

MEXICO MISSION TRIP

PERSONAL LOG OF LAURENCE A. JUSTICE

March 11-18, 2000

Victory Baptist Church Kansas City, Missouri

On October 13, 1999 the Victory Baptist Church of Kansas City, Missouri voted unanimously to send four of its men, *Pastor Laurence Justice, David Anderson, Sean Baker and Monte Jones* to visit *missionary Danny Roten* whose headquarters are in McAllen, Texas. Brother Roten has spent many years in virtually parts of Mexico spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and establishing Baptist churches. The purpose of the trip was to be fourfold:

1. To visit the field of labor of missionary Roten
2. To observe the work of brother Roten
3. To aid brother Roten in his work of evangelism in Mexico
4. To be of help to brother Roten in any other way possible

The expenses of this trip were to be defrayed by the church at a cost of \$1,000 and was to take place with the approval of brother Roten beginning March 11th and ending March 18th in the year 2000. The following log was kept by Pastor Laurence Justice during the trip and is intended as a partial description of what the four men making the trip saw and experienced.

SATURDAY MARCH 11, 2000

After loading our baggage into brother David Anderson's 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee four wheel drive sport utility vehicle I kissed wife Lyndy Justice goodbye and we departed from the church building at 6:39 AM. We decided to take I-35 South through Wichita, Kansas and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma instead of Missouri highway 71 through Joplin, Missouri and Tulsa, Oklahoma because of a seven inch snow being reported in the Joplin area. We ate breakfast at 8:43 AM at Hardee's Restaurant at Matfield Green on the Kansas Turnpike North of Wichita. At mile marker 177 we telephoned brother Paul Brown in Oklahoma City using brother David Anderson's cell phone. We wanted to notify brother Brown that we were going to pass through Oklahoma City and would be willing to transport some things to brother Roten for him if he could meet us at some location on I-35 highway in Oklahoma City. As we drove through Kansas and Oklahoma I read

aloud the daily Bible reading our church uses each year. The chapters we read all during the trip were from the books of Deuteronomy, Mark and Luke.

We ate lunch at 11:45 AM at Arby's Restaurant on S.E. 66th and I-35 in Oklahoma City where brother Brown met us, ate lunch with us and presented to us the materials he wished delivered to brother Roten. David Anderson had driven from Kansas City to Oklahoma City. Sean Baker now drove and at 2 PM we stopped at the rest area on the Texas side of the Red River. Traffic on I-35 W from Ft. Worth to Waco, Texas was very heavy. During the afternoon we began keeping a list of all the "churches" we saw that evidently do not wish to be known as churches because of the names they have placed on the signs on their buildings. Some of the names we collected included Living Resource Center, Praise Temple, Victorious Life, Temple Of New Life and Evangel Temple. I drove from near Waco to San Marcos, Texas where we ate supper at McDonald's Restaurant. During this long afternoon all the men related favorite stories about various experiences in the past and we all agreed to look into the possibility of taking a group of members of our church on a Bible Study tour of Israel in 2001.

At 11:20 PM we arrived at the home of brother Danny Roten in *McAllen, Texas* where we would spend Saturday night, all day Sunday and Sunday night. Monte Jones slept on the Rotens' couch while David, Sean and I slept in the beds of the three Roten boys, Josh, Michael and Daniel.

SUNDAY MARCH 12, 2000

We arose on this fine Lord's day at 6:30 AM and were served a special breakfast by Janet Roten. Leaving the Roten home at 10 AM we drove for about thirty minutes to the Mexican city of *Nuevo Progreso*. The Roten van in which we traveled this morning was the one brother Roten had purchased last year from brother Jack Duplechain, pastor of the Raleigh Springs Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee.

We drove through vast vegetable fields where there were more onions growing in one place than I would think even existed at any one time. We also passed through a number of grapefruit orchards. The soil in this area was sandy colored and there was an extensive underground irrigation system on the U.S. side of the border. Various multicolored flowers and trees were everywhere on both sides of the border in this region. There were Oleanders, Bougainvilleas, Poinsettias, Palm trees, and various cousins of the Mimosa tree.

After paying \$1.50 to cross the bridge into Nuevo Progreso, Mexico we crossed the *Rio Grande River* which at that point was about 50 feet wide and its water was green and filthy. Here we learned that all the bridges across the Rio Grande into Mexico are privately owned by Mexicans. As we drove into

downtown Nuevo Progreso we found it crowded and bustling on this Sunday morning just like any other day of the week.

The worship services at *Primero Iglesia Bautista* of the Mexico Baptist Convention were a real blessing. Thirty-eight persons including eleven children were present for Sunday School. At the close of the Sunday School hour the children stood at the front of the auditorium and recited Bible verses they evidently had learned in Sunday School that morning. The church also sang a Spanish version of "Happy Birthday" to a little girl who stood at the front while others present all came by and shook hands with her and hugged and congratulated her. Morning worship began at 11 o'clock and was conducted entirely in Spanish. Ephesians 3:1-4 was the scripture reading and the hymns led by a young well-dressed Mexican man included "To God Be The Glory," "God Of Our Fathers" and "Our Father's God To Thee" which I enjoyed trying to sing in Spanish. I noted that these were quality hymns in contrast to the shallow and worldly choruses sung by so many churches in the U.S. these days. The hymnbook was "Himnario Bautista" printed by the Baptist Publishing House in El Paso, Texas. I know personally Dr. Frank Patterson who was for many years the head of this publishing house and in the 1950's our family spent the Christmas week with brother Patterson's family at the Baptist Publishing House. The church pianist was a male member of the church in his mid to late thirties. He was a local dentist and his wife was well dressed and coiffured.

The sermon was delivered by *Pastor Tomas Olvera* age 44 who has served the church as pastor for the past ten years. His sermon text was II Timothy 4:1-4. He made generous use of scripture references in his message including Hebrews 13:7, II Timothy 3:15 and Acts 15. His delivery was animated and his sermon was a crescendo in volume and intensity. He used well-prepared notes that he graciously showed me afterward. He did not halt or stumble in his delivery and he made good use of gestures. He was well dressed and immaculately groomed as was the case with his wife as well. His sermon lasted for forty-three minutes from start to finish. Brother Roten who is a close friend of brother Olvera says that brother Tomas believes in and preaches the doctrines of God's sovereign grace. Brother Roten also informed me that all the men in the church with one exception believe the doctrines of grace.



The church building was made up of a very simple auditorium and attached Sunday School rooms. The auditorium was clean, painted pastel green and had light green tile on the floor. The pews were obviously used furniture and there were florescent lights and ceiling fans on the ten-foot ceiling. There were seats for sixty if crowded together. I sat next to an open window which was not covered with a screen and enjoyed the very pleasant 70 degree temperature. As I looked out the window I saw a very typical sight in Mexico, a wall covered on top with broken glass for the purpose of hindering burglars from climbing over the wall. The singing of many birds added to the pleasantness of the worship hour. The worshippers were all very clean, bright and friendly. They were also very reverent throughout the entire service. Pastor Olvera called on brother Roten to lead in the closing prayer that he offered in clear and flawless Spanish. After the conclusion of the services we visited with several members of the church and took pictures in front of the church building.

We drove back across the border to McAllen for a lunch of tacos and bean soup. During the afternoon brother Monte Jones attempted to repair the broken air conditioning on the Roten van but to no avail. Meantime Sean Baker played football with the Roten boys. We rested and visited during the remainder of the afternoon and then at 6:30 PM we held a worship service at the Roten home in which I preached on Psalms 121:1-2 calling the sermon "The Three Hills." We

sang good hymns led by brother Roten. At 7:30 we ate a wonderful supper of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and all the trimmings prepared by Janet Roten. Stuffed full and very tired we went to bed at 9:45 anticipating finally getting underway for Mexico on the morrow.

MONDAY MARCH 13, 2000

It was 5:30 AM when we arose this day. We cleaned up, packed the car and set out to enter Mexico at *Reynosa*. Leaving the Roten house at 7:11 AM we ate breakfast at McDonald's Restaurant in McAllen, Texas. Since the Mexican government requires all cars crossing their border to be covered by Mexican auto insurance we went to the Nelson Insurance Agency in McAllen where David Anderson and brother Roten filled out forms and paid \$73.70 for the proper policy. Next we stopped at an H E B grocery store in McAllen where we purchased sandwich fixings, fruit and bread for our meals across the border. At 8:45 AM we went to Casa De Cambia where we exchanged our American currency for Mexican currency. We changed \$800 of the church's money into Mexican and divided it among all four of the men from Victory so that in case one of us got robbed we would not lose all the money. In addition I changed \$100 of my own money for Mexican. The rate of exchange we got on that particular day was nine pesos and ten centavos for one dollar. At 9:07 AM we crossed the border into Reynosa, Mexico and were charged \$1.25 for doing so after a very short wait in line at the bridge.

When we reached the Mexican side and filled out the obligatory papers Sean Baker was told that he had insufficient ID for being issued a visa. Brother Roten and David Anderson went to the proper government office to work out the problem and found that \$5.00 American money was just the ticket Sean needed. While all this was going on Monte Jones and I walked through the downtown market in Reynosa where Monte bought a white Mexican cowboy hat for 72 pesos or about \$8.00. I told him I would wait to purchase mine till we got further down into Mexico because I figured I could get it cheaper than that.

At 10:30 AM we finally were ready to head for the interior of Mexico and after passing through the pastels of the buildings and then the shanty towns in Reynosa reached the open road. While moving down the highway in the rich farming area nearest the border I read aloud our daily Bible readings. Corn is grown in this part of the country. We passed through many small and very poor villages. Mesquite trees were everywhere and along this road we spotted a number of Central American merchants transporting automobiles and TVs from the U.S. to their own countries. About an hour South of the border we stopped at a gasoline station for gasoline and a Mexican Coca Cola. The Mexican government long ago

nationalized the petroleum industry in Mexico so all gas stations are called Pemex which is the name of the government run gasoline industry.

It was 2:35 PM when we arrived in *Ciudad Victoria, Mexico* where we went to a bank to pay for our visas. At Banco Serfin we paid 170 Pesos each for our visas. The tellers at this bank were attractive young Mexican women with cold black hair and ready smiles.

After leaving Ciudad Victoria we drove over the *Sierra Madre Oriental Mountains* where we were treated to breath-taking views of the plain of Eastern Mexico. Near the summit of the pass we came to some pre European ruins called *Balcon de Montezuma* but did not stop to view them. Instead we left some gospel tracts with the very poor family who lived at the entrance to the ruins and took some pictures. The flora now began to change very noticeably and included Joshua Trees, Mesquite Trees, huge prickly pear cactus plants as tall as ten and even twelve feet and other types of cacti as well. At this point we came to a strange looking monument on the side of the road that was shaped like a large yellow ball with a black stripe down its side. The plaque attached to its base said that this monument marked the *Tropic of Cancer*, the only place on earth where the sun is directly overhead at noon. I recalled here that two years previously I had seen the Tropic of Capricorn in Brazil.

At 5:20 we arrived at what was to be one of our favorite locations on the entire trip, the city of *Tula*. Passing through the narrow dusty streets we came to the *Hotel Meson de Mollinedo* where all five of us were able to stay the night for the grand sum of 213 pesos. We stayed in two rooms, brother Roten, Sean and I in room 305 and David Anderson and Monte Jones in 207. After leaving our gear in our rooms we set out to walk the streets of the town and to pass out tracts to all whom we met. It seems to be the daily pastime in all Mexican towns and cities for the people to stroll in the public square in the evenings when dusk begins to settle. We met an American teen aged girl who surprised us by addressing us in English. Two of the locals signed up with brother Roten here to receive Bible correspondence courses. We walked through the town market place which was filled with delicious and very pleasing aromas from the many fruits and vegetables including Guavas, Papayas, Tomalitos (small green tomatoes surrounded by a leaf), tangerines called Mandarins, limes and a large vegetable the skin of which looked like a potato but the shape of which was more like an onion.

About dark we went to the restaurant in our hotel for supper. We ordered steak and enchiladas which resembled neither as we knew them. What they called enchiladas I would call Tostados and Monte Jones' enchiladas were actually covered with chocolate. Though not matching our own ideas of what we ordered the food was very good.

Returning to the town square after dark we blitzed the area with tracts handing them to everyone with whom we came into contact. We spoke with a number of people in Spanish, broken English and even German. Two German men about the age of sixty spoke with us using words from all three languages which got to be a little confusing after awhile. I had the privilege of handing a gospel tract to a modern looking and very clean and proper Catholic nun who took the tract and said “Gracias” and whom a few minutes later I saw leading a prayer meeting in the local Cathedral. My prayer is that she took the tract home that night and read it and that the Lord spoke to her through its message.

At 8:30 PM we returned to our hotel and Sean and I sat in a partially enclosed patio on the second floor, Sean reading and I bringing my log up to date. The hotel had three floors with all rooms facing onto a central patio or courtyard. This architectural style creates a pleasant breeze through the building. This particular night the temperature was about 70 degrees and the humidity was low making for a very pleasant evening. Sean and I fell into a philosophical discussion about the fall of man and why God allowed it to happen. Tomorrow we plan to reach the desert Indian villages where we hope to distribute gospel tracts to the *Pame Indians*, perhaps being the first to bring the gospel to these people.

TUESDAY MARCH 14, 2000

We were awakened long before dawn this morning to a chorus of many roosters crowing, donkeys braying and birds singing which continued past 6 AM. After shaving and cleaning up I went to the courtyard area of our hotel to pray and read the Bible then I walked to the town square by myself to see what I could see. A four man crew was sweeping the brick city square with regular kitchen brooms.

The children of the city, dressed in the uniforms of their various schools, were gathering around the square and boarding school buses. I was told that the schools in Mexico meet in three shifts due to an inadequate number of buildings. Surprisingly to me the literacy rate in Mexico is very high compared to other nations. All the children I saw were very clean and neat in appearance.

The square soon came alive with the people of Tula all of whom were friendly to me and all of whom had beautiful smiles. Most of the older women wore shawls called rebozas to protect them from the coolness of the morning. Some were made of wool, some of silk and some of acrylic. Thousands of Grackles were squawking loudly in the trees in the square, so loud that it was hard to hear anything else. After sweeping the square for about thirty minutes the men began to wash it with garden hoses.

As I strolled through the narrow streets I observed some very old Spanish style buildings with the characteristic large wooden doors. Our guidebook said that Tula is the oldest city in this particular state in Mexico dating to the eighteenth century.

I again saw the two German tourists with whom we had talked last night and this time I tried to speak to them in my rusty German from college days. They told me that they were from Frankfort and that they had four days left till they would return to their homeland.

I enjoyed watching the dawn come. The sky now began to turn red and the temperature was so pleasant that no jacket was needed. As the light increased I could see the whites and pastels of the houses on the hillsides surrounding the city. The clock bell on the Cathedral chimed or rather clanged just now as it had done every fifteen minutes all night long.

As I stood on a street corner near the square I was taken with the terrifying thought of Mexico's millions, the great majority of whom have no gospel witness in their towns and villages and who never hear the true gospel of Jesus Christ preached. Then I was comforted somewhat by the thought that God has his elect and will call them out and save them wherever they are! At all times I was passing out gospel tracts to everyone with whom I came into contact.

Tula had a few old fashioned TV antennas and a tall short wave antenna downtown. Most of the windows on the houses had no screens on them. There were a surprising number of pickups of all models and years driven by men going to work. As I stood on one particular corner a garbage truck moved toward the square. Written on the side were the words Obras Publicas. Most all of the men wore white cowboy hats except for the garbage men who wore baseball caps.

Moving along the streets I came to two different tortilla factories which were just getting underway for the day. One was making flour tortillas and the other was making corn tortillas. They were using fairly modern machines to make their tortillas which they would then wrap in bunches of about 20 in butcher paper and place them in crates or sell them over the counter to each person who came to purchase his daily supply. Many dogs ran loose in this and in every town we visited.

We ate breakfast at the hotel restaurant at 7:44 AM. David Anderson ordered Desay Uno Especial (an omelet), Monte Jones ordered Huevos Conticino (bacon and fried eggs), Sean Baker ordered Huevos Con Chorizo (scrambled eggs with sausage scrambled in), brother Roten ordered Tocino and hotcakes and I ordered just plain hotcakes. I tried to sample all the various dishes we ordered and all were very tasty.

At 8:44 AM we left the hotel bound for the city of Cardenas. There was heavy truck traffic everywhere this morning. Traveling through the countryside we saw birds such as Chaparral or Road Runner and the Carcare which at first glance resembles an American Bald Eagle. The plants we saw included more Joshua Trees, Mesquites, branched cactus and the Mege plant from which the Mexicans make tequila. There was an increasing variation of cactus plants in this wasteland

of white sandy soil. Here we began to observe a parasite that actually grows on the electric wires which looks like small clumps of Spanish Moss. Today brother Roten pointed to a Catholic church building and referred to it as a Catholic edifice because according to the New Testament Catholic churches are not true churches and neither are buildings properly called churches. From that moment we all began to refer to the Catholic Cathedrals in every town as the Catholic edifice.

At about 9:24 AM we came to the village of *San Rafael* which was a dusty and filthy village with the scrawniest and sickest looking cattle I have seen in a long time standing everywhere. Here we encountered the first of several military checkpoints on our trip. The Mexican soldiers were outfitted in the latest American helmets, fatigues, weapons and even Humvees.

Leaving the blacktop at *Ciudad Del Maiz* we traveled six miles over a very rough road to the town of *Lagunillias* where we arrived at 10:30 AM. This was one of the *Pame Indian* villages we had set out to visit and here we left gospel tracts in every house and hut. Here brother Roten held conversations with many of the villagers concerning salvation and the gospel. Electric power lines had recently come to this very primitive village which was filled with goats, burros, turkeys, geese and chickens. Many of the yards had ovens made of what looked to be adobe. These ovens were similar to what I had seen many years ago near the hogans of the Navajo Indians in Arizona and New Mexico.

For lunch we drove back to *Ciudad Del Maiz* where we ate lunch in the sparse shade of the very old Catholic edifice, some of which looked to be ancient and in ruins. Here we dined on a chicken sandwich spread which we had purchased before leaving McAllen, Texas. I ate some of the beef jerky and dried fruit that I had brought with me from Kansas City. We all drank bottled water or Coca Cola.

After lunch we headed for another Pame Indian village called *Alvaro Obregon* and drove through a wasteland of mountains to get there. Alvaro Obregon suddenly appeared as we came over a hill at 1:25 PM. The yards of many if not most of the houses were fenced off by Organ Pipe Cacti planted to serve as fences. Alvaro Obregon was a much larger village than Lagunillias. Brother Roten and I walked about two miles placing tracts in doorways and handing them to villagers. We had several very interesting conversations with people, one of which was especially enjoyable.

It was with a young widow who had four children. After getting a warm reception from her she went across the street and told her relatives about us and they came out and talked for quite awhile about God's word and about church services which had been held in that village in the past. I found myself wishing I could speak Spanish so I could gather these people and start a Sunday School

there. The language barrier was always in the way for me. I gave the widow's son a coin and took pictures of the entire group that had gathered while we talked. The others in our group said that they covered about the same amount of territory as we did though we finished before them.

As we waited for the others to return to the store where we had agreed to regroup we visited with several local children and brother Roten was able to converse with them. While sitting on the porch of this store a truck load of workers pulled up to the small store which seemed to be the central place in the village. Made up of both men and women these people were seated in the back of a pickup truck covered by a blue plastic tarp to shield them from the sun. We gave each of them a gospel tract.

After waiting longer than we thought we should have had to for the others brother Roten and I got into the Jeep and drove back through the village looking for the others. While driving around we came across the old ruins of a very large house which some people seated nearby told us were the remains of the house of a famous Mexican general from one of their many past wars but they told us the general's name was one thing and others whom we asked could not agree on his identity. After not finding the others we went back to the store where they had returned in the meantime and we left for the town of *Cardenas* where we arrived at 4:45 PM.

Upon first entering this city we stopped at a Taxi stand for directions to a hotel. We were directed to the *Hotel Central* which the taxi driver said was the "best in town." We paid 413 pesos or \$11.00 each for three rooms. This "luxury" hotel had rooms on two floors all facing onto the large courtyard and each room having a TV. Large green columns held up the porch around the courtyard. Cardenas was much larger than Tula and was more spread out.

At 5:30 PM we ate supper at the *Casal Restaurant Y Cafeteria* just down the street from our hotel. This restaurant was our favorite of the whole trip and we ate several delicious meals here. For supper I ordered Enchiladas Rojas trying again to get some real enchiladas rather than the tostados I was served when I ordered enchiladas at Tula. I was successful and was served three chicken and cheese enchiladas smothered in red pecante sauce. They were HOT!

After supper we passed out a large number of tracts in the city market place where hundreds of people were strolling. Sean Baker and I found a sombrero shop which had the Grande size hats that we needed and I purchased a large white Mexican cowboy hat for \$5.00. Later Sean was to refer to Monte Jones' hat that he had purchased in Reynosa as Monte's "eight dollar rip-off." Sean purchased a hat very similar to mine. David had a suede hat so now all of us had hats and we laughingly took pictures of ourselves with our hats on. The sounds and smells of

this market place were truly delightful and there was a real excitement in mingling with and passing out gospel tracts to the multitudes here.

Sean somehow met a young teenaged girl from Longview, Texas who spoke English but no Spanish. She seemed to really be attracted to Sean so we all kidded him about her during the remainder of the trip. As Sean and I walked down the busy thoroughfare where hundreds of people were strolling a dogfight broke out among the many dogs running in and out among the pedestrians. Evidently this is such a common thing that hardly a notice was taken of this vicious war of dogs. Soon we came upon an organized volleyball game which Sean decided to join and was welcomed by all who were participating. We met two Mormon missionaries who had little time for us as soon as they found out who we were and what we were doing in Mexico. During this very enjoyable pleasantly cool evening David Anderson hunted for a brief case or bag to replace the one he had brought which was now falling apart and Monte Jones stayed in the hotel due to a bout of tendonitis. We retired between 9:30 and 10 PM.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 15, 2000

I awoke at 5:25 this morning and no one else was stirring even at 6:19 when I had shaved and packed my bags for the day's trip. Deciding to walk through the town market by myself I was soon underway and found only two or three persons in the narrow streets and shuttered stores. At one store which seemed to be a place that served sweet rolls and coffee two older men were watching the news on a Mexico City TV station. Everything else was locked up tight. There were very few streetlights in the narrow curving streets. This morning I heard very few roosters crowing and no burros braying and I did hear some birds.

Returning to the hotel for a time of Bible reading and prayer I then had a very pleasant visit with Monte Jones on the balcony of the hotel courtyard. At 7:15 Sean Baker and I returned to the city market which by now had begun to wake up. We stopped and observed a family at work in a tortilla factory. While we were watching the assembly line type of production a number of men came by from time to time and purchased their families' daily supply of tortillas. They paid for them and placed them wrapped in butcher paper into the colorful plastic cloth bags that most all Mexican men carried wherever they went.

There were some strange and interesting sights in the market this morning. In several different places men could be seen cooking large pots of food to be sold in their stores. One man's work particularly intrigued me. He was boiling some kind of stew in two large metal pots. When brother Roten asked the man later what was in the pot he told us it was Menudo which is tripe. Next to the two pots of Menudo was a large pot full of strips of white chicken meat.

Just a little way down the street another man was cooking some bull meat with some kind of large leaves laid on top of the meat in a number nine wash tub. The pot in which he was cooking was over a fire the man had made in the street in front of his butcher shop. He told us what he was cooking was Carnitas or barbecue.

At another place in the street in front of someone's shop we saw an older woman cutting pieces of prickly pear cactus in strips about the size of green beans. Further down the street yet we passed a store that had a freshly skinned skull of a cow or a burro, I'm not sure which, sitting on the counter top nearest the street. I was afraid to ask what they were going to do with that!

Breakfast time had now come and we again went to the Casal Restaurant Y Cafeteria where I had Huevos Rancheros A La Mexicana O Revotillia (fried eggs on a tortilla covered with Salsa) and sweet bread and black coffee. Danny Roten had two hotcakes that looked and tasted like what we call yellow cake. The eggs covered with pecante were very good.

After breakfast we decided to make one more tour of the market because its sights were so intriguing. We were not disappointed. Now the market was booming at full blast. Merchants were rushing everywhere opening their metal shutters and putting their goods on display. There were several sides of beef or other meats hanging on hooks and giving pleasure to the local houseflies. Butchers were also cutting various portions of the meat preparing it for sale. Some of the meat still had the hides on it, especially the pork that was being brought in.

As we left Cardenas we looked for a *Pemex* station but the first one we came to had run out of gas, a problem not uncommon in a nationalized industry. Driving across town to the other Pemex we noticed some trees called Japanese Pines with short very green needles arranged on straight horizontal branches making these trees stand out from those around it. We also saw some Paloverde or green stick trees that had small yellow flowers and hanging down from these flowers were some ten to twelve inch long green sticks.

At 9:30 AM we finally left Cardenas with the nearby village of *Alaquines* as our destination. Alaquines lies in the floor of a valley and we arrived there after descending from the nearby mountain. The village centers around a town square faced by some very old Spanish style buildings and graced by some very large and thus very old trees that made the entire square a place of delightful shade. An ancient Catholic edifice sits on one side of the square and dominates the town.

At the opposite end of town from where we entered we left the blacktop and headed for a Pame Indian village brother Roten had never visited, the name of which was unknown to us at this time. Stopping at a roadside store for a coke and to ask directions to the village of our destination a lot of young people gathered to look at us. The people seemed hesitant to admit the existence or at least the exact location of the village for which we were looking. Along the creek beside this

road were some very large and beautiful Cypress trees which apparently were very old.

A little ways further down the road we stopped to ask directions from a bearded old Mexican man. It is rare to see a Mexican man with a beard so this man really stood out. We were almost sorry we had stopped here because this man proceeded to tell brother Roten "how the world works." He was evidently some kind of local prophet and he went on and on with some preposterous story about how the world came into being and how it supposedly works. Telling the man "Gracias" we drove on for a number of miles through a heavily inhabited area with many houses right up on the road but none back away from it.

Along this road we passed a work gang of Mexican men digging a ditch. David Anderson got out and gave each of the ten or twelve men in the crew a gospel tract and said the customary Buenos Dias to each of them. After driving a little beyond these men on the road I got out to take a picture of the men and when I looked at them they had all sat down and were each reading the tract given them. Near here we also encountered a man who was making adobe bricks in some wooden forms and he was mixing the mud with his bare feet. Each brick was about 14 inches long, seven or eight inches wide and two to three inches thick which seemed to be a pretty standard size and shape for adobe bricks that we saw wherever we went.

After about an hour we came to a little village called *Corrito* where we stopped, passed out tracts and again asked of the location of the village of Northern Pame Indians we were seeking. Here we saw the same Pepsi truck driver we had seen and visited with yesterday in Lagunillas. He spoke fair English and his infectious smile made it a pleasure to talk with him. I asked him how many Mexican towns he had to visit that day and he told me fourteen. He told us that we were on the right road to the Pame village. In the meantime brother Roten had found the first Pame man we saw who professed to be an evangelical Christian. He gave brother Roten directions to the desired village and told him that the name of the village was *Hoya Del Duranzo*.

The farther we drove the more primitive the road became until we were finally virtually crawling along over a one lane trail of rocks. We were all glad that David Anderson had agreed to bring his Jeep Grand Cherokee on the trip. All along the road for a number of miles we observed an unusual geological phenomenon which was new to all of us. The road followed a chain of what appeared to be large sinkholes that had no outlets for water. In the bottoms of most of them were small fertile fields that had been farmed for who knows how many generations. One of these was so deep that we could not see the bottom from the road. This area was much greener than any place we had been on the trip thus far.

After taking a wrong turn at a fork in the road we doubled back and took the right road and began the last leg of our journey to Hoya Del Duranzo. We noticed

along the road that corn was growing in fields filled with large boulders many of which were four to six feet high. In most of these fields we could not even see the dirt yet here were cornstalks growing everywhere. After awhile we came over a ridge and two men were standing at the side of the road cutting firewood. We spoke to one of them whose name was Jose and who told us that he was an evangelical Christian who lived in Hoya Del Duranzo. After a pleasant and informative visit with Jose we proceeded over the next rise where we could suddenly see the entire village of Hoya Del Duranzo. There were 52 houses or huts in the village and our intention was to visit every one of them.



Entering Hoya Del Duranzo

The first place we stopped was at a hut which served as a store and was owned by a very hospitable man named **Ramone Reyes** who with his wife had a fourteen year old daughter named **Antonia** and a seven year old son named **Victor**. Victor had had an infection that impaired his hearing and he was a shy but very pleasant little fellow. When we approached this store there was a large Coca-Cola truck parked in the yard and when we began to speak much to our surprise he told us that he spoke English. He said his name was **Carlos Perez** and asked us where we were from. When we told him Kansas City he asked us if we knew where Oklahoma City was. Since Oklahoma City is my hometown I perked up and said Yes and he then asked me if I had ever heard of a restaurant there named **Casina de Mino**. That just happens to be my favorite restaurant in the whole world so I spoke with him further and he told me that he is the part-time head cook at that restaurant during the work season.

David Anderson Pastor Justice Sean Baker Monte Jonas



We asked Ramone if we could eat lunch under the shade of his porch and he graciously agreed. We broke out the food that we had brought with us and shared it with Victor and Antonia while the dogs; chickens and neighbors came and went freely from Ramone's house. After finishing lunch Sean, Monte and I waited at Ramone's house while David Anderson and Danny Roten climbed a nearby hill to three or four houses that were nearby but off the road. Ramone sold bailing wire for \$25 American for a roll.

When David and brother Roten returned we all started out to blitz the village with our gospel tracts and copies of the gospel of John and the book of Romans. Sean Baker and I were paired together and the houses or huts to which we went were the most primitive dwellings of human beings that I have seen in all my travels over the world. They had thatched roofs and their walls were made of one inch in diameter limbs of trees that were about four feet long. These limbs were stood on end vertically and tied together in the middle with some kind of rope or fiber. The cracks in between were filled rather haphazardly with mud. These dwellings had no windows or doors and the pigs and the goats and the dogs and the chickens were moving in and out at will. Smoke from the cooking fires within was coming out of the windows and doors. All the huts sat on small acreages and most had two or three head of Brahma cattle. The troughs for watering the stock animals were hewn out of large logs. Some government or politician had had electric power lines run to this village but none of the huts had meters, doubtless because they could not afford the electricity. Access to some of the huts was very

difficult passing through boulder strewn narrow paths. Some of these Indians were not very clean in their persons but they were friendly and receptive to us even though they could not understand what we said except when brother Roten spoke. Their clothing was very American and several of them even had on sweat shirts and T shirts with witty and sometimes filthy English messages on them.

When Sean and I had finished our allotted number of houses we walked to the part of the village where the others were still distributing their tracts. While we waited for them to finish a visit inside one of the huts I sat down on a large boulder near the village well and just looked at the valley that was surrounded by some rather high mountains covered with dark green vegetation. While sitting at the well a young woman approached with her two five-gallon plastic water buckets slung over her shoulders and suspended on a stick. She let these buckets down into the well one at a time drawing them out filled with water over the vegetables which she had for some reason left in the buckets. This well was in the midst of a place where cattle also came to drink and I'm afraid the urine of the cattle poured out near the well probably mingles with the water which the villagers draw there.

Now began the most exciting part of our entire mission trip. All four of us decided to visit the huts on the high mountain overlooking the village on the North. The trail to these houses was steep and rough and we had to stop often to rest as we climbed. When all but the last three dwellings had been visited brother Roten, Monte Jones and I decided to go to these. After a somewhat exhausting climb we reached the next to the last hut and found there a middle aged woman to whom brother Roten immediately began to speak and to offer a Gospel of John. I stood and listened and watched as brother Roten spoke to this woman in Spanish. The woman became somewhat animated as she spoke but since this seems to be the normal thing in any serious conversation among Mexicans I duly stood there and thought nothing of it. But the woman's excitement began to reach a greater level than I had seen and then suddenly a large rock about the size of a softball came hurtling toward me. I looked at brother Roten who was still calmly talking to the woman and before long a large piece of a limb from a tree whizzed past his head and then another stone and then more sticks and limbs. There was now a fire in the woman's eyes the likes of which I have rarely seen in anyone's eyes. Brother Roten steadfastly tried to calm the woman and kept holding out the Gospel of John for her to take. She was now completely enraged and was yelling at him and walking back and forth from side to side.

Brother Roten decided it was time to leave so we started up the trail to the last hut that was about thirty yards away but when we got there no one was home so we had to return down the trail past the house of the enraged woman. She was watching us and when we passed her house again four or five other women and girls joined her in sending a hail of large stones and sticks at us and hurling loud

insults one of which was to the effect that You Protestants are lying and deceiving our people! Brother Roten was hit, Monte Jones was hit in the stomach and I was hit in the knee by a stone about the size of a softball. The next day I had a large bruise about three and a half inches across.

About 4:30 PM we started our long and arduous trip back to Cardenas where we planned to spend the night. The seventeen mile trip back to Alaquines over the steep and rocky road took us a little over two hours but on the way we distributed gospel tracts to scores of people who were walking down the road.

Arriving back in Cardenas about dark we checked into the same hotel we had stayed in the night before and after refreshing ourselves we again went to the Casal Restaurant Y Cafeteria to take our evening meal. This time we had a much more extended conversation with the young businessman who owned the establishment. His name was *Eduardo Castillo Alvarez*. We told him his food had been excellent and I told him that I would like to come back sometime and talk Mexican politics with him to which he replied through brother Roten, "If the PRI (party) and the Catholics keep control of this country, all of us will go Del Norte before long!"

On Wednesday afternoons the shops in the market at Cardenas close until the next day so we were not able to visit the many shops tonight as we had on other nights. This gave us time to contemplate what we had seen and experienced on this very eventful day before retiring for the night.

Some random thoughts that presented themselves as I mused about the events of this day and the others are as follows:

1. Brother Danny Roten is a master of the Spanish language and this has been essential to our doing anything while in Mexico.
2. If I just knew the language I would definitely be interested in coming to Mexico and preaching in some capacity.
3. Why must the people of Mexico live in Roman Catholic darkness and ignorance?
4. After the treatment given us by the Catholic women in Hoya Del Duranzo today, I have little respect for all the recent talk by Roman Catholics about tolerance for other religions.
5. What will it be like when the women who stoned us today stand before God at the Judgment?
6. Why do the poor peasants of Mexico have to work so hard with such primitive tools just to eke out a meager living for their families?
7. We have to this point seen no tractors, no fertilizing machines and no harvesters in all of Mexico. The men plow with oxen or with mules.

8. The young women of Mexico have a real beauty of face and complexion but after the ages of about 14 or a great many of them marry, have children and become dumpy looking by the time they are 20.
9. Many of these young women have severe cases of periodontal disease that quickly becomes obvious when they smile. Their gums just next to their teeth are dark red and swollen.
10. Most of the men and many of the women we have spoken with in Mexico have told us that they travel North to the U.S. to work during the work season and then return to their homes here in Mexico for the remainder of the year.
11. All the food we have eaten in Mexico has been excellent. I have not tasted anything with a bad taste. One of my favorite dishes has been Enchiladas Verdes or enchiladas smothered in green salsa.
12. Tonight I am missing Lyndy and all the more so when I realize that I will not be able to contact her and she cannot contact me until Friday evening when we return to McAllen, Texas.

Lights out after trying to watch a Mexican soccer game on TV.

THURSDAY MARCH 16, 2000

At exactly 5:31 AM I awoke without the benefit of an alarm clock or roosters crowing or donkeys braying. Again I strolled alone through the market place in Cardenas to see the sights and smell the smells. Today a number of shopkeepers had open fires going in the streets in front of their shops and they seemed to be cooking the foods they were hoping to sell during the coming day. I visited the same tortilla factory that I observed yesterday, the one run by the family. Today I noted the name of this factory, *La Morderna*. I also noted the name of the shop where we saw the man cooking the cauldron of tripe yesterday. It was *Comedor Don Poncho Menudezia*, 35 anos a su Servicio.

Looking east down the valley from the side of our hotel I could see the fog lying thick between the mountains. Everywhere I looked I could see the yellow-eyed Grackles which are definitely the predominate bird in Mexico. They seem to be much more shrill and vocal than their cousins North of the border. We have seen a number of other birds including at least two pet green parrots, some large doves with white feathers on their open wings, some small doves with deep red feathers on their open wings and a small bird about the size of a finch which is as red as a cardinal at home.

There is much more activity in the market today than there was yesterday. Everywhere I can see women wearing their shawls or rebozas as they walk to the market or to work. One older lady has on a particularly large bright red one. At

6:45 a taxi horn was heard that sounded like an electronic calliope and played several bars of some song.

We decided to eat breakfast at Casal Restaurant Y Cafeteria again and this time I ordered the hotcakes. They were about an inch thick and as big around as the plate so I asked for just one. As we ate a young Mexican woman joined us and Danny Roten conversed with her relaying our questions and her answers. Her name was *Norma Angelica Rodrigez Castillo*. She had a degree from the Autonomous University of Mexico at San Luis Potosi and worked for the government of Mexico as a legal assistant to Indians including Aztecs, Huastics and Pames. She was well dressed having on a stylish leather jacket, bluejean pants and a top made of two different types of tapestry material, the under part being a light gray and the over part being black. Her dark page-boy hair cut was well coiffured. She told us she was new in this work and this was just her second trip to the Indian areas. She had not yet visited the Northern Pame area of Hoya Del Duranzo where we had spent yesterday but was interested in our impressions of it.

This may very well have been God's providence at work in the life of brother Roten. Here was someone who has close ties to the Northern Pame Indians and who works for the government of Mexico. We were able to befriend her and she was not opposed to brother Roten's missionary work. Who know how God in his great providence may use her in the future to aid brother Roten in spreading the gospel among these and even other Indians in Mexico?

Finishing breakfast we realized that we were now leaving Cardenas and the Casal Restaurant Y Cafeteria and its owner Eduardo Castillo Nunez for the last time. He realized it at the same time and we could tell he really appreciated our business over the past two days. As we walked away he caught up to us and gave each of us a bottle opener with the name of his business written on it. I wonder if I will ever see him again?

Now we headed for *Alaquines* again, this time to distribute gospel tracts to the homes on the hillsides of the Southern part of the village. When we arrived a band which played the traditional Mexican polka music was assembling in front of the door of the large Catholic edifice on the square. It was made up of nine Mexican men in their forties and their instruments included saxophone, tuba, drum, trumpet, cymbal, clarinet, French horn and trombone. It was a festive atmosphere as the band played and we ate our lunch in the shade of the trees on the cobblestone street of the city square.

We decided to enter and observe the Catholic Cathedral which must be at least two hundred fifty years old and had been only partially restored many years ago. Once inside we noticed the font containing the holy water which is supposedly for the purpose of warding off demons in the church. We also observed a hideous life sized image of a dead Christ made of wax and complete with wounds and blood. It

was encased in a glass coffin-like display case with a slot for the insertion of money by the gullible. Significantly one hand of the image was lying open with palm upward beneath the slot and there were two American dollars in that open hand.

But there was also an atmosphere of, if not fear, apprehension here as well. We got a cool and even resentful reception from most of the people as we went from door to door passing out the tracts and attempting to speak with the people. It was almost as if someone had told the people not to receive us and not to talk with us. When we first arrived on the town square a Mexican man standing near a pickup truck asked us where we were from and told us he had lived and worked in the state of Idaho for ten years. He spoke excellent English and kept asking us how long we were going to be in town and indirectly what we were doing there. We answered him just as indirectly suspecting he was acting for the local priest.

There were some very interesting sights to see as we did our evangelistic work here. David Anderson, Sean Baker and I worked together on this particular day and we covered a part of town that was high up on a hillside overlooking the South end of the town. Two children, a four year old girl and a four year old boy were trying to carry water from the local well back to their home using the stick over the shoulder with two five gallon plastic buckets hanging by rope from the shoulder stick. Ten gallons of water must be very heavy for such small children and they were having great difficulty carrying their loads stopping often to rest and spilling a lot. Walking past three loose and wandering burros we made our way up the hill past a father and his eight or ten year old son making adobe bricks. We handed out tracts at each dwelling until we came to the largest Joshua Tree I had ever seen. It must have been a good ten feet straight through its trunk and very old. We took several photos of ourselves in its shade. On the other end of our assigned area we came to a canyon that became narrower as we went along until finally there were no more houses and we entered a cool, shady area which was filled with a small forest of large Cyprus trees. Someone had been cutting a branch from one of them and the aroma was pine like and very pleasing.

At 12:45 we had to say goodbye to Alaquines and begin our journey to the city of Mante and ultimately to Ciudad Victoria where we would spend the night. Passing through a volcanic area with very dark red soil we then came into a subtropical area where we saw palmetto, orange trees, sugar cane, Spanish moss and banana trees. After coming to a summit of sorts we began what proved to be a curvaceous downgrade of several miles and maybe several thousand feet. On this leg of the trip I observed at least five different kinds of parasites growing on the trees of the area. There was Spanish moss and there was one that looked like blades of grass growing in clumps. There were three different kinds which

actually had leaves, one with small leaves, one with leaves about the size of those of plantain lilies and one with leaves about the size of Cana leaves.

As we descended from the mountains to the floor of the Eastern Ocean plain of Mexico we noticed on the computerized thermometer built into our Jeep Grand Cherokee that the temperature rose from 76 degrees at Alaquines to a sizzling 100 degrees on the valley floor. The flora on the plain was interesting in that there was a forest of very tall palmetto trees and in other areas there were forests of a strange tree that had a slick shiny bark. There were also quite a few eucalyptus trees like those I had seen in Israel and in Brazil.

At *El Naranjo* we stopped to rest and went to a bank to get some of our large Mexican bills changed to smaller ones. Leaving there we started out in a generally Northeasterly direction and could see the beautiful blue and green hues of a huge valley and the immense mountain ranges surrounding it. We passed over one mountain pass and into another valley and then another and then another. Passing through *Nuevo Morrelos* we noted that there were open saloons with swinging doors just like the ones in American western movies. Each successive valley became more desert like until we came to a vast agriculture area which was not quite as lush as the plain onto which we had descended from the mountains.

We now came to *Antigua Morrelos* with its large Catholic cemetery with many large gravestones and larger than life sized statues of angels. We passed through an agricultural inspection station and were waved on through by the uniformed attendant. Just out of Antigua Morrelos in a canyon we looked up about two hundred yards above us on the canyon wall and sighted a huge cave opening. Passing a lime quarry and over the last mountain we could see that the land was now flat all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. We had now passed out of *the Sierra Madre Oriental Mountains*. Here for the first time we began to see tractors and fertilizing machines.

Just West of the city of *Mante* we turned North toward Ciudad Victoria. Sugar cane was everywhere and bamboo was growing beside the road. We also saw a few banyan trees and there were some rather expansive orange groves. We could see the high hazy blue peaks of the Sierras off to the West. We now entered another old volcanic area with old volcanic cones and basaltic columns protruding upward from the desert floor. The soil seemed to be mostly ash.

Sean Baker has been sick today, probably with *Montezuma's Revenge*. He has slept off and on all day.

Arriving at *Ciudad Victoria* at 6 PM we checked in at the *Hotel Posadade Don Diego* and after freshening up went to the *Jalisco Restaurant* several blocks away for supper. This was a place which had tables in a covered courtyard surrounded by various Mexican bushes and plants and in the cool of the dusk our mealtime was very pleasant. I ate a dish called Enchiladas Mixtas that was made of chicken

and cheese enchiladas. We had an outstanding Guacamole salad that really had a bite to it. I wish I could have brought some home with me.

After supper we strolled through the streets of the city with the teeming thousands of its inhabitants, most all of whom seemed to be under the age of thirty. The streets were filled with stores selling TVs and automatic washing machines and boom boxes and shoes and clothing. There were two squares about six blocks apart here and we walked from one to the other and then back to the first. Both had large Catholic cathedrals on one side. One square was surrounded by the government buildings of the State Capital. The Cathedral on this square was larger and more modern than the others we had seen, having colorful stained glass windows that were lighted from the inside in order to be seen from the outside. We looked in at the door and saw the largest crowd I have ever seen inside any Catholic edifice anywhere in the world. A well-educated and well groomed priest was saying mass. After looking unsuccessfully for a map of Mexico and purchasing some bottled water we called it a day and retired at 9 PM. I had the pleasure of bunking with brother Danny Roten this night and was able to discuss spiritual things with him as we finally fell asleep.

FRIDAY MARCH 17, 2000

We awakened at 5:33 AM and drove to the square with the government buildings to have breakfast in a very modern restaurant called *VIPS*. As we entered the restaurant we could see the clouds rolling in over the high mountains to the West of Victoria and turning around to the East could see the red ball of the sun rising. The cool morning temperature was very pleasant after yesterday's 100 degrees. The VIPS Restaurant was tastefully decorated in what I would call a modified Mexican art deco style. Our breakfast was totally American with eggs, bacon and pancakes.

We left Ciudad Victoria at 8 AM planning to arrive at the border at Reynosa about noon. The weather turned cloudy and at 8:54 AM the temperature was 66 degrees. The country was flat, the vegetation was scrubby and there were very few towns as we headed North. We saw a sign beside the highway that read *Autorefaccionaria* that brother Roten told us meant Auto Parts Store. As we progressed Northward the temperature dropped steadily till we arrived at noon at Reynosa. We now went to the market to look for some things to take home to our loved ones because on our entire trip we had not seen a single souvenir store for tourists. At 1 PM we arrived at the border crossing and had to wait an hour before being waved through without an inspection. At 3 PM we arrived at the Roten home in McAllen, Texas after stopping for lunch and an oil change.

At 3:20 we were underway once more hoping to travel as far as San Antonio or Austin or even Temple, Texas before stopping for the night. Doing this instead of

spending the night with the Roten's would make tomorrow's final leg of the trip a little easier. Down the road at Encino, Texas we stopped and telephoned ahead to the La Quinta Inn in Temple for reservations. Driving until 9:45 PM we reached our motel from where I immediately called Lyndy on David Anderson's cell phone and told her that we estimated we would arrive home at about 6 PM tomorrow. Tonight I roomed with David Anderson but because we were pretty tired we did not visit much before falling asleep.

SATURDAY MARCH 18, 2000

Our trip was now fast coming to a close. This last day began at 5:30 AM and we left the *La Quinta Inn in Temple, Texas* at 6:27 AM. The temperature was a cool 47 degrees and it was misting rain. David Anderson started out driving while the rest of us read the "Dallas Morning News." The trip from between Waco and Dallas, Texas was slow, gray and dull. Sean Baker worked on homework for his Monday college classes. As we approached Waxahatchie, Texas on I-35 we came upon a Sports Utility Vehicle that had overturned on the highway and some firemen were trying to free a passenger or passengers inside. We had breakfast at McDonald's Restaurant in Waxahatchie at 8:30 AM.

Passing through downtown Dallas, Texas we moved steadily Northeastward over the state line and into Oklahoma. The trip across Oklahoma was somewhat nostalgic for me since we passed through a number of places that had family memories. These included Durant where my brother Paul had been born on December 9, 1942 and Atoka where dad had been pastor of First Baptist Church from 1941 to 1947. There was absolutely nothing remaining in Atoka that I could recognize. All buildings, houses and even bridges has been removed and/or replaced since the last time I visited there in the early 1980's. On up the line we passed through Stringtown where as a child I had often visited the limestone quarry that we saw just off the present highway and then through Checotah where I had once preached a revival meeting at the First Baptist Church in the late 1960's. At 12:27 PM we stopped for lunch at Braum's Ice Cream in Muskogee, Oklahoma, the hometown of my college friend, Ed Chaney. At about 1:45 we encountered a traffic snarl in Pryor, Oklahoma. At 2:15 PM when we finally reached the town of Big Cabin, Oklahoma and turned onto I-44 highway it was still raining intermittently and the temperature had climbed to 51 degrees. Near here we paid the \$1.25 toll on the Will Rogers Turnpike.

All during the trip today the four of us traded favorite stories and told our favorite jokes until we figured we had heard all that the others had to tell. Several times during this day we used David Anderson's cell phone to call home and at 3:01 PM I called Lyndy in Kansas City to tell her that our estimated time of arrival was 5:30 PM. Our actual time of arrival at the Justice house was 5:17 PM and it

was still raining. Sean Baker's car had been left here by his parents the night before so he was able to drive home and David Anderson took Monte Jones to the home of his daughter Mrs. Scott McDaniel where his truck had been left by wife Crystal.

We were all very grateful that the Lord had brought us all safely home. As we prepared to leave the Jeep for the last time we took note of the fact that half the dust of the great land of Mexico seemed to be on the inside of that automobile. David Anderson informed us that according to his onboard computer the total number of miles we had traveled from the Victory Baptist Church building on March 11th to the Justice house on March 18th was 2,909 miles and that we had actually been in the car during this trip for 59 hours and 52 minutes.

May the Lord use this trip and all our efforts to bring some of his elect souls to repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ!