

Tepic, Mexico

(The Rotarians mentioned in this story are members of the Rotary Club of Tepic Paraiso, Tepic, Mexico, Rotary International District 4150. This club is new, having been chartered in 2003, and consists of 22 members, plus one honorary member, all of whom are ladies. The president of the club is Rosalba (Rosy) Upgalde de Sanchez who served as my hostess while in Tepic. The purpose of this trip was to purchase food funded by a matching grant between the Rotary Foundation, RI District 6220, and the Rotary Club of Tepic Paraiso.)

On Tuesday, September 7, 2004 I flew from Houston, TX, to Puerto Vallarta arriving at 2:30 in the afternoon. I was met by Rotarian Marcela, with whom I had communicated, and her Rotarian friend Lupitta. After lunch we proceeded on a 2 ½ hour drive into the mountains to the city of Tepic. Upon arrival in Tepic, we went to a Rotarian's home where we were met by about 8 members of the club. We made the final decisions on the purchase of the food. We were also informed at that time that the funding, which had been wire transferred on Friday, Sept. 3rd had not been received. After this meeting I went to President Rosy's home where I had the pleasure of meeting her husband, Victor, who is a Past District Governor of District 4150 during 1999-2000.

The next morning, we went to the meeting of the Rotary club which had been changed from Thursday to Wednesday for my benefit. This is a club of active members; so active in fact, that all of the other men's clubs are envious of their activities. This was quite an interesting meeting, which was in Spanish. After the meeting, I was taken on a tour of the city and visited some of their projects. We met back for lunch where we visited and discussed additional projects. At that time, a most important announcement was made by the club treasurer "the money that was transferred was now in their account". Everyone cheered at this announcement. Afterwards I was taken back to Rosy's home to rest and prepare for our flight the next morning.

Thursday morning we met at the airport where four members of the club and I boarded a Cessna 106 and flew 40 minutes north into the mountains and jungle. We landed on a dirt strip, and I congratulated the pilot because finding this strip and landing on this particular one was an act of skill, which I appreciate. We were met by a jeep driven by the honorary member who had originally located these needy Indians. From this point we traveled on roads which could only be considered roads in name only. We moved along at an average of 10 miles an hour.

As we left the landing strip we drove down and around the mountain to the village of Marie Jesus where we stayed that night. We went to the Hotel, and then into the center of the village where we met the truck of food that had left Tepic the day before. It took 11 hours for the truck to drive from Tepic to the village. After a couple of hours discussing our afternoon drive, we finally left the village for our primary destination, which is a small community of Indians. It took us 2 ¾ hours of bouncing along into the mountains, and we finally arrived at the community, which consisted of 10 families who actually lived in the village, and 40 additional families who lived within a 2 hour walk of the village. We waited a little while until all the 50 families arrived to receive their food before proceeding with the distribution of the food.

Our contact in the village had instructed the people to wear their Indian clothes, and they were beautiful. The colors were white or light colorful materials with beautiful decoration embroidered onto the material. Each Indian carried a colorful purse with a strap for their shoulder. We distributed approximately 2 tons of beans and rice. The people were very appreciative and were very excited that food would be distributed monthly for the next 11 months. Their main source of food is raising corn on the side of the mountains, and they kept some cattle. The people in this area did not speak Spanish but instead spoke an Indian dialect, and we were lucky to have

people who could translate into their language. After the food was distributed, we returned to the village where we stayed the night.

The hotel was something to remember. We had private rooms but without running water or electricity (no air conditioning) or doors. That night I felt like I had been tied to a bucket of paint on a paint shaker. I think every muscle in my body hurt. 5 ½ hours on these roads was a bit much. It was so hot during the day that we had to drink a lot of water or sodas to keep from becoming dehydrated. However, in spite of that, I was still unable to sleep. It was so hot in the room that just lying on the bed caused you to sweat. Also the mosquitoes were horrible. Anyway all of us survived the night and were up early the next morning ready to drive up to the airstrip. Unfortunately the mountains had clouds that morning so we were delayed. When we arrived at the airport in Tepic we were met by members of the club and three of them drove me directly down the mountain to Puerto Vallarta. I arrived at the airport in Puerto Vallarta just in time to catch my plane home and arrived back in Houston at about 5:30pm.

This was one of the most interesting trips I have ever had the pleasure of taking. The following is a summary of this lengthy narrative.

The trip was successful because the money was transferred and the food was purchased. A total of 50,000 pounds was purchased, which is 5,000 pounds more than stipulated in the matching grant.

It gave me the opportunity to meet for the first time extremely exciting new Rotarians

I saw first hand the excitement and appreciation on the faces of the Indians who received the food.

This was an excellent example of the work that can be done by Rotarians from different countries.

WOW !!! WHAT A TRIP.

John Germany, Hunger Plus, Inc. Vice President