

**Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.**

**2008 Expedition Report**

By Neil Steede & David B. Brown



# **Archaeological Advances Made During the 2008 Spring Expedition of the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc.**

By Neil Steede

Many positive events occurred during the 2008 Hill Cumorah Expedition Team Spring Expedition. This portion of the report concerns the archaeological aspects and advances made as a result of this expedition. These advances fall into several classes. I will attempt to place all of the advances in geographical order as opposed to chronological order for reasons of clarity.

## **Teotihuacán**

For many, the interest of the Hill Cumorah Expedition Team in Teotihuacán is clear. However, I will give a brief explanation of my specific interest in this site.

In 2003 a sinkhole appeared in the plaza in front of the famous Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl in Teotihuacán. This sinkhole dropped about twenty-five feet through solid bedrock to a tunnel more than five hundred feet in length. The tunnel runs from about mid-plaza to the apex of the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl. Speculation is that a room will be found under the apex of the pyramid. I believe that this now completely silted tunnel and room contains the Jaredite records and the sixteen stones. I am attempting to get into a position of coordinating this

excavation. During this trip I got a little closer however, much could still happen before the excavation begins.

## **Yaxchilan**

While in Mexico City visiting with my dear friend Dr. Mario Perez Campa, I learned that I had made a mistake in identifying Temple 6 at Yaxchilan as King Benjamin's Temple. Rather it seems to have been Temple 42. I will soon be receiving more information on this as Dr. Campa has published on this finding and will be providing me with a copy.

Aside from receiving information on Benjamin's Temple I was also able to find new information on base for King Benjamin's Tower and the Thrones located behind it on Temple 41. The large slab located within the perimeter of the tower base is actually a stela that was discovered in front of Temple 41, but they have placed it back in a face-down position and covered it to preserve it. It is the "newest," or last stela carved and erected at Yaxchilan, and it was erected in front of Temple 41. This information further confirms the theory that Benjamin's tower was built upon this spot as a wooden tower.

As for the thrones that were discussed in my February report, I was able to confirm suspicions that were raised from the information we gathered during the January expedition. The thrones had been built in three stages, the last stage being the addition of the seats and arms on the

throne during the Golden Age, or Classical Maya Period. A more complete report on this will be forthcoming.

## **LaVenta**

While traveling to Yaxchilan we passed through LaVenta and while there we found more monuments with Ogam-like inscriptions. Jerry Stoner was able to take several very clear photographs and they will be turned over to the Mexican Epigraphic Society.

Also, better photographs were obtained from the monument which I believe depicts King Lib against the serpents. In particular I am referring to the photos of the very top of the monument. These photos clearly show the incised line connecting the pictographic scene on the front with the cartouche outlining the Ogam-like script found on the obverse side of the monument. This is an important key to the translation of the text.

## **Cumorah and Cumorahcita**

There were several advances and several confirmations of theories found in the area of Jalapa de Diaz. As many know, our team believes this to be the site of the Land of Cumorah and Cumorah itself. The area is saturated with caves. A total of five caves were explored during this expedition. Three were west of the river and two were east.

Over the years the artifacts and information found during cave exploration has built a great deal of the case that this area is an ancient site of a large battle. Some of the best evidences come from caves. This year was no exception. Pottery types found were consistent with the time period forecasted. This was also true of weapons. Evidence for both Jaredite (Olmec) and Nephite (Maya) battles were evident. Though, it should be mentioned that a single piece of Aztec-time and type of obsidian was found.

Surface pottery and weapons collected by the locals were also reviewed. The same types and time periods were found. Of this, two notable pieces were observed. The first was a pot leg in the shape of an eagle head. The foot of the leg was the beak of the eagle, while the neck of the eagle was apparently where the leg attached to the pot. I do recognize this type of pottery, but I suspect it might be related to the Nephite battle through the descendent Mulekites as it appears to relate more directly with Mulekite icon influence. The second artifact of interest can not be specifically identified with either battle, though the Jaredite battle seems more likely. This artifact is a stone lid for a stone receptacle (box?). So far no box to go with the lid has been found.

Finally, several areas of mapping were executed. This included onsite mapping in conjunction with Google Earth mapping. In both cases the results were most satisfactory. At the moment there are several working theories that utilize the most recent information gathered this

year and combined with previous years. All of these will be presented together in a future overall report.

This expedition gave us more archaeological evidence than any previous. This is mostly due to the fact that previous expeditions have given us a “back drop” upon which we can more easily interpret the new information received. Each year is becoming easier to interpret and classify the information we gather.

## **Team Report**

By David B. Brown

The Hill Cumorah Expedition Team, Inc. 2008 Spring Expedition was comprised of eight members that divided into two teams; Tim Brown, Kevin Brown, Joe Fera and David Brown formed the driving team, while Carol Brown, Jerry Stoner, Mike Brown, our resident archaeologist Neil Steede formed the flying team. The flying team left Kansas City by air on Friday morning March 28, 2008 and arrived in Mexico City just after noon the same day. They accompanied Neil Steede as he met with Dr. Mario Perez Campa on Friday evening. The meeting was very productive. Mario is no longer in the position he originally held due to a shift in appointments with the new government, but Neil assures us that Mario still holds a lot of influence in the right places. Many issues were discussed that led to some very important clarifications concerning Maya and Olmec ruins and artifacts. Neil commented how very timely it was that he had this exchange of information with Dr. Perez.

The driving team met at the Buckner Congregation at 4:30 AM Saturday morning and they were accompanied by a small contingent of supporters who helped them finish the packing and sent them off with a prayer. The team was on the road by 5 AM and they made it to Laredo, Texas by 8 PM Saturday evening.

The flying team spent Saturday at Teotihuacán taking photographs and touring the site. It was noted that the face of the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl is starting to settle and fall due to the collapse of the tunnel underneath. Jerry Stoner was able to get lots of very good quality photographs to illustrate this change, and also to give greater detail to symbols on the face of the pyramid. They then spent the Saturday night at Stacey's (Edd and Kay DeTray's daughter) in Mexico City.

The flying team rested on Sunday morning and made a leisurely drive to Puebla where they got rooms and waited for the driving team. The driving team crossed the American-Mexican border without incident at 7:30 AM Sunday morning and they were on the road by 8:30. They got to Mexico City at 5 PM, missed one turn, but got right back on the proper road and got into Puebla at 8:15 PM! We ate dinner and then gathered for a wonderful devotion, sharing the experiences of the previous two days.

Those who were driving were blessed with tremendous discussions concerning scriptural insights and archaeological insights. Being on the road for fourteen hours a day allowed them to spend their energy focusing on the historical aspects of the scripture and the archaeological material that has been published through the years. They feel they have made some very important strides in defining and matching archaeological names with Book of Mormon names.

Monday March 31<sup>st</sup> started with the combined teams leaving Puebla and traveling through the mountains by Orizaba (which was still very snow-covered) and down the eastern pass to the lowlands of Veracruz, arriving in Tuxtepec about 1:30 PM. The team got the usual hotel, unpacked and headed to Jalapa de Diaz. Tim, Carol, Joe, and Kevin met up with Moises, while Jerry, Neil, Mike and David found Felipa Rubio and made arrangements to drop off the donated clothing on Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup>. After a very cordial and gracious reception from Dona Rubio and her family they then caught up with the rest of the group and spent some time with Moises. The team left the 100-plus degree weather in Jalapa at about 5 PM and headed back to Tuxtepec where they had dinner and another very informative devotion this evening and then off to bed.

Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup> began with Tim and Carol taking Joe and Kevin out to meet Moises and begin the cave exploration on the area of the mountain skirt where Moises lives. Moises was able to help them find three caves, one of which went in a few feet and then opened to a four foot diameter hole that dropped about 40 feet straight down. They determined that it would open to a room at the bottom, but without the proper gear Joe and Kevin opted to move to another one and save this cave for a later date when there were more people and better gear.

Mike, Neil, Jerry and David got to Jalapa about 9:45 and met with Dona Felipa to deliver the clothing. Tim met them on the edge of town

and both vehicles were driven to the temporary DIF location and unloaded the clothing. They were very appreciative. Former Mayor Alvaro Rubio let the team know that he had arranged for them to meet with the Mayor of Piedra Ancha at 3:00 PM so that Neil can ask permission to camp on their hill and hopefully avoid a “rope” situation as was experienced last year. The team was to meet Alvaro at 2 PM to begin the drive over for the meeting. With nearly three hours until the next appointment the team drove to the center of town and discovered that the old municipal building had been torn down and they were starting to build a new one. They walked over to the dress shop to check on the owner, Don Asuncion. His wife said that he was out of town on business and that they were doing well. After an exchange of pleasantries the team then moved on to check on Don Julio. We had received a report that Don Julio was not feeling well and thought it might be a good time to drop in. When the team arrived they found that he was doing fine, but it was his father that wasn't doing well and that Don Julio had left town to visit his father. Again the team exchanged pleasantries and moved on to meet with Catalina. Arriving at Catalina's home revealed that they had added a front porch to the home, making it look very different from the outside. Catalina's mother and Grandmother were home, but most of the siblings were in school, and Catalina had moved to Mexico City where she is attending school and working at a paper store. The team stayed for a few minutes to talk

about events during recent months then they said their goodbyes and left.

The team had a quick lunch and then took a drive to the west side of the "bowl" to take another look at Cumorahcita from a distance and see if there was anything that could be determined from a distance. This provided us with some insight with Neil's input. The time was slipping away and the team had just enough time to travel back to town to meet with Alvaro and travel to Piedra Ancha for the meeting.

The team met with Alvaro; Neil and David went in his vehicle with his two youngest children Sarai and Paco. Tim, Carol, Mike, and Jerry followed in the much more comfortable riding Expedition. The group was formally introduced to the Mayor (Commissioner) of Piedra Ancha. Neil explained everything he was doing with archaeology and how this location is important for determining the location of a grand final battle—a battle that took place in this very valley. The Mayor was very receptive and asked a few questions for clarification which our friend Alvaro answered in complete support our purposes in the area. After about forty-five minutes the team left feeling very positive that the way was cleared for a trek up to Cumorahcita. Now it only had to be cleared through Oberto Castillo who had already given us permission last year. The team drove back to Alvaro's and then Mike, Neil, Jerry and David headed for Tuxtepec while Tim and Carol went to pick-up Joe and Kevin from their day of caving with Moises.

Wednesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> began with the traveling group heading out about 9 AM. They traveled to Villahermosa where they quickly visited the LaVenta ruin site museum so that Neil could follow-up on the research, then they checked with the Museum of Natural History to see if there was anything to be found of the non-fossilized mastodon skull reported to have been found in the area—all the items in the museum are replicas. They went into LaVenta Park and toured the site to take some photos that were missed when the group went in January. They were successful. Then they were off to Palenque and checked in at the hotel Tulipanes.

The morning for the Jalapa team began with a visit to the DIF in Jalapa to pick-up the trailer that was left there yesterday. The team then made a brief visit with Moises to invite him to come and spend the time with the group on Cumorahcita. The team then headed to Piedra Ancha and met with the Mayor again. The team stopped at the house and spoke to the wife (Guadalupe) and found that her husband (Juan) was working a short distance away. Their son rode the horse to lead the way and soon Joe was on the horse with the Mayor's son holding on for dear life. Yes, Joe got to run the horse down the road. The group found Juan sawing lumber with a chain saw and when he was done with the sawing each member of the team helped him carry the lumber up to a small building where he was stacking the lumber he cut. The group sat and talked for some time and found that Juan had worked at dairy farms

throughout the US Midwest including Iowa and Wisconsin. After some very enjoyable conversation the group walked back to Juan's home where he assured the group that he would speak with everyone on the hill and let them know why our team is there; this would help assure easy passage to and from the hill.

The team then spent the next hour riding back to Jalapa on that very bumpy and dusty road. The morning had been overcast so most of the day the temperature was a tolerable 84 degrees, but by 4:30 PM the sun had been out in strength for a couple of hours and it was a humid 96 degrees when we reached Tuxtepec.

On Thursday April 3<sup>rd</sup> the traveling team got on the road early traveling to Yaxchilan. After a three hour car ride to Frontera the final hour was spent on a motor boat to Yaxchilan. Yaxchilan is located on the west side of the Usumacinta River the forms the international border between Guatemala and Mexico. Once there they began touring the Grand Plaza and then met up with Arturo who Neil met in January. Arturo then took the group through the entire site, showing them the back way to Temple 41 that is the backdrop for King Benjamin's Tower. Many things were learned on this trip that refines the understanding of temple location, tower construction, and who placed the thrones on Temple 41. As it turns out Neil most definitely believes the thrones on Temple 41 to have been placed by the Bountiful Historical Society because it is clearly a later construction with different

materials. The stones placed in the middle of the rectangle outline for King Benjamin's Tower is actually a protective cap that was placed over the stela found face-down in front of Temple 41. This stela is being preserved by keeping it face-down and covered. And, King Benjamin's Temple is located about 200 feet from Temple 41 on the top of the hill. It measures a remarkable 60 feet by 120 feet and was definitely built during King Benjamin's reign. Mario Perez Campa has published his study on this building and will be providing a copy of it to Neil in the near future. Arturo then took the crew down to the labyrinth and gave them the full story about the labyrinth. It contained two tunnels, one to go UNDER the Usumacinta River and the other is a shortcut to the temples up on the hill. While in Yaxchilan the traveling team came across a couple of gentlemen who were traveling from Mexico City and when Neil mentioned King Mosiah, one young man's attention turned directly to Neil and asked, "Did you say Mosiah?" This young man by the name of Jesse is Mormon and had studied Yaxchilan inside and out and was fascinated with all the information Neil had about Yaxchilan being the City of Zarahemla. They soon discovered that these two young men were staying at the same hotel in Palenque and Mike invited them to dinner that evening to discuss more. This whole endeavor turned out to be a God-incidence.

The Cumorahcita team ventured out to Jalapa and met with Moises who graciously bowed out of going to Cumorahcita—he had to work on

building the house. The team then gave a ride to Moises' Aunt Isabella who needed to ride to Santa Dominga which is on the way to Piedra Ancha. Once in Piedra Ancha the group met with Guadalupe Torres who accompanied them to the owner of the top of the hill whose name is Maximo. After getting permission the group then headed to the top of the Cumorahcita. It was extremely hot and dry on the walk up, but they eventually made it to the top via a more direct trail that ran along the southern ridge. The top of Cumorahcita was basically cleared on the west and south end, and it had been planted in corn, and cows were allowed to graze on it. This gave the group the ability to see things more clearly this year. The team then headed down the north end to the stone walls and began doing a survey of the area to mark the boundaries of the walls while Kevin starting searching for pottery. The heat was so intense that they spent a lot of time resting and re-hydrating. The team then headed down the hill and rested in the air conditioning of the truck (103 degrees) until the sun went over the horizon and they could work in shade to build the tent. The team set-up camp in a small quarry on the west side of the mountain near the road; had delicious MREs for a meal and then settled around the small fire to hold devotions. How can one explain the feeling of setting under the stars of heaven with the shadows of the mountains all around, watching meteors streak across the sky and ponder the vastness of the heavens and the creation of our God? It was a

truly humbling experience. Each member prayed for divine guidance, angelic presence and God's will in all things.

On Friday April 4<sup>th</sup> the traveling crew visited the ruins while in Palenque. Jerry took many photos with his new camera and is doing a great job of chronicling the trip in photographs while Neil spent a good hour in the museum and two hours in the ruins. They finished things up about noon and headed back to Tuxtepec.

The Cumorahcita Team had arisen Friday morning, geared up and headed back up Cumorahcita. They stopped at the small cemetery to hold devotions, and then headed back up the hill to the top. Once at the top Kevin started right in on searching for pottery and the rest of the group started measuring and mapping the top of Cumorahcita and along the north ridge. Joe investigated much of the west side of the hilltop that was covered in brush last year, but found nothing of significance. Tim and David measured the physical features and established a bearing on directions. By early afternoon Joe and David started down the hilltop to find another path to the ridge on the lower most northern part of the hill. They walked down the hill to the truck, filled their water containers and then headed down the road to skirt around to the north side of the hill. In the process they traveled into the uppermost part of Piedra Ancha and being about 102 degrees they stopped inside a gate under a shade tree to rest and refresh when a middle-aged lady came from across the street and started telling Joe and David about a cave that was up the hill in the

same ravine where they were sitting. It was hot and Joe and David were exhausted so Joe was not able to concentrate and he answered, “Si” to everything she was saying. She went back into the house and after about fifteen minutes Joe was ready to comprehend what she wanted to say so they walked over to their home and soon discovered that there was a cave up the hill and that the owner of the land was just a few houses over. They thanked her and were on their way to talk with the man in the two-story house. Joe and David introduced themselves and the gentleman and his wife received the “gringo’s” and in time gained permission to go to the cave. With this bit of information and a lead on a cave, Joe and David assessed how exhausted they were and moved to the side of the road where they could catch a truck taxi back up to the top where the truck was parked. Once there they got on the radio with Tim and Kevin and found that they were on their way down the hill. Once in the truck and with nothing further to accomplish on the hill they packed up and headed back to Tuxtepec for a well deserved shower and good meal. The traveling team arrived just at the time the Cumorahcita team had sat down to order dinner. The two teams spent the evening updating each other on things that were accomplished by each group.

Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup> began with the entire group heading out to Piedras Negras to follow-up on the cave lead. The long and dusty two hour trip got them to the destination at about 11 AM. They pulled up to the home where they met with the middle-aged lady the day before with

the intent to arrange for a guide to the cave; having already gained permission the day before. As Neil stepped out of the van and started speaking with the gentleman who was our sheepherder friend from last year, an elderly woman approached Neil and in Spanish she said, (Paraphrasing) “Finally, you have come. Now things will change. You have come in the name of God; you have come in the name of Christ. Things will be different now.” She then proceeded to pronounce a blessing on Neil, even as a Catholic Priest would gently touch the cheeks and forehead to pronounce a blessing. This moment was so amazing that all Neil could say was, “Muchas gracias,” (thank you very much) over and over he repeated this with each statement she made. Neil will have more to say on this later about the spirit this woman carried, but those present who experienced it have agreed that this lady was anointed with the Holy Spirit when she spoke. There was a flow and a presence that accompanied her words. Once that moment waned, the team began to speak again about the cave and again found themselves at the home of the landowner who then agreed to walk the group up the hill to the location of the cave.

Neil, Kevin, and Joe went into the cave and spent about an hour and a half crawling through it (yes, Joe and Kevin wore respirators this time since there were plenty of bats to make the air noxious). Once out of the cave the group met back together at the sheepherder’s (Jacobo Hernandez) home and again this wonderful elderly lady (Paula

Hernandez Carbo) came out to greet and converse with the group. She saw how mud-covered Neil was from crawling in the cave and she insisted on “bathing” him—not as a nice gesture, but because she genuinely wanted to clean him almost as the Christ experience of washing of feet. She brought out the pails of water and made sure that Neil was cleaned.

The Cumorah Team sat and shared with this family for most of an hour, sharing the gift of gab and relating to one another some stories and making plans for other caves in the area. Several generations were represented here and they were genuinely open and received us in grand fashion. They wanted to kill a large turkey and feed us. We insisted that they not spend their money that way, and later they wanted to buy a big fish and feed us. Again we insisted that it wasn’t necessary. It is hard to express how wonderfully we were received and what a joyous experience it was.

Neil then left to go spend some time alone on Cumorahcita so he could say goodbye to a loved one. The team met back in Tuxtepec and spoke of the day with amazement. The team agreed that we received the guidance and confirmation we had prayed to receive. And, we are not convinced that this is all, perhaps greater things await—but, again, it will be in God’s timing, not ours. However, blessings are ours to claim as this day has proven so wonderfully.

Sunday April 6<sup>th</sup> began with the team driving out to Cumorahcita for a Communion Service. The service began at precisely 10:30 AM. The morning was beautiful with a slight overcast sky and a temperature of about 79 degrees when our service began. We sang a song and opened with prayer. Tim then read this morning's devotion for our scripture:

*Jacob 4:1 And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy:*

*2 That the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass.*

*3 And in the day that he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people, is the day, yea, even the last time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that, the end soon cometh.*

*4 And how blessed are they who have labored diligently in his vineyard; and how cursed are they who shall be cast out into their own place!*

*5 And the world shall be burned with fire.*

*6 And how merciful is our God unto us; for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them, all the day long;*

*7 And they are a stiff-necked, and a gainsaying people; but as many as will not harden their hearts, shall be saved in the kingdom of God.*

*8 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech of you in words of soberness, that ye would repent, and come with full purpose of heart, and cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you.*

After reading this scripture Tim spoke about the need to come before God with humility and repentance for our shortcomings. He reminded us of the wonderful day in which we live, but that we must remain in

tune with God and that requires repentance; a periodic review of the health of our relationship with Him. He asked us each to take turns in praying our prayers of repentance. It was during our prayers for repentance that the sun broke through the clouds and shined upon us— isn't it amazing how it is the little things that seem to make such a personal statement to the heart? Afterwards we each prayed a prayer of thanksgiving and a claiming of the gifts we will receive. We all then shared in the communion emblems. Afterwards a member of the group felt impressed to share the following scripture from the Doctrine & Covenants as a word of hope:

*Section 98:4d And in that day, all who are found upon the watchtower, or in other words, all mine Israel shall be saved.*

*4e And they that have been scattered shall be gathered; and all they who have mourned shall be comforted; and all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned.*

*4f Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion, for all flesh is in mine hands: be still, and know that I am God.*

*4g Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered, they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their inheritances; they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy; to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things, that the prophets might be fulfilled.*

The team then ended the service and found themselves back in Piedra Ancha speaking with the family we had met the day before. They spent the better part of an hour talking with the family and getting to know them better. They then stopped and spoke to the Mayor of Piedra Ancha

on the way out of town and presented him with the pottery Kevin had collected out the cave the day before.

The team arrived at Alvaro and Felipa's home (the former Mayor of Jalapa and his wife) at 2 PM sharp and were graciously greeted and sat at the table for a very "native" dinner of yucca tamales with pieces of pork rib and chicken soup with a piece of "free range" chicken. Both dishes were spicy and flavorful. We had a tamarindo drink that is made from the pod of a local plant—it is somewhat tart, but with sugar it too makes a flavorful drink. The team spent a couple of hours here with Neil mostly speaking and relating stories, but Alvaro and Felipa were doing this as a genuine gesture of thanks for remembering them and bringing the clothing again this year. The team then gave our sincere thanks for the meal and were off to Cerro Rabon to take a few minutes to remember Jerry Hedenberg in a quick service we held for him about 1/3 of the way up to base camp. It was a good sending off and then we moved on to pick-up Moises and drive back to Tuxtepec.

The team arrived in Tuxtepec and cleaned from the warm day in the sun that finally came out in full-force about 1 PM this afternoon. We all gathered with Moises for a very talkative meal in the restaurant and then held devotions in one of the rooms upstairs. This will be very hard to translate, but Moises attended our devotion this evening where Joe gave the Invocation in Spanish and then followed with the English translation and then read the following scripture:

*II Nephi 6:56 But wo unto him that has the law given; yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation; for awful is his state!*

*57 O that cunning plan of the evil one!*

*58 O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men!*

*59 When they are learned, they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves;*

*60 Wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness, and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.*

*61 But to be learned is good, if they hearken unto the counsels of God.*

Neil then delivered the devotion for the evening as he did the entire lectionary by first speaking to Moises in Spanish and then giving the English version. This scripture was right on cue for the issues that are confronting our brother Moises and he was visibly moved—expressing that he sincerely feels that we are the only ones who care about his life and his future. There was a very powerful presence of the Spirit in the room as we all bowed and prayed our Benediction with Neil again providing it in Spanish with English translation. But, we were truly moved when Moises then prayed a prayer of thanksgiving for he felt that he now understands better what his future should be. He asked for blessings on the members of his family and for us. It was so very moving and we know that there are things we will need to do for Moises before we leave.

Monday April 7<sup>th</sup> began early for Tim, Neil, Kevin, and Joe who left about 7:30 AM to reach Piedra Ancha around 9 AM; they had a meeting scheduled with Abraham to see about a cave that was a two-hour hike from the town. But, it was raining in that part of the valley this morning and it turned out that the meeting never took place since Abraham did not show. No one in the group was too upset on missing out on the two-hour, one-way hike. It also gave them a chance to talk with Jacobo and his family. Joe was so impressed with the elderly Paula that he asked her to be his Mexican grandmother; she accepted and called him her grandson. One funny event occurred when Kevin walked around the back of the vehicle to find that someone had written “lava me” meaning “wash me” in the dust on the back of the vehicle. Kevin decided that this was ridiculous since we don’t write “pave me” in the dust of their rock and dirt roadbeds. After all if the road was paved then the vehicle would not be dusty and needing to be washed. The rest of the team thought that was a good idea so they wrote “pave me” in the dust of the road and took a picture.

The team then left and stopped in at Santa Domingo to see little Esperanza (the little baby girl that Joe named last year). The team had bought a present for Esperanza and Joe was able to gift to her. The family was very thankful and spoke with the team for a short while and soon the team was off to Catalina’s home. Joe had a gift to deliver to the mother of Catalina since she had been so gracious and sent a gift to Joe’s

mother last year. The team stopped in and talked for a while and Joe presented the gift. As they were leaving and halfway up the hill Catalina's brother came running up and told them that she had a gift for them and they needed to return. They walked back down and Catalina's mother gave each of them a serviette as a gesture of thanks. Neil expressed that they were very happy to share with her and the gesture wasn't necessary. She answered back, "But, you saved the life of my daughter." Neil could only thank her and graciously accept.

The crew of Mike, Jerry, Carol and David remained in Tuxtepec got a few important tasks completed. By 11:30 they were on the road to Jalapa and met up with the other crew as they were leaving Catalina's house. The team traveled to the home of Moises where we were able to provide some funding for building material that is needed for the erecting of a new home structure, and since it was raining in this part of the valley we spent our time inside the house sharing with the family.

Kevin and Joe sat in a hammock and played and tickled with the little sisters (Maria and Juanita), while the rest of us spent time with Moises and Isabella. Isabella displayed her sewing handiwork; serviettes, table cloths, dresses, blouses, and skirts. She is very talented. After a good hour of laughter and play, Martha (who was sitting in the back room) was observed trying to peek around the corner and be a part of the group. Tim and Neil had already gone back to the kitchen to extend a gesture of caring to see if there was anything that could be done

for Martha. Her muscles have atrophied so completely they knew that there is nothing that they could do—this was something that only Our Lord can correct. Some mention was made that the medicine (ibuprofen) the team left last time seemed to help. The team agreed to see about getting some. Then, the entire team was summoned into the back room where we all sat on the floor and stayed at eye-level with Martha. She took joy in the company and in being included. It was a joy that touched each one of us. Particularly moving was the gesture of Neil touching her cheek and her kissing his hand with the appreciation of being touched, and of Tim kneeling beside Martha and gently rubbing her back and stroking her ponytail as a further gesture of caring; she just soaked it all in. The power of the Holy Spirit was very apparent as we children of Our Creator all shared in the joy of being alive and being loved. As the team got to the vehicles at the road the grandmother of Moises arrived by taxi with a large sack of grain for pig feed; without a word Joe picked it up and took it the 200 yards down to the house. She was very, very grateful and it was a good gesture. It was sometime around 4 PM when the team left Jalapa knowing that we would be back for caving in the morning and for dinner and blessings in the afternoon.

After dinner the team met for devotions. It was here that we were touched so powerfully by the inspiration of the Spirit that we knew that God had something in mind for tomorrow and that we would be a part of it. We all shared the inspiration we each had received throughout the

day—the whisperings of the still, small voice speaking to our spirits and laying certain understandings upon our hearts. It was here that we each participated in helping one another understand the greater blessing that God has in store for Martha and others. We anticipate an outpouring of the Spirit, not because we are finally prepared, but because in God's larger plan He is ready for this to occur and we happen to be the servants who are in the field when this particular request is being made; how joyous and how great to be in the service of our fellow beings and being in the service of Our God.

Tuesday April 8<sup>th</sup> began with the cave crew of Tim, Kevin, Joe, Neil and Jerry all getting up early and being ready for devotions at 8:30 and out the door to meet with Moises at 10 AM to explore a cave that was passed up at the beginning of the trip because of the need for repelling gear. The boys met up with their appointed helpers and they were off to the cave. Kevin got geared up and repelled into the hole—no vicious animals awaited. It did open up into a small area and Kevin did find some pottery pieces in the area.

Mike, Carol, and David left Tuxtepec about 10:30 AM and stopped in Jalapa to meet with Catalina's family one last time. She was very gracious and gave us her love. She wanted to be sure that we contacted Catalina when we get into Mexico City and we assured her that we would make the attempt to call and meet up with her. There was just enough time to drive out to Moises' and meet up with the cave crew as

they were on their way up from the field where the cave was located. Both groups met at the roadside entrance to Moises' home and the boys changed out of their dirty clothes into more appropriate visiting ones. Before we entered the property Carol gave a prayer for God's Spirit to be present as we ventured to serve in His stead.

Once at the home the team sat on the porch and spent a lot of time looking at historical pieces that Moises and his sisters had picked up around the area. Most of us stayed on the porch and talked and played, but Kevin soon found a dirt pile next to the house and was finding many pottery pieces there. It was dinner time and we were treated to a dinner of chicken with broth, homemade tortillas and some very spicy chopped hot peppers. It was a very filling meal. Once we were finished and had cleared the table, then Moises' family ate while we all rested on the porch.

After dinner was complete we all gathered in the room and prepared for the administrations. We were told the specific request each person was asking and Isabel asked for her children to be prayed over as well—that they would do well in school. Each person was given a blessing through the laying on of hands; first the grandmother, then the children, then Isabel, then Moises and finally Martha. Words cannot express how the power of the Holy Spirit increased with each blessing given, finally culminating with all of us kneeling on the floor and touching Martha while Jerry anointed and Mike confirmed the

administration. It was flowing so strongly that for the next half hour we all sat in silence and bathed in the power of the love and light that was in the room—it seemed that no one wanted to leave the moment of pure love that was expressed without the interruption of words. It is not that words weren't spoken at all during this time; it is just that only the absolute necessary words were used to move and adjust Martha and comfort her as she had filled Neil's palm with her tears. Perhaps the initial tears she cried were from discomfort and pain, but as she lay face down on the mat and recovered from the experience we all sensed that she was overwhelmed with the power of love of God's Spirit. She sat back up and we ended the service with a prayer of blessing on the home.

At this point Moises told us about an uncle of his who had experienced a particularly bad week recently and was requesting a blessing from us. Neil, Tim and David then followed Moises to his uncle's home just a quarter mile up the road. The rest of the crew stayed back with the family and started looking at clothing and homemade items to purchase. Moises' group arrived at the uncle's home and after Moises spent several minutes giving a testimony to his Mazatec-speaking uncle of the power of this type of blessing; his uncle began to decline. Neil then took his seat and sat in the front of the man and spoke to him eye-to-eye about very personal experiences while Moises interpreted. After a few minutes the gentleman admitted that he did need administration and that he would accept the blessings of God. Tim

and David then administered to him and again the Spirit was there as Neil told us later that he could read from the man's expression while he was being prayed over. This man who just 20 minutes earlier was being very "macho" and not in need of anyone's help, left us with a bear-hug and a smile; perhaps feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit and sensing that someone truly cared. They then returned to the rest of the group. It was a joyous experience with this family that seemed to be so full of life and hope at this point—the Spirit of God had filled a void and for this afternoon the home was full of a large family that was represented by the eight visitors, but in essence this family was drawn-in from around the globe from all our prayer partners who were sending their love and concern for this small broken family in a humble dwelling that lies in the shadow of this mountain in Mexico. All of that love and energy was centered here; dispatched by your sincere request and delivered by angels to express the love and mercy of Christ in its purest form.

Reluctantly, we finally parted ways. Mike and Carol headed back to Tuxtepec while the remaining six traveled across the river to Piedra Ancha one last time. They arrived right before sunset and again met with the family of Jacobo. Joe provided the family of the 18 year-old daughter with a couple of walkie-talkies so that she and Moises can talk to each other across the river. Joe is trying to be matchmaker here; perhaps he has a skill we didn't know about? Then Neil presented a Spanish Book of Mormon to the middle-aged lady who told us of the

cave and then gave us a humorous “burro story” last Sunday. Then, one of her friends wanted one as well. Neil then spent time telling them about how this book is a history of the ancient people of this land and that it is important for them to understand the history of this place where they live.

Joe and David then went to the home of Paula to present her with a Spanish Book of Mormon as well. David spoke while Joe interpreted and explained how our team had been praying for guidance as to how to touch the people here in the valley and make them aware of this history and their ancestry, but when Paula greeted us in the manner that she did and acknowledged that we came in the name of God and in the name of Christ we knew that God had touched her spirit and prepared her heart to receive the message of this book. We also explained how in Ezekiel he speaks that Judah shall write upon a stick and that Joseph will write upon a stick and that the two shall be combined to be one common witness that Jesus is the Christ; that the Bible is the stick of Judah and that this Book of Mormon is the stick of Joseph. The Book of Mormon is not intended to replace a religion or to replace the Bible, but it is a gift to her to strengthen her faith in the promises of God and the salvation of humanity. She graciously accepted and said that we must return next year and that we should continue to follow the pathway we have been traveling in serving God. Joe and David left her with their blessings and she said a sincere adios to her grandson Joe.

We met back up with the rest of the crew and headed back down the hill, but before we left Piedra Ancha we left a Book of Mormon with the family of the Mayor and before we crossed the river back to Jalapa we left a Book of Mormon with the family of little Esperanza. On the way back to Jalapa the team received notice via radio that someone had left a handmade napkin from Martha at the home of Moises so the team headed back to his home to recover that item and was again showered with so much affection from Moises, Isabel, and Juanita. It certainly made it hard to leave. At 8:45 the team finally left to head back to Tuxtepec.

On Wednesday April 9<sup>th</sup> began with a 6:45 wake-up call, got breakfast and were back up to our rooms and pack. The team checked out about 8:30 this morning and was on our way out of Tuxtepec, weaving our way up the local roads past the sugar cane tractors and all of the over-the-road truck traffic that is becoming ever more prevalent in recent years. We made our way up the mountain pass by Orizaba, down into the Puebla Valley, then back up the 11,000 foot pass that leads into the Mexico City Valley. We inched through the traffic on the east side of town, finally arriving in Teotihuacán at about 4 PM. The site did not close until 5 PM and they don't empty the park until 6 PM so Kevin, Tim, Joe, Neil and David bought tickets and Neil gave a quick history of the site; covering the Main Plaza of the Temple of the Sun and southward down the Avenue of the Dead to the Citadel of Quetzalcoatl.

Amazing what you can learn in that amount of time when you have someone who is as knowledgeable about the site as Neil is. Even at Teotihuacán Kevin is always spying the ground to see if there are any hidden treasures that he can find on his own—a true rock hound; he found pieces of pottery. Finally, it was time to leave and the group headed back to the hotel located close to the site. The team gathered for dinner and sat under a canopy through a thunderstorm watching the lights of the hotel flicker on and off throughout the dinner session. Neil gave us a very detailed session of some of the hidden mysteries of Teotihuacán and it was a very entertaining. The group then retired and gathered at 9 PM for our devotions. This was a chance for us to decompress from all the events of the trip. Our devotion lasted for an hour and a half as we all expressed highlights and concerns that will make us better people for the future. We ended the devotion with a prayer for further guidance and direction in being better servants for the purposes of our Heavenly Father and the work to which He has called us.

Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup> brought an opportunity for the driving team to make one last visit at a couple of temples at Teotihuacán as they arose before the dawn and made their way to the site gates waiting for the attendants to open them. Neil again provided a quick tour of very important information while Joe and Kevin got a chance to climb the Temple of the Sun. The driving team then returned Neil to the hotel,

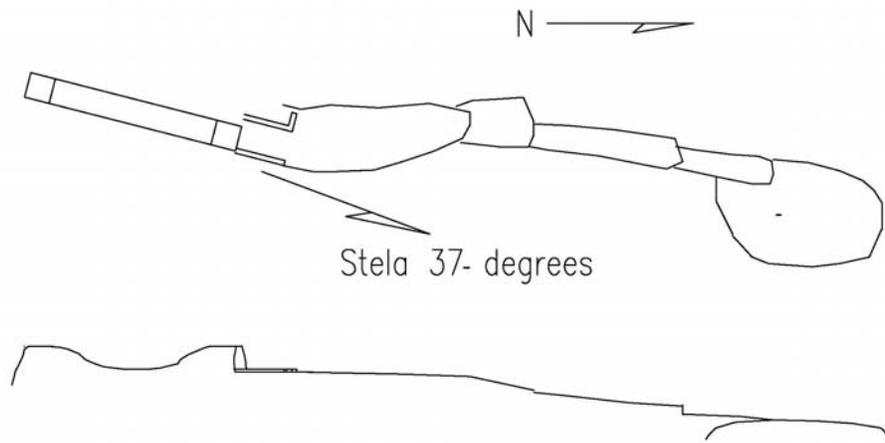
said their goodbyes and were on the road to Missouri by 9:30 AM. They made it to Laredo, Texas by 8 PM and then pulled into a hotel on the north side of Austin at 1AM.

Surprises came to the flying team on Thursday afternoon. Sergio was not able to make the scheduled meeting 1 PM and then flying crew was informed that the American Airlines flight they were scheduled to take on Friday had been canceled. They were able to make other arrangements on Mexicana airlines into Chicago, got into Chicago about 1:30 AM Friday morning and then they were back at the airport at 8 AM to get the flight to KC. The flying crew got into KC about noon on Friday.

Friday April 12<sup>th</sup> found the driving crew by-passing Friday morning rush hour in the larger cities and getting into Buckner, Missouri at 7 PM on Friday. All teams made it back to Missouri on Friday and everyone ended the trip in good health.

## **Conclusion**

The 2008 Spring Expedition provided information that help to confirm several concepts that have been developing over the years. For the area of Cumorahcita we were able to solidify some theories about the hilltop having been altered by man to create an embattlement or command position. Below is a top view and profile view of the map that was developed from our measuring.



It seems VERY apparent that this area was modified to create a series of elevations that were leveled and connected. And, there were other hilltops in the area that, from this vantage point, seemed to be similarly modified; these will need to be investigated in future expeditions. The team still feels very strongly that this hill was a very strategic point from which to conduct a battle as the top of Cerro Rabon is periodically covered with clouds and mists and would make commanding an army very difficult. This hill provides a visual vantage point that is consistent and allows full vision of the valleys to the east and the west as well as the slopes of the mountains on the north and south.

The experience this year was a testimony that it is possible to have a two-pronged approach to the expedition and still have success in both areas. We were able to have one group focused on the gathering of information concerned with archaeology at established ruin sites, while a second group focused on the “dirty” aspect of exploring, measuring, and collecting local information. The expedition proved that it is possible to have two groups working separately, but still focused and alike enough in spirit and purpose that they worked harmoniously. With care, this concept may provide expanded opportunities for future expeditions.

As to the location of the library of Mormon the team has not completely ruled out Cerro Rabon. There are many spiritual experiences concerning Cerro Rabon. While it is feasible to accomplish the task should someone decide to excavate the entire Cumorahcita to find the library, certainly the vast size of Cerro Rabon makes it virtually impossible, thereby ensuring the safety of these records until God announces the time for them to be found; of which we have full trust and faith that he will send His messengers to lead the way.

Because of our experiences with the local people at Piedra Ancha and with Moises and his family we are continually reminded that God has children everywhere that are starving for the loving expression of His gospel. These people operate in full sincerity and are searching for meaning, understanding, and purpose to explain the hardships they face on a daily purpose—how are they any different than us? They are not.

Their hunger for Christ's message is a call for us to provide the nourishment of His written Holy Word; their thirst for Christ's loving Spirit is a call for us to provide the ministry of the Holy Spirit through loving acts that brings the refreshing assurances of God's love for them as His children. We are hereby challenged to be a spiritual people who more completely live the life of ministers and messengers of God and continually look for ways to minister and challenge others to this ministry. It will absolutely be necessary for us to learn and be proficient in Spanish.