

# Hill Cumorah Expedition Team 2009

By Neil Steede & David B. Brown

# Archaeological Report

By Neil Steede

Every year our team goes forth into the burning hot 107 and 108 temperatures of the Oaxacan jungles to see if more can be learned about the place which we believe to be Cumorah. And, each year we come back with unexpected surprises. This year was no exception. Our plans were meek as compared to other more ambitious years, however, the quality of our results were just as interesting as before. The results are given below in abbreviated form with references to the larger reports of each incident.

The Apparent Location of a Nephite Front-line Outpost at Cumorah<sup>1</sup> is the report of a corpus of artifacts which, unusually appear in a single location. The corpus or group of artifacts in conjunction with artifacts found the year before at the same location strongly implies that a Nephite defense outpost existed there.

Whereas throughout the battlefields in the area the Lamanite artifacts out number the Nephite artifacts 2, 3, and sometimes as much as 4 to 1; this small 200 square foot area boasts the opposite. The pottery is close to 100% Nephite whereas war implements have ratios of 3 to 1 Nephite.

Therefore, one now has a notion of where the Nephite front lines of defense were at the location which we consider to be “Cumorah.”

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<sup>1</sup> Steede, Neil; The Apparent Location of a Nephite Front-line Outpost at “Cumorah,” ESRS, Box 4175, Independence, MO, 2009.

Extremely Strong Ogamic Evidence at Cumorah<sup>2</sup> is a report of two pottery shards which are from an original single piece, show overwhelming evidence of the use of the ancient script known as Ogam. This piece of evidence is of great importance since it is demonstrative of Ogam's formal usage and this supportive of the Proclamation Tablet claim.

A quick exploration of what was thought to be an extension of “Burro’s Cave” in Piedra Ancha proved that cave to be a dead end while another visit and measurements at the fortified point on Cumorahcita finally demonstrated that site to be probably related to the Nephite Headquarters<sup>3</sup> during their Final Battle.

Verification of a Mixtec Outlook was finally made. It is in the area of present-day Ayoutla which is just west of “Cumorahcita.” Now with the contact needed, this site will be able to be visited and mapped next year. Further, this contact has found strong Mixtec evidences of a royal tomb<sup>4</sup> just west of Cumorahcita and within the “bowl.”

Of course our social contacts with the authorities of Jalapa de Diaz, Piedra Ancha, and Ayoutla were all important. These social contacts strengthen our evidence every trip.

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<sup>2</sup> Steede, Neil; Extremely Strong Ogamic Evidence at Cumorah, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64050 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Steede, Neil; Nephite Headquarters at “Cumorah?” ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64050, 2009.

## **The Team Report**

By David B. Brown

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc. 2009 Spring Expedition was comprised of eight members that divided into two teams; Tim Brown, Jerry Stoner, Neil Steede and David Brown formed the driving team, while Carol Brown, Mike Brown, Chris Scott and Randall Lawrence formed the flying team. The flying team left Kansas City by air on Friday morning March 27, 2009 and arrived in Mexico City just after noon the same day. They encountered some issues with traversing the pass from Mexico City to Puebla; the van overheated and required a replacement of a thermostat in order to get back on the road. They did arrive in Puebla in good time to enjoy a dinner and wait for the driving crew to arrive.

The drivers had a good start from Buckner about 5:15 AM on Thursday morning, staying over night in Laredo, Texas, crossing the border on Friday morning and on the road to Mexico City by 7:45 AM.

The afternoon the driving team traveling through San Luis Potosi and having a few chapters read aloud from a book entitled So You Don't Want To Go To Church Anymore by Jake Colsen. We arrived on the north side of Mexico City at about 6 PM and that is when the frustration began to set in. Reading the 13 chapter book aloud kept our minds off of

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<sup>4</sup> Steede, Neil; A Royal Mixtec Tomb? A Preliminary Report, ESRS, PO Box 4175, Independence, MO 64050, 2009.

the maddening traffic situation and the book was finished as the team exited Mexico City at 11:30 PM. It took five hours most of which was spent setting dead still in bumper to bumper traffic in the very heart of Mexico City. The good news is that the team finished this excellent and spiritual-life challenging book AND they were so lost in all of the traffic that they were never pulled over by the Policia--we exited Mexico City without having to pay a bribe! The driving team finally arrived in Puebla at about 12:25 AM.

The now combined teams rolled out of bed about 8:30 on March 28<sup>th</sup>, got some breakfast, had a good devotion, and then hit the road about 11 AM heading for Tuxtepec. As usual there were some excellent discussions on the road. Tuxtepec was 80 degree under cloudy skies when we arrived at about 3:20 PM. The team checked into the hotel renewing acquaintances with the hotel staff we have come to know over the years. They were curious if Joey Brown (Fera) was coming this year. We informed them that he was not able to travel with us.

Once we were unpacked at about 4 PM we gathered about 8 PM to discuss what would be done over the next few days, developing a fluid itinerary and considering the priority of each item we desired to complete on this trip. We then completed our evening together with a devotion that centered on the inclusive message of the Restored gospel—the fact that the Book of Mormon is a document that chronicles ministry of a Risen Christ half a world away from his human drama that

was played out in the Holy Land. This is an example of a God that loves ALL of His children and desires personal relationship with ALL His created. He is "especially fond" of each person and calls every one of us to adopt His view of the world He has created.

March 29<sup>th</sup> started with the team rousing at 7 AM to begin devotion by 8 AM. We had a very good morning devotion where a special blessing was given praying that each of us would experience the presence of the Holy Spirit as it moved and that we could remove our personal filter of the mind to allow God's Spirit to speak directly to our heart as to what could be done in our relationships today as we made contact with our acquaintances. With the pronouncement of that blessing we departed the hotel about 8:25 and headed for Jalapa.

As we pulled up to the home of Moises we found Isabel at the road waiting for a taxi to go into town and heard the voice of Moises break through on the radio. The group went down to Moises' home while Mike drove Isabel into town to purchase the few items. While we waited on Isabel and Mike to return we visited with Aunt Martha who was looking especially well (we credit this in large part to recent prayers on her behalf). Once Mike and Isabel returned the social exchange was very gracious as we enjoyed sweet bread (*pan dulce*) and *cafe con leche* and caught up on the events of the last year. It was here that we discovered that Alvero had led a group of people to remove the current government at the municipal building because they had tore down the building, but

the rebuilding process had not moved any farther than the last time we were there—it was still just concrete pillars with rebar sticking out. Alvero and others had grown tired of the corruption involved and succeeded in ousting the group involved in that. We expressed that we were impressed and had always sensed that he was an honorable man.

We then expressed our desire to share a worship service with Moises' family and all present retired to the concrete porch to bask in the presence of the Spirit as we sang hymns and Neil brought the message in both English and Spanish. We each felt the Spirit in power as we observed Martha being visibly moved from the Spirit and the inclusion she felt as part of the group. We ended our stay with an invitation to the family to come and spend the evening with us and dine with us in Tuxtepec on Monday. They tentatively accepted.

As we reached the road to leave we looked to our west and gazed on the lower slopes of Cerro Rabon since the mountain was still enveloped in a shroud of low hanging clouds. It was very reminiscent of past years where we spent time on the slopes encased a heavy mountain mist. This year Neil provided us an added piece of information concerning this mountain as he informed us that this is the birthplace of Tlaloc, the Rain God. The clouds generate from the mountain as mists generated from the heated air of the valley meets with the cool moisture escaping from the mountain. These clouds being formed are then drawn to the west into the Tehuacan Valley and then eventually into the Puebla

Valley so that there is a natural atmospheric connection between Rabon and Puebla Valley. While standing here our new members of the team caught a brief glimpse of the upper peaks as the clouds momentarily broke to allow the view.

We then moved on to Jalapa and stopped in to meet with Alvero (the former Mayor). We found that he was out of town, but his wife Felipa received us very graciously. We sat and talked for about 45 minutes as we caught up on news and left her with an invitation for dinner later this week.

We were then on to Catalina's home and were greeted by her family. Both of her parents were present and we sat talking for about a half an hour. While there we found that Catalina is still in Mexico City and working at a paper store. Her little sister called Catalina on the cell phone and Catalina and Neil got to talk for about ten minutes. Neil stated that she sounded very lively and in spite of finding out that Joey was married, she still seemed to be very witty and charming as ever. We said our goodbyes to the family and expressed that we hoped to meet with them again before we leave. We took Moises back to his home as he had accompanied us through all the visits and headed back to Tuxtepec as we reflected on the events of the day while stopping at an eatery in Tuxtepec before we headed back to hotel.

Randall brought devotions for the evening and as he recounted the events of the day we again felt the power of the Spirit as we began to

reflect and each person considered the movement of the Spirit in the lives of the people we met with this day. We know that God is performing a work with them and we are so honored to be a small part of this. God is moving and preparing them for something very important—that much we can see very clearly.

The team started the morning of March 30<sup>th</sup> with a restaurant full of Federales; about 35 of them. That postponed the service for our breakfast so we completed our devotions and were on the road by 9 AM to take clothing to Tuxtepec. We arrived at Alvero and Felipa Rubio's about 10:20 and unloaded the clothing we gathered from donations provided from several people, but the bulk of the clothing was gathered by Sheri Aguirre (Thanks Sheri).

We delivered a Spanish Book of Mormon to a gentleman who requested the book. This gentleman was the policeman who intervened and stood up against "green shirt" in 2005 when those being held by the police were being accused of "firing arms" at the hill. We were happy to accommodate his impromptu request as he apparently felt the need to investigate the beliefs of those he defended.

The team left Alvero's and drove on to Piedra Ancha to visit our friends there. We stopped at the Santo Domingo bridge and visited with the family of Esperanza, the little girl that Joe Fera named. We shared some moments with them and played with the kids then left and headed up the road to Piedra Ancha enjoying the day as it was bright and

sunny. The clouds finally lifted off of Cerro Rabon (Cumorah) and we were able to see the mountain for the first time this trip. As we were making the approach to the town with only a couple of miles to go those of us riding in the van got a call from the group riding in the Expedition that we were leaking a steady stream of oil. We stopped and quickly turned off the engine before we burned the cylinders and ruined the motor. Wow!! It was a steady stream pouring out of the van—we punctured the die-cast aluminum oil pan. Plans immediately changed. Everyone rearranged the gear and piled into the Expedition making for some tight quarters, but it was fun. We drove back to Jalapa to find that while they had a garage to repair the vehicle, they had no tow truck and instructed us to tow it ourselves with the Expedition. We considered that for about 30 seconds and then decided that it would be worth the expense to pay a tow truck.

We headed back to Tuxtepec to find a tow truck working next to the road about five miles outside of Tuxtepec. We arranged his services and Mike went with him to retrieve the van while the rest of us went to the hotel. Then, Neil, Tim and Jerry traveled back to Jalapa to pick up Moises, Isabel, Martha, Maria and Juanita and brought them back to Tuxtepec for dinner.

While waiting at the hotel Carol and Chris began a conversation with a young man who was staying at the hotel. He is one of the 35 Federale Policia staying at our hotel on some kind of security rotation in

the district. His name was Daniel and he spent a good hour and a half showing us photos of all the places he had been in the last two months on his rotation. Acapulco, Cancun, Tabasco, Chiapas, Merida, Chichen Itza, Satillo, Veracruz and others. He share parts of his recent travels and seemed genuinely interested in knowing who we were. With about 35 Federales staying at our hotel each with a machine gun at all times it seemed that we were in one of the safest places in the entire state of Oaxaca.

Our evening of sharing and fun with the Moises family was wonderful. Martha and the crew were all smiles! After Mike finally made it back from getting the van towed to Tuxtepec we shared a delicious dinner together with our friends and it felt like one large extended family. Then all were ready to retire to their rooms after devotions.

March 31<sup>st</sup> started late with our guests taking a much needed respite and sleeping in until about 10 AM. This few hours away in Tuxtepec seemed more like a mini-vacation to them. They piled into the Expedition with Neil, Tim and Jerry at about noon and headed back to Jalapa. The rest of the group stayed back and worked on various things. I worked on editing Neil's book, Mike worked on getting the van fixed, Carol worked on her projects, and Chris and Randall worked on some important reading they needed to get done.

Neil, Tim and Jerry spent some very productive time in Jalapa. Once at the home of Moises they were presented with some pottery artifacts that Juanita, Maria and Isabel had found all within fifty feet of their home. The pottery was a very fine thin wall pottery not anything like the crude orange we were finding up against the cliffs. And the obsidian was a mixture of green and smoky gray that was most surprising. The green obsidian was over 80% of the find, with only a very few pieces being a smoky gray. Past experience throughout the valley has always yielded a percentage of over 60% smoky gray obsidian compared to a little over 30% green. Because the smoky gray is from Guatemala we know that it was Lamanite, and because the green is from Teotihuacán we know it was Nephite. This provided us with the implication that the Lamanite army outnumbered the Nephite army by more than 2 to 1. And, when adding the fine pottery with the overwhelming amount of green obsidian with the piece of pottery that appears to have Ogam script etched into the clay before baking it is almost certain that the home of Moises is built over an area that was once a Nephite encampment. Certainly the lay of the land would be conducive to such an outpost as it is relatively flat with a small stream for water supply. And, the Nephites inhabited this valley for nearly three years prior to the final battle so it would be necessary to have encampments in many places throughout the valley to support the

200,000 plus army, most of which could fall back to a safe zone once the enemy was on the approach.

The crew made their way back to Tuxtepec crossing the valley in 107 degree temperatures. Mike, Neil and David then traveled to the mechanic shop to check on the progress with fixing the van. The die-cast oil pan had a hole punctured in it with several cracks fingering outward from the hole. The shop was able to weld the pan back together and get it fixed by about 7:15, but the owner had already left for the day and we could not get the vehicle released to us until the bill is paid. The team retired after devotions with the hope of retrieving the van and moving forward with the plans for further exploration.

April 1<sup>st</sup> was bright and sunny. Mike, Neil and Tim went to the mechanic to pick up the van. The exhaust system still had issues, but the oil pan was fixed and we all got on the road to Jalapa by 10 AM. Neil, Chris, Carol, Tim and Jerry drove the rough road out to Piedra Ancha in the Expedition. They met with the town Mayor whose name is Juan. They dropped off the clothes with Juan and then got information about the Burro Cave. The crew ventured to the cave and took a cursory view to get an idea of what might be involved in going deeper into the cave. They finished that venture with very little to show and then moved up the hill to visit with Paula and the rest of the Jacobo family. The crew then drove on up the road a bit further to view the valley and took some more photos.

Mike, Randall and David pick-up Moises then drove on to Ayoutla to check on finding a passage to the Mixtec Outlook. Mike drove to the home that was Larry and Cynthia's; the couple who informed us about this outlook as they had discovered it while working in the region for the Wycliffe Bible organization. But, Larry and Cynthia left less than a year ago. We did discover that there is a road that goes up to the outlook and that if we get permission from the Mayor of Ayoutla that we can drive the Expedition most of the way up. With that information we left Ayoutla and drove on up the road past the next town of La Soledad and took some photos down the valley to get a sense of the length of the valley and the vantage views from some of the hilltops.

We then made our way back to drop off Moises at his home with the understanding that we will be by at 9:30 in the morning to meet with him and explore a cave he has found. We headed back to Tuxtepec while our counterparts left Piedra Ancha and stopped off in Jalapa to meet with Alvero and Felipa. Arrangements were made to have them meet us in Tuxtepec at 7 PM on Friday to have time to enjoy dinner together and talk about events in Jalapa.

Mike, Randall and I arrived in Tuxtepec and were then summoned by Neil and Tim who had found an exhaust mechanic. We ventured the van to the mechanic who directed us to the Ford dealer who couldn't get the part until Monday and directed us to a muffler shop just up the street. Forty-five minutes later our exhaust issue was fixed. We owe a

great deal to Neil's tenacity; he hung in there in spite of being worn from all the interpreting he had to do.

We had dinner and followed that with an excellent devotion this evening. Plans were made for one group to go caving the next day while another group heads around to Ayoutla to acquire permission from the Mayor.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> Mike, Tim, Neil, Randall, Jerry and Chris all headed for the cave in Jalapa. Tim, Jerry and Chris met with Moises to make their way to the cave while Mike, Jerry and Neil headed to Ayoutla to finish making connection for access to the Mixtec Outlook. The cave group met with the connection that Moises had made for getting to the cave, but the price for the information to get to the cave was now three times the amount that was agreed upon the day before. The cave group packed their things and followed the road to Ayoutla to catch up with the rest of the group.

It took some time and tenacity, but Neil was finally able to find someone that knew about access and getting a guide arranged for the Mixtec Outlook for early Saturday morning. The drive and climb should not be taken during the middle of the day since the temperature was a steamy 108 this afternoon. Once those arrangements were made in Ayoutla, the group then headed back to the home of Moises and Isabel to finish some arrangements for some shirts that Isabel had made for Neil. And, arrangements were also made for Isabel to join us for dinner

with Alvaro and Felipa on Friday evening. With the heat of the day having sapped so much from the group they headed back to Tuxtepec to have dinner at the local VIPS Restaurant, and then devotions and bed.

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> Tim, Neil, Randall, Chris, Carol and David were out of the parking lot at 8:10 this AM as they headed for Piedra Ancha and arrived at the base of the climb for Cumorahcita at about 10:10 AM. It was a beautiful morning and the climb was a little taxing but we beat the heat of the day. The ridge along which we climbed had been cleared of jungle and a freshly erected barbed-wire fence ran the length which provided us with a pretty well established path to the top. Once there at about 11 AM we were able acquire a few more measurements and Neil did confirm that the top of Cumorahcita had been anciently worked with some interesting positioning of walls and terraces. We spent some time looking around the “bowl” and reviewing again the probability of how different battle strategies might unfold in this particular topography. We finished about 12:30 and headed down to the road to meet with Carol who had chosen to sit tight in the car.

We got to the home of Paula about 1:45 and sat and talked for some time, but being the afternoon and heat of the day most people were resting as was Paula. We presented the prayer shawl to her daughter who was very gracious and promised to present it to Paula. We were sad that we were not able to stay longer but we did have others to meet with

before daylight slipped away. We said our goodbyes with a promise to return and have dinner with them next year.

On the way out of Piedra Ancha we stopped to speak with Juan and Lupe to let them know we were leaving the area and probably would not have a chance to return again this year. Juan then asked if we could pray for his wife Lupe as she was still recovering from gall bladder surgery she had last week; we heartily agreed. The team exited the car and walked the short distance to their home. We sat for a few minutes as Neil explained the process of the prayer of blessing, then David anointed and Tim confirmed the administration while the rest of the group and her family knelt in prayer around Lupe. I know I felt the Spirit of God very strongly as Tim confirmed the blessing of healing and health upon Lupe. It was a very moving experience.

We continued to talk for a short time and Juan then introduced us to a young lady and her daughter who wanted to thank us personally for the clothes that we had brought; her little girl was wearing the outfit she had received from the donations we delivered. Juan said there were several who wanted to come personally to thank us, but they didn't know when we would be back. We told him that we would certainly do what we could to bring more clothes next year. With time continuing to whittle away, we moved on to travel across the river, stopping by quickly to say goodbye to Ezperanza, and then on to pick-up Isabel. We arrived in Tuxtepec about 5:15.

We met for dinner with all of us wearing the shirts that Isabel had made for us with the team name and the four names of the mountain embroidered on the back. Alvaro and Felipa apparently were not able to make it, but it did not dampen our spirits as we enjoyed a wonderful evening meal with Isabel. We had a very good devotion, spoke of plans for tomorrow and were off to an early bedtime.

Saturday April 4<sup>th</sup> found Mike, Neil, Jerry, Randall and David on the road at 5:05 AM making their way to Ayoutla to meet with the guides that had been loosely arranged a couple days previous. We arrived at Rabon as the sun was rising and caught a beautiful photo of the sun coming up over the horizon next to Cerro Rabon with the foreground of Cumorahcita in the center of the bowl.

We got to Ayoutla about 6:20 and looked for our contact in the central square in front of the municipal building. We looked and only found someone who knew about it and we were then told to follow the road around and it would take us up. So, we did—wandering around the upper portions of the small village until we found a road that did venture to the area we were wanting. We followed the concrete road until it ended and changed into a rock and dirt road that we attempted to follow until it ultimately got too rough to travel even in the Expedition. As we were turning around we were "greeted" by the local police department who were making an effort to "chase us down" because we had not apparently gone through proper channels. We followed them

back to the palace where Neil spent ten minutes sitting and discussing the nature of our investigation. The gentleman in charge indicated that he will be very glad to make arrangements for us to make such a climb next year as he knows the individual who can show us to the top. We then left the municipal building to be greeted by a couple of men, who were the contacts to take us to the top, but it was already 7:30 and it was already too late in the day. The young man said he had some artifacts that he wanted to show us so we followed him to his house.

Once we arrived we were greeted and then brought into a room where he presented a box with some of the most wonderful Mixtec ceramics. There were funerary masks, bowls and trinkets that were amazingly pristine. He inquired if we knew anyone who would be interested in these items and we made it very clear that we were not authorized to deal in artifacts—that he would have to find someone involved with INAH; our only interest is in investigating and recording the artifacts found in the area in order to establish a record of the history in the region. But, we were very happy that he did allow us to take several photos.

After some very interesting discussions concerning the location where this pottery was found and the nature of the climb to the Mixtec Outlook, we then made arrangements for next spring to allow us time to climb and the time to get ourselves in shape as he explained this climb

as a two hour strenuous climb to the upper ridges. We then made our way back to the road and on back to Tuxtepec.

We arrived at the hotel in time to catch the rest of our team getting up for breakfast. We all ate dinner and then took the afternoon to rest and swim. The temperature was a very steamy 106 this afternoon. We went to the downtown area of Tuxtepec to get some tacos and then back to the hotel for devotions. The spring daylight savings change is tonight so we are loosing an hour.

On April 5<sup>th</sup> the entire team enjoyed a late start and started devotions at 9:30 AM then out the door at 10 AM and on the way to Jalapa. The drive on this Palm Sunday was unmistakable as everywhere there were church goers carrying their palms formed into the shape of a cross. We entered the market in the center of the square in Jalapa at about 11 AM and walked around taking in all the items that were available and the swarms of people in the market. The Catholic Church at the top of the square let out about 11:30 and the already crowded market became packed! As I was walking along working my way against the crowd I was greeted by a hand that reached out and I looked up to see the smiling face of Catalina's father extending a warm handshake—it was a real joy to find a familiar face in the presence of all this humanity. I led him back to our group whom I had left at the fountain and arrangements were made that we would visit them shortly after noon. Our group moved on about the square—Randall

was able to find a primer that translated Mazateca to Spanish—this is something he hopes to begin to master in time.

We then made our way on down to Catalina's home and visited, making the most of the opportunity to share and overlook the quickly rising heat of the day (it reached 102 degrees). After some exchanges of gifts and making some purchases we all received hugs and kisses and made our way back up the long hill to the cars. Taking our time to cool off in the vehicles we slowly winded the road that led to the home of Moises. We were still a little early for dinner so we passed our time at the road gazing at the face of Cero Rabon that always seems to capture our attention and imagination every time we look at it. We spent some time chatting with the neighbor boy Felipe who we have come to know over the years. I found that he is going to turn 13 on May 4th of this year—his height causes me to guess more like 8 or 9—we gringos are more like giants among the natives of the region.

We were then summoned to enter the gate that led to the path of the home of Isabel and Moises. We were immediately led into the living room to find that it had been transformed with a large table and benches and it was ready for us to sit and feast. Again, the menu was so simple and yet appetizing; chicken in a spicy broth, homemade maize tortillas, homemade *pico-de-gallo* and salsa (not for the timid), with soda in glasses with ice. It was so filling and wonderful. The table was soon cleared and the festivities of gabbing began. There was truly a sense of

family as Juanita enjoyed the coloring book and colors that Randall had brought for her. Randall got out his Mazateca to Spanish dictionary and we got a taste of the native language while the rest of us engaged in cajoling and kidding one another as family does. We then gathered for a while in the next room where Tim had already spent some time with Martha sharing with her as she stitched yet another *servilleta* to help supplement the family income. We all then shared in a beautiful prayer of blessing given by Jerry Stoner and translated into Spanish by Neil. Time caused us to begin saying our goodbyes and there wasn't a dry eye in the house—even among the new ones; the spirit of grace, goodness, and Christian love had permeated this humble setting and truly made us all partakers of the richness that Christ brings to hearts that share.

We walked up to the vehicles and made our way back to Tuxtepec for a few minutes of frustration as we tried to connect to the internet for the church announcement that was webcast at 7 PM—we finally decided that we would have to catch the "canned" copy tomorrow evening when we are in Puebla. We enjoyed a unity this evening as we contemplated the events of this trip—both at dinner and in devotions. We have been allowed to touch the lives of God's children in such meaningful ways, and as always they have touched us in inexplicable ways as well. We are rich! Who can match the power and majesty of a God who loves so freely and allows barriers to melt away in the presence of a love that is

the true definition of charity? He gives freely to all and we are all partakers of that gift!

The morning of April 6<sup>th</sup> began with overcast skies and a strong wind coming in from the east. While the air was cool, it was thick with humidity. We left the hotel a little after 11 AM and headed east and north from Tuxtepec, up the highway to Tonajas where we had some dinner and then headed west through the Cordoba pass rising up through the light rain and low-hanging clouds till we crested the top and came down into the Puebla Valley eventually breaking into the sunshine.

We found our hotel about 4:30 and then headed to the market in the historic downtown area; being at the 6,000 foot elevation made for a very different and welcome change in climate. After some casual shopping in the wonderful cool climate using a suggestion from Neil we found an excellent little restaurant on the square. It was a very enjoyable evening as the sun set and we took in the community activities on the square. We then our way back to the hotel and viewed the taped version of the church announcement, discussed some of its content and then enjoyed our devotions.

April 7<sup>th</sup> began with a quick breakfast at the hotel in Puebla, followed by our devotions then moved out onto the road to Teotihuacán at about 9:20 AM. We ventured on a new route to the east of Mexico City in hope of avoiding the unpredictable traffic. We arrived in Teotihuacán at about 1:15 PM where we purchased our tickets for the

site and began our tour with the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, moving up the Avenue of the Dead to the Pyramid of the Moon, the Temple of the Butterflies, and finishing with the Pyramid of the Sun before we exited the gates at about 5:15. The weather was windy, about 80 degrees and wonderful at the 7,500 foot elevation. It made for a perfect setting to receive instruction and insights from Neil as he shared many unpublished facts about the complex at Teotihuacán. Chris, Randall and David braved the climb and made it to the top of the Pyramid of the Sun.

We ventured to our hotel and then out to eat a tasty dinner at one of the restaurants on site. We had an excellent devotion this evening as we each shared in the aspects of the trip that were important to us. Each recounted events and moments that seemed to be evidence of God moving among His children by bringing together people, ideas, and evidences; both temporal and spiritual. While there were a few planned items that did not get fulfilled, everyone felt that what was accomplished was important to the ongoing efforts and expressed a trust that God was definitely orchestrating the successes of the group.

The morning April 8<sup>th</sup> began beautifully with a breakfast for everyone at the hotel. Once we were checked out we were all on our way about the same time leaving the premises at almost 9:45 this morning; the driving crew heading for the road home and the flying crew making their way toward the airport.

Once on the road the driving crew made their way across the north part of Mexico City to make the Autopista to Queratero when they were stopped by a local police for not having the proper sticker to be on the road before 11 AM. Tim refused to pay the ticket to the policeman and we were then escorted to what they called the station but was, in fact, a tow lot/junk yard with a small police building in the back. After some negotiation with the police insisting on 2,000 pesos we finally agreed on 1,000 pesos and we were on our way. Really, we were one step away from being delayed all day, as it was it was only about 45 minutes.

Once back on the road we made our way down in elevation and upward to the border. About halfway between Saltillo and Monterrey we had a flat on the driver rear of the Expedition. Another half-hour delay and we were on our way to the border, reaching the Rio Grande at Nuevo Laredo at 10:45. We found a very amiable guard who got us through fairly quickly. As it turned out it was very busy for a midnight on Wednesday night because it is Holy Week and there is a lot of family visiting going on across the border. We got some late food in Laredo and made it to a San Antonio hotel about 2:45.

The driving crew got word from the flying crew that everyone made it home safely and relatively on time with the airlines. They traveled the final stretch through the rain across Kansas and reached Buckner about 9:30 PM; everyone was now home safely.