

Homes & Fields

Summer Missions Update 2001

By Jon Ericson and Joy McMasters

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.” Mark 10:29-30 NIV



We took an afternoon cruise and ate lunch on this trajinera in the canals of Xochimilco.

It isn't possible to really understand this passage before leaving these things behind to follow Christ. Jon left his “fields” for two months of unpaid leave just as his job started to get interesting. Joy left her “home” by giving up her apartment and putting her life in California on hold and up in the air for the summer. In return God gave each of us new families, roommates who helped us grow, lots of friends, spiritual renewal and a second culture as we joined Spearhead's work in Mexico City.

Spearhead has worked with the Mexican church for more than 30 years bringing teams of North American young people to do clown and mime shows, pray and evangelize in the streets, attend *veladas* (all-night prayer sessions), and participate in other ministries with host churches. Each of us was a member of a 10-person team that served a region of the city. Jon was Team Five's *Señor Pecado* (Mr. Sin) and Joy was Team One's *Payasa Científica* (Scientific Clown) in the clown and mime shows, performed in conjunction with team members' churches and enjoyed by children and adults.

After these shows we explained and gave out bracelets (which our leaders had taught us to make) to help children remember the plan of salvation. Many of the children we talked to were poor and often believed that salvation comes through good deeds, worshiping the Guadalupe (an appearance of Mary to the people of Mexico), or giving money to the Catholic church. It was a joy to tell them that Jesus saves us as a free gift—we only need to accept His love for us. It is hard to know if these children will ever hear the truth about

Jesus again, and even those who prayed to accept Christ might not be allowed to attend activities at evangelical churches. But our teams believe that all our time learning and performing the shows, and even the silly costumes and annoying make-up were worth the effort because the shows are such an effective tool in communicating the life-changing truth of the Gospel.

Although we spent much of our time separated from each other by an hour and fifteen minutes of travel time on the bus and *Metro* (subway), we visited many of the sights in the Valley of Mexico. At the *Zócalo* (the largest city square in the western hemisphere), we saw the National Palace with its government offices and Diego Rivera Murals, the National Cathedral which was constructed from the stones of a destroyed Aztec temple, and the immense Mexican flag which always flies in the center.

We also visited the Basilica of Guadalupe, which is the traditional site of the Virgin Mary's appearance. It is the second most visited Catholic pilgrimage site after the Vatican. Later that afternoon we climbed both the pyramid of the Sun and the Moon, and explored the ruins of *Teotihuacan*.

At *Xochimilco*, we toured the canals on *trajineras* and shopped in a market with the most beautiful (and cheapest) plants around. We also spent lots of time haggling with vendors at the artisan market near *Metro Balderas*, eating food from street vendors (tacos cost 15-20¢ each!) and talking in a coffee shop near the Spearhead office.

Mexico has become like a second home for us. We want to thank you for the financial support, letters, emails and prayers that made possible all the things you're reading about here. Our summer families and churches were a great blessing to us and we hope reading what we have written about them [see reverse] will be a blessing to you.



After a very steep climb, a rest at the top of the pyramid of the Moon gave us a great view of the Sun and surrounding ruins at Teotihuacan.

I lived in the southeast corner of Mexico City in *Colonia Reforma Política* with a widow named Isabel and her adult son José. My roommate Adam came from a Bible college in Austin, Texas, where he is a member of a dominantly Korean church. Each Sunday we walked a few blocks to our family's small Methodist church and ate *desayuno* (breakfast) with the congregation before Sunday school. Eating *Comida* (the large afternoon meal) with a different family each Sunday consumed most of the afternoon, though there was often time for *fútbol* (soccer), naps, playing Nintendo with our many cousins who lived nearby, reading, and worship practice. In the evening we went back to church for the *culto* (church service).

Wednesday evenings the family took a *micro* (a small bus) to a mission church at the edge of the city up in the foothills. After visiting that church during my first week in Mexico I wrote in my journal, "I've been thinking that we are



Jon and Adam's brother José proudly drove them and all their luggage to closing conference in his new car.

called to take care of widows and orphans. The service tonight is what the whole church is like—needy people in a dirty world worshiping halfway between heaven and the city of men in a clean, white, simple room where we praise God. We stand faces toward heaven and when we serve God we descend into the muck and poverty and need of the city."

Adam and I worked well as a team. I had prepared for the trip by going to *Iglesia Bíblica "El Calvario"* in Burbank so I understood Spanish better while Adam was the enthusiastic one when it came to speaking. We learned the hard way how to describe food and illnesses, how to pray, preach and lead worship, and how to ask for directions.

But even after two months, when José dropped us off at the hotel, I was unable to express the joy of having been in Mexico and the pain of leaving. God provided more than food and shelter, He gave us a home and family.

My Mexican family took care of and lived in our church, *Iglesia Cristiana Remanente*. Our *papá* Abraham worked long days in his family's plumbing business as his wife Yola cared for one-year-old Elí and seven-year-old Isaí. Elí has major digestive and developmental problems and he didn't begin walking until the end of the summer, but we were excited to see prayers answered as he took more and more consecutive steps. His illness keeps the family so busy that they had never visited the free National Zoo located only a short bus ride away. With only a few days left in Mexico Jon, my roommate, and I took Isaí there. He would have spent all day watching the monkeys if he could.

Remanente and three sister churches in Mexico City are affiliated with Grace Community Church and Master's Seminary near Los Angeles which gives church leaders and members access to seminary-style courses translated into Spanish. The Mexican evangelical church is young both in its history and leadership. I was glad to see firsthand that the association has allowed this congregation to learn from a more mature church. The church has also been blessed financially and its beautiful new building is located in a commercial district called the *Zona Rosa* in the heart of the city. The building is just one block away from Spearhead's office so it was a convenient location for our meetings and Spanish classes.



My little brother Isaí demonstrates one of the ways he earned the nickname *Mi Changito* (My Little Monkey).

My roommate, April, is a high school English teacher from Bakersfield, California. Together we taught free English classes three nights a week at church. We didn't start teaching until our second week in Mexico and even then had a hard time taking care of the logistics of the class. Students were curious why we were teaching the classes for free, but how could we fully explain that we had given up our summers to serve the people of Mexico because of Christ's saving love?

To start the third week of classes I planned a lesson using Third Day's "Love Song" in which Jesus is presented as a lover passionately doing everything necessary to be with His beloved. When April went downstairs to let the students in a few minutes before class time she was shocked by the number of people waiting on the sidewalk. We took a few minutes to pray and regroup before heading downstairs. The class, including many who had studied English for years and just wanted to practice with native speakers, heard the song about five times as they worked together to put strips of paper with the lyrics written

on them in order. At the end, I translated the song into Spanish and elaborated on its ideas with the students. Most of them didn't come back, but for those couple hours they were in a church building seeing Christians love and serve people because of who their Savior is without asking anything in return.