

Report No. 1 from Alto Cayma - 18 Feb 18

Back in Alto Cayma Again

After an unusually long absence (4-1/2 months), I arrived back in Alto Cayma this past Monday afternoon, this time to spend 2-1/2 months here. I was pleased to see "the usual suspects" turn out to greet me in the airport.



A Fresh Mount

The very first thing I did the next morning was to go downtown to a Yamaha dealer and select a new motorcycle to buy. My old Communist



Chinese junker has never run right since its last engine failure, and I need reliable transportation. The difference in quality between Chinese and Japanese bikes is like night and day. After my test ride, I had only one word to describe this bike.....sweet!

It would be nice if the story ended there, but hey, we're in Peru, so there's got to be more to the story than that. I bought this motorcycle on Tuesday, and by Thursday I "unbought" it when the dealer apparently tried to pull a "bait and switch" on me, so now I'm going to buy the same model from a different dealer in town. And the saga continues.....

Letters

I've delivered all the letters from sponsors which have been submitted thus far. I would like to invite **any sponsor who has not written to their "ahijado" (sponsoree) in the last few months** to write a letter now and send it to me via e-mail. I will get your letter translated and delivered, and you will receive a reply. For those who don't wish to keep up to date with their "ahijados" via correspondence, but want to know from time to time how they're doing, you can always write and ask me for a report.

Lidia the Rotarian

Gloria had some nice Rotary apparel which I've saved since she passed away, and now I've found a worthy recipient to continue her legacy of service to others. I was very pleased to pass these items on to Lidia, the newest



member of the Rotary Club of Arequipa Ciudad Blanca.

Día del Amor y la Amistad ("Day of Love and Friendship")

That's the name under which Valentine's Day is celebrated in Peru, and as is my custom, I used the occasion to give a rose and a chocolate bar to each of 18 ladies who are instrumental in our service to the poor here in Alto Cayma. Here, for example, is Sabina, Lidia's assistant, who is the youngest



member of our staff. If you study the angle in this photo, you will notice that it was taken by someone who is taller than Sabina. (Just don't look at the reflection in the window behind her. :-)

Bridge to Opportunity

At this time every year, Lidia and I are always very busy processing new students into the Bridge to Opportunity program. (That's the program that supports the students' studies in prep schools, called academies, to be able to compete successfully for entrance into the National University.) Most of these students are Acercádonos sponsorees who have just graduated from high school, such as Katherine, who has been sponsored by Ray Sindell since



he visited Alto Cayma 11 years ago this summer. (My, how time flies!) Katherine will compete for admission to study Business Administration.

Rotary Project

Our local Rotary club (Arequipa Ciudad Blanca) has a number of members who are very proactive about looking for new service opportunities. A few months ago, when they were escorting the District Governor on an orientation tour of Alto Cayma, they asked if there were any social service projects for which Padre Pedro, our parish priest, would need help. Rosario, Victor Galdos' wife, told them about Padre Pedro's dream of having a kitchen to serve his parishioners in need. In very short order, the Rotarians collected enough donated furniture and equipment to make this dream come true. This week we had a formal delivery ceremony, attended by the most active



members of the club. As is the local custom, Padre Pedro blessed the enterprise with holy water, being sure to also drench Rosario (on the left,



with the camera), Sra. Laura (our cooking instructor) and her assistant, Sra. Dominga.

A Screeching Halt

After 3 days of running full tilt, I came to a screeching halt on Friday afternoon with a stomach ache that landed me in the government medical clinic (a true joy) by midnight that night. The next morning I had to miss the monthly meeting of the Salir Adelante student group, but by Saturday afternoon I had recovered sufficiently to attend the monthly Acercádonos birthday party. These things don't happen to me very often, fortunately, but even I am not completely immune.

Acercádonos Birthday Party

We had invited a total of 47 "ahijados" (sponsees) to attend this month's party, which was for people celebrating their birthdays in January (when our office was closed for vacation) as well as February, but only a little over half were able to attend. We had elderly as old as 95 and 91 on the list, but the oldest one who was able to attend was the amazing Sr. Nestor, who



was "only" turning 80.

One of the games John played with the celebrants involved a blindfolded volunteer trying to find a balloon, guided only by the spectators shouting directions (all at once). We have both children and elderly at these parties, so John first asked for a youth volunteer to play the game. When he



then asked for an elderly volunteer, who should step forward but Sr. Nestor.



The way the contestant demonstrates that he has indeed found the balloon is by sitting on it and popping it. Does that look like an 80-year old? Sr. Nestor



is young in spirit, and I believe that that's what keeps him so active physically. We should all follow his example!

Of course, it wouldn't be a birthday party without cake and a piñata



(hanging from the ceiling in the upper left) and presents. We have a number



of handicapped children in the program who continue with us well beyond the normal age. They, too, participate in the birthday parties, like Roxana, shown



here celebrating her 20th birthday.

Mujeres con Esperanza

I was eager to get up the hill and inspect our outpost in the new settlement of Mujeres con Esperanza. The first thing that I noticed was that some neighbor had apparently needed a board, and I was glad (oh, so glad) that one dark night we were able to provide him one from the wall of our



storage building. Now we won't have to worry about our stuff inside the building "drying out" during the rainy season.

Speaking of the rainy season, you will remember the problems we had last year with erosion from the runoff eating back towards our building from



the ravine below. We have implemented a fix to that problem with this bit of simple construction. The theory is that these concrete "wings" will guide the



water into the central channel down this concrete-lined spillway, placing any



erosion far downstream from our building. We are in the rainy season now, but we haven't yet had any shower big enough to truly test this installation. Stay tuned for further updates.

Another thing I was eager to see in Mujeres con Esperanza was the new kitchen in our Service Center. Cooking classes in our original center down the hill have been very popular for years now. We wanted to offer the same opportunity to the people of Mujeres con Esperanza, and we were able to equip a kitchen up the hill for this purpose thanks to a donation from David & Donna Hodgkins, in honor of their late daughter, Jessica. We



designed the kitchen down the hill ourselves, but this time around we were able to take advantage of inputs from Sra. Laura, our cooking instructor. The main thing she wanted was for the stove to be installed in a moveable island,



so that she could face the students as she cooks and instructs. When not in use, this island can be parked along the wall, where the trash can is seen in the photo.

Rotaract

I just now got back from visiting our Rotaract club, which meets every Sunday evening. Tonight they were engaged in a fundraising project, making "chocotecas" (flavor-filled chocolate candies) to sell. They do this project every



year, under the leadership of President Joseph, who is also a professional chef. I was pleased to see 14 members present, all enthusiastically engaged.

And that completes the whirlwind tour of activities in Alto Cayma during my first 5 days back. This pace will likely continue during my remaining 10 weeks here, so stay tuned for future reports.

"Love God, Serve Neighbor/Serving Alto Cayma",

Jim