

Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.

2007 Expedition Report

By David B. Brown

The 2007 Spring Expedition was markedly different. Neil Steede, our guide and mentor, was not able to travel with us. In every organization there comes a point where those who initiate its ideals must let go of the rudder and see if the crew has trained and drilled enough to keep the vessel both afloat and on course. I believe that test has been passed. The efforts that Neil has placed in motion as a result of his years of dedication to Book of Mormon archaeology are successfully planted in the breasts of faithful men and women who desire to use this knowledge to glorify God. In return, I am convinced that God has blessed our efforts to the extent that even the few who traveled to Mexico this year were able to accomplish many important things.

We set out to retrace our steps over the last several years and to investigate the possibility of new areas inside the valley to the south and west of Cerro Rabon. Prior to leaving for Mexico, the seven person team met with Neil Steede to review the areas that he felt were important to cover, and an alternate plan for research and fact finding was developed in case we were not able to acquire access to the necessary places in Jalapa de Diaz. That alternate plan was never initiated as we were able to acquire access to all the desired locations in Jalapa.

This year's Expedition team was comprised of seven people; four persons who traveled by truck and three who flew into Mexico City and met up with the drivers in Puebla. We do our best to be on our best behavior when traveling in Mexico. We do not want to find ourselves in

a bad situation with the laws of Mexico, so especially when traveling through Mexico City we are very cautious of all laws. But, it seems that every year, without fail, there is one law enforcement officer who will take advantage of the “gringos” driving through the city and will fabricate some infraction so he can get bribe money. Such was the case Sunday evening when we were supposedly driving in the far left lane and that apparently is not allowed (even though three miles up the road that lane makes the turn we need to traverse the south side of Mexico City). The contrived infraction cost us thirty minutes and 500 Pesos. A policeman in Mexico City was able to feed his family well that week.

We made it into Tuxtepec at about 2 PM on Monday April 16th. We got our hotel rooms and immediately headed for Jalapa to begin making contacts. We first contacted Don Julio to make arrangements for using his land. As always, he was very gracious and again emphasized that we are welcome on his land at any time.

We then contacted Don Asuncion to get permission to access the hill from his land by the road—his land access makes things much easier on the climb. The house where we access the hill is now vacant and the gate is padlocked. We arranged to meet with his son at 11 AM on Tuesday to arrange for ways to access the lower part of the hill.

We traveled out to meet Don Vincente to arrange access to the portion of the hill where the stela is located. He was not home, but we were told he was in town at the municipal palace. We began heading

into town and stopped in at the home of Moises. We found that he was doing very well and sadly learned that his Grandfather Gregorio passed away in December. But, his Aunt Martha is living with him still and she is doing well. Joey asked Moises if he had read the Book of Mormon. He stated that he had, that he really liked it, and that he also shared some of these things with his family. Our conversation then moved to some artifacts he had found and some caves he had located for us to explore. We made arrangements with Moises to explore some of those caves on Tuesday while others in our group were making arrangements for land access.

We ventured back to town to find Don Vincente but could not locate him. We then made our way to the police station behind the municipal palace to look for our good friend the Mayor Alvaro Rubio. Here we discovered that both he and Don Vincente were in Tuxtepec and would not be back until after 7 PM. We left word to tell the Mayor that we had stopped by and we arranged for a 9 AM Tuesday appointment with the Mayor.

On Tuesday April 17th Joey, Carol and Mike spent the day tracking down Don Vincente and getting permission to access the land for a visit to the stela area and the climb up the shoulder of the mountain above the stela. They also met with Don Asuncion's son Hector and got permission from him to access the land so we could make a climb up to cave camp. Then they took a little drive across the Rio Santo Domingo.

It was here that Joey had a conversation with a family who ran the little store located on the south side of the bridge. His conversation with them revealed that their little six-month old girl had no name, so Joey offered the name of Esperanza. The family laughed and started calling their little girl by this name and Joey was amazed that he apparently got to name this little girl in rural Mexico. By the way, in Spanish *esperanza* means “hope.”

One sad note I wish to report. As many of you know, about 30 years ago Neil Steede met a man named Ignacio who took Neil up to the stela for the first time. They met again two years ago and shared a bond that can only be appreciated with the passage of time. We learned that Ignacio passed away on April 1st of this year. We were very sad to hear the news.

Tim, Kevin, Forrest, and I spent the day looking in caves in the hillside below Moises’ home. Moises and his cousin Edwardo escorted us to four caves. The first one was a new cave that revealed some Oaxacan Black pottery and a snake that Moises was kind enough to dispose (killed by blunt force trauma) for us. Kevin got a nice picture of an interesting lizard in that cave. We then moved on to two more new caves, but both were more like vertical shafts that went down from forty to eighty feet. We didn't carry ropes with us, so we declined to check those caves. We asked about our proximity to two caves that we found last year and within about twenty minutes our guides brought us to those

caves. We spent the majority of the afternoon dodging bats and watching Kevin get excited over pieces of broken tableware (as he always does). He found some more Oaxacan Black pottery and several very nice pieces of Mixtec pottery. It was a very successful day for pottery sampling, but time forced us to move back to our vehicle.

Nothing could have prepared us for the humiliation we were about to encounter. Four grown men climbing up a five hundred foot slope of at least forty-five degrees; huffing, puffing, legs wobbling, chest heaving for breath, and not a drop of sweat on Moises and Edwardo, nor Moises' Aunt Isabel, who had joined us for the trek up the mountainside—in her sandals and with a machete in hand. As we trekked through the jungle she kept looking at us with such pity--"these four poor gringos"--she seemed to be saying with her eyes (but I am not so sure she wasn't whispering something in Mazateca). An hour later the embarrassment ended as we finally reached our vehicle. We graciously thanked them for the help, made arrangements for meeting with Moises the following day, cranked on the air-conditioning and quickly found a vendor where we could wash away our aches and pains with a can of Coke.

Wednesday April 18th began with an overcast sky in Tuxtepec. We left about 9 AM and got into Jalapa at about 10. We picked up Moises, explained that we weren't going anywhere new today, but that the crew was going to ascend the hill to the camp sites we had established previous years and do some searching on the mountainside.

It was explained further that there would probably not be any pay today, but if he wanted to join that he was welcome. Moises then conveyed a beautiful message that he wasn't concerned about the money, that he liked spending time with us and that he just wanted to help. He then traveled to the hill access with us.

We parked and made our way to the lower gate on the mountain access when it started to mist heavily. Just inside the gate on the lower pasture, we all stopped and each of us (Forrest, Joey, Kevin, Tim, Moises and I) offered a prayer for the day. It was a very moving moment for there was a spirit of unity that was extremely strong. We then proceeded up the mountain in quiet contemplation as the mist turned into a light rain.

We had left the roadside at about 10:30 and by 12:15 we had reached cave camp about seventeen hundred feet above the road. We stopped for a rest and a quick snack then made our way up another four to five hundred feet onto the steep ledges above cave camp. We traversed the ledge in a westerly direction and as best as we can determine we found ourselves beside the last undulation on the mountain face. We found no cave, but did find an area that we were not aware could be accessed before. And, while on our trek Joey was able to explain to Moises a few more of the finer points as to why we come to this mountain every year. By 4 PM we were in a steady rain with daylight fading fast from being on the east side of the mountain on a

cloudy day, so we called it quits and began the perilous descent beginning at about 4:15 PM. After some very clumsy minor falls on slippery slopes and wet rocks, we finally made it to the road at 6 PM. All arrived safe, wet and filthy (I won't even begin to describe the stench). We dropped off Moises and arranged for more adventures on Friday explaining that our motley crew needed a day to rest from our aches and pains of the twenty-one hundred foot vertical climb and descent.

On the way back to town we all contemplated the multiple blessings we received with the rain and cloud cover to keep us cool and hydrated, the multiple times we found ourselves out on precipices and on steep loose rock shelves with no mishaps, and the multiple humiliating falls during the descent with no more damage than a few bruises and some mud on our clothes. We were truly watched over.

While we were traversing the slippery slopes, Mike and Carol spent the morning venturing around Jalapa making contacts and then they drove over the Rio Santa Domingo Bridge to the dirt road on the south side of the river to see what type of access they could find to the hill in the middle of the bowl area. They, too, were blessed as Carol relates that the tires on the river side of the road had to have gone off the road as they were trying to make room for a truck coming from the other direction. Mike said that had they rolled down the slope the only thing that would have caught them was the rocks next to the river. Yet,

mysteriously, they did not roll off the road into the river--how is God able to do such things? This is another example of how we have been blessed in our meager efforts to find out more about this valley of our ancient brothers and sisters.

Thursday April 19th was a good day to sleep-in for some serious rest is what we all needed. We had our devotions late in the morning. This particular morning I had something to share for as I had gone to sleep Wednesday night I had specifically asked God for some direction concerning the location of the records. Wednesday's climb on the hill had been very exhausting and disheartening in that we understood with true depth that we could never find the records without true divine guidance. When I awoke on Thursday morning I had received a dream which I shared with the group at devotions.

I dreamed that I was both watching and participating. It was night in my dream and I was watching this strong and powerful, almost dashing Harrison Ford type man, take his lady by the hand to the base of a very steep hill. When at the base of this hill he turned to stand behind his lady and with his right arm under her right shoulder he cupped her jaw in his hand and literally dragged her up this very steep hill as she seemed to be without any power of her own. The strange part of this was that I was watching him do this to her and yet I knew that I was her. Then, when we reached the top I saw that the hill was leveled into a flat area that had some fencing and used to be a baseball field. But, this field

had long ago been abandoned for there were several mature trees growing on the abandoned ball field. And, strangely, there were grave stones scattered throughout the hilltop and abandoned ball field as well. Then, I watched as this man leapt to the side of an open grave, dramatically reached in deep and retrieve an item that he clutched in his hand. This man then walked briskly about fifteen feet to his left (my right) and to my amazement he disappeared into the trunk of this very large tree. It was as if he magically changed into spirit and became a part of the tree itself. But, as he did this the item he had been clutching hit the side of the tree and fell to the ground. It was a very bright and shiny gold wedding band. My dream then ended.

I knew the interpretation to this dream and I related it to the group as this; the man was Christ and his lady (me in the dream) was His bride, the church. He was leading us, even forcefully carrying us to the higher ground that we needed to obtain in order to receive the blessings that were waiting. That higher plain is the place where battles are won and lost (ball field) and it includes the ancients (gravestones). He reached into the past to recover a precious item (reaching into the grave to grab something) and he then became the living tree of life (he walked into the tree). He left behind the symbol of his covenant with this particular ancient one (the precious item he grabbed out of the grave was left for me to retrieve). That symbol of covenant was the wedding ring. But, it was metallic and precious and a symbol of one eternal round. What

would be more precious and valuable than something that contained his word on metallic plates? Those records are a symbol of His covenant with so many prophets through the ages beginning with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) to Joseph, Lehi, Nephi, Alma, Mosiah, and countless others all the way to Mormon and Moroni. I admitted not knowing the purpose of the dream as to whether it should be taken literally or symbolically, but I felt it to be significant enough that it needed to be shared with the group. We all discussed this and then began our day.

Joey, Carol and Mike went into Jalapa to meet with the folks at Social Services (DIF). Tim, Kevin, and I ventured in about 45 minutes later with the trailer of clothes and we unloaded the several boxes we brought for them. In a gesture of sincere trust Joey was allowed to drive the Jalapa Police truck to get it out of the way so we could pull through the gate. Mayor Alvaro's wife is still in charge of the Social Services group and she was very glad to receive the items we brought. We asked about what items they want to receive next year and she indicated that children's clothing is always a great need.

Carol and Mike headed back to Tuxtepec while Joey, Tim, Kevin and I drove past Moises' house and found him at the fence. He was on his way to do some work, so we had a couple of moments to share with him. We gave him a couple of items to read that were testimonies written in Spanish. In the course of the conversation Moises invited all of us to a dinner at his home. We agreed to come to his house for a meal

at noon on Monday. We asked if there was anything we needed to bring, he replied that we were his guests and that he will provide all that was needed. We then carried Moises to his work via the running board on the truck (that is the way most people travel here) and told him that we would see him Friday.

We then drove around the bowl area to get a feel of the terrain and the possible layout of the battlefield from a different perspective on the Mixtec outlook side of the valley. While there are some geographical hints in the passages of the Book of Mormon in chapters 1 thru 4, the hints are still very vague and we are attempting to create a scenario that meets the criteria for all that we actually know about the battle, including the preparation and the ultimate ending. Then we stopped briefly to survey the face of Cerro Rabon to get an idea where we had walked the day before while we were in the clouds and the rain. We agreed that we covered a very large area of the cliff face. We were actually amazed at how far we had traveled.

We then returned to Tuxtepec and met up with the rest of the group, rested some more, got a good dinner, had some fun with the ladies at the food place who "oohed-and-awed" over Joey. They were using their cell phones to take pictures of each of the girls standing next to Joey. I do want to mention what an excellent job Joey did throughout the entire trip. Interpreting and using his Steede-esque charm with the people here in Mexico, I am not certain that any of us

could have pulled off a drive in a police truck, or any of the many other little "cuteness" things he does. He has a way of disarming and breaking the tension so that everyone is at ease. He is a real asset to the group.

Friday morning April 20th began with Tim, Kevin, Forrest and I driving out to the stela location after devotions. Mike, Carol, and Joey met us there and we were able to share the little hand toys that David Netter had made for the children. The children had a lot of fun with them. Before long the four of us walked up to the stela and as usual Kevin began finding pottery pieces and obsidian blades on the way up. We got to the stela in good time and began scoping the area for possible other ruins. After a thirty minute scan with no new finds we came back to the stela and began taking measurements. The original measurements were almost exact. The mound measures thirty feet wide and twenty-seven feet deep with the stela located exactly nine feet from the front of the stone wall, and the center of the stela measuring fifteen feet from the side wall by the small creek. It is definitely Maya/Mixtec in design. We did find one interesting additional discovery this year. There is equal amount of fall down on both sides of the stone wall at the front of the mound. The fall down on each side measures an equal distance from the wall and equal distance from each end giving the very strong indication that the fall down was originally built as stairs.

While we were on our way up the hill, Mike, Carol, and Joey went into town and met with Catalina's mother. Then they tried to meet with

the Mayor, but again he was unavailable until Monday. Joey was brought back to the hill and quickly joined us to help Forrest check out some of the jungle area above the stela. Kevin finished his measuring and illustrations and asked to go search for pottery and obsidian in the open field on the hill. How could we say no?

Tim and I then ventured up into the jungle above the stela and worked our way up to a very steep and dense portion of the jungle about three hundred seventy feet above the stela location. There were many fallen and rotting trees, soil that was extremely soft from the decay and lack of foot traffic, and the non-wood vegetation was twelve to fifteen feet high and very dense. With no way to navigate or know where we were headed and the terrain getting increasing steep, Tim and I headed back down to meet up with the others.

Meanwhile, Mike and Carol again ventured across the river and found a road that made its way all the way up to the saddle between the two peaks of the small hill we have affectionately named "Cumorahcita." It is the smaller hill that is in the center of the bowl area where we have speculated there to be some type of fortifications or stela mound similar to the one we found on the shoulder of Cerro Rabon. We got to the field and noticed that Kevin was having a heyday finding pottery and obsidian. We stayed together for a while and then made our way back into Tuxtepec.

On Saturday morning April 21st we had our devotions and Tim, Forrest, Kevin, Joey and I crowded into the Expedition and made our way to Jalapa under cloudy skies. This actually turned out to be a blessing by relieving us from the heat of the sun. Cerro Rabon was shrouded in clouds all day and the cloud cover hung over the valley at about the 2,000 foot elevation. We picked up Moises and crossed to the south side of Rio Santa Domingo to make our way to the cradle between the two peaks of Cumorahcita.

It seemed at this point that the universe synchronized in a bizarre manner for just as we parked our vehicle to put on our backpacks and start exploring the top of the hill, a shepherd who was walking his sheep up the road, came by us and started talking about the caves in the hilltop on one peak and the ceramic stones on the other. A conversation between this man and Joey (with Moises' help) revealed that one peak had four "noses" with caves; the other peak had many headstones that were beautiful and ancient. The key word here is ancient. He did not say old, as in Colonial, he said ancient, indicating Pre-Colonial. We all looked at each other in awe trying to do the math to figure out the odds of driving to an obscure location on the top of a peak in Mexico and by chance a local shepherd (pastoral figure) is there to tell us everything we needed to know at that moment. He told us who owned the land, and we agreed that we would wait to do a full exploration another day once we got permission. He told us specifics about each

peak, and the dangers of the one with the caves. From that point on the day was truly remarkable.

Kevin was immediately drawn to the dirt that had been cut away by a bulldozer, but it was too fresh to reveal any clay pottery or obsidian. We did note that the north peak was mostly composed of very loose shale. We were thinking that we would not have much chance for good cave locations there when Joey let us know that he found a limestone rock fall on the slope of the south peak. Forrest and I made our way across the road onto the other peak and began climbing, soon we found ourselves on a limestone rock fall and climbing up to meet with Joey and Moises. It was here that Moises handed Forrest, Joey, and I each a one and a half inch diameter stick that was about eighteen inches long. Joey asked why we needed these and Moises replied that the man said we would need them to hit the snakes. That was comforting--not. We climbed up this rock fall that seemed to go on and on. After about half an hour, we found ourselves inside the cloud cover that had been on the peak all day. The trail we had been following had been freshly cut and was about five feet wide, but we had traveled for some distance with no end in sight due to the cloud cover; having no permission as yet we thought it best to return to the road, especially after we heard the gunshot in the distance. We returned to the car unscathed. We left the top of the hill and following the advice of the shepherd we made arrangements to talk with the landowner on Monday afternoon.

One more very wonderful testimony; while on the mountain, Moises told Joey that last Sunday he had a dream that he was traveling with three of his brothers to this hill (Cumorahcita) and that they were going to a party. The strange thing was that Moises had been to the hill before, but only on his bicycle, not in a vehicle like he was in his dream and like he was today. And, that he only has two brothers in his family, but that in his dream he was traveling to this hill for a party with three brothers and they were us. Joey asked what he did when he got to the hill. Moises said he woke up at that point. Joey asked how he felt when he woke up. Moises said he felt the Spirit of God. How is that for confirmation of the power of prayer to move in the life of this young man and the desire God has to unite us all in His Spirit?

We then left the south side of the river and returned Moises to his home. He had another cave to explore and we still had some time so Kevin and Joey decided to go searching down another hole in the earth. The only live animal in this cave was a frog. But, Kevin slithered down into this wet cave and found some pottery. It was a long and narrow cave. Joey kept calling on Kevin every so often to insure that Kevin was all right--hoping that he would not have to make his way into this tight cave to retrieve Kevin. Once Kevin began making his way from the place where he was working at the deepest portion of the cave, it took him eighteen minutes to reach the mouth of the cave; that is how tight, narrow, and deep the cave was. But, they were not out yet, it

took Moises and his friend to reach down with a stick and pull while Kevin and Joey each held on to the stick to get them out. That is how deep the sinkhole was before it even went into the cave.

While Kevin and Joey were doing their cave routine, Forrest, Tim and I were at the road making friends with Marcello and Philippe. These were two young boys about eleven years of age, who were very curious and wanting to make friends. We gave them some of the toys that David Netter had made, shared some granola bars, and threw the American football for a while. It was a scene from Wayne's World of "game off--game on" each time that the cars came up or down the road. The road was the only place smooth enough to throw the ball and catch it without splatting in fertilizer or having the ball roll a half-a-mile down the hill before stopping.

After a couple of hours we all finished our business at Moises' home and started back into Tuxtepec. Everyone was excited as we began reviewing the events of the day. It is truly amazing that God has orchestrated all of this for us to accomplish and all it took was for us to step out in faith.

After reading the evening devotion scripture on Saturday, we agreed that continuous prayer was our best hope for a revelation of God's purpose, timing and our specific mission in this work this year. It was here that we determined that Sunday will be a day dedicated to prayer and fasting with a communion service on the stela portion of the

hill then spending the rest of the day in prayer asking specifically for a revelation of the mysteries concerning the valley and the records found there. We agreed to make no demands on what God might reveal to us.

Sunday April 22nd was sunny in Tuxtepec. We had our devotions and then traveled to the Cerro Rabon. Tim chose not to travel with us due to the allergic reaction he was experiencing on his skin. He had broken out with a rash in many places on his limbs. We left him with a prayer of administration and blessing. So, six of us went to Jalapa for the day. On the way to the hill we sang camp songs in preparation for the Spirit we anticipated. It was fun to have a car full of good singers all praising our God. We arrived at the base of the stela hill at about 11:15 and began the trek up.

Forrest and I traveled into the stela area and began preparing the grounds with a cleansing. I burned the sage as Forrest sang a Lakota song. As I was walking with the sage and singing with Forrest, I kept hearing someone else singing our song and several times I looked around to see who was singing with us, but there was no one I could see. I was on the stela mound, Forrest was to my back on the left and I continued to hear a voice singing our song with us, but this voice was on my right. I kept this to myself.

The rest of the group came into the stela area and cleansed. Joey opened with a prayer inviting warrior angels, ministering angels, healing angels, and guardian angels to be present and accompany us as we

worship and throughout our trip. We had our communion service, sang songs of praise and then broke out individually to spend whatever time we needed to pray and pour out our heart to God as was directed in the scripture that Forrest read for us.

Enos 1:1 Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father, that he was a just man: for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2 And blessed be the name of my God for it.

3 And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins;

4 Behold I went to hunt beasts in the forest; and the words which I had often heard my father speak, concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

5 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication, for mine own soul;

6 And all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came, I did still raise my voice high, that it reached the heavens.

7 And there came a voice unto me saying, Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

8 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

9 And I said, Lord, how is it done?

10 And he said unto me, because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen.

11 And many years pass away, before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

So we spent most of two and a half hours in prayer and meditation; each in our own space and listening and speaking to God in our own way. We gathered back together and shared our experiences and impressions of the Spirit with one another. Each of us was visited by a beautiful large iridescent blue butterfly. It seemed to come to each of us in our private prayer place and connect us as a common theme/thread. We felt the Spirit in power and while we received no corporeal visitation, we felt assured that we were loved and that we are traveling a path of promise.

As we ventured down the hill we were able to see the hilltop of Cumorahcita very clearly. This hill that the shepherd said contains the stones of the dead (headstones or stela?). We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying each others company as we drove back into Tuxtepec.

It was at evening devotions that we discovered some additional wonderful things. I shared my experience of the voice I heard singing with Forrest as he was singing the cleansing song, and several others then admitted hearing someone singing with us as we sang the hymns both before and after we had broken for meditation. The voice seemed to be emanating from the same area to the south side of the stela. With this same experience coming from several of us it was validation that we had heavenly visitors at our service. How does it feel to hear angels singing? I have to admit that the sound of our voices was more like that of hymns ringing from the rafters of a closed congregation, not an open air hillside with soft jungle floor and foliage that has no hard surface from which to reverberate. The sound seemed to be engulfing and full beyond measure. It was surreal because the experience made no sense to the logical aspect of the mind, but in spirit it was more real than anything I have experienced.

Monday April 23rd was designated as our day of ministry and it truly was an eventful one. We had our devotions and left Tuxtepec at about 10:00. Tim, Kevin, Joey, Carol and I were first to arrive in Jalapa

while Mike and Forrest stopped to get some photos developed before they caught up with us. Once in Jalapa we went to Catalina's home to visit for a short time. We found out that Catalina had received permission to have the day off from school so that she could be home to meet with us. There was some additional conversation between Catalina and Joey that most of us were not able to comprehend. First there was something about Catalina learning a lesson of not playing with snakes, then it was followed with Joey giving Catalina a photograph of the two of them together last year. Apparently this photo is for Catalina to place above her bed so she can wake up and see Joey every day. There was some laughter about this, but again, there was a light in Catalina's eyes. We were on a schedule and needed to be at Moises' home by noon for a lunch date, so we regretfully said our goodbyes and moved on down the road.

We arrived at Moises' about fifteen minutes later, and we were very warmly greeted by the family. Moises and his two younger sisters were the gracious host and hostesses while the older ladies were finishing the preparation for dinner. Mike then presented Moises with some photographs including two very good photos of his grandfather Gregorio that Don Beebe took last year. Moises was moved by this and was quick to share them with the rest of his family members. The family then began preparing to serve us by placing the table in the middle of the large living quarters. They set the table and had us sit at

our places and offer the prayer on the food. Then, they served us our dinner.

The dinner was very good. It was chicken broth with a piece of chicken on the bone in the broth. The broth had a spicy "kick" to it. We had fresh made corn tortillas, fresh salsa, onion, and warm rice milk to drink. Then they brought out small cups with pineapple jello. It was a very pleasant dinner and the conversation was very good. Moises then accompanied us to our appointment across the river to get permission to explore Cumorahcita on Tuesday. We went back into town and split the group. Kevin, Mike, Forrest and Carol went back into Tuxtepec. Joey, Tim, Moises, and I began to journey across the river when Tim asked if we should invite Catalina. What do you think Joey's response was at that point? It took Joey all of ten minutes to find her home (yes, he proved you can get lost in Jalapa), ask her to join us and bring her back to the vehicle. The five of us then made the hour trip to Piedres Ancho to speak with the landowner. The drive was very interesting as the three youth in the back seat all talked in Spanish and took turns making fun of one another, mostly it was Catalina and Moises making fun of Joey, but there were moments when some very important information was exchanged such as why our group comes to Jalapa every year and what we believe about the "history" that is buried in the hill.

As it turned out, Catalina and Moises were helpful in convincing the landowner to allow us access to the hill Tuesday and Wednesday for

a small fee. We then took Moises back to his home and made arrangements for picking him up in the morning. We took Catalina back to her home and upon the request of Catalina's mother, we had the opportunity to administer to her the same way we had administered to Catalina two years ago. Tim took the time to investigate her ailment, and as it turned out she had experienced a small stroke on the 31st of March. Most of her facial muscles and speech had returned to normal, but she was suffering from residual weakness and discomfort in the left arm. Joey took the time to explain how the prayer of administration would proceed. I anointed and Tim confirmed. The power of the Spirit in the room was remarkable. When Tim began his prayer for healing I felt such a spirit of light being infused in the room and I felt a flow of energy run through my hands onto Dominga's head. Tim later expressed that he had rarely felt the strength of the Spirit as strongly as he felt it during this administration. Joey made the comment that he felt a powerful presence of the Spirit as well and that each one in the room must have felt it as each one was teary-eyed.

After the prayer, Joey was diligent in expressing that the Spirit of God had entered the room and rested on her and that He will bless her as long as she did her part to make the full recovery. He told her how important it was to continue to exercise that arm with a repetitive gripping. She understood and thanked us. We received hugs and kisses

from each and we left knowing that we would return the next day to check on her again.

Our evening devotion was on a very high plain as we contemplated the blessings of the day and basked in the joys of being servants of an awesome God. How great are His blessings and how wonderful to feel the joys of knowing that His Spirit is moving in the lives of others and blessing them and filling them with the joy of feeling loved by the Almighty! These experiences are priceless.

Tuesday April 24th was very warm when we left Tuxtepec at 7 AM and it just got hotter throughout the day. Tim, Forrest, Kevin, Joey, and I had devotions on the road to Jalapa, then picked up Moises a little after 8 AM and headed for Cumorahcita. We arrived at Piedres Ancho (the little town below the top of Cumorahcita) just before 9 AM and looked for the shepherd to see if he would be our guide for the day. He was already gone, but the lady at the home gave us the name of someone just over the top of the mountain who might be able to be our guide.

We arrived at the top of the hill by the road and Joey and Moises headed to the house we had been directed to find. Forrest and Kevin began to trek up the hill to find the top of the north peak and wait for the rest of us with our guide. Three miles later Joey and Moises found a rancher but he was not able to be our guide because by 9:30 it was already too hot for him, but if we wanted to come by at 6 AM Wednesday he would gladly be our guide. We passed on his offer since

it means getting up at 3:30 AM to be in Piedres Ancho by 6 AM. By the time that Joey and Moises had returned to the road, Forrest and Kevin were calling over the radio for help from a Spanish speaker because they had come across someone on the path to the top. This person was working on clearing a section of land for farm use. He was waving a machete and was not allowing passage to the top. Joey and Moises finally arrived and cleared the situation. It seems that the man was only concerned that Forrest and Kevin might find themselves in trouble with the other farmer who was working on top of the peak. Apparently the man on the lower side of the hill felt the man on top was not a pleasant individual to deal with. I soon found all of them sitting in a steep field of fallen trees. Even on the west side of the hill it was very hot by this time. The vigilant farmer allowed us to pass and gave us the name of Roberto as the man who owned the land on the top of the hill.

We arrived at the top of the hill at about noon. Roberto was working hard to clear a section of land on the top. While the previous farmer had indicated that Roberto was not the best person to be dealing with, we found him to be very helpful and very friendly (probably not a whole lot of people to talk with on the top of a tall hill five hundred feet above a road that very few cars could successfully navigate in the middle of rural mountains of Mexico). We inquired as to the location of any ancient stones and Roberto immediately cut a path through the

jungle for Joey, Kevin, Forrest and Moises. I stayed back at the hilltop to take navigation readings and survey the top.

Roberto cut a path directly to a series of stone walls that were anciently done and they appeared to create a level platform that followed the contour of the north promontory of the hill. This wall was very difficult to find at first because of all the overgrowth from the jungle, but one section of it appeared to run about 80 feet in length and rose up from nothing to about 8 feet tall and then back to nothing, all the time following the contour of the hill and creating a flat platform on top of the wall. The wall is clearly of human construction, very similar to the same type of construction found on the Maya/Mixtec stela on the other side of the valley.

While they were discovering the walls below I surveyed the top of the hill and noticed several things. I first noted that the hilltop was heavily populated with butterflies. Discussion with Roberto later revealed that the butterflies usually come during the rainy season, but this was the end of the dry season—the rains won't begin until well into the month of May. I stood at the very top of the mound that appeared to be built on the top of the hill. The elevation at the top of the hill is nineteen hundred feet and the make up of the hill seems to be a mixture of clay, shale, with some solid limestone interspersed. The area around seems to have been manipulated by digging and filling with some chinked stone walls to create a flat area just to the north of the tall

platform-like rock that formed the hilltop. What is remarkable is that from this visual vantage point you have about a three hundred degree view range to see all that is happening down the slopes of the hill toward the river. If the mountain were cleared of all trees as earlier studies have suggested, then there is little doubt as to the strategic location of this promontory. I took in the remarkable view that this peak provided all the way around the valley. I felt impressed that I needed to break out the sweet grass and offer up a prayer. I did.

The heat of the day took its toll and by 1:30 we were more than ready to make our way down the hill before dehydration began to set in. Roberto was ready to come down with us as well. We gave him a ride back to his home in Piedres Ancho. Then we began to head through town when we came to a place where the town people had a rope tied across the road to stop the traffic. We stopped not knowing the problem when five or six people began walking to our vehicle. Before the conversation had a chance to begin about twenty to twenty-five people had gathered to begin an inquisition as to who we were and if we were the ones who had taken a boy from the hill last Saturday, because the banditos were driving a vehicle just like ours. The conversation was very animated as several people were all trying to talk at once. Joey was overwhelmed with the multiple voices all being directed into the car, when finally Moises rose up from his seat in the middle and leaned toward the window to talk with these people. He emphatically told them

that no one had taken him against his will and that he was with his friends and that they did not take him from the hill, neither would we ever take him because we are his friends. With that said to the crowd, Moises tapped the driver, Tim, on the shoulder and motioned for us to leave. The people dropped the rope and let us pass. It was only after we had left that we were told all what was said. It appears that someone had seen Moises leave with us last Saturday and they assumed that Moises was being taken against his will. So began the rumor that led to the vigilante group. And, our good friend Moises kept us out of a Mexican jail.

Once across the Rio Santa Domingo we headed into Jalapa to visit Moises' "Aunt" Anna. She is an elderly Mazateca lady, and as we learned, she has been suffering from a knee injury for the last two months that is keeping her from being able to walk. When we arrived, she was lying on a bed and her right knee and ankle were very swollen. After some examination by Forrest and Tim it was determined that the only thing that could help her was surgery because one of the ligaments in her knee has slipped inward and is keeping her knee from working properly, and any movement is very painful. Tim had some medicine to give her for pain, but we promised that we would investigate the cost of surgery since the family was in no way able to afford it. Then we administered to her. Joey explained to Moises in Spanish what we were about to do and Moises then explained to his Aunt Anna in

Mazateca what we were about to do. She was agreeable. We all knelt as Forrest asked Kevin to say a prayer asking for the ministry of angels. Kevin's prayer was beautiful as he invited the healing angels and the Spirit of God to be present in power. By this time Anna's entire family were all kneeling with us and Tim anointed followed by the confirmation of healing by Forrest. Everyone in the small humble home was moved to tears with the presence of God's Spirit, and Anna and her husband, though unable to understand, they too visibly felt the power of God's presence. Forrest prayed a short, simple and very powerful prayer of confirmation and later testified that he felt the heat of God's healing power emanating from Anna's knee as Forrest had placed one hand on Anna's head and the other on her knee. In fact, the heat was so intense that he had to move his hand off her knee and create a distance before it became too uncomfortable. We all stayed kneeling without saying a word for several minutes, then Anna graciously thanked us in Mazateca and we quietly left her home with another testimony of how the love of God transcends language and speaks directly to the heart. Some experiences of connection need no words.

We then moved on to take Moises to his home, then back to Jalapa to check on Catalina's mother. We dropped off some photos at the police department and then marched down the hill to Catalina's home. Catalina was still in school (much to Joey's dismay), but Tim had his blood pressure cuff today and was able to take Dominga's blood

pressure. It was extremely high. We asked if she was on blood pressure medicine. She said it was prescribed but she stopped taking it because of how it made her feel. Joey spent several minutes interpreting suggestions from both Tim and Forrest as to what Dominga must do to regulate the blood pressure medicine, emphasizing that without the medicine she will most likely have another stroke or something worse—she cannot just stop taking the medicine. I think Joey used enough scare tactics that they got the message.

After an exhausting day we headed back to Tuxtepec to get some food in air conditioning (it was a humid 98 degrees here) and experienced yet another devotion on a very high plain. It was here that Forrest brought us a revelation concerning the manner in which the records may have been preserved for there is nothing to indicate that they are in a cave as we have previously been visualizing. It was food for thought.

Wednesday April 25th began with devotions at 7:45 and ended with a call to Palmyra, New York to discover exactly where Joseph Smith found the stone box in the hill there. In possession of this new information and armed with incredible hope, Tim, Forrest, Kevin, Joey and I were then on the road to Jalapa at 8:15. We picked up Moises and again crossed the river to Cumorahcita. The day was extremely warm by the time we arrived at the parking spot at 10:15. We climbed out of the truck and geared up with water. As we entered the pasture to make

the way up we stopped and Tim asked Forrest to give a prayer. Forrest gave a beautiful Native American style prayer and within seconds of the end of the prayer, as we began to walk on up the hill we were welcomed by two eagles. This was an awesome sign for our day.

We again made our way up the hill with our eagles passing by occasionally and in fair time we reached the top. Once there, Forrest stayed on the hill top and proceeded to rest and survey the top. He was moved by the Spirit while in this place. He and I talked about the overwhelming sense of loss here at the top of this hill. From this apparent command post (almost even with the stela elevation across the valley) one can see the slopes of the hill all around and it was from this point that we felt that Moroni and Mormon made their observations;

Mormon 3:12 “And it came to pass that my men were hewn down, yea, even my ten thousand who were with me; and I fell wounded in the midst; and they passed by me that they did not put an end to my life.

13 And when they had gone through and hewn down all my people save it were twenty and four of us, (among whom was my son Moroni,)

14 And we having survived the dead of our people, did behold on the morrow, when the Lamanites had returned unto their camps, from the top of the hill Cumorah, the ten thousand of my people who were hewn down, being led in the front by me; and we also beheld the ten thousand of my people who were led by my son Moroni.

15 And behold, the ten thousand of Gidgiddonah had fallen, and he also in the midst; and Lama had fallen with his ten thousand; and Gilgal had fallen with his ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Jeneum had fallen with his ten thousand; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their ten thousand each.

16 And it came to pass that there were ten more who did fall by the sword, with their ten thousand each; yea, even all my people, save it were those twenty and four who were with me, and also a few who had escaped into the south countries, and a few who had deserted over unto the Lamanites, had fallen.

17 And their flesh, and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them, to moulder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth.

18 And my soul was rent with anguish, because of the slain of my people, and I cried, O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

We reflected upon this lament and felt just a small portion of the overwhelming sense of loss that Mormon must have felt. When the rest of us moved down the hill for further exploration Forrest was able to do his meditations and ghost dance with sage and sweet grass for the ancients who died there—so much sadness to overcome.

Joey, Tim, Kevin, and I then moved on to the north to continue surveying the platform and wall just down the hill about sixty feet in elevation, leaving Forrest to complete the prayers of his heart. Before we had arrived that morning our good landowner friend Roberto had already cleared a portion of the wall for us so we could see the wall much more plainly. Some additional time was spent looking for a "standing stone" that the landowner said used to be on the flat area of what we are calling the platform, but there was not enough of any particular rock left to ascertain if there was a stela on this platform.

We moved on to the west side and began cutting a swath through the jungle area to see if there was anything else we could discover. About forty-five grueling hot minutes later we began to move upwards through the jungle to the top of the hill and that's when Kevin found pottery. He had been very dismayed up to this point because this hill had not given him any pottery or obsidian over the last two days. That drought was now over. He found coarse red and orange pottery and

Oaxacan Black. This is a great find as it indicates this hill is related to the other finds we have logged on the other side of the river below Cerro Rabon. We finally made our way back up to the top, met up with Forrest and we all headed down the hill to the vehicle. It was 3 PM and Forrest and I were both beginning to show signs of being overheated, so the air-conditioning in the Expedition was a necessary follow-up to our venture in the Mexican heat.

We made our way down the mountain and there was no rope blocking our way, in fact it almost appeared to be a ghost town with no one venturing out into the heat of the day. While on this trek back across the river Joey asked Moises if he still had a couple of extra Spanish Book of Mormon's we had left him last year. He answered that he did. Joey asked if we could have one of those extra copies to give to Catalina. Moises smiled and said that he was thinking the same thing. God is moving and prompting Moises to share these experiences. We took Moises back to his house, acquired one of the three extra Spanish Book of Mormon's we left last year, then headed back to Catalina's home.

We arrived in Jalapa, walked to Catalina's only to find that she had gotten out of school to meet us earlier, but we were a little later than we thought we would be so Catalina had already gone to basketball practice. It was 4:30 and she was supposed to return home by 5:30. Tim took Dominga's blood pressure and found that it had gone

down noticeably with just one day back on the medication. We encouraged her to continue to take the medications and let her know that we would be back to check on her one more time. Then we all went back to the central square in Jalapa to wait until Catalina returned. We went back to her home at 5:30 and she still had not arrived, but we did bring a Spanish Book of Mormon for Catalina and Joey began telling her parents about the reason we come down to Cerro Rabon every year. At this point Catalina arrived home. She had a handshake for all of us, but she had a kiss on the cheek for Joey. Then Joey gave Catalina the Book of Mormon and explained that it contained the heritage of her people and that we use this book because it brings us closer to God and that the information in this book is why we come to Jalapa every year. Joey asked if they believed him and they all said "yes, they believed." How wonderful it is to see the child-like faith they exhibit. No questions. No eyes rolling. No smirks. They just believed because we shared something with them that is important enough for us to travel two thousand miles each year. And, I am certain that the Spirit of God has testified to them on many occasions. The Spirit has certainly testified to us when we have shared with them. But, this faith is so wonderful to experience. It was time for us to move on, so Kevin and I both took pictures of the Catalina and Joey connection. We left Jalapa and returned back to Tuxtepec to finalize our plans for Thursday.

Our last day in the State of Oaxaca was bittersweet. Thursday April 26th found us having devotions and leaving Forrest to stay at the hotel to watch the rooms and the trailer while the rest of us headed to Jalapa to say our goodbyes. We first arrived at Moises' home and visited for a little while. We talked about our plans for coming back next time and some of the things that will be helpful when we come back down, such as what type of caves and the type of pottery artifacts that are helpful to us. We were getting ready to leave when Moises informed us that they had gone to town earlier that morning to get the milk for us to have *cafe con leche* (coffee with milk). We then understood that we had to stay a little while longer. When we all had a cup in our hand, they brought out a plate of sweet bread that they had apparently bought as well. They were very gracious and as we were about to leave Moises stated that his Aunt Anna wanted us to stop by and see her before we left—and that his Aunt Isabel and her daughter Juanita wanted to go with us. We agreed. We then requested to have a prayer of blessing on their household and all of the family gathered in including their Aunt Martha who sat in the midst of us all. Joey then prayed for them in Spanish.

We arrived at Aunt Anna's home and visited with them shortly. We found that Aunt Anna was feeling better and that the medicine we had left with her was helping to relieve the pain. We then spoke with her about the plan to have her knee looked at by a doctor and an x-ray

taken to determine the extent of the injury and the recommended course for correction. We also left her home with a prayer of blessing that Joey provided again in Spanish so that the family could understand the sentiment of our desire for God to bless them.

We moved on to Catalina's home and Moises, Isabel, and Juanita joined us as we parked on the municipal plaza, waved at the police, and walked on down to Catalina's home. Mike dropped by the municipal palace and handed a couple of photographs to some of the folks there. While up there he ran into Catalina's father who came down to the house with Mike. While at Catalina's home we introduced Moises, Isabel and Juanita to Catalina's family. Juanita was especially taken by the bunny rabbit that they had. Tim again took Dominga's blood pressure and it had dropped even more this morning so the suggestion was to continue to take the medication so that her blood pressure would regulate. She agreed. We then got our hugs and said our goodbyes, and they sent us off with tortillas filled with frijoles so we could have food for our journey. And, Joey got the indication that Catalina will be calling him in the future; he was surprisingly happy about this. We made our way back up the hill to the square and took Isabel and Juanita to a place where they could catch a cab back to their home, but Moises stated that he wanted to ride into Tuxtepec with us to see "Rambo" (his affectionate name for Forrest).

We drove back to Tuxtepec with Moises and met up with Forrest. It was here at the hotel that Moises told us that he wanted to pray a blessing for us in his native tongue of Mazateca. He prayed a beautiful prayer, and while it was not comprehended by the ear, our hearts felt every intent of his heart for the Holy Spirit conveyed it to us. It was almost as if he wanted us to feel the way he has felt when we have prayed for his family and while they didn't understand our words, they completely understood our love as it was conveyed through the Holy Spirit. It was a moment when we were all of one heart and one mind. Our sharing of God's love and grace with him and his family had come full circle. We all embraced, said our reluctant goodbyes and we departed the hotel leaving Moises to catch a bus back to Jalapa.

In conclusion, it was a very successful year. We were able to accomplish several things. First, we were able to rule out the idea of a cave on the face of Cerro Rabon. While we have found pottery, obsidian, and a tablet at cave camp, it does not meet the other requirements of being the hill from which Mormon made his observations after the final battle—the hill he specifically calls Cumorah. Second, we have ventured to the top of the hill inside the bowl of the valley that lies to the west and south of Cerro Rabon. On this hill we have positively identified areas that have been modified by human construction with land being leveled and walls built to create platforms. Additionally, there has been some pottery found that is

consistent with pottery fragments found across several other parts of the valley, further supporting the theory that the entire valley was engaged in supporting a large population that was not permanently residing there. Third, by the hand of God we were led to continue working with the people of Jalapa by being called upon to love, minister, and heal. Fourth, we gained such a rich understanding of how the final battle must have occurred. To stand on top of the hill with the surrounding mountains on three sides and observe the approach from the valley to the east—it is here that the Nephites first observed the entire horizon begin to move with the enormous numbers of Lamanites that were coming into view. It is here that they saw how hopeless their cause was; to the extent that it struck each with that awful fear.

Mormon 3:9 And it came to pass that my people, with their wives and their children, did now behold the armies of the Lamanites marching towards them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they wait to receive them.

10 And it came to pass that they came to battle against us, and every soul was filled with terror, because of the greatness of their numbers.

From the top of this small hill all the scriptures of Mormon make so much sense. It just fits. The majority, if not all, of those who traveled on this trip and stood on this small hill in the middle of this arena now sense that we are within a square mile of where these records are stored, it is just a matter of when God is ready to send a messenger to direct His final chapter for these precious symbols of His covenant. And fifth, we have received a marvelous testimony of how God works through the small things and the weak to show His power and might. He has shown

how it is through the darkest day of the Nephites, in the saddest place of their history where so many thousands fell dead in a single day, that from this very place in the valley of the shadow of death, there will burst forth a gift of light that will engulf the world in the glory of our God. It will proclaim a testimony of Jesus as Christ and that testimony will then shout upon the rooftops to a world in need and serve as a trumpet call to gather together the children of Israel. This is a marvelous day to be alive, and we are in the midst of this glorious work.

There is much yet to do. Plans need to be developed for further exploration of the hilltop. Roberto Castellano says he will have the hilltop cleared when we return. It will be planted in corn, but we have already gained permission to access his land at any time. With this being done we should be able to see the walls and platforms with much better clarity. And, efforts need to be made to scour the lower portions of the hill near the river as those slopes should yield large quantities of weapons of war—ax heads, spear points, obsidian blades and so on.

Locally, in the United States, there needs to be research done and materials prepared for education and distribution. When these records do come forth (and there are many indications that it may be soon) it will be necessary to have a method of education in the process of development so that a means of teaching a hungry world can be set in place. Like with the Book of Mormon, while the Spirit of God moves in the hearts of men to testify of the truth of words that are written, in many

cases we must first tear down the biased and willful minds of humanity with the use of logic. If we can use our research of historical materials and at least prove the possibility of the Book of Mormon being a true record, then the mind can open and the heart can begin to be taught by God's Spirit. In this process, knowledge is the first step to awakening the souls that are slumbering. We want to develop this "alarm clock" of historical support so that larger portions of humanity can be brought to the feet of our Lord. We need people who can help in this regard.

While we have always experienced a special bond with those who have traveled as a group to Mexico, because this year's group was smaller than usual, each person's unique talents and abilities were accentuated. There was so much to do and only seven pairs of feet and hands available to get those things accomplished. As the days progressed it was amazing to witness how the Holy Spirit utilized the giftedness of each individual and created a beautifully woven tapestry. Each personality was vibrant and needed in its own way. The multiple gifts were well balanced and we found that when each person shared the little perplexing experiences with the group, the purpose for that event suddenly became clear as God had moved another in the group to assist or complete or validate—unbeknownst to the first. Our entire trip was strewn with what we termed "god-incidences" as opposed to coincidences. How awesome He is when we allow Him to guide and reveal His great and marvelous ways.

For those of you who have supported in monetary means and through prayer, fasting, and emotional uplift, thank you for all that you do. I can assure you that your efforts are not in vain. A new wind is blowing through the churches of the Restoration faith and it is the Spirit of God moving to unite all who will listen; it is the voice of the Master calling His sheep. The time is now and the need is great. Let's make this marvelous journey together in faith. All praise, honor, and glory to God. Shalom. A-ho.