

Hill Cumorah Expedition Team 2010 Research Report

By David B. Brown

In January of 2010 the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team joined up with the Early Sites Research Society to co-sponsor a research trip in Mexico. The purpose of this trip was to visit important sites and museums along the Olmec historical region in the Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco then visit a few Mayan sites in Chiapas. It was the hope of Neil Steede to gather more information to assist in filling in historical gaps in the Olmec culture as it waned and eventually gave way to the influence of the Maya. This required a visit to the ruin site and museum at El Tajin, the Museum at Xalapa, the sites of Tres Zapotes, Acayucan, San Lorenzo, Coatzacoalcas, LaVenta, the LaVenta Park in Villahermosa, Palenque, Tonina, Chinkultic and the museums at Comitán, San Cristóbal, and Tuxtla Gutierrez.

Neil Steede traveled to Mexico about five days ahead of the group, Mike Brown, Carol Brown and David Brown traveled to Mexico City on January 20th in order to arrange the rental of the two large passenger vans. Then on the 21st of January the balance of the group flew into Mexico City where they were met by the four already in Mexico. The group consisted of Chris Scott, Terry Scott, Scott Norwood, Edd DeTray, Richard Rupe, Joel Loving, Pat Beebe, Don Beebe, Barent Eliason, Barbara Eliason, Mike Brown, Carol Brown, Neil Steede and David Brown.

January 20

Mike Brown, Carol Brown and David Brown arrived in Mexico City by air about 2:45 in the afternoon without incident. The airport experience was rather efficient as there seemed to be a very small crowd. The team took a cab the car rental where they acquired two 13-passenger vans and headed over to the hotel to checked in and get some food from the taco joint next door (Tacos al Pastur and Queso Fundidos). They were able contact Neil and make arrangements to meet on Thursday prior to collecting the balance of the crew from their flight at about 1 PM and then head off to El Tajin.

January 21

Mike, Carol and David had a leisurely breakfast at the hotel and then were off to the airport to pick up the crew. Mike hosted us at the American Airlines Admirals Club while we waited. Soon we were joined by Neil, Edd DeTray, and Edd's daughter Stacey and grandson Hans. We caught up on the latest and then got word that our team had landed and were in the process of finding some food in the food court. We found them at....McDonalds, where else?

Once the meal was complete we all made our way to the vans and on the road to Poza Rico, passing by Teotihuacán where we did see the Pyramids of the Sun, Moon and Quetzalcoatl, but there was no time to visit the site. The trip to Poza Rico was interesting when the toll road

ended and we then traversed the mountainous terrain on a narrow winding two-lane highway. We found a hotel in Poza Rico where we quickly checked in and sat down to dinner. The fourteen members of our group are an interesting mix and I am sure traveling with them will prove to be fun and eventful with the combination of views and talents involved.



Neil was able to provide a lot of very promising information about the progress of projects including a series of new developments involving the tunnel beneath the Pyramid of the Sun Teotihuacán. The future proves to be promising and there is good reason to hope that some very remarkable events are taking place in the field of archaeology that in turn will be supportive of the ancient records of the past coming to light and undoubtedly pointing to Christ as a Savior of the entire world and not just the mainstream Judeo-Christian faiths! Tonight the crew is off to find the sleep that has eluded many of those who traveled 2,000 miles today.

January 22

Our group was up as planned this morning and all gathered at breakfast where we shared our stories of the all night party that was reverberating from the bar into the upper hallways of the hotel until precisely at 3:45 this morning when all activities seemed to cease. This time was provided to us by Joel. We checked out and made our way down the road through the overcast and at times foggy drive to the archaeological site of El Tajin. Arriving about 9:30 AM and after receiving the necessary briefing from Neil to alert us for important facets of the site, we entered the main walkway to the site and crossed over the bridge into the initial plaza. What welcomed us was truly amazing as there are four pyramids that flank the four directions of the plaza. The pyramid on the east is Totonoc style, the south is Teotihuacán, west is Huastec style architecture, and the pyramid on the north is similar to Comalcalco. These four represent the four areas of influence at the site.

Moving further into the site a person is then presented with a history of the area as the architecture reflects a blending of styles in each structure with large-block Jaredite at the base followed by *talud and*



tablero panels and ramparts that reflect Teotihuacán and Nephite styles, then finished with niches and cornices that are reflective of the Asian influence. This site seems to shout a message of the Golden Age blend of cultures. This is punctuated by the mega-structure plaza in the shape of a conch shell that both symbolizes Quetzalcoatl (Christ) with a double meaning of a speech scroll indicating that the structures and forms of the architecture and design ARE the testimony of the people here.

Both Neil and Don Beebe were very impressed as the last time they had visited the site it was only about 1/5th of the way excavated. Today's visit to this well-developed site was eye-opening on so many different



levels where symbolism reflected multiple levels of meaning from the physical realm to the spiritual realm and life-after-death.

We finished our visit with a meal coupled with Neil providing a quick overview of what we had seen. We left the site about 2 PM and headed south along the Gulf Coast sharing stories and making the long road journey easy. We pulled into Cardel about 5:30 and before 6 PM we had located a very nice hotel in the center of town that proved to be very quiet and restful. We had a good dinner, had a meeting over what we planned to see at the Xalapa Museum and then had devotions before

turning in for the night. God has a way of continuing to reveal for those who continue to seek. We believe there is so much more yet for us to find.

January 23

We were up early with a very good night's rest and after a good breakfast and devotions we were on the road to Xalapa at 8:40 AM. We arrived at the Xalapa Museum at 10:45 and once inside we began the tour of this impressive collection of Olmec Culture. We viewed and photographed a collection of Colossal Heads, Olmec Alters, ceramics, mural paintings, the La Mojarra Stone, codices, and several stela. This was so impressive and extensive that it took until 3:30 for the group to complete.

Once done with the museum, we made our way out of town and found ourselves on the road to Veracruz and beyond to Alvarado where we stopped for the evening. The three-hour trip seemed to fly by as we spent much of the time listening to Neil's archaeological explanations, then testimonies of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration faith, and sharing perspectives on the future of the faithful. Many of us are sure that God has placed us where we are for His purposes and that while we admittedly do not KNOW where the future will take us, it is certain that we all know that only a faithful attention to the work in front of us will ultimately bring about the designs He has in mind. So it is this faith

journey that has brought us together; this group of people with unique perspectives and backgrounds, at this time and place to share these moments—family-like bonds in Christ that unify our hearts and spirits in a unity that transcends time and connects us with these loving, giving, and faithful ancient people. While we did not quote this scripture I know that the following summarizes the nature of the conversations we shared today:

"And now I say unto you mine elders, apostles and high priests of my church, Continue ye in the ministry unto which you have been called; and if ye cannot fully agree on all the points of the law, be patient and be not contentious; so far as you can agree work together without heat, confusion, or malice. Ye are equal in worth of position and place in the work of the church; and if in honor ye shall prefer one another, ye will not strive for precedence or place in duty or privilege, and shall be blessed of me. Yea, verily, thus saith the Lord, unto the elders of the church: continue in steadfastness and faith. Let nothing separate you from each other and the work whereunto you have been called; and I will be with you by my Spirit and presence of power unto the end. Amen."

It is in this faith that we stand together, arm-in-arm and hand-in-hand to seek, gather and share the truly remarkable testimony our ancient brothers and sisters have set in stone. Their messages are not only set in the glyphs and pictographs, but in the very forms of their

architecture. It shouts a message that they knew of Christ, looked forward to His coming, rejoiced in His visitation, and looked forward to His return. Their testimony beckons us to continue to strive for stronger faith for we have so far yet to go. The future has so much to offer as God has promised that "righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood..." Perhaps the truth we are helping to collect is a part of that process; perhaps we are able to do our small part in revealing the hidden events and testimonies of a God who has loved us and worked to redeem humanity from the very instant that Adam fell. And, to seal that redemption He has revealed Himself to humanity throughout all ages. You, through your patience, prayer, and support, coupled with our endeavors, unite to push forward a hope that we can **KNOW** the full measure of God's love. Thank you for caring and praying. You have an impact that cannot be expressed in words.

January 24

We were up early this morning again, some of us (me and Edd DeTray) were awakened by team members who wanted to load the van—it seemed that we had overslept! We had devotions and then headed into town where we ate breakfast right next to a fish market that was in the process of slicing up the morning catch, but the interesting smells wafting into our morning meal did very little to distract us from the very interesting conversations that seemed to hold our attention.

We traveled southwest to Tres Zapotes and after a 25 mile overshoot, we backtracked and finally made our destination. Finding the small museum we took photographs of the Colossal Head and other very large carvings then found our way out to the mounds east of town. Here we climbed one and found several fragments of pottery along the cow path on the side of the hill. We then loaded and were on the road back to Santiago Tuxtla where we found a Museum and two more Colossal Heads. And, there was a very important group of artifacts that Neil had been a part of excavating in San Lorenzo over thirty years ago. Those items are now here in this museum and will save us the trip to San Lorenzo.

We finished our adventure at the museum and located a cozy restaurant where we had a very enjoyable meal with family-style seating where conversation was of such a personal and enjoyable tone that the spirit of the Christ was present, gently moving among the group, unifying us all through pleasant moments of joy that is often only found at reunions of long-distance family. We closed that portion of the day and moved on to the hotel that ended up being a very pleasant surprise. The outer appearance of the hotel did not stand out in any way, but once inside it was very nicely appointed with a traditional Spanish inner courtyard. It provided us a very quaint and personal place to stay.

We unpacked and gathered for our devotions. Joel brought the initial thoughts for the evening, followed by Richard Rupe, Neil Steede,

Mike Brown, Don Beebe and then wrapped up with a few words by Joel. The spirit was especially powerful and sweet this evening. We parted for our rooms while plans were made for tomorrow. Some of us ended the evening by accepting an invitation to a cultural dance held just a block away from the hotel.

January 25

This morning brought with it an overcast sky as we loaded our bags in the vans at 7 AM and then gathered for our devotions. We made our way down the sidewalk to another hotel cafe for our breakfast and then out of the little town of Santiago Tuxtla south to the Autopista and east through the light rain that led to Cuatzacoalcos for Neil to follow-up on a mysterious lack of communication from a friend. Once that situation was addressed and the proper efforts were set in motion, we traveled east again over the narrow pass that is nothing more than a strip of clay landmass that rises out of the marsh and runs in an east/west direction between the Gulf of Mexico on the north and the marshlands on the south. This strip ran all the way from Coatzacoalcos to LaVenta and is what we believe to be the “narrow pass” that leads from the City of Desolation (LaVenta) to the land northward.

We broke into the sunlight on this leg of the trip and found ourselves in LaVenta at about 3 PM. Here it was our hope to use ladders to photograph the several stela and altars with Married Ogam script

chiseled into the top of these artifacts. The pre-planning for this exercise all fell into place, the museum was empty, the sunlight was perfect, and the staff was so accommodating that this could not have been more perfectly planned. These types of events almost never pan out as there always seems to be something that falls through the cracks with an official who drops the ball on an agreement. Not to mention that this is Monday and INAH sites are very often closed on Mondays—for instance, the INAH Museum in Santiago Tuxtla was closed today. But, it seemed that the angels had gone before and set these things in motion. We were able to photograph all the items in the museum with Married Ogam script on them. The site attendant provided the ladders for us to use, and they allowed us to stay an hour past the closing of the site so that we could complete all of the photography. See what your prayers can do for us? You assist in providing miracles by asking and believing that those requests will be answered.

When leaving the site, we met with a few of the local children who were playing in the parking lot and soon Mike Brown found his soccer skills being challenged. I think Mike was eventually undone, but we were impressed with his ability to make an effort. Barbara Eliason then shared the bounty of her red licorice with the kids and it was time for us to get back on the road.

We left LaVenta and moved on down the road to Villahermosa where we found a hotel and had dinner at VIPS. Once back at the hotel

Bearant Eliason brought the devotions this evening and again there was a gentle sweet spirit as we have felt during all of our devotions. We sang "What A Glorious Thing To Be, In The Light" with such a beautiful harmony provided by the altos and tenors that it was remarkable the sound that was made by these fourteen people. Who knew? Bearant then shared a testimony of God's protection for those who are involved in this work of collecting and revealing the truth of this ancient people. We then dismissed with a prayer of thanks for the day and for continued protection for tomorrow.

January 26

We were up at 7 AM, got our breakfast and had our devotions. The harmony of the songs was again something to enjoy. We loaded the vans and were off to LaVenta Park just a couple of blocks from the hotel, arriving just as the gates were scheduled to open. There was a line of school children ready to enter the park as we stood in waiting with papers in hand to gain permission for taking the pictures we desired. Neil began talking to one of the people at the park and after showing the journal with Neil's article concerning Married Ogam on the top of the Colossal Head and the accompanying photos of Neil on top of one of the Colossal Heads, the man Neil was talking with stated that he remembered that incident and that he had helped Neil get into the park over thirty years ago when that photo was taken. Now, with a letter from

INAH officials and this publication in hand Neil was here to once again get photos and access to the tops of the Colossal Heads. We were now in!! We got the permission for cameras, tripods, and ladder along with a guide and security escort. While waiting for members of our team to purchase a ladder, we were interviewed by a local group of high school students who were learning English and had to tape an interview as a project. Several of us participated. See the photos attached.

One of the purposes for the photo shoot was to have access to the top side of the Colossal Heads that have Married Ogam script carved into them so that the carvings can be accurately reviewed, researched, transliterated and translated. This included four Colossal Heads, a couple of altars and the Serpent Stela that illustrates King Lib defeating the serpents at the pass that opened them access to the land southward and provided the people with forested wilderness for food.

While there Neil was the introduced to the Park Director who immediately established a rapport with Neil and took Neil to the INAH headquarters downtown to purchase a very recent publication on the Olmecs. That fell through as it appeared that the last volumes of the publication were gone; they were sold out, but the establishment of the friendship was a plus. While we were waiting for Neil to return from that trip, we purchased some snacks at the park and we were quickly visited by little raccoon-like creatures called *coatimundi* who enjoyed our snacks.

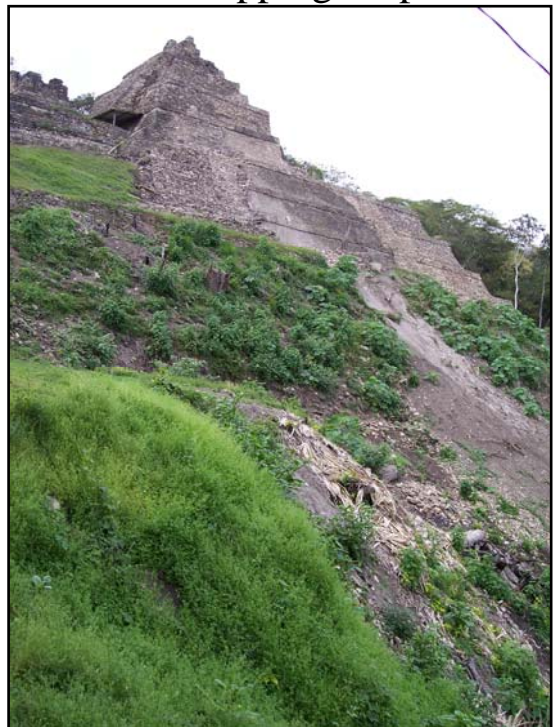
We left the park and headed north for Comalcalco. We entered the museum and took many photographs of the items that have been added to this display. This site is truly unique in that the art, architecture and technology are undoubtedly a blending of Greek, Roman, Southern India and the Mekong Delta, and reflect a Mediterranean/Southeast Asia Christian influence established at 50 to 100 AD. Roman-style fired brick measured in Roman inches, fired in Sri Lanka-style kilns, and then used in building a series of structures in the same design as the city of Ocoo on the Mekong Delta! Those who settled here were world travelers. Neil started talking with the attendant at this museum and again he found an old friend that had worked with Neil at this site twenty-five years prior. This was a foot in the door for information that Neil needed to gather.

Neil provided us an extensive tour of the site and then we were back on the road in our vans heading east to Villahermosa for a meal of US food. Some ate at Carl's Jr. while others ate at Burger King. Then back on the road east to Palenque. We again spent the time sharing testimonies, miraculous experiences, and our hopes for the future. We arrived in Palenque about 9 PM, got rooms, had devotions with songs of praise for such a blessed day, and were off to bed. Barbara Eliason was in charge of devotions and chose "All Hail The Power Of Jesus Name" as one of our songs and it was powerful with rich harmony and full voices.

January 27

Our stay at Palenque was restful and the morning brought a good breakfast and another special gathering for devotions with powerful songs. We made our way to the vans, then filled the vans with fuel and journeyed to Palenque for a quick tour of the thrones in the south end of the underground rooms of the palace. Once done there Neil stopped by the library, but found the staff on vacation. We then walked through the museum taking photos of the inscriptions from Temple XIX, Pakal's Tomb and other artifacts of interest. Neil then spent a little extra time speaking with the director of the site and establishing contact with officials there.

Once completed at about 11:45 we headed across the mountains going south, snaking our way around the curves, stopping to purchase fresh apples and bananas, until we finally reached Ocosingo about 2:30, then made our way east 10 kilometers to Tonina. We walked about a mile to reach the ruins and spent the rest of the afternoon photographing the construction, art styles, and architecture. This site seems to have a lot in common with Yaxchilan in that it began about 300 BC, has early



construction floor plans very similar to early Yaxchilan and Rio Bec styles, and has a maze similar to the labyrinth at the entrance of Yaxchilan. This was very interesting indeed.

We had to leave not because we were done exploring but because it was 4:30 and the site was closing. But, not before many of the team members climbed to the highest point of this monstrous hillside ruin.

From the top the panorama was remarkable. This site is situated in the cradle of a valley that made for a beautiful view of pine covered mountains no matter what direction you gaze. And, it is obvious from the



fruitfulness of the agriculture that the soil here is very rich in comparison to other regions of Mexico. Cattle, fruits, and vegetables are plentiful as the deep rich green in the dry season tells us that there is no lack of moisture here. As we left the valley through a southern pass we found ourselves driving through a fine mist at the higher elevation. Going the back roads we finally made it to Comitan about 9 PM and found our accommodations for the night. There was noticeable excitement in the voices of the van occupants as we crested a hill and viewed the city lights of Comitan filling the horizon. This was clearly a

tired bunch. We got our rooms and quickly met for devotions and then to discuss the plans for our visit to the ruin site of Chinkultic planned for the following day.

January 28

It was a very cool sunny morning when we got up and made our way to devotions. The high mountain elevation had the temperatures in the upper-fifties and the blowing wind brought it down a few more degrees. After breakfast we loaded the vans and made our way south out of Comitán and then east to Chinkultic. It was exciting to be driving along the high elevation valley with beautiful mountains all around then we caught a glimpse of the pyramid against the limestone wall backdrop. It was beautiful in the morning sun. We made our way down the side road to the site and pulled up to the front gate to discover that the site was closed for maintenance. WHAT!!!! We were momentarily stunned. A couple of members of the group began walking around the fence to see if there was anyone inside that Neil could talk with about gaining admission. Neil did talk with some locals who said that the caretakers at Tenam Puente were the same as Chinkultic so Neil developed a plan to drive over and talk with them to see about gaining admission to the site.

I then drove down the east side road to find the other two members of our group who had come upon other locals who gave us permission to use their entrance to the site. We passed on that offer and went back to

the main gate to meet with the other van and continue with the Tenam Puente plan. When we arrived at the other van we could not locate Neil. We looked inside the fence thinking he had crawled his way inside, but we could not find him. I drove another perimeter road on the south side to look for him and in the process of backing out of the lane that was too narrow to turn around in, it happened. CRASH! I backed into a corner of a metal billboard sign that was protruding out beyond the steel support post. It shattered the rear window on the back door of the van. Now we had a shattered window that created a security hazard and we still could not find Neil.

Once back at the main entrance, everyone worked together as a unit to remove the left over shards of glass from the door, took plastic trash bags and duct tape and fastened the plastic over the opening at the rear of the van while I was tended to for minor punctures in my hand from the glass shards. They were very minor cuts as only a few drops of blood were released before the platelets did their job of closing the wounds. Isn't the body a fascinating organism? But, I digress. All of this time went by and still no Neil! Well, Edd decided that it was ridiculous to let the day go to waste and insisted that we take the invitations of the locals and use their entrance to the site. We loaded the van and took the side road on the east to the lake at the back of the property and they escorted us in.

Our group of nine immediately made our way to the temple site and climbed the steep embankment to the top where we looked out over a remarkable panoramic view very



similar to the one at Tonina. Here was an incredible feat of nature with this massive piece of earth set against the back side of a mountain face; a cenote on the east and a lake on the west with a small river connecting them draining from the west lake to another lake just beyond the cenote. It has the appearance that water completely surrounds the temple mound, but there is a narrow strip of land that connects the temple mound with the mountain behind the temple—exactly as the secret pass described in the Book of Mormon.

It was at this point that we finally got word that Neil had appeared. Apparently he thought I had driven back to the main highway when I went to find the missing members of our crew, and he was walking to catch up with me. While walking the 4 kilometers back to the main highway he ran into some locals again and gathered information about the defensive walls that ran through the fields surrounding the city, about the location where the Esperanza Disc was found, about the

location of the king's palace and ball court, and of minor digs that found encampment sites similar to what the Book of Mormon describes as Lamanite encampments that surrounded the city to hold the people of King Limhi hostage; Neil was ecstatic!

Once Neil was back, the rest of the gang met up with us at the temple while Neil gave us a history of the geology of the region and the topography as it relates to the Book of Mormon story. We also noted the location of the



tower mentioned in the story of King Noah. Then down the temple mound and over to the stela located on the south side of the site. One stela illustrating the death of Abinidi, one of the discovery of the twenty-four golden plates, and one of Nephi and his influence in converting the Lamanites and completely changing the political and social fabric of Mesoamerica in preparation for Christ's visitation.

As the low hanging clouds came in from the southeast and rained upon the land around the site, we enjoyed only a small misting of moisture. Another illustration of God's goodness! We packed the vans and headed back for the town of Comitán where our group found the museum and viewed the stela illustrating King Limhi sneaking across

the pass to lead his people to freedom, and the Esperanza Disc that illustrates that King Limhi became the "Lord of Nothing" by giving up his kingdom to free his people from Lamanite oppression.

After a quick dinner on the town square next to the museum, we were back on the road traveling about fifty miles north to San Cristóbal where we found accommodations for the night at a Holiday Inn. We had our devotions and headed to bed. At this point we have completed visiting all the ruin sites on our schedule, but decided we still wanted to visit a local museum in search for additional information on three ruin sites along the Pacific coast.

January 29

We were up for breakfast at 7 AM on another high-elevation cool sunny morning in San Cristóbal. Neil remembered that the better museum was in Tuxtla Gutierrez, so we left the hotel after enjoying a beautiful spirit at devotions this morning. We left San Cristóbal heading west through mountains and arriving in Tuxtla Gutierrez about 11 AM. We got to the Museum to find that it too was closed. We took photos of the important statue that shows a warrior with a sword; an important argument for Book of Mormon accuracy. We stopped at McDonalds and then began the long trek to Puebla.

The mountain passes through the central region of Mexico are very beautiful. The conversation on the nine-hour trip was stimulating as we

shared testimonies of God working in our lives. We shared humorous life stories and our concerns for the future. We started up the Orizaba mountain pass about 7:30, breaking through the cloud cover close to the summit and found ourselves being greeted by a large full moon. We pulled into the hotel in Puebla about 9:30 and gladly became acquainted with the beds.

January 30

The team gathered for breakfast at 8 AM, then held a very personal devotion led by Edd Detray. The team then packed and made our way from Puebla across the mountain pass to Mexico City where we found a hotel next to the airport, quickly unloaded and checked in so that we could make it to the rental car business before they closed at 1 PM. Neil, Mike and I arrived there at 1:20, but the owners stayed on the lot long enough for us to return the vans, arrange for the repair of the window, grab a taxi and make it back to the hotel to meet up with the rest of the crew for a late lunch.

Neil arranged for the group to use a conference room for a 6:30 meeting to review the successes of the research trip. That gave us time to nap before we held our final meeting of the trip. We all gathered at the conference room at 6:30 and reviewed the goals for each site visited, contrasted the successes against the failures, and then noted the unexpected finds. This trip was a wealth of information to further

develop understandings of the ancient people of Mesoamerica. The meeting ended about 7:25 and we broke for a few minutes to gather a few items for our evening service.

We started the service at about 7:45 beginning with this morning's devotion scripture, followed by a sharing in the sacrament of communion. There was a powerful spirit present as the blessing was read on the bread that did not wane until the service was over. Once we finished the communion portion we then entered into a season of testimony for anyone who wanted to share. It was just after the beginning of this portion of the service that Moises called to say that he was outside in the lobby. Neil invited him in and Moises (our friend from Jalapa de Diaz) then sat with us for the rest of the service as each individual on the team stood to share their testimony of what this trip has meant to them. Neil interpreted each testimony so that Moises could share in understanding the movement of the Holy Spirit. Then, Moises stood to bear his testimony of God working in his life and that he knows that God has something planned for him. The power of the spirit this evening was incredible and life changing. When it was finally over at 10:20 we couldn't believe that we had been in this service for two and half hours; it was truly special.

We then made plans for the morning where we will begin making our way to the airport by shuttle starting at 6:30 AM in preparation for our 9:45 flight to Dallas. Some of the group then gathered in the

restaurant of the hotel to sit and enjoy some ice cream and chat with Moises to see how he was getting along.

It has been an incredible expedition and God has blessed us beyond compare. The future is very bright for those who express faith and we are finding that the expression of that faith in God's strange latter-day work is well founded indeed!

January 31

Members of our team were up early this morning and getting shuttles to the airport for a 9:45 AM flight out of Mexico City to Dallas. The flight was on time and without incident as everyone was at the gate and boarded on time. We got into the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, made it through customs, took the tram to the next terminal and with about half an hour left before boarding we were able to catch a quick lunch at Subway. Carol Brown had purchased her tickets at the last minute and was not able to book the flight from Dallas to KC that the rest of the group was on. When we checked that flight this morning in Mexico City it was still completely full, but Mike Brown had Carol's name put on as a stand-by to see if she could get the earlier 2:30 PM flight with everyone else instead of her previously booked 4:45 flight. Just before we started boarding God had one more prayer to answer for us as Carol's name was the last stand-by passenger allowed on the flight. We all made it into KCI at 4:05 this afternoon.



Everyone is now home safe and sound. It will take a few days to decompress and comprehend all that was accomplished, and there will undoubtedly be several testimonies generated from this endeavor as we have enjoyed the transformation of faith into knowledge. Here is a quick synopsis of our accomplishments:

1. El Tajin—discovered a compilation of influences beginning with Olmec (Jaredite), then Huastec (Nephite), Comalcalco (Southern India) and ending with Totonac (Southeast Asia). This was a thriving metropolis that welcomed foreign settlement and displayed their blending of cultures proudly through architecture that displayed cultural statements, historical statement, and statements of spiritual ideology. This was a very rich find.

2. Xalapa—accomplished the photography of the Colossal Heads here and also found sculptures that were not expected such as "The Oarsmen" from San Lorenzo site and fine pottery sculptures from the Totonac culture.
3. Tres Zapotes—photographed another Colossal Head and found large sculptures that appeared to be arms created for an articulating statue.
4. Santiago Tuxtla—photographed more Colossal Heads, especially the one that has an African lip-seam and seven braided locks on the back of the head flowing over a headband. Also found artifacts of baby sacrifice on display that had been excavated at Acayucan.
5. Coatzacoalcos—was not able to locate the gentleman who has a large Olmec collection. Put out the message to friends who began looking and by the end of the trip the collection owner was found to be vacationing in Cancun.
6. LaVenta—was able to photograph all of the Married Ogam on the Colossal Heads, Alters and other artifacts. The goal was to have four and we left with over 400.
7. LaVenta Park—was able to photograph all of the Married Ogam on the Colossal Heads, Altars, the Ambassador Stone and the Serpent Stone. The goal was to obtain four photographs and we ended with well over 1,000. Also found a lead on an important Olmec culture publication.

8. Comalcalco—visited the museum and found several artifacts that had not been previously displayed such as the Roman-style drainage tile and fired bricks with Ogam. Wanted to obtain photos of the knucklebones (dice), but they were not on display. Neil has a lead on obtaining the photographs.
9. Palenque—visited the museum to see if there is anything yet published on Temple XXI; nothing yet. Neil did make contact with the site director.
10. Tonina—wanted to get photographs of the medallions, but they had been moved off-site. Neil left his name with the site manager for the director of the site to call him. We found out the next day that the director was absent because they had just found a major tomb at this site and the director was with his superiors providing as much information as he could for the press release. We did obtain several hundred photographs of the architecture and friezes.
11. Chinkultic—in spite of the official closure of the site we were able to obtain photographs. We were specifically looking for two city-glyphs on the stela there, but none were found. This is not a strike-out, but it only means we were not able to find it. We still need to obtain the etching and drawings produced by Ian Graham almost fifty years ago. The stela were in very good condition then and it has been rumored that those drawings are excellent.
12. Tuxtla Gutierrez—the library was closed and that was a strike-out.

This was a "working tour" to collect information that further develops the theories created thus far. There was not even time for shopping that normally occurs with normal site tours. This was "hit and run" visit and collection. But, we truly enjoyed the company of each individual on this trip and we enjoyed the spiritual faith-to-knowledge journey we shared over the last 10 days. This was a trip that will be remembered!