could find in trash piles. Her mother cooked over an open wood fire in the small open courtyard, and felt fortunate to have an oldtime well from which to draw water. The two, small lean-to rooms at the far edge of the lot contained only a rickety little table; two squatty, broken chairs; one old, bare mattress; an ironing board and iron; and two swinging hammocks, strung out from one wall to another. One could not help but wonder how everyone managed to find sleeping space each night at bedtime. One naked light bulb hanging from the corrugated tin ceiling was visible through the faded piece of fabric hanging in the doorway to ward off the cold of the valley's night air. Yet while Julieta's father worked as a laborer far north in Mexico City, her mother took in washing and ironing to earn enough *pesos* for the children to go to school.

But my thoughts were interrupted as Julieta continued. “*Señora Nancy, my papá sent money for a piñata and I wanted you to be there to watch us break it and to share the candy and fruit it had inside.*”

“Oh, Julieta, I am so very sorry, but we were in Mexico City. See, I have brought some friends to visit us. But, Julieta, we would still like to come a birthday party for you. If we may come to your house this Monday evening, we will bring everything we need for another party.”

“I will go tell my mother,” yelled Julieta excitedly as she ran back across the street, her long braids flying. “See you on Monday,” she called.

As Monday evening approached, our plans were carefully made. Remembering that gelatin desserts, rather than ice cream, are always served at birthday parties, we stirred up a large bowl of red Jell-O. Then candies and suckers for all the children were sacked up, and presents wrapped. Our guests had decided to chose their gift for Julieta from the small Christian book store we maintained in our home. As her gift, Mrs. Taylor chose a book entitled *Santa Biblia Para Mí*, “The Holy Bible for Me,” that told how the Bible came to be and what each book was about. Julieta already had a “Good News for Modern Man” New Testament in Spanish and had been attending Sunday School and church with our family. Pam had brought some lovely used clothes with her, and carefully chose what would fit Julieta and her younger sister, five-year-old Elsa. As I chose two pair of new shoes from some brought to us by earlier visitors from the States, I thought, “How thankful I am for friends. Now Julieta and Elsa won't have to wear their rubber thongs to school.” To all this, we added some “fun things” and off we went to Julieta's house.

The make-shift door was quickly opened as we knocked at the Martínez house. Julieta's mother, thin and looking much older than her thirty-two years, graciously ushered us into the larger room. Around us

clustered Julieta and Elsa, pre-schoolers Sadot and Jorge, and toddler Eva, followed up by older brothers Habacuc and Gustavo. Even though Mrs. Taylor and Pam could speak no Spanish, they were immediately caught up in the lively, festive spirit of the moment. They especially watched the sparkling eyes of the two older girls as they each opened her presents while the other children shared in the refreshments. Did I detect tears in the eyes of petite Mys. Martínez as she told each one, “Gracias. Qué Dios les bendiga.” I sensed that there was no need for me to translate her expression of appreciation and wish for God's blessing upon these visitors, for in that moment I felt a bond trying all of us together through that happy experience of sharing.

“Thank you, Lord,” I prayed silently that night, “for allowing even two of my friends from the States to be here. And thank you for all our other friends who could not come to Julieta's party, but who love boys and girls like her enough that they sent us here to Oaxaca.”



CO-WORKERS, PAST AND PRESENT

Southern Baptist work began in Mexico in 1880 with the appointment of John C. Westrup as missionary. Since that time our work has expanded to presently include over seventy-five missionaries involved in many facets of Christian ministry. Each of our co-workers play an important role in helping us carry the Gospel of Christ to the people of Mexico. Yet much of today's success is due to the solid foundations laid years ago by earlier Christian workers.

One outstanding example is the Mexican Baptist Theological Seminary which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1976. Having recently moved its campus from Torreon to Mexico City, this school continues to train Mexican people to carry out all aspects of Christian service. Offering three levels of study, according to the student's previous educational preparation, the school is showing an increased enrollment of young men and women each year. For those unable to attend the seminary itself, the school directs an extension program reaching out to all parts of Mexico, as it trains Mexico's present and future Christian leaders.

Our 90-bed Baptist Mexico-American Hospital, inaugurated in 1958, is considered one of the finest hospitals in western Mexico. Many of its staff are Mexican Baptists. A missionary nurse helps to direct a school of nursing, and both a Mexican and a missionary chaplain minister to patients. Another aspect of the healing ministry is a mobile medical unit which travels to many parts of the nation. As physical needs are being met by a physician and a dentist, missionaries and national workers present the Gospel to those in the waiting room.

Another example of our dependence on our co-workers, past and present, is the Baptist Spanish Publishing House of El Paso, Texas. It was begun in 1905 as a print shop in a missionary's kitchen in Toluca, Mexico. Today, besides shipments to over forty countries where Spanish is spoken, it supplies five modern Baptist book stores in Mexico with Christian literature. Local churches and pastors are encouraged to become actively involved in the distribution of Christian materials, as are the missionaries.

Other vital programs in radio and television, student work, agriculture, and English-language work complement the ongoing ministries of many field missionaries working in rural and urban evangelism.

Today 30,000 Mexican Baptists have almost 350 churches and 600 preaching points. Over 200 of the churches are entirely self-supporting. In 1976 approximately 3,200 people were baptized by almost 300 national Baptist pastors. The Vacation Bible School enrollment reached nearly 38,000 children.

The National Baptist Convention of Mexico, working hand in hand with Southern Baptist missionaries, is presently involved in a program to begin 500 new churches, 750 missions, and another 1,000 new preaching points. Other goals include increased giving by the churches, an emphasis on a deepened spiritual life for every Baptist and enlistment of the laity in outreach ministries.

Since 1880 Southern Baptists of the United States have seen the challenge of Mexico, have given financially to support the work, and have sent men and women out from their churches to their neighbors to the south. Yet more workers are needed and more support must be given, for the task is not yet completed of winning Mexico to Jesus Christ.



A HUNDRED NAMES AND FACES

If I should be asked who are a missionary's friends,
a hundred names and faces would race through my mind.

They are our parents
who are willing to allow their children's
the freedom to follow God's call
to a foreign land.

They are the folks back home in the churches
who give that we can go,
who pray that we can be upheld,
who write to us that we can be encouraged.

They are fellow missionaries
who have the gift of ministering
one to another, and who are our children's
substitute aunts and uncles.

They are national church workers
who accept us as we labor
alongside of them
to win their people to Christ.

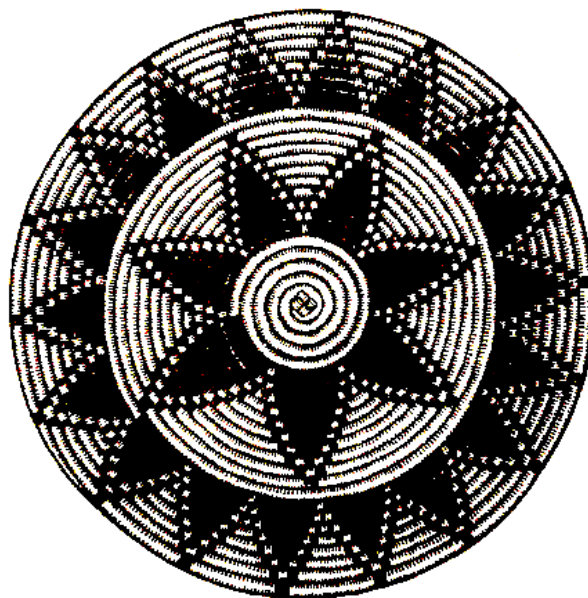
They are our church members on the field
who pray with us and
who encourage us
in every situation.

They are our Mexican neighbors
who welcome us into the community
without prejudice
and help make us feel at home

Friends.

Yet above and beyond all these treasured human friendships, God's presence through the Holy Spirit has remained the most real and precious possession in our lives

VIII. DOES A MISSIONARY FACE FRUSTRATION?



SOLDIERS NEAR PUERTO ESCONDIDO

In planning a summer camp for the young people of southern Oaxaca, Bob drove to Puerto Escondido, Hidden Port, to find a retreat site and make arrangements for meals. Pastor Carlos Morales of the Miahuatlán Baptist Church accompanied him. By the time the good pavement ended ten miles south of Miahuatlán, the Mexican and American *hermanos* were already engrossed in lively conversation.

“*Hermano* Roberto, just last year during rainy season as I was on one of my frequent trips down south to visit our missions, I came across a huge landslide that completely blocked the roadbed. As there was absolutely no possibility of going through, I turned to drive back to Miahuatlán. Soon I overtook a bus loaded with passengers also headed north. However, within the hour we were stopped short by a second gigantic mass of rocks and earth that had slid down the mountainside onto the red dirt road.

“What did you do, *Hermano* Carlos?” asked Bob, anxious to hear the conclusion.

“Well, *Hermano*, knowing no town was within the blocked area, we were all quite worried. That is, the bus passengers and myself as well. Fortunately, most of the people were carrying some food supplies. We all pooled the food and rationed it carefully, for it was several days before a bulldozer arrived from the north to clear the road. Since many men carry pistols, they were able to shoot an occasional wild rabbit and we found bananas ripening on a few sparse banana trees. So you see, the Lord once again provided.

Within a few minutes, nearing the little town of San José del Pacífico, Bob spotted eight or ten soldiers sitting in the shade to one side of the road. Spying the approaching car, the uniformed officials, carrying semi-automatic rifles, darted into the road indicating that Bob should stop the car. As Bob turned off the engine, several armed soldiers searched through the glove compartment, under the seats and in the back. Pastor Morales quickly explained to Bob they were in the midst of an area known for its hallucinogenic mushrooms and some guerrilla fighters. “Thus,” he explained, “they are looking for drugs or firearms.”

In that moment one soldier's eye caught a glimpse of the green canvas U.S. Army surplus duffle bag that Brother Morales had brought along. The soldier, his eyes bulging whirled around to face Bob and exploded with questions. "Who are you? What are you doing here with the U.S. Army? Where are your documents? Why...?"

Bob stammered and looked with eyes pleading for help to *Hermano* Carlos. The *hermano* calmly explained to the nervous enlisted men that the duffle bag was not Bob's, but that it had been given to him by friends in the United States. That only prompted more questions regarding Brother Morales' citizenship. "Show us your documents," demanded one.

"I'm sorry, we neither one are carrying our *documentos* with us," declared Carlos. "But I assure you that what we have told you is the complete truth."

"And why should we believe you?" retorted one who had taken charge.

"Because, my friend," state Carlos in a calm but stern voice, "we are evangelical Christians. If you know anything about *cristianos evangélicos*, you know that I wouldn't lie to you for any reason."

An immediate hush fell upon the group. "Well, then, you can go," the head soldier blurted out, as he signaled for the others to stand out of their way. Quickly Bob and Carlos climbed up into the Carry-all and headed south toward their destination along the Pacific coast.

*"God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not be afraid."*

- Psalm 46:1, 2a (TEV)

BAPTISM IN CUAUHEMOC

Having been raised on savory Missouri barbecue, it was an interesting discovery to find that virtually every region of Mexico has its own style of barbecue, or *barbacoa*. Bob's first opportunity to enjoy such an elaborate meal came during a trip he and agriculturalist Jim Philpot made from Oaxaca three and one-half hours north to Cuauhtemoc village near Tlaxiaco in northern Oaxaca state. The occasion was the organization of that preaching point into a mission of the First Baptist Church of Oaxaca City.

"Jim, I feel right at home on this trip. I was hardly awake when we left town this morning at five o'clock, coming through the first stretch of mountains. But the wooded terrain here around Tlaxiaco with its pine forests and oaks reminds me of the south Missouri hills where I grew up. You know, I've been looking forward to today as a time to get away from the pressures and frustrations and just enjoy the services. Is it much further to Cuauhtemoc?"

Jim glanced at Bob, then back to the curvy, mountainous highway. "No, not really. We'll leave the highway about fifteen minutes south of Tlaxiaco. From there it's only another forty minutes. It's the dirt road that'll slow us down."

"Tell me something about the Baptist work in the village, Jim," requested Bob.

“About two years ago José Maya, the regional missionary, began preaching in Cuauhtemoc, a community of about two hundred people,” explained Jim. “Since then sixteen people have been baptized and eight more are awaiting baptism. One of the families has constructed a church building on his property and with a core group of about twenty-five members, the mission should grow rapidly now.”

“You mentioned eight people are awaiting baptism, Jim. Have they just recently made professions of faith, or why haven't they already been baptized?”

“The brethren here in Mexico, especially in the rural areas, still believe strongly in allowing a new believer several weeks or months for training and preparation before he is baptized. They also look upon it as a trial period for him to show living proof of his new personal relationship with Christ. But there is yet another reason for a delay in baptism,” added Jim. “The local Baptist tradition demands that only an ordained pastor can baptize. Since there are only about nine ordained pastors in the entire state, in most areas there is a long delay between making a profession of faith and the time an ordained pastor can make a long trip to baptize new believers. Therefore the eight new Christians have been anxiously awaiting today's meeting because Brother Ortíz, the pastor of First Baptist Church, will be here and can baptize them.”

“I'll be glad to see that,” Bob stated. “I had heard that it is the custom here, as on some other mission fields, to deny immediate baptism to new believers. Yet to my knowledge there is no Biblical precedent for such action. It seems to me that baptism can have a real positive influence on Christian growth. For me, the highlight of today's activities will be the ceremony of baptism. It also will be memorable for the eight anxious candidates, I'm sure, as it signals an important step forward in their Christian pilgrimage.”

As the car wound its way through rolling countryside, their conversation turned to the history of the people who inhabit that particular region. Bob said, “You know, Jim, since Nancy has a longstanding interest in Mexican history and anthropology, I asked her about the Highland Mixtecs of this area. She mentioned that the Mixtecs have been inhabiting parts of Oaxaca state since before 1200 A.D., and being outstanding craftsmen, they worked in gold, jade, and carved bone, as well as polychrome pottery. She reminded me that the famous archaeological ruin of Mitla in the Oaxaca valley is just one of several examples of their exquisitely carved stone mosaics. These people have a proud heritage of an advanced, highly-organized social system climaxing artistically in the 15th century, before the Aztecs marched south into the valley of Oaxaca to conquer them. Not long after the arrival of the Spaniards, many Indians were absorbed into the new *mestizo* race, to be sure. Yet Nancy read that many of today's Mixtecs are the state's outstanding craftsmen in gold filigree jewelry, as were their ancestors.”

“However, Bob, those living around Tlaxiaco are now mainly farmers. They cultivate corn and raise chickens and turkeys as their main source of meat, but occasionally shoot a wild rabbit or deer. Sheep and goats are also raised to provide meat for special celebrations and *fiestas*.”

By nine o'clock the men had driven into Cuauhtemoc and greeted the group of brethren gathering for the full days activities. They were offered sweet bread and cinnamon-flavored hot chocolate.

Several men and women were already busy preparing the afternoon meal, which was to be barbecued sheep. A large outdoor pit three feet square and four feet deep held a fire burning down to hot coals. Soon after dawn a sheep had been killed, split and cleaned. Bob watched as the men lowered the skinned animal down onto a rack made of green sticks, suspending the meat above the coals. After the sheep's four legs were stretched out to four corners, two big earthenware pots were placed under the neck and tail ends in order to catch hot blood and grease drippings as the meat cooked. Finally another framework of sticks was placed over the top of the pit. Large, wet straw mats were overlapped on top before the men shoveled on dirt over a foot deep to insulate the homemade oven.

“You know, Bob, down on the coast the folks use giant banana leaves rather than the wet straw mats. In other regions, big fleshy leaves of the maguey plant are substituted. In fact, corrugated metal is now utilized in some areas. But whatever is used to cover the pit, the barbecue meat always results very flavorful.”

Meanwhile, the women had been preparing the rest of the meal. Two important ingredients had been carefully extracted from the sheep, its blood and its intestinal casings or tripe, both of which were to be used in making tasty blood sausage. Two women cleaned the sheep tripe thoroughly and turned it inside out. Cut into eighteen inch lengths, the tripe was then dipped in boiling water to strengthen it. Meanwhile another woman salted the sheep's blood and beat it well with a big wooden spoon. To the blood was added diced sheep fat, chopped garlic and green onions, sliced *chiles*, as well as three spices – oregano, marjoram and thyme. Bob observed the women carefully filling each length of intestinal casing with the sausage mixture. Tying each section with a strong cord, they rinsed the sausages off, then lowered them into boiling salt water to simmer for over an hour. Moments later, however, everyone began moving toward the meeting hall to begin the Sunday morning worship service.

Assembling in their chapel building which closely resembled a pioneer log cabin, the meeting was led by Brother Hermenegildo Ortíz, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oaxaca City. Following their regular two-hour worship service, Brother Ortíz spoke to the group about responsibilities of church membership. Then they proceeded to elect regional missionary José Maya as their mission pastor. One by one, leadership positions and their responsibilities were discussed before someone was elected to fill the position. Slowly they progressed from Sunday School director and teachers to Brotherhood and Women's Missionary Union directors, then on to numerous other responsibilities. Finally Brother Ortiz announced that the mission's organizational structure was complete, but that only enough time remained to eat before his return for the Sunday evening service in his own church in Oaxaca.

Bob cast a questioning glance at Jim. “What about the baptisms?” he whispered. Jim shrugged his shoulders, with an equally disheartened look upon his face, as was on Bob's. Then with a flowery prayer of dismissal, the meeting was adjourned. What Bob had feared had happened. The baptisms, given least priority, were to be left until another occasion. And it might be months before Pastor Ortiz would return to the little mission. As the others left the mission building, Bob and Jim lingered behind to talk.

“Jim, is it because I'm so new on the mission field that I feel frustrated by some attitudes and practices of the churches here? You have been here several years now, how do you feel?”

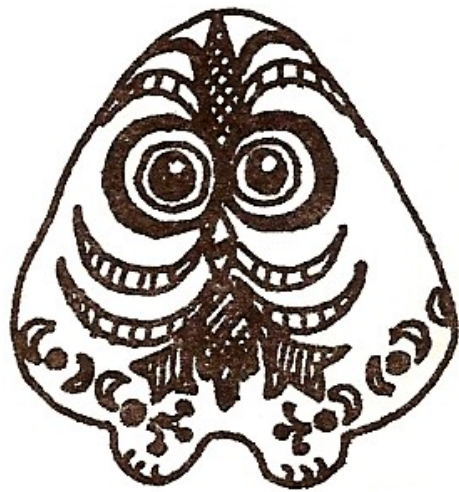
“Well, Bob,” Jim began, “I guess it doesn't bother me so much now as it used to. Like you, when I first came I saw things I wanted to change right away. It's not just this problem of the delayed baptisms, but other situations as well. There seems to be an attitude of professional clergy that makes it nearly impossible for a man to be recognized as a pastor and ordained until he is Seminary educated and well experienced. This tends to make the ministry an elite club of professionals widely separated from the laymen. Then I've tried to get the local seminary to promote extension studies for untrained pastors who cannot come to the campus in Oaxaca, yet many of the seminary do not see the need for reaching out to where the mission pastors and lay people live and work.

“Possibly most frustrating of all is their belief that the Lord's Supper can only be observed within the walls of an organized church. This means that a mother church, which may have twenty or thirty widely-scattered missions, insists that all those members make the long, tedious journey to the mother church to take part in communion. But Bob, no longstanding customs or attitudes change overnight, especially not in rural Mexico. Now, I'm finding that as we work patiently with the people and establish relationships of trust, we can influence church life toward patterns that conform more to New Testament principles applied to this cultural setting.”

“I suppose the tendency to give priority to human traditions rather than Biblical teachings is no different here than in many other places,” Bob commented. “It’s a shame that these extra-Biblical ideas hinder the work of evangelizing and planting churches. I’ll just trust the Lord to give the Baptists of Oaxaca not only numerical growth, but genuine spiritual maturity and creative approaches for reaching these multitudes for Christ. Meanwhile, I’ll pray for more patience and wisdom to know how to deal with each new situation.”

With a certain feeling of relief following their discussion, Bob and Jim walked out of the mission building and along the footpath to join the others waiting for the meal to be served. The pit had been uncovered to extract the barbecue meat. As Bob was handed a plate of meat and a clay bowl of water soup, he recognized the cooked blood sausage sliced and floating in the broth. Along with their meal the brethren drank sweetened rice water. Yellow cornflour *tortillas* the size of dinner plates were delivered to them as fast as the *masa* dough could be patted out and cooked on the *comal*, a hot clay griddle. The *tortillas* not only served as fork for the meat and spoon for the soup, but also as their only napkins.

“Now this is really quite all right,” thought Bob. “How often can you eat your napkin, spoon and fork?”



IX. DOES A MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE JOY AND VICTORY?



THE HOME/CHURCH MISSIONARY

Joy comes to the “home/church missionary” through a thousand little ways – ways similar to how your joy is made more complete in the United States. In activities and in relationships; from big, notable occasions and from small, inconsequential moments; in doing for others and in sharing, joy comes as we allow Jesus Christ to live through us.

As I walked dusty Oaxaca trails to a mission point, God was there.
As I saw hope in tiny, dark faces, He taught me to care.
As I sat on a rock to tell children about Jesus, God taught me to share.

As I taught a beginner's Sunday School class in faltering Spanish, God was there.
As I watched eyes light up as we sang of Jesus, He taught me to care.
As I declared His love despite grammatical errors galore, God taught me to share.

As I lived across from Oaxacan hovels of cardboard and tin, God was there.
As I saw my neighbor living in poverty's grasp, He taught me to care.
As I gave them shoes or a Bible, God taught me to share.

As I went shopping to buy food for the day, God was there.
As I gave out tracts in the marketplace, He taught me to care.
As I told a shopkeeper about Jesus, God taught me to share.

As I cared three months for a baby girl being adopted, God was there.
As I applied for her passport, photos, and documents, He taught me to care.
As I changed her diapers at midnight and warmed her bottles at dawn, God taught me to share.

As I mixed socially with dignitaries in the Ambassador's home, God was there.
As I saw so much sadness in people's lives, He taught me to care.
As I shared my Christian testimony as we visited, God taught me to share.

As I cooked food for fifty campers, God was there.
As I taught them choruses under the shade of tree, He taught me to care.
As I watched ten children accept Christ as their Lord and Savior, God taught me to share.

As I answered the telephone to talk with a dear friend, God was there.
As I spoke with her about her problems, He taught me to care.
As I prayed with her by telephone, God taught me to share.

As I drove across Mexico City through freeway traffic, God was there.
As I taught Mexican women Bible truths or English grammar, He taught me to care.
As I saw their sorrow change to joy, God taught me to share.

As I was bedfast with typhoid, hepatitis, or salmonella, God was there.
I thought, "If only this He does not let me share!"
Yet through it all, I knew that He cared.

For without God's presence within us each day,
There's nothing to share, nothing of worth to give away.
There's no way to care, there's nothing to say.
Yet because of Him who gave us His Son,
There's everything to share.
There's a world to be won!



WOMAN'S BIBLE STUDY

Perhaps one of my greatest joys while living in Mexico City has been the fellowship of a Spanish woman's Bible study which we began in our home in April of 1975. Linda Buenfil, a Tennessee Baptist married to a Mexico City businessman, and I lived a mile apart. Each had Mexican neighbors who we felt would welcome a chance to study God's Word together. As it was to be in my home, we called upon our friend Helen Griffin to lead our discussions. Each Wednesday morning at 10:00 my neighbors and a carload of Linda's would come for an hour of coffee and fellowship, followed by an hour of concentrated Bible study. The Catholic women grew visibly in their understanding of the Scriptures.

Five months after the studies began, when I had to be bedfast four months with hepatitis, the studies continued to flourish in Linda's home where they have remained. While her neighbors Lucía, Mercedes and Carmelita have attended since our beginning in my home, now others come – Kathy, Teresa, and Alicia. Soon others joined the group. But more important than the size of the group, which many times crowded Linda's living room, was the spiritual growth we witnessed in each woman.

One morning as we discussed prayer, a visitor expressed her deep feelings of guilt because she was not able to concentrate when reciting long, memorized Catholic prayers. She confessed that the repetitive petitions to Virgin Mary and the saints could not hold her attention and seemed to have no meaning. She felt the devil was surely trying to keep her from her dutiful tasks of reciting such authorized prayers. "But," she said, "when I just talk to God about my personal problems and thoughts during the day, I really feel better. Is that the devil trying to separate me from God when i can't find meaning in long, memorized prayers?"

One of our Catholic women who has attended our studies for two years quickly spoke up, "No, that is not the devil. You must not feel guilty, for God wants us to speak with Him from our hearts." She went on to explain beautifully what prayer is. I glanced at Helen, then over to Linda. We smiled as our disciple preached on!

In each session we use a few minutes to memorize books of the Bible and to practice locating Scripture references. Several in our group now use their Bibles daily at home, read to their children, have family devotions, and ask a blessing before mealtime. However, our greatest thrill comes when a woman finally puts aside her lifelong belief in salvation by good works through the church, and can accept by faith God's grace to save her eternally.

A few months ago as I prepared to present the study, I felt led to attempt something a bit out of the ordinary. Using a WIN booklet that clearly explains the plan of salvation, I typed a letter to each woman in our group and put it in an envelope with her name on it to give to her at our study. It was not from me, however, but a personal letter from God, her Father.

My dearest daughter,

Since so long ago I have loved you, I am writing this letter to you to offer you something very special – a new life, an abundant life with purpose. This life is in my Son. I have given my only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have life everlasting.

My daughter, it isn't just existing, but a life filled with peace and joy from the moment you accept Him and let Him be the Lord of your life.

I'm writing to you because I have noticed that your life is empty and without real meaning. In you I see guilt, loneliness, and weakness. This hurts me, my child, because I sent my Son to the world so that you might not have to live that way. He was crucified on the cross for your sins, and was resurrected – all this for you!

My child, you can enter into this life through a spiritual rebirth. I mean that it's more than just believing in Jesus, for the devil also believes. It's more than doing good works, because it is by grace

that you are saved through faith, not by works, lest anyone boast of his good works. What I mean by a spiritual rebirth is turning your life over to Jesus Christ. As I revealed to you earlier through my Holy Word, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Now, my daughter, possibly you still don't fully understand how to receive this special gift that I am offering to you. To receive Jesus Christ you must admit that you need Him because you are a sinner and cannot save yourself. You must be ready to allow Christ to draw you away from sinning, to change your attitudes and goals. Instead of ignoring My Will, you must want to obey Me. That is to say, that if you confess aloud that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that I, your God, raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, my child. In that moment when, by faith, you come to me through Jesus Christ, you arrive at the point of accepting my gift and of becoming a believer. Then you receive an abundant and meaningful life.

Before closing this letter, my daughter, I want to tell you one thing more. There may come a day when you're feeling low or depressed, and you begin to doubt your salvation. For this reason, I'm going to go ahead and tell you how you can be sure that you are a Christian and have abundant life in Him.

Jesus Himself said, "He who hears my word, and believes in Him who sent Me shall have eternal life. He will not be judged but has already passed from death to life." This is a promise of Christ, and you can believe it.

Also, in view of your faith in Christ, you can know that you're saved eternally. In Romans 10:13 you are assured that all who call upon the name of the Lord in repentance and faith shall be saved. That's another promise that I will keep.

And finally, you can be sure of your salvation by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Just as the Scriptures in I John 4:13, "In this we know that we belong to Him, and He in us, in that He has given us His Spirit."

Well, my child, I shall close now. However, I want to write you again telling you more about how you can keep growing in abundant life in Christ. Meanwhile, keep reading and studying your Bible, because I left it for you. Never forget, I am with you each moment to help you in having a full, rich life filled with joy and peace.

I look forward to your letter of response.

With all my love,
Your Heavenly Father

As each read her own letter during the study, I noticed several who seemed touched by it. For the following week I left as their assignment the writing of a response to God. Here I include parts of two responses so that you may understand the joy that has come from this Bible study.

"I, Lord, your child, write this letter with much love, expressing what I am thinking about You. I want to tell You that I know that I'm a sinner and that I want to come to You with a soul cleansed from sin. I come to You as You have asked, asking that You make my soul as white as snow. I feel, Lord, that the sin of the vultures that had rested in my heart has been smoked out! Now I see and understand, Lord, what was lacking in order to look upon You. I will listen to Your voice with eternal ears. I come to You, Lord, my Saviour ..."

"Thank You, God, for Your Son who You gave to save us from sin. I believe in Him and I accept Him as my Saviour. I know that I cannot gain eternal life by good works, but I also know that as a Christian I am going to work for You. Give us patience to wait to know Your Will in our life. Thank You for Your Book. Help us to study Your Word daily and to understand what You are saying to us. I love You so much, God, that I don't have words to express my thoughts. I hope that I can show You how much I love You by my actions ..."

CONVERSION OF A CATHOLIC PRIEST

While in Oaxaca we heard the story of the conversion of a Catholic priest in southern Mexico who was won by the witness of a shoeshine boy. The boy, some twelve or thirteen years of age, had learned a popular chorus at the Baptist church where he was a new member. The words to “Solamente en Cristo” say, “Only in Christ, only in Him. Salvation is found in Him. There is no other name given to men. Only in Christ, only in Him.”

As the lad shined the priest's shoes he began to sing, “Solamente en Cristo, solamente en El...” The priest interrupted, “Quit singing that!”

“Why?” asked the boy.

“Because I don't like it,” retorted the clergyman.

The young Christian said, “Oh, I think it's great,” as he sang, “Solamente in Cristo, solamente en EL. La salvacion se encuentra en EL...”

“If you don't shut up, I'm not going to pay you for the shoeshine,” the village priest blurted out.

“Oh, that's alright,” responded the boy. “I'll shine them for free.” He began again, “Solamente en Cristo, solamente in EL...”

The exasperated priest stomped away in anger with one shoe shined and one still dirty. He was so upset and disturbed that through the day those words passed through his mind over and over again ... “Only in Christ, only in Him...” His heart became convicted of the truth that Christ is the only way to salvation, and he received Jesus as his personal Saviour. That former priest now recounts the witness of the shoeshine boy as an integral part of his Christian testimony.

PETER AND HUMBERTO

Peter is a deacon of our church in Mexico City. A tall, strongly-built man of German descent, he left East Germany when he was eighteen. Although he has become a naturalized U.S. Citizen, much of his life has been spent in Latin America. His lovely American wife is the daughter of life-time missionaries in Venezuela. It was there that Peter met her. Peter is now an executive of a large manufacturing company in Mexico.

Some months ago Peter noticed that one of his co-workers, a young Mexican man named Humberto, had a great deal of interest in discussing religious and Biblical topics. Humberto, the company's sales manager had a Catholic background, yet was questioning many of the teaching of his childhood. Peter gave Humberto a Bible, encourage him to read it, and began to pray that God would use the Scriptures to lead his friend to a personal encounter with Christ. In October, Peter invited Humberto to attend a Sunday service at Capital City Baptist Church. He came and was quite fascinated by the “strange ways” in which Baptists worship.

That afternoon when our phone rang, Bob immediately recognized Peter's voice, still with its slight German accent. “Pastor,” Peter said, “Humberto is with me and he would like to come to your home and ask you some questions about this morning's sermon.” Within minutes the three men were sitting in our living room involved in a discussion of the Bible's most basic teachings about God's purpose and Will for man. After Peter and Bob shared their own conversion experiences, Humberto indicated that he too would like to trust Christ to become his Saviour and Lord.

When the men stood again after the brief prayer time in which Humberto had invited Christ into his life, and Peter and Bob had thanked God for the miracle of new birth, Bob explained to Humberto that all new believers begin the spiritual life as babes and must mature day by day.

Humberto, with eyes moist, put his hand on the shoulder of his big German friend and asked, “Peter, will you be my big brother?”

This, it seems to me, is the essence of real evangelism. One person leading another to Christ and then “big-brothering” the new Christian toward spiritual fullness and fruitful service. The new Christian needs not just an orientation class or correspondence Bible study; he needs a big brother.

BRIANA

Capital City Baptist Church has been blessed by several young families of executives moving to Mexico City from the United States. Last year Bob and Jan Hartenstein joined our church and, along with their two lovely children Chris and Jenny, became active in the life of our church as they awaited the birth of their third child, Briana. Their experiences after the baby's arrival served to draw our congregation together in prayer and support for them, as well as to enrich our lives personally. Allow me to let Jan tell it in her own words.

My dear Nancy,

I praise God for the opportunity to share Briana with others. Difficult situations can be filled with such rich blessings if we only let Christ do His will.

When Briana was born, it was a beautiful time for us, especially since Bob shared in Briana's birth. Chris and Jenny had been very big babies, and she was so tiny. The first week at home with Briana brought us many blessings. Then Briana became ill.

When the doctor said it was a chest cold, I remained calm, thinking she'd be fine after a few days in the hospital, but she gradually got worse and was unable to eat. When it was decided she had bronchial pneumonia, the doctor put her in intensive care and we were unable to stay with her. It was so difficult not to be able to hold her and comfort her! The doctor was unable to say if he thought she would be all right or not. I panicked! But praise God for Bobby. He went to Christ and left Briana with Him! Bob tried to comfort me, but I did not want to be comforted. I knew God had a lesson for me, but I didn't want to learn. I just wanted Briana to live!

We had never faced such a serious situation as this illness before, so we felt we needed to know others were praying too! We called friends and relatives back in the States and they called their churches. Some gathered that very night to pray. Friends called friends and prayer chains were started on our behalf. Still, I was in my own world! We were allowed to see Briana only once a day and it was so hard. So many tubes and a baby so very tiny!

One afternoon while I was home alone crying (I did a lot of that), I just felt I could not handle it anymore. I couldn't pray and I needed a friend. You came to my mind, Nancy, so I phoned. I praise God for you, Nancy, that you loved me enough to understand my need and cared enough to pray with me. When we finished, I knew I had suffered through those days unnecessarily! For the first time I truly felt God's love, both for Briana and myself. He did care! He felt my unhappiness and my hurt and He really cared!

I could realize then how precious were those people who cared enough to pray for us and our baby – people who didn't even know us, but loved us because we all belong to God's family.

That night when we went to see Briana it was so different! I could see Jesus' love all around her! He knew she hurt and He loved her all the more. She improved and is doing so well now, and growing swiftly, all because of God's love!

This experience drew Bob and me closer, and the children saw what great things God can do by making their sister well. How God used and blessed the situation, once I gave it all to Him! I know now in my heart, and not just in my head, that Christ is the answer for everything, and that peace is possible to obtain no matter how tough things are, all because of His undying love for us.

Love, Jan

X. WHAT IS THE MISSIONARY CHALLENGE?

Almost five years have elapsed since that memorable evening when Bob and I stood with those thirty-seven other men and women on the platform of the Foreign Mission Board's auditorium in Richmond, Virginia. Yet our missionary appointment service is fresh in our memories because the challenge presented to us that night by Baker James Cauthen, Executive Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, has been an upholding message throughout our first term of service in a foreign land.

Dr. Cauthen read that portion of Zechariah 3 where Satan stands beside Joshua, ready to bring an accusation against the great prophet of God. Dr. Cauthen reminded us that Satan was surely very displeased with our appointment, and that he would be trying to accuse us in the coming months and years. Dr. Cauthen went on to say that Satan's displeasure would often be very real and personal as he would try to accuse the missionary. "You are not worthy to serve," Satan may say. Another time we might hear him declare, "You are so weak spiritually that you cannot serve effectively." Possibly he approaches with the threat, "I will destroy you." Yet, Dr. Cauthen assured our group, we shall stand fast, for by God's grace we have been made worthy; by God's power we are sufficient for the task; and by His promise we rejoice for, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the ends of the world," says the Lord.

The profound significance of those words voiced by Dr. Cauthen did not sink into my heart at that moment. My enthusiasm and exuberance could not be easily restrained as I looked, perhaps too idealistically, to the mission field. I heard the words of the message, to be sure. Yet, in the midst of my self-confidence and excitement, I was unsure of their application to my life.

Four years in Mexico have given deep meaning to Dr. Cauthen's words, for Satan has now had opportunity to voice all threats, and repeat some more loudly than before. Many temptations and trials have come, and there have been times when, in my own power, I was very weak and unworthy, and Satan came close to destroying me. Then I would lift up my eyes to Jesus Christ once again and be reminded of His constant love. It is He who restores my courage and gives me victory. It is He on whom I must depend, for after all, missionaries are human too.

... and if I have not said other things
I should have said, forgive me,
for I do not know how to tell it
better at this time.

- Bernal Díaz del Castillo
1496-1584



GLOSSARY OF SPANISH WORDS

Adulto (ah-DUEL-to) Adult.

Alguién se está bañando? (al-ge-EN say es-TAH ba-NYAN-doe) Is anyone bathing?

Arroz con pollo (ah-ROHS cone PO-yo) Chicken with rice.

Atole (ah-TOE-lay) Thick broth made by cooking cornmeal in water, it's always sweetened and flavored, usually with cinnamon or chocolate.

Barbacoa de cabra (bar-bah-CO-ah day CA-bra) Barbequed goat meat; Greenwood broiler used by Indians, or the meet thus broiled.

Barranca (ba-RAHN-cah) Deep hollow, gorge, ravine.

Bienvenida (be-en-vay-NE-tha) Welcome – feminine form.

Bistec (BEES-take) Beefsteak.

Bruja (BREW-hah) Witch.

Buenas tardes (BWAY-nas TAR-dace) Good afternoon.

Bujía (boo-HE-ah) Spark plug.

Burro (BOO-row) Donkey.

Calandria (kah-LAN-dree-ah) Horse drawn carriage.

Caldo (KAHL-doe) Broth or soup.

Cazuela (kah-zoo-AYE-la) Pottery bowl used for cooking.

Chiles en vinagre (CHEE-lace en vee-NAH-gray) Chilis in vinegar.

Cocinera (ko-see-NAY-rah) Cook.

Colonia (ko-LOW-ne-ah) Housing development, subdivision.

Comal (ko-MAHL) Clay or iron griddle.

Comida (ko-ME-dah) Meal. Usually refers to the big afternoon meal.

Cristianos evangélicos (krees-tee-AH-nos a-vahn-HAY-lee-kohs) Evangelical Christians, used interchangeably with the name, Protestants.

Dios mediante (dee-OHS may-dee-AHN-tay) God willing.

Están en su casa (es-TAHN en su KA-sa) Literally, “You are in your home.” “Make yourself at home.”

Exactamente (ek-sahk-tah-MEN-tay) Exactly.

Farmacia (far-MAH-see-ah) Pharmacy or drugstore.

Feliz cumpleaños (fay-LEASE kume-play-AH-nyos) Happy birthday.

Fiesta (fee-ES-tah) Holiday, celebration, or holy day.

Frijoles (free-HO-lace) Beans. Commonly used varieties include the Pinto, 5th of May, and black beans.

Frijoles refritos (free-HO-lace ray-FREE-toes) Refried beans.

Gracias (GRAH-see-ahs) Thank you.

Gringo (GREENG-go) Foreigner. Especially applied to Americans.

Gusto (GOOSE-toe) Pleasure, keen enjoyment.

Henequen (ay-nay-KEN) Agave plant that produces sisal fiber. It has blue-grey leaves with conical spines which are cut from the bottom.

Hermana (air-MAH-na) Sister. *Hermano* (air-MAH-no) Brother. Used widely in Christian circles as in “Sister Nancy” or “Brother Bob.”

Hola (O-la) Hello.

Huarache (wah-RAH-chay) Sandal.

Huevos a la bandera mexicana (WAY-vos a la bahn-DAY-rah meh-he-CAH-nah) Eggs, Mexican flag style.

Huipil (WEE-peel) Woman's blouse native to southern Mexico. Spaniards accent the last syllable rather than the first.

Jabalí (ha-ba-LEE) Wild boar.

Jalapeno (ha-la-PEH-nyo) One kind of hot chili.

Jovenes (HO-ve-nace) Young people.

Kilo (KEY-lo) Weight measurement. In the metric system, it equals 2.2 pounds.

Litro (LEE-tro) Liter. Measurement in the metric system, it equals approximately one quart.

Mariache (mah-re-AH-chay) Mexican band of singers.

Masa (MAH-sah) Dough for making *tortillas*, *tamales*, etc. Dried corn is soaked in a lime solution until husks can be rubbed off. Then the *nixtamal* corn is ground while still moist to make the *masa*.

Mestizo (mays-TEE-zo) Race of those of mixed Spanish and Indian blood.

Metro (MAY-tro) Meter. In the metric system, it equals 39 inches.

Mole (MO-lay) Rich, and usually piquant sauce made of chilis, chocolate, spices, nuts and raisins.

Moronga Rellena (mo-ROHN-ga ray-YAY-nah) Blood sausage, usually served in a soup.

Muchacha (moo-CHAH-chah) Girl.

Nopal (no-PAHL) Nopales (no-PAH-lace) Prickly pear cactus.

Ojo de dios (OH-ho de dee-OHS) Eye of god, pagan religious symbol of the Huichol Indians.

Olla (OH-ya) Medium-sized or large clay jar, pot or kettle.

Papá (pah-PAH) Father, dad.

Pecado (peh-CAH-doe) Sin.

Pescado (pehs-CAH-doe) Fish.

Peso (PAY-so) Monetary unit. Presently worth between four and five American cents. (1976)

Petate (pay-TAH-tay) Woven straw mat.

Piñata (pee-NYA-tah) Fanciful Christmas or birthday decoration which is filled with candies, nuts and fruits, and small toys. Suspended at children's parties to be broken open during a game, it spills out the goodies for all to grab.

Plaza (PLAH-zah) Plaza, square; marketplace.

Posiblemente (po-see-blay-MEN-tay) Possibly.

Pozole (po-SO-lay) Soup containing hominy and pork, as well as several other ingredients.

Qué Dios les bendiga! (kay dee-OHS lace bayn-DEE-gah) May God bless you!

Quesadilla (kay-sah-DEE-yah) Folded *tortilla* filled with white cheese and, in Oaxaca, finely chopped yellow-orange squash blossom.

Ranchería (rahn-chay-REE-ah) Small settlement or cluster of homes.

Rancho (RAHN-cho) Ranch.

Rebozo (ray-BOH-so) Long, fringed hand-woven shawl.

Refresco (ray-FRAYS-co) Bottled soft drink. Most widely distributed throughout Mexico are Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Orange Crush.

Rellena (ray-YEH-na) Blood sausage.

Salsa (SAHL-sa) Sauce, dressing gravy.

Seño (SAY-nyo) Shortened form of *señora* or *señorita*. Used by Indians in the marketplace, especially when it's unclear if a woman is married or not.

Serrano (say-RAH-no) Another kind of extra hot chili.

Sí (see) Yes.

Sopa de tortilla (SO-pah day tore-TEE-yah) Tortilla soup.

Tacos de sesos (TAH-kos day SAY-sos) Tortilla rolled or folded and stuffed with beef brains. Can be grilled, fried, or baked.

Temple (TEHM-plo) Church, temple.

Tierra firme (tee-ER-ra FEAR-may) Firm or solid ground.

Tortilla (tore-TEE-ya) Cornmeal patty. A ball of dough is patted between the palms of the hands until a thin, flat round cake is formed. It is then cooked on an ungreased griddle until done on both sides, but not browned. Tortillas are now machine made in towns and cities.

Tostada (tohs_TAH-dah) Crisply fried tortilla.

Un momento (oon mo-MEN-toh) One moment, just a moment.

Verdad? (bear-DAHD) Isn't it true?

Yerbabuena (yehr-bah-BWAY-nah) Mint.

Zócalo (ZOE-ka-lo) Town square or plaza.

WORDS FROM TWO SPANISH CHORUSES

Solamente en Cristo

Solamente en Cristo (so-la-MEN-tay en KREES-to) Only in Christ.

Solamente en El (so-la-MEN-tay en el) Only in Him.

La salvación se encuentra en El (la sahl-vah-see-OHN say ayn-KWEN-trah en el) Salvation is found only in Him.

No hay otro nombre dado a los hombres (no ahy ohtro nohm-BRAY dahdo ah los OM-brays) There is no other name given to men.

Solamente en Cristo, Solamente en El. (so-la-MEN-tay en KREES-to, so-la-MEN-tay en el) Only in Christ, Only in Him.

Por Estos Favores (a dinner song – to the tune of Adeste Fideles)

Por estos favores que Tu nos has dado (pore ES-toce fah-FOHR-ace kay two noce ahs DA-tho) For these favors that You have given us.

Te damos las gracias, Oh, buen Padre Dios! (tay DAH-moce lahs GRAH-see-ahs, o, bwayn PAH-dray dee-OHS) We give You thanks, Oh, great Father God!

De tu buena mano nos das el alimento (day two BWAY-na MAH-no noce dahs el ah-lee-MEN-toe) From Your good hand, You give us nourishment.

De Ti es nuestra vida, de Ti también salud (day tee es new-ES-trah VEE-dah, day tee tahm-be-EN sah-LUDE) From You is our life, from You also our health.

A Ti te alabamos, Oh, buen Padre Dios! (ah tee tay ah-lah-BAH-moce, o, bwayn PAH-dray dee-OHS) We praise you, Oh, great Father God!

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE TO SPANISH NAMES

Abastos (ah-BAHS-tohs)
Aurelio Mandujano (ah-oo-RAY-lee-o mahn-doo-HAH-no)
Buenos Aires (BWAY-nohs EYE-race)
Cacalchén (kah-hahl-CHEN)
Carlos Morales (CAR-lohs mo-RAH-lace)
Cuauhtemoc (kwah-oo-TAY-moke)
El Nuevo Mercado Libertad (el noo-AY-vo mare-KAH-doh leeber-TAHD)
Galera (gah-LARE-ah)
Guadalajara (gwah-dah-lah-HAH-rah)
Hermenegildo Ortiz (air-may-nay-HEEL-do or-TEES)
Huichol (we-CHOAL)
Ixtaccihuatl (eeks-tah-SEE-waddle)
Jalisco (ha-LEASE-koh)
José Maya (ho-SAY MAH-yah)
La Iglesia Bautista El Mesías (lah ee-GLAY-see-ah bah-oo-TEES-tah el may-SEE-ahs)
Llano de León (YA-noh day lay-OWN)
Mazateca (mah-zah-TAY-kah)
Mérida (MEH-ree-dah)
Mexico (MEH-hee-co)
Miahuatlán (mee-ah-waht-LAHN)
Mitla (MEET-lah)
Mixtecs (MEEKS-teks)
Monte Albán (MOHN-tay ahl-BAHN)
Oaxaca (wah-HAH-cah)
Orizaba (oh-ree-ZAH-bah)
Paila (pah-EE-lah)
Parras (PAR-rahs)
Pochutla (poh-CHOOT-lah)
Popocatepetl (poh-poh-cah-TEH-peddle)
Porvenir Ballesteros (por-vay-NEAR bah-yehs-TEH-rohs)
Puerto Escondido (PWHERE-toh ehs-cone-DEE-doh)
Puerto Vallarta (PWHERE-toh vah-YAHR-tah)
Rogelio Vásquez (roh-HAY-lee-oh VAHS-case)
Salina Cruz (sah-LEE-nah cruce)
Salvador & Alejandrina Trejo (sahl-vah-DOHR, ah-lay-hahn-DREE-nah TRAY-ho)
San Agustín Loxicha (sahn ah-goose-TEEN loke-SEE-chah)
San Gabriel Mixtepec (sahn gah-bree-EL meeks-tay-PEK)
San José del Pacífico (sahn ho-SAY del pah-SEE-fee-koh)
Santa Biblia Para Mí (SAHN-tah BEE-blee-ah PAH-rah mee)
Santa Clara (SAHN-tah CLAH-ra)
Sola de Vega (SO-lah day VAY-gah)

Taxco (TAHS-koh)
Tehuana (tay-WAH-nahs)
Tehuantepec (tay-wahn-tay-PEK)
Teotihuacan (tay-oh-tee-WAH-kahn -or- tay-oh-tee-wah-KAHN)
Tlaquepaque (tlah-kay-PAH-kay)
Tlaxiaco (tlah-hee-AH-koh)
Tonalá (toh-nah-LAH)
Torreón (tore-ray-OWN)
Uxmal (ooks-MAHL)
Villahermosa (vee-yah-air-MOH-sah)
Virgen de la Soledad (VEER-hen day lah soh-lay-DAHD)
Yagul (yah-GOOL)
Yalalag (yah-LAH-lahg)
Yucatán (yoo-cah-TAHN)
Zacatecas (zah-cah-TAY-cahs)
Zapoteca (zah-poh-TAY-cah)
Zapotecs (ZAH-poh-tek)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



(written in 1978)

Nancy Perry has been a Southern Baptist representative to Mexico since December, 1973, along with her husband, Rev. Robert L. Perry. Following a year of language study in Guadalajara, Mexico, the family served most of 1975 in the southern city of Oaxaca doing rural mission work with Indian people scattered throughout that mountainous region. Since September, 1975, the Perrys have lived and worked in Mexico City. Rev. Perry's primary assignment with the Foreign Mission Board is as pastor of Capitol City Baptist Church.

Mrs. Perry grew up in North Kansas City, Missouri and graduated from Southwest Missouri State University. Before their appointment, she worked as a social worker, junior high school librarian, and as a Spanish teacher, along with being a pastor's wife. The Perrys have two sons, Douglas and David.

DOUG'S DEDICATION AND UPDATE

Thirty years later, I'm still just beginning to understand the legacy that was entrusted to me by Godly parents, grandparents and extended family. In the last three or four years, the Lord has begun to really show me how my own ministry is to be shaped. Yet I keep looking back and seeing how our time in Mexico – and my mother's deep faith, selfless love and abiding connection with the Holy Spirit – was vitally important to prepare me for what's coming. I never bought into the American lie that a boat and a new car and a 401K would make you happy. I grew up seeing kids with their skin flaking off because they didn't have a bar of soap. Pastors that would kill their last chicken to feed the visiting missionary family – and yet were happy and trusted God in all things. I praise God for the parents He gave me and for the experiences of watching them endure through so many trials.

This book was published on the year-long furlough after our first four year term in Mexico. After that were about three more years of ministry in Mexico – filled with ongoing health problems, particularly with my younger brother David's severe lung problems from the smog in Mexico City. The decision was made to go back to the USA in 1980 and Dad took a pastorate in Excelsior Springs, Missouri, then several years later an administrative role as Director of Missions for the Clay-Platte Association in northern Kansas City, Missouri. In there somewhere he completed a Doctor of Ministry program at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Mom was never happy away from Mexico. Since she was thirteen years old she had known that God had called her to be a missionary in Mexico. In college, she married a math major. She took a lot of heat from the older ladies in the WMU (Women's Missionary Union) that felt she was abandoning God's call on her life. But she prayed – and Bob got called into the ministry as a pastor. As he was serving as a pastor she prayed – and he got a call to be a missionary. She prayed – and they got appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to go to Mexico. She never pestered or pressed, she just prayed and God moved.

She died from cancer (melanoma) in 2003 after several years of fighting, living far beyond what the doctors had predicted. Sick in bed while on chemotherapy she started a non-profit called “Good Gifts Ministries” to provide handcraft jobs and income for poor immigrant Hispanics. In Herndon, Virginia, on May, 19th, with the nuclear family gathered, my brother and his fiancée got married in the living room, with her in a hospital bed, so she could be there for their wedding. She went to be with Jesus a week later – and they had their full blown wedding in Kansas City as planned in June that year.

Mom had such an amazing gift of administration, mixed with a creativity and a sensitivity to the needs of others. This gift continued to manifest, even during her sickness. She had her own funeral planned out, flight arrangements for the casket arranged, details done on every possible levels so that those who remained behind wouldn't have to worry. While confined to bed during chemotherapy times, she made hand-sewn dolls, collected toys and read books like Peter Rabbit (my favorite) on cassette tape for the grandchildren she would never get to see. I credit Mom in a big way for marrying Rachael. In 1994 when we had been dating, Rachael had decided that we should “just be friends” – until we opened the box Mom had left marked “For My Grandkids” and we pored through all the little bits, so lovingly gathered for those children she would never meet. A tea set marked “for the first girl”. A train for the first boy. Cassettes and dolls and mementos from Mexico. Rachael cried and cried and said, “These are for MY kids! I want to be part of THIS family!” A few months later we were married. Even in death, my Mom's gift of administration was impacting our lives.

And even beyond that, Mom knew that Dad wasn't really wired to be alone. In her last days, she had prayerfully and lovingly prepared her top ten list of single ladies that she felt Dad should consider

remarrying after she was gone. Soon after Mom's death, Dad got married to Dr. Marilyn Christian Nelson - who was number two on the list.

At the time of her funeral Dad was the Executive Director for the Mount Vernon Baptist Association in Northern Virginia. At her funeral each of the dozens of the congregations in the association sent choir members to represent them. As I recall, around 500+ people gathered and heard a choir nearly a hundred strong, in a complete rainbow of choir robes, sing her favorite songs and hear the Gospel presented. I never cried at her funeral. She was so loved by many, and I knew that I would miss her, but I also knew that the death of a parent is a pivotal moment in any person's life and a moment, above all, to test whether you really believe what you say you believe. She was with Jesus and I knew it. And she was not in pain anymore.

I've prayed a lot about this and I've come to a very sad conclusion. God made Nancy to be a missionary in Mexico. And because of decisions and circumstances, she couldn't be that. So He took her home. And I'm really glad He did. Right now, I'm sure she is, too. But the lesson to me is clear – be where God wants you to be – or else.

I often wonder how she might feel about the turn my own life has taken – the way that I have walked away from all to serve as a missionary right here to those trapped in dead religion. I think she would have understood. She heard God a lot better than the Baptists would want you to believe is possible – and she KNEW that God could heal and that the gifts of the Spirit were real and for today.

I know that where I'm walking is hard ground and I'm saying some things that people don't want to hear, but I think Mom would understand. I know that she wanted the Bride to be pure and that she saw the futility and hypocrisy of the politics and in-fighting in the “system”. She was hurt by “church politics” on many occasions that I can remember – and far more, I'm sure, that I never heard about.

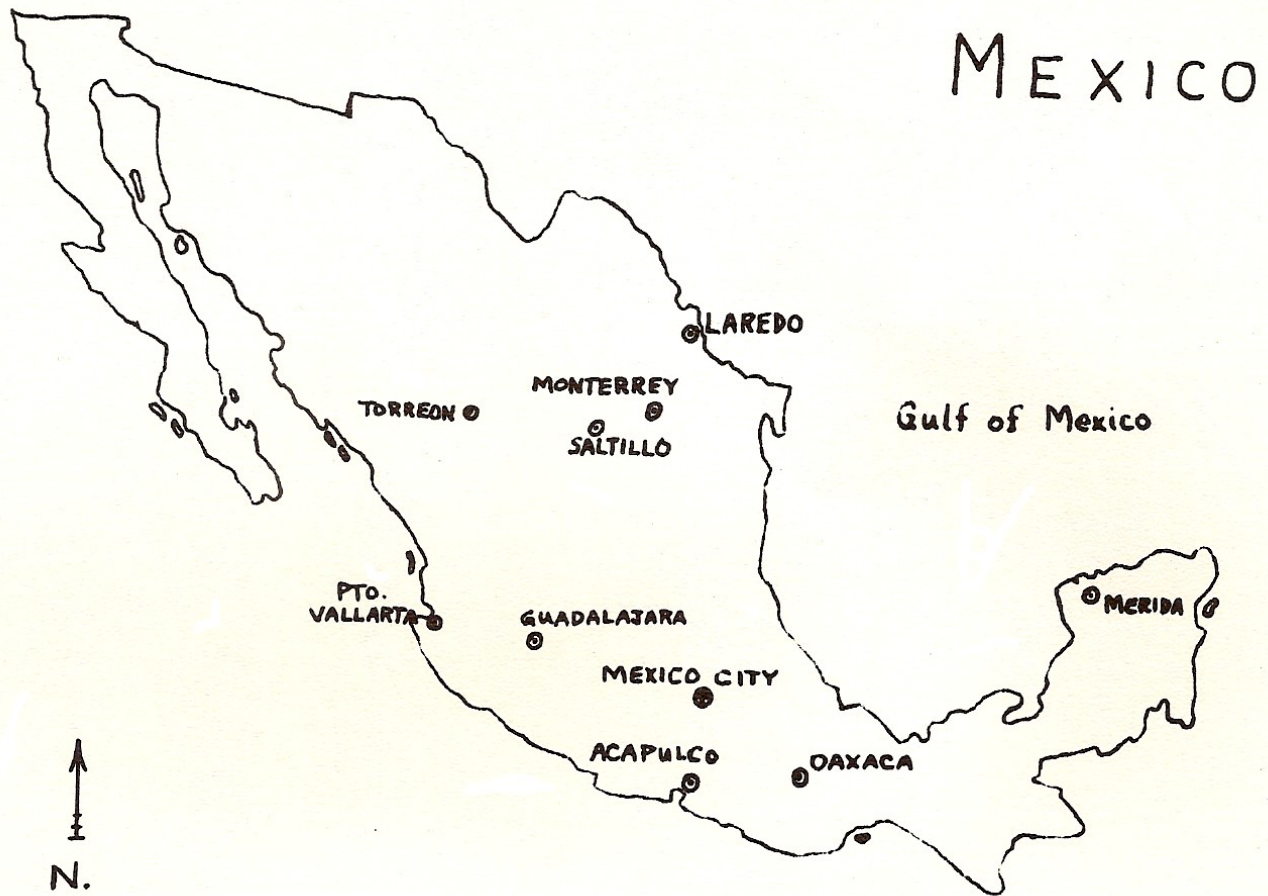
It's a very hard step to cross the line that I've drawn in the sand. If I'm right, the vast majority of what some of us have spent our lives building and cementing into “tradition” has grieved the Spirit of God and sent millions – maybe billions – to hell. It's a hard thing to ask someone to cross that line. Only God can push someone across that line and pull the scales off their eyes and pour out repentance.

In this book, Mom talks about the dead, superstitious religion that she saw amongst the cathedrals and basilicas of Mexico – the blended Christian and pagan legacy of the Conquistadors. The giant, gold-crusted buildings built on the back of the exploited poor. Perhaps if she were here now, she might see that America in the last thirty years has become more like Mexico in that way than we want to admit.

I pray that God will wake us up soon. I hope you will pray with me. The only unanswered prayer of Jesus that I can find in the Bible is the last one He prayed before the Cross – that we would be ONE as He and Father are one. (John 17) Then the world would know that He was sent by the Father. When we manifest our freakish, unstoppable, sacrificial love for one another, the “world” will have to see and acknowledge that something supernatural is happening and that Jesus is real and was who He said He was. Maybe if we all pray that last prayer in agreement with Jesus, it might get answered.

In the meantime, I present this book (again), as a gift from my family, hoping that it will edify the Body – and that this beautiful woman of God (who hardly anybody ever heard of) will have a voice to speak again about the power and glory and majesty and mercy of our Mighty God.

Doug Perry
Missionary to the United States



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