

From Frank Palacios and Jack Brown to the 2007 June team who helped out at the new, severely disabled Special Friends Camp:

We want to take this moment to let you know you did a great job. We were really pleased at how well we worked together and that we got a good amount of work accomplished (the reports we are receiving are informing us of things “we” did of which we weren’t even aware! [If you haven’t sent a report, please do so.]

I receive a daily quote online along with my online daily devotionals. Today’s:

"I am always doing that which I can not do, in order that I may learn how to do it."

- Pablo Picasso

That summarizes my feelings about these trips. Fortunately for us we had the direction and support of God, the example of Jesus, the power of Christ’s Spirit to help. We also had the guidance and presence of Lisa and Norberto, the practical help of Judith, the friendship and cooking skills of Rosalba and her crew, the maintenance and housekeeping support of David and Ruben of Lety and her team, the friendship of Enrique and the Berea girls, the influence of Richard and the cooperation and enthusiastic involvement of each of you. And we had many people praying for us each day.

For your information – we contributed from our combined contributions (above our participation fees) \$1600 U.S. toward the construction of the two cisterns and \$1300 for the support of the camp. Contributors:

NACCC - Contingency	500
Clarkston, First Congregational Church	1004
Maine, personal contribution	335
Salt Lake City, First Congregational Church	780
Olsons, Wayne and Rev. Matt	100
Madison, WI	800

We used the contingency contribution from the NACCC Missionary Society to cover unbudgeted costs due to the cancellation of the return flight and delay overnight in Dallas (as well as some funds from the Olivet Congregational Church also for that purpose).

As I shared at our closing Communion Service, I was blessed to witness the way you used your hands (notice the hands in the pictures in the last email Larry sent out, including especially Julian’s hand in his father Jose’s hands – the essential picture of New Testament love: heartfelt, practical, personal, constant, encouraging, compassionate. We were/are in God’s hands just the same.)

As I took note through the week I saw these wonderful things done because of your willing hands:

Hands...

Passing the salsa in the Blue Tile House

Sorting donations

Loading and planting trees

Repairing a hot water heater

Carrying a new red plunger through the San Felipe market as a gift for friends

Shaking hands with a “Buenos Dias” to staff and villagers

Clapping in church (I think mine are still tingling)

Fruit-stained hands after collecting fruit from the orchard

Construction wounded and cement grimed hands

Paint smeared hands

Hands pushing a severely disabled boy, to his great delight, in a wheelchair

Hands helping with crafts

Playing violins at a wedding, at church and for Communion

Preparing food; serving food

Distributing donated sewing machines

Sharing the tortilla “bread” at communion

Fertilizing fields

Repairing wheelchairs

Shopping for friendship and family gifts

Receiving and eating Menudo (Tripe soup)

Sanding, varnishing

Carrying donated wheelchairs, walkers and crutches from the U.S.

Carrying cement

Removing forms

Picking up litter

Preparing a Quinceanera

Making balloon animals to the delight of disabled children; my favorite: a monkey climbing a coconut tree!

Sharing toys

Reaching out in friendship across cultures

Illustrating a new English word during English lessons

Not using hands during international soccer matches!

Giving physicals

Handing out vitamins

Taking pictures to publicize and to help us remember the trip

Taking notes for our daily news reports to supporters back home

Giving a backrubs/massages

Dancing hands with tambourines in church (including a tiny Mazahua girl worshipping with her mom and big sisters)

Playing disabled volleyball

Preparing a meal when the power went out, many helping hands for a special meal to honor the campers

Stuffing chicken breasts
Breaking up Oaxaca cheese
Flipping tortillas
Cleaning and repairing the store room
Sharing bottled water
Sharing antibiotic soap
Sharing toilet paper
Providing a podium for a chapel speaker
Playing guitar, mandolins and string bass
Preparing for a wedding (and cleaning, scrubbing up cake off the floor afterwards!)
Greeting a new groom and bride
Holding scripts for afternoon Bible plays
Picking up busted balloons
Writing in journals
Taking pictures
Turning on C water and hoping it wouldn't be F water!
Typing on computers
Playing Ragtime on the piano
Helping break a piñata
Showing TLC (I don't know what the initials are in Spanish nor in Mazahua)
Passing out memory verses
Preparing a special treat of corn/chicken chowder
Checking a car engine
Wiping away a tear
Washing dishes
Setting tables
Serving campers; serving team members
Assisting campers get ready for the night and then the day
Carrying food to the Comedor from the market
Handing out "goodie bags" to campers
Shaking hands farewell at the Mexico City Airport
Manos, muchos manos.

Thank you for lending a hand.

Jack and Frank

Mission Mazahua Trip June 20 – 27, 2007
Missionary Report

Bob Millholland

How to summarize a week of working with an amazing community of faith in the beautiful mountains of Mexico—while not possible for this exercise, I will list a few of the moments that struck my heart.

- Firstly, the surroundings: At first glance, the valley wraps its beauty around as to require you to pay special attention to the area and its people. It is a place “set apart.” At fuller inspection, I saw what very difficult circumstances in which the farmers were living and working. But once I spent some working among them, I came to know their abiding faith and acceptance of God’s plan for them.
- The friendships that I developed with the ladies in the kitchen while working and laughing with them: The only expectation I brought to the trip was the desire to work in the kitchen and learn some of the cooking methods, although I was not sure culturally if *hombres* were a usual sight in the kitchen.
 - The relationship I developed with Rosalba, Jessilie and especially Rosario are ones that will always cherish and a major inspiration to return to the Hacienda.
- The time Karen and I spent with Rosario on the Sunday trip to church and the markets: Besides the great friendship we developed, I remember something very specific. As I sat with Rosario on the bus, an amazing thing happened to me—she witnessed to me in a profound way. I was showing her my iPod and we looked at some of the songs, especially the Latin music. She then talked to me about how she especially liked praise songs. She then proceeded to get her Bible and I read to her the days passage from Acts in Spanish.
 - As I later reflected on the exchange, I found how my life outside my “church life” is encrusted with cynicism and the consuming distractions of American media and culture. I thank Rosario for the gift of discernment and hope to shed some of the unnecessary things in my life. I shall think and pray long and hard and maybe with the help of Cindy Bacon I can find a better way to live all the time.
- The little girl with the tambourine at the Magdalena church. No further explanation needed.
- A moment at the *Amigos Especiales* camp regarding Leopoldo: We were in the chapel learning Bible verses. Leopoldo was near the front and some of the Olivet girls and Stephanie were attending and dotting on the young boy, Efren, who was profoundly handicapped. Leopoldo was generally stoic throughout the camp but usually wore a soft smile. I saw him glancing at Efren and the girls and just fixing his gaze there for a long time. I may be reading too much into this, but I felt as if Leopoldo saw the care and respect the girls were giving Efren, and he, somehow, was projecting that love unto himself.
- Working with and getting to know Don Pepe, the maintenance foreman.
 - Walking with Don Pepe to Los Rosas one morning and getting to know him. His graciousness to endure my very limited Spanish in communicating with me.
 - Seeing the real pride Don Pepe had in the rabbit project, when I interpreted for Bob Kingo who was asking about the rabbits.
 - Finally, the respect I developed for Don Pepe and the respect I felt from him.

- Helping Bob distribute his “Kingo gifts” to young village school children.
- Being a blessing to Bob in helping him to communicate with the kids in Spanish.
- The wedding on Saturday (Saturday I felt was a perfect day of team bonding starting with Nina’s testimony at chapel.)
- Listening to Don Pepe sing along with the Mariachis.
- Sitting across from the Olivet girls and getting to know them better.
- Having Don Pepe give me a beer and introduce me to his friends as a sign of generosity and acceptance.
- Tarrying with Karen near the end of the evening, talking to the wedding couple and some of the guests, especially a Mazahuan family with three beautiful children. Promising the grandmother of the family that I would return to Mission Mazahua.
- Having Javier kiss my hand and letting me kiss his.
- The incredible love and devotion of Javier’s father, José.
- After returning from the Sunday trip, saying goodnight to Javier and his father in the darkened courtyard.
- Staring into the unblinking eyes of a little beggar girl, in front of the cathedral in Tlalpujahua.
- Being unable to provide help and feeling inadequate.
- Finding the irony of this scene occurring in the plaza of grand façade representing the Catholic Church in Mexico.
- Getting to know and love Rosie: As she says, she reminds everyone of someone and she reminds me of my mother.
- Talking to a beautiful family with three young boys in the San Felipe market.
- The mother apologized (unnecessarily) for the way the boys were staring at Karen, because they had never met anyone with blue eyes.
- Walking through the market with the mother boys to search “para ropas por neustros hijos.”
- And finally: having Richard giving me a chair to fix for the wheelchair distribution. After successfully replacing a broken wheel, I considered this temporarily “my chair.” I worked with Jay Steward and learned what he was doing during the camp—quietly fixing wheelchairs. I watched Richard working with the villagers who needed chairs surrounded by the other campers and the “cement men” who seamlessly transitioned to the new task. I watched a young man, probably a polio victim, receive “my” chair and then reading the name inscribed on the back “Ida Kaufman.”
- I have been around healthcare long enough to surmise that Ida was, at one time, a nursing home resident. Only the Lord knows (and Ida’s family) what happened to Ida. Perhaps she got sick and was bedridden and the chair sat forlornly outside of Ida’s room until she succumbed to her struggle. And then the chair sat in some state of un-use, misuse, or disrepair until a Christian minded man

or women checked that chair as third piece of luggage, brought it to the Mission where I began my encounter with it.

Jack, I want to express my gratitude and thanks for you plans with Larry Sommers in bringing the Heritage group to Mission Mazahua and for your guidance during the trip. I hope and pray that this was the first of many trips to the mission for Karen and me.

MAC trip to Misión Mazahua
Larry Sommers
529 words

Missionary hands — 35 pairs, recruited from [NACCC] churches in five states and carried on an equal number of missionary feet — came together at the Mexico City airport on June 20.

We were short-term missionaries on a one-week trip to Misión Mazahua, an NA mission serving some 400,000 Mazahua people, who live in the high country north of Mexico City.

Our leader, Rev. Jack Brown, and his assistant, Frank Palacios, both of Olivet Congregational Church, Olivet, Mich., met us with a chartered bus. After brief sightseeing and a good dinner, we rode three hours (about 60 miles) to the mission.

It was midnight, but we got a warm welcome from Lisa Cortes — co-director, with her husband Norberto, of the mission. Cinnamon-laced hot chocolate with *pan dulce*, sweet bread warm from the oven.

Morning unveiled the charm of the mission compound, the former Hacienda de Tepetitlan, built in 1712.[1718] The hacienda, rescued from ruin when Norberto and Lisa purchased it in 1978, is a concrete symbol of their hope for the Mazahua community — to move from the verge of oblivion to a new, abundant life in Christ.

A stone stairway leads to the roof of the compound's main building. One looks out over a valley with craggy hills on the right and the volcano Xocotitlan rising blue and stately on the left.

I met a fellow one-week missionary on the roof. Stirred perhaps by the cool intimacy of dawn, she spoke forthrightly: *In view of the poverty and the great needs of the Mazahuas, will anything we do here make a difference?*

I could only suggest a wait-and-see attitude.

In our seven days at Misión Mazahua, we 35 guest missionaries —

- Attended seven morning chapel services.
- Ate 21 delicious meals.
- Built a 4,000-gallon concrete cistern to feed clean rainwater and springwater to Las Rosas, the mission's program center a mile from the main hacienda.
- Helped the mission host its annual "Special Friends" weekend camp — assisting and guiding eager disabled campers in sports, handicrafts and social activities.
- **[Delivered 10 wheelchairs and]** Assisted with a wheelchair clinic to match disabled people with improved mobility equipment.

- Brought sapling trees to nearby villages and helped the local farmers plant them, for shade and fresh fruit on their small acreages of dry, dusty cornfields.
- Attended Sunday service in a village church and shared a feast provided by the proud host congregation.
- Visited ongoing transformative projects in outlying areas, meeting local workers, affirming their worth, sharing their joy.
- Painted, patched, chipped, swept, dusted, and fertilized, where needed.

Wednesday morning, June 27: Time to go home. *Where did the week go? Why can't we stay longer?*

Lety Gomez, the mission's chief potter, had burned midnight oil to make each of us a hand-painted stoneware mug emblazoned with our name. People handed them to us as we stepped up into the bus. To remind us where we'd been. What we'd done. *What kind of a difference we had made.*

At the airport, we boarded our planes, 35 pairs of missionary hands and missionary feet, going back to our home churches. And 35 missionary hearts, newly broken — a piece of each one staying behind at Misión Mazahua.