

Report No. 8 from Alto Cayma - 28 Apr 19

Letters

On Monday of this week, I took 50 letters, written by "ahijados" (sponsees) to their "padrinos" (sponsors), downtown to the Cultural Center for translation. The English teachers at this institution were the ones who used to translate over 300 letters, 4 times a year, for us until one time their system broke down. Hoping that they've recovered from whatever was the problem, I'm starting to give them letters again and I'm going back to requiring that all our ahijados write to their padrinos. Many padrinos haven't heard from their ahijados for well over a year.

Elderly Outing

On Tuesday, we gave the elderly an outing that was "highly classified" right up to the moment it began. We didn't tell anybody where we were going. Nevertheless, proceeding on blind faith, the people assembled early, as they



always do, some bringing their knitting so as to not waste time. We had 78



"guests" show up for this outing, and this being Peru, of course I had to greet each one of them individually.

Not only had we not told anyone *where* we were going, we also had not told them *how* (which was the best part), so when the double-decker tour



buses showed up, their jaws dropped. One fellow I was standing near said, "Those are for *tourists!*", and I told him, "That's right, and today *we're* the tourists." Another lady sitting nearby simply said, "Wow!".

There was a great deal of excitement as the buses were loaded. Many



of our people couldn't negotiate the narrow spiral staircase to get to the



second floor, but just like all tourists, those who could, did. We left no one



behind, not even wheelchair-bound people.

When the buses took off, Victor and I had to stay behind because we



had to pick up the chicken dinners, which were delayed. I'm tempted to make



a lame joke about the punctuality of Peruvian chickens, but it wasn't their fault. The chickens all reported for work on time that morning, but there was a power failure in the kitchen where the chicken was to have been baked in the early morning hours, and other arrangements had to be made. While waiting for the meals to be packaged, Victor and I had a chance to visit with the family of the cook, who was Señora Escolástica, the lady who used to cook



720 lunches every weekday in Father Alex' community kitchen some years back.

Meanwhile, the tour group had spent the morning visiting places our elderly had never seen before, like the Plaza de Yanahuara, with it's



beautiful sillar arches framing the view of El Misti, and the factory store of



the Inca Alpaca clothing company, where they have a small zoo with the 4



animals who provide the wool (the llama, the alpaca, the guanaco and the vicuña).

Victor and I caught up with the group at the Molino de Sabandía (the Sabandía gristmill), where they have a large green area in which we could



spread out for lunch. As often happens when we go out to the countryside, some of our country people spread out to harvest the green plants they don't



find in arid Alto Cayma.

Everyone was clamoring for their lunch by the time we got there, but some of them were clamoring with their mouths still full of all they food they



had brought with them to "tide them over" (all of which is just a polite way to



say, "Man, can these people eat!") We served the lunch right away, and



everyone attacked it with gusto. After lunch, of course we had to take a group



photo.

Then it was time to load the buses again to return home, but even the return trip afforded panoramic views of the beautiful Chili River Valley. I'm



sure that this is one outing they're going to be talking about for a long time to come, and our thanks go out to the Adventurers group at Advent Lutheran Church in Charlotte for making it possible.

Renacer ("Rebirth") Group of Alcoholics Anonymous

Tuesday also marked the 1-year anniversary of the founding of our



local AA group. Not surprisingly, it remains a challenge to get people in our area, who might need this group, to come try it out.

Meeting with Edith

On Thursday morning, we invited Edith Benique to come meet with Briza, Carmen and myself. Edith got her law degree through our Salir



Adelante program, and was one of the early presidents of our Rotaract club. Now she's a lawyer with her own law office downtown, but she's still very involved with the local community. She has many ideas for service which I knew would resonate with Briza and Carmen, and indeed, they did get excited once they began exchanging ideas. Their focus in this meeting was on prevention of legal problems by helping families stay on track so they don't have the kinds of breakdowns that then require a lawyer's legal services. I'm sure that some good new initiatives are going to come out of this initial brainstorming session.

Nerves of Steel

On Thursday, we also met with Gregorio, the lead psychologist of the Humanitarians Without Borders group. We had asked him to devise a



workshop that would train our students in techniques to control their emotions (nerves) and stay focused on the task at hand when they take the university entrance exam. Gregorio did a quick demonstration of what can be done, using Lidia and Sabina as guinea pigs (using them in the gringo sense of the word, not the Peruvian :-), and was able to obtain almost instant results. He is proposing a workshop with 8 sessions - 2 per week during the month leading up to the date of the exam. We're definitely going to give this a try.

The Elderly in Mujeres con Esperanza

This group, which meets every Thursday afternoon in Mujeres con Esperanza, has recently grown from 6 to 10 participants, and as you can see



in this photo, they really get into whatever project is offered.

Wall of Fame

On Friday, we added another very welcome handprint to our Wall of Fame. Carmen is much more than a lawyer to us. You'll see her in these



reports doing all sorts of things - teaching English classes, helping with the elderly group, etc. Also, like Briza, she's a great generator of new ideas, and brings us the benefit of her extensive network of contacts. She and Briza are working hand in glove, so Carmen was very pleased that her handprint could go up right beside Briza's.

Bridge to Opportunity

On Saturday afternoon, we had the monthly meeting of the Bridge to Opportunity academy students' sponsorship program. I introduced the



subject of Gregorio's workshop by asking for a show of hands to 3 questions in sequence. Of all the times you've taken the entrance exam, I asked, how many times have you come out saying, "Man, I really aced that thing!?" (One or two hands went up, tentatively.) How many times have you come out saying, "Well, that's about what I expected. I knew some things, and others I didn't know." (Perhaps 5 or 6 hands went up.) And then, how many times have you come out saying things like, "Man, I clutched! I didn't manage my time well, and when I saw the time remaining was dwindling, I completely froze up and couldn't do anything!" (Virtually every hand shot up.) They are very eager to take advantage of the opportunity to attend Gregorio's workshop, but some of them were concerned that to participate, they would have to miss some of the seminars being offered in their academies. I asked them, "Which is more important, to stuff your heads with a little more

knowledge, or to be able to break the logjam that has prevented all that you already know from making its way onto your answer sheet?" That ended the debate.

The Theater of Law

The Catholic University of Saint Mary is very community service-minded. For example, we have an alliance with their medical faculty that provides us with a massive medical campaign (up to 1,000 patients seen in a single day) every year. The students of the Law School have devised a creative means of educating unsophisticated audiences as to how the law works in Peru, and what are their basic rights and responsibilities as citizens. They educate through the use of theater, and on Saturday afternoon



they brought their theater company up to Mujeres con Esperanza. A good crowd had turned out in the spacious Mujeres con Esperanza Community



Social Center, and the activity generated quite a lot of excitement.

An Anniversary

Saturday marked the 6th anniversary of the death of the one who was known and loved in Alto Cayma as Señora Gloria, or Mamá Gloria, or even La Mamá Gatita (the little Mother Cat). So great an impression did she leave on this place that to this day, her name frequently comes up in conversation, as a touchstone for the quality and compassion with which we need to be serving those who need us here in Alto Cayma. This sign, which hangs in our



main office down the hill, says it all: "You will always live in our hearts, Mamá Gloria."

Father Alex, who was with us in North Carolina when Gloria died,



offered a mass for her on Sunday, and like all of his masses, it was very beautiful. And now it's time to roll up our sleeves again and continue the work that was so important to her as well as to us.

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

Jim