

Twenty-six Americans and our Guatemalan guide, Hugo, packed into a bus with jumpseats that folded out into the aisle as each row filled up. The picture says it all!

Photo Credit: Sallie Presler



Guatemala — Heartland of the Maya

By Aaron Presler

Months before our departure, my wife, Sallie, and I looked forward to this tour of Guatemala. It was to be our third consecutive trip to explore Book of Mormon lands with the PSI group. The two previous trips, first to Central Mexico and then to the Yucatan Peninsula, had proven to be our favorite vacations ever! For the two of us, these trips combine three very important elements: our love for The Book of Mormon, sharing the experiences with good friends (both old ones and new ones we meet on every tour), and quality time spent with each other. The prospect of a third “all-time favorite” vacation explains our anticipation.

Finally, the day of our departure came. Seeing old friends and meeting new ones at the airport introduced an early spirit of gentle kindness that is difficult to explain. That same spirit continued with us throughout the entire eleven days. I have, on the past two trips, kept a daily journal of the adventures we encountered each day. For this trip, I did the same. I will not try to recount

all the wonderful events that transpired but will focus on a few observations, both physical and spiritual, that touched my heart on this trip. It cannot be an in-depth analysis of archaeological evidences. I am no archaeologist... simply a passionate lover of The Book of Mormon and a fairly attentive observer.

Guatemala is as exotic and beautiful as you might imagine it to be. Its geography ranges from high volcanic mountain ranges to jungle rainforests filling vast low plains not much above sea level. Each of the days we were there, the weather was nearly perfect... warm and dry.

After stops in Houston and Guatemala City, we landed in Flores, a town in northern Guatemala nestled on the shore of a beautiful lake located deep in the rainforest. Our first night was spent in Tikal, some 40 miles further into the jungle, the site of some of the truly fabulous ancient ruins in the world. However, our first day of exploration would not be Tikal itself, but a place even deeper into the jungle... a town I think very near the end of the world, Uaxactun (wash-awk-tune).

Twenty-six Americans and our Guatemalan guide, Hugo, boarded a bus to begin our trip to Uaxactun. Unlike any I have seen in the U.S., this bus had jumpseats that folded out into the aisle as each row filled up. When all of us were finally aboard, we experienced first hand the cozy intimacy of packed sardines! Rather than a hardship, however, we found it simply added

to the bonding our group had already begun.

The map indicated our journey to be only 17 miles or so, but this “trek” through the jungle took about an hour. Thick jungle grew on either side of the road, teeming with monkeys, toucans, macaws and probably a lot of creatures I was not interested in meeting face to face. Finally emerging from the dense jungle, we entered a clearing, an old runway used by early archaeologists to fly into Uaxactun to study the ruins. The town literally lined both sides of the runway, very simple homes, shacks really, where the local villagers lived. There were a few shops mixed in among the dwellings but there was little wealth to be found here.

Unlike many of the well-known sites I’ve visited the past two years, no crowds of tourists filled Uaxactun... only us. Yet within minutes, fifteen or twenty children ranging in ages from 4 to perhaps 14 surrounded the bus, each one carrying dolls made of local natural materials such as cornhusks, fungus and dried weeds. The dolls were truly beautiful and, of course, for sale. I looked into the beautiful brown skinned faces of these children and knew I was in the presence of direct descendants of The Book of Mormon people. These children were Mundo Maya, which loosely translated means “first” or “original” Maya.

As we exited the bus, each child made his or her own unique sales pitch, encouraging us to buy a doll. However, our first purpose was to visit the archeological site. We

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promised to buy some after we returned to the bus, since none of us really wanted to carry the little dolls with us the 7 mile or so we would walk to the site, risking damage to them. Undeterred, the children followed us each step along the way.

Uaxactun is a site relevant to our Book of Mormon studies for two reasons. First, many of the structures, artifacts and stela found there are dated to around 300-400 AD, a time near the close of The Book of Mormon. Second, one particular stela describes the capture of the king and the killing of the women and children in sacrifice, testifying to the accuracy of statements found in Mormon 2:13-16.

As we walked on the grounds, climbed the steps of the low pyramids and looked over the eroded glyphs on the stela, I was struck by the horrible events that had occurred here centuries ago. And yet, I sensed a gentle spirit of peace, too, that I could not as yet explain.

The two major sites at Uaxactun are split by the runway and village right down the center. As we walked from the western site, crossing the open runway, the children followed. As we neared the bus again we took time to buy several of the dolls. For Sallie, the delight she found in communicating with the children, especially the young girls, and the fun in negotiating with these



Sallie and Sherrie Smith hand out treats and hair ribbons to each of the girls.

Photo Credit: Aaron Presler

young entrepreneurs was priceless! And the photo opportunity for me was equally priceless.

After a brief tour of a very small museum located in the village, we loaded the "sardine" bus for a short drive up the hill to Uaxactun East. Thinking we had finished with our shopping experience, I was surprised to find many of the children had followed us up the hill to the second site. We took a lunch break, sharing food with our newfound friends, and then continued our exploration. As is my nature, I climbed the tallest of the pyramids at the site. When I walk the paths and climb the steps of pyramids once trod by people centuries ago, I grasp a deeper understanding of them.

These ancient people become more than words in a book...they take on flesh and blood. It is one of the strange phenomena that occurs to me on these trips to Book of Mormon places. After our first trip two years ago, I came home with a great desire to read The Book of Mormon from cover to cover, something I had never done before. No longer were these simply stories, but experiences of real people who sought to know Jesus just as I do today.

Upon descending this pyramid, I noticed Sallie and Sherrie Smith had turned the tables on the young girls who had stuck with us like very cute leeches. These two women were passing out treats and hair ribbons to each of the girls. Sallie began talking with them, asking their names. One was Glenda, another Rosalea, and another Luce. Sallie dug into her pack and from it emerged a bubble blower. She showed Glenda how to blow bubbles, to the delight of many of the children. They ran through the streams of floating bubbles, squealing with joy! When she was sure Glenda had the hang of it, Sallie handed the soap bottle over to her.

As I watched the events unfold, I pondered the fate of these modern-day Lamanites. Here in a village, that seems to be at the edge of the world, amidst poverty and lack of opportunity, what would life have to offer these girls? And what could we do to make any difference? I remembered a statement by Mormon as he

lamented over the fate of his people. From Chapter 3 of Mormon it reads:

And now behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people which are spared, if it so be that God may give unto them my words, that they may know of the things of their fathers; Yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel, and these are the words which I speak: Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel! Know ye that ye must come unto repentance or ye cannot be saved! (vv. 24-25)

He goes on to say this:

Therefore repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ which shall be set before you, not only in this record, but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, this is written for the intent that ye may believe that; And if ye believe that, ye will believe this also; And if ye believe this, ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them. And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; Therefore, ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; And if it so be that ye believe in Christ and are baptized—first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior according to that which He hath commanded us—It shall be well with you in the day of judgment. Amen (vv. 30-33)

Within this text, Moroni specifically describes the intent of The Book of Mormon as a witness of Jesus to the remnant of the Lamanites.

Looking into those beautiful faces, I was humbled by the awesome responsibility we have to share the truth of The Book of Mormon with the remnant of God's covenant people found here in this clearing in the jungle at the edge of the world. I was saddened by the future that the world appears to hold for these children. How desperate the need is to share Christ's testimony here and to introduce the loving grace of Jesus into their lives, too. What an awesome tool The Book of Mormon could become when the truth of it is revealed to those who are the Mundo Maya.

That sweet spirit I had felt earlier was suddenly brought to my attention again. As our group, including the local children, began the return trip toward the bus, we gathered in a quiet place to sing a hymn together, a tradi-

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Guatemala

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tion begun last year. As we gathered, Lyle spoke for several minutes about the Guatemalan people. He spoke of the civil war that ended in 1996, only 8 years ago, and of the terrible toll it had taken on the Maya, leaving 100,000 orphans throughout the country. He also spoke of recent events that give hope. Within the last few years the Bible has finally been translated into the various dialects found among the Maya tribes in Guatemala. Think of it...nearly 2000 years after Christ walked among these people, Jesus' words are finally written in their own language!

As we began to sing "The Old, Old Path," the children became attentive and fell silent. With each verse, that sweet spirit seemed to amplify, growing stronger note by note. As the song came to a sweet close, the children broke into applause. I have to say it was the most appreciative audience

week, at Copan, we experienced a truly unique bonding with the staff at the hotel restaurant and again had opportunity to share God's love and the testimony of Jesus found in The Book of Mormon.

Two things in particular emerged for me from this trip. Each time I walk the places where Christ ministered in the New World, His presence in my own life grows. The testimonies of Nephi, Alma and Moroni become more tangible, they come alive for me because these wonderful people are no longer just chapters in a good book. They are real people, who lived real lives, and had a first-hand relationship with Jesus. Their testimonies strengthen my own testimony and increase my desire to better know my Savior. Second, I am humbled by the great needs of these remnant people in Guatemala as well as people the world over...and the hope that Jesus offers to each one. The following experiences illustrate these two points.

The last Maya archaeological site we visited on this 2005 tour was a little-known site called Quirigua. It is known for its colossal stelae, several of which relate strongly to The Book of Mormon. One stela in particular described in glyphs the Maya story of creation. I will leave it to respected scholars to give the detailed explanations. The creation story found on this centuries-old Maya stela closely parallels that found in Genesis of the Inspired Version. It is also set up as a chiasm, a form of Hebrew poetry that has

come to light in recent years, found throughout The Book of Mormon.

I stood in this ancient plaza, a couple thousand miles away from my comfortable home in Missouri, looking at a marvelous stone carved by craftsmen at least 1200 years ago. My confidence in the truth of The Book of Mormon is that the words found there parallel my own experience of discovering that Jesus truly is MY Savior. But the truth in The Book of Mormon takes on a more personal witness when I touch, and see and walk through history that seems to speak of Christ even from ancient stone, stone that comes to life for me. The words of The Book of Mormon also come to life. And the gospel of Jesus Christ is more than just an interesting philosophy found in ancient text. It becomes a living part of my life here and now.

Our last stop in Guatemala was the beautiful mountain city of Antigua. Repeating the pattern of each place, we seemed to bond with the hotel staff in a unique and peculiar way. Each time it seemed as if a door was being opened for some purpose. The main staff person in the small annex where Sallie and I roomed was named Carlos. Over the course of our 2+ days there, Sallie, in particular, spent time in conversation with Carlos. We met his two young sons, Carlos Jr. and Pablo. Sallie fell in love with these two boys! On our last day at the hotel, she found two toy trucks she had brought from home with the intent of finding deserving new owners. She asked Carlos to give these to his sons. She then gave Carlos a Spanish translation of The Book of Mormon. He was genuinely thankful for her gifts. In her limited Spanish she explained that The Book of Mormon was a history of his ancestors and their covenant with Jesus. He promised to read it. This was only one of many experiences our group had sensing the direction of the Holy Spirit to reach out in love to certain people we met along the way. It seems, at times, like there is so very little that we can do in response to God's Spirit. I'm not naive enough to believe that the little we did while on this trip will have widespread effect on the Lord's work in Central America. There are missionaries who give a great amount of time and energy on a daily basis whom I admire greatly. But I also know that when God directs and we are willing to respond to His prompting, seeds can be sown that may take root and flourish. Perhaps some seeds have been planted.

For me, this PSI tour has brought more substance and reality to the people of The Book of Mormon. It has also broadened my awareness of the tremendous need for the hope of Jesus among the remnant people. I am humbled by the awesome task ahead. I recently read a Book of Mormon scripture that piqued my interest. In Chapter 5 of Ether, verse 36, Moroni states "And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that He would give unto the Gentiles grace that they might have charity."

Why did Moroni pray for grace for the Gentiles that they might have charity? Perhaps it is for the very reason that through the love we share with the remnant of Moroni's people, they will be brought to the truth of Christ through The Book of Mormon and the Bible. So many of God's beautiful children found in Central America seek a Savior, who is Jesus Christ.



Aaron Presler displays the fun side of his personality at the site of Copan, Honduras. Do you see the resemblance, too?

we've ever had at one of our "site songs!"

The time arrived for us to leave this special place. We had only been there a few hours, and yet it seemed as if that sweet spirit had bound us together, Guatemalan children and American adults, at least for a short time. Had that sweet spirit affected those we were leaving behind? The good-byes were just a little bittersweet, each of us reluctant to part company.

This was just Day One of our Guatemalan adventure. Yet it had set a spiritual tone that was to follow us on each stage of our journey. It seemed that God's spirit opened doors for us to share His love with several people we met along the way. At least three members of the hotel staff at Tikal were given Spanish translations of The Book of Mormon under circumstances dictated by the Holy Spirit. Later in the

4 *glyph* notes

the Joy line as shared with Joy Muir

Cumorah Testimony

By Kevin Brown, Part 1.

For the past three years, I and numerous others have gone to Hill Cumorah in Mexico for several weeks with Neil Steede. For those who don't know, Neil is an expert in Maya archaeology and a member of the Community of Christ church. Our goal has been to gain entrance to a cave that is forty feet off the ground on a thousand foot cliff face. We believe that in this cave is the complete library of the Nephites and the Jaredites.

The mountain, which the natives have been calling for centuries "the hill of the tablets," is surrounded by miles of jungle. Although there is a small village in the shadow of this impressive mountain, there is no industry—only survival. Population is scarce.

Archaeology tells us several important things. This mountain is proven to be the site of two tremendous battles. The first battle occurred hundreds of years before the other; the latter being somewhere in the late third century A.D. There are no ancient settlements anywhere close to the mountain. The only artifacts found are those of war and those used for food preparation. The different artifacts are distinctive of two different cultures—that of the Olmec (who we

believe to be the Jaredites) and that of the Maya (the Nephites and Lamanites). We know that the land was clear cut at the times of the battles through core samples of the soil. It is now becoming the accepted idea for archaeologists that the Maya were in a world war with the southern cities against the northern. Scientists can now read city names and the names of those who ruled them. They have translated one city's name to be Muluc (similar to The Book of Mormon's Mulek), another to be Lamani, and the lineage of another is the exact kingship of The Book of Mormon's Zarahemla.

When we are on the mountain and look out over the valley and the river, it is hard to imagine the death and the carnage that happened so long ago. Maybe it's because of the jungle's covering that we can't fathom that many people in this valley. Or, maybe it's just hard to imagine the hatred that must have been in the hearts of those who fought and the remorse of those few Nephites who were left standing when all others were fallen. The Book of Mormon chapter three tells of the final battle between the Nephites and the Lamanites. The last years of Mormon's life were turbulent. Mormon was charged with leading his people to battle against the Lamanites, not just this one last time, but for years. He preached repentance. He cried

unto the people to accept Jesus Christ and turn from their wicked ways. He was tired. He knew that their time on Earth was growing short. He wrote to the king of the Lamanites, asking to be allowed to gather all of his people together to wage one large battle, a battle to end all battles. I believe he hoped in his heart that the Nephites would again gain favor unto the Lord through repentance, and have victory over the Lamanites. The king agreed and so Mormon marched all of his people to the holy, sacred mountain of Cumorah. I imagine a solemn journey, an exodus of biblical proportions, but with a different end. Having gathered together, the Nephites numbered at least 230,000 people. The Lamanites came with numbers that far exceeded the Nephites, and the war that transpired was horrific. When the fighting was done, there were only twenty four Nephites left, Mormon and Moroni among them. Mormon lamented for his people. He preached to them as if they could still hear. Why didn't they accept Jesus Christ? Why didn't they repent of their sins? As the day ended, they stood at the top of Cumorah and looked down at the camps of the Lamanites. What were those twenty four men thinking, knowing that there was no hope for their own survival?

To be continued.

a Letter to Lyle



Hi Lyle,

It was great to hear from you again. I just want you to know that this trip meant so much to me and I had a blast. Thank you for making this such an enjoyable and wonderful learning experience. I found it absolutely astounding to see all the similarities between the Mayan people and The Book of Mormon. I feel like I was actually able to live The Book of Mormon. When I went to these two countries I felt like everything came alive to me.

I really want to continue to study The Book of Mormon more now and I plan on doing that. Thank you for helping make this an unforgettable trip. I do plan on writing down my experiences for *glyph* notes. Sorry I haven't done that yet, but once I have the chance to I will e-mail it to you.

Thank you and God Bless,

Stephanie Wangler
Graceland College

SUPPORT UPDATE 2004

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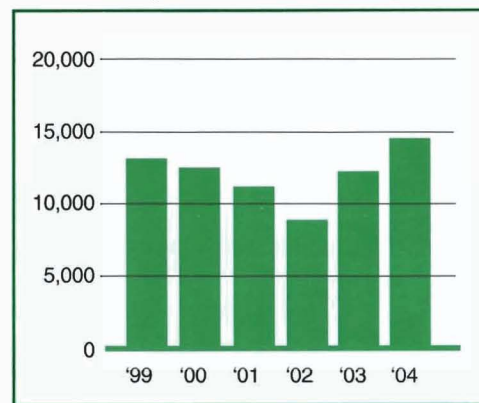
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glyph clips

◆ Olmec “influence” at San Bartolo

Imagine my surprise when I spotted an Olmec face (mask?) on a figure in the San Bartolo mural! Before the symposium began, I was looking at a section of the mural, a hand-painted reproduction by Heather Hurst which was on display outside the auditorium. This was my first glimpse of what I had only read about.

The Olmec face was totally unexpected at San Bartolo, a Maya site in the heart of the lowlands which we learned reaches back as early as 600 BC. The murals date to approximately 100 BC. Many questions were buzzing in my head. Some were answered in the first presentation, but many more remain.

In the 1950s radiocarbon dating revealed that the Olmec predated the Maya. Subsequent work has pushed the Olmec dates back at least two millennia. This revelation sparked a debate concerning the role of the Olmec that has continued since the 1950s. We generally correlate the Olmec civilization with the Jaredites and the Maya with the Nephites/Lamanites/Mulekites in The Book of Mormon.

John Clark of Brigham Young University discussed the basic debate, whether the Maya civilization derived

from the Olmec or whether the Olmec were not that influential. He presented his research which focused on the evidence of connections between the two cultures. His premise was that historically the Olmec influence and power radiated in all directions and provided heritage for the Maya, including the early beginnings of ceramics, village life, social ranking, the first city, massive terraces, stone monuments, stone sculptures, social stratification, planned architecture, ceremonial centers, earliest ballcourt, and kingship. The reuse of Olmec “heirloom” objects by the Maya, such as Maya carvings on the back of Olmec jade items, however, does not require actual contact. As an example to illustrate the widespread and long-term connection, Clark compared a long list of elements of Olmec burials at La Venta (850-400 BC) with the Maya burial of Pacal at Palenque (died AD 683), which resulted in an 80% match so far. He concluded that the overall evidence supports an Olmec origin for the Maya civilization.

What does this widespread influence mean to us? We have The Book of Mormon as our advantage—a written record of the two groups that tells us they each have a distinct origin. While the Jaredite history covers more than two millennia, it is greatly condensed in the Book of Ether, with the bulk of the

record devoted to the Nephites/Lamanites. Ether, the last Jaredite prophet recorded the final battle and Coriantumr, the last king of the Jaredites, falling “as if he had no life” (Ether 6:106). Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemla and lived among them for nine “moons” (Omni 1:35-39), giving us the only recorded link we find between the early and later peoples. However, within the record itself there are a number of names among the Nephites/Lamanites that obviously have a Jaredite origin, giving us a hint that there may have been more interaction than first thought. (Also, we shouldn’t forget that there were spans of time when the Jaredite leaders and their families were in captivity, with little or nothing recorded about what was occurring outside this confinement. It is a complex story.)

The mask in the mural at San Bartolo serves to remind us that there is more to the story of the Olmec. But we’re also mindful that while the archaeology record can contribute to a better understanding of the Olmec/Jaredite connection with the later groups, it must be filtered through the written Book of Mormon record. It is an exciting prospect!

Shirley R. Heater



Guatemala and Honduras, 2005

By Joel Davis
Graceland College

I knelt down at the roots of a colossal tree on the brink of the jungle; my face was down to the earth, and I poured out the desires of my heart to the Lord. Tomorrow was the day we were to visit the Lost City in Tikal, which is a site that was erected before the time of Christ, meaning Jesus himself could have possibly walked where we were soon to walk. I prayed for God's Spirit to visit us with power so we would know with assurance that Christ was there. After being immersed in The Book of Mormon for several days, I had great faith that something amazing would occur in the morning.

It was the dry season in Mesoamerica, yet early that morning it poured vigorously. It continued to rain, yet more gently, as we proceeded to walk through the jungle to the Lost City. When we arrived at the site, I didn't have a memorable spiritual experience, and I was unable to sense the power of the Spirit—all I felt was a burning in my thighs from climbing to the top of the temple. However, that night I recorded in my journal the following passage: "All morning it rained. I don't know if that meant anything or not, but it stood out in my mind."

After returning to Graceland, I went over to the Shaw's home to visit with Faye and Gaylord and to



seek some counsel from their wisdom. I had them examine the patriarchal blessing I received before Christmas break, and it advised me to seek the ways in which the Spirit speaks to me. So, I asked Faye how the Spirit speaks to her, and she recounted several ways in which it did. However, one of the ways stuck out in my mind—soft, gentle rain. She has had experiences in which God answered her prayers with gentle rain, and it was impressed upon her by the Spirit that the rain is reminiscent of the love and blessings of God being showered upon her. It wasn't until I reread my journal and had this discussion at the Shaw's that I realized my prayers weren't in vain that night in the jungle of Tikal. God was listening and He responded by pouring out His eternal love and blessings in the form of rain upon our group.

The trip to the lands of Mesoamerica was primarily intended to study its relationship to The Book of Mormon—to examine archaeological evidence in the form of geography, writing systems, and artwork, to walk on the Promised Land itself, and to bring The Book of Mormon to life. We witnessed a stone carving, or stela, that shared a creation story paralleling the Inspired Version. We saw numerous glyphs of a hand with a hole in it and other glyphs that have been translated to mean "And it came to pass." Yes, these things were amazing, but the trip was more than a scramble to find evidence and prove the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon.

The trip was about people who never knew each other before, knitting together lasting relationships. It was about the young assisting the "well-aged" up and down the slippery rocks—hand-in-hand and step-by-step. It was about the older folks sharing their wisdom and encouraging the youth to delve deeper into the Scriptures and to find purpose in living for Christ. It was about cultural appreciation and learning to find joy in life through the smiles of young children who have virtually nothing. Even more-so for myself, it was a journey to discover how to listen to God's Spirit, and it was a wake-up call to faith and repentance.

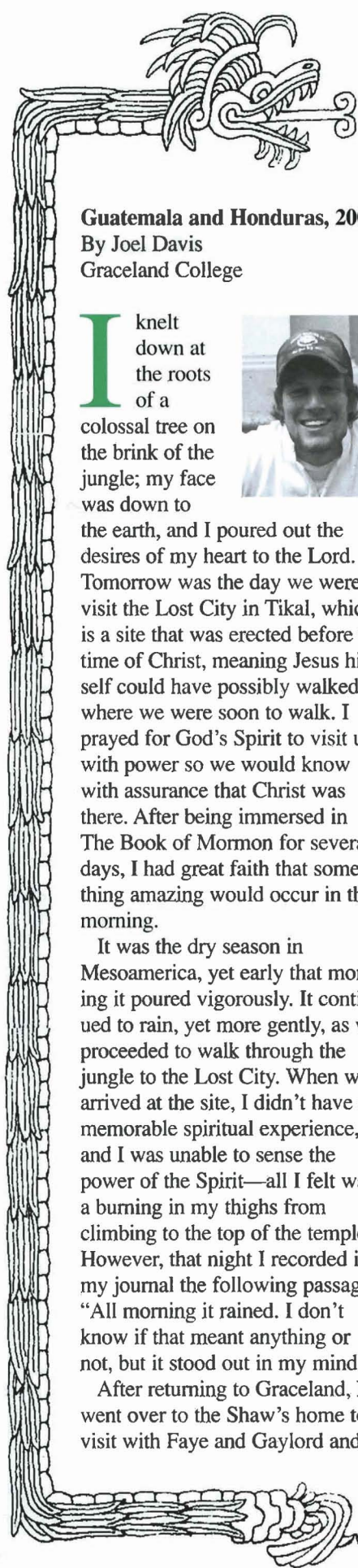
Often times, I would get hungry waiting

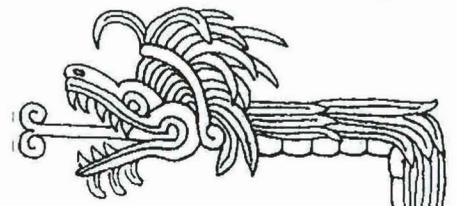
Memories from Mesoamerica

for dinner every night; however, I noticed whenever I was feasting on God's word I was no longer hungry. I was filled as the sacred words nourished my soul. I failed to sense the Spirit while visiting the Maya ruins, but It came alive and present each time I read The Book of Mormon. I felt the frustration of Nephi with his brothers, who continually rebelled against God. I was there, camped out around the temple to hear King Benjamin's final sermon. I was with Alma as he fled from King Noah and led hundreds of people into the covenant relationship at the Waters of Mormon. I became a character in The Book of Mormon! Sadly, however, this confronted me with a harsh realization.

When reading through The Book of Mormon I noticed a pattern. A righteous man would come along preaching the gospel, many people would be converted, some churches would be established, and there would be peace for the space of a few years. Then, some stiff-necked, hard-hearted people brought about contentions and perverted the ways of the Lord. Next, there was usually a war, and the cycle of repentance, peace, and wickedness started all over. Praise God for His patience and mercy because I was getting annoyed, thinking to myself, "Won't these people ever learn?" Then it hit me. I am the stiff-necked person causing all the troubles. I am the one making God say, "Won't he ever learn?" Therefore, I invite you to explore the pages of The Book of Mormon and see what marvelous work the Lord will bring forth in your life. Be prepared because your eyes will be opened, your spirit will be renewed, and you will be called into action!

I want to thank all those who made The Book of Mormon and Lands of Mesoamerica trip possible, and I would like to extend a special thanks to Lyle Smith and Don Beebe for the tremendous effort they put forth to make it enjoyable, as well as a valuable learning experience.





Exotic and Beautiful Guatemala

Guatemala is the Maya heartland of Central America. Its neighbors are Mexico on the north and west, Belize and Honduras on the east, and El Salvador on the south. The country is divided into three main regions—the highlands which are cooler and contain the greatest population, the tropical area along the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, and the heavily forested jungle in the northern lowlands known as the Petén.

One of the most beautiful countries in Central America, Guatemala features high mountains, lush rainforests, volcanoes, vivid tropical plants, and exotic birds and animals. Its volcanoes are the highest and

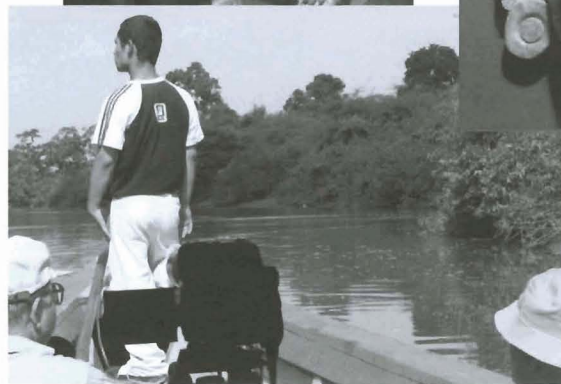
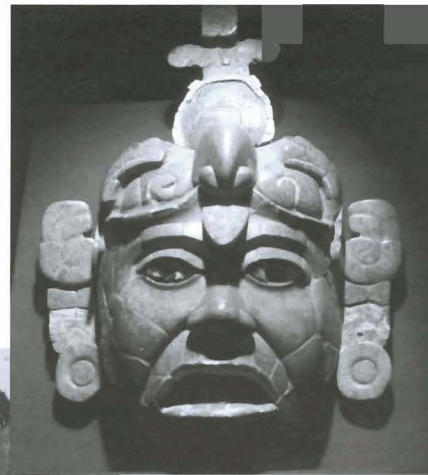
most active in Central America, and its Maya ruins are considered to be the most impressive. The tallest pyramid (212 ft.) in the Maya area is found at Tikal in the lowlands of the Petén. Massive pyramids at this site rise more than 21 stories to overlook the jungle canopy. Although Spanish is the official language, Mayan tongues can be heard alongside the Spanish.

Guatemala's major Maya ruins such as Kaminaljuyu, Tikal, Nakbe, and El Mirador flourished during years important to Book of Mormon believers. Recent excavations add more archaeological evidence verifying that violent warfare and specific events occurred at Maya sites which closely match the timeline of accounts documented in The Book of Mormon. Hieroglyphic inscrip-

tions found on Stela C at Quirigua provide another powerful link to the people spoken of in The Book of Mormon. These inscriptions give a detailed description of the first moments of creation. The Maya creation text on Stela C, the testimony of creation from the Inspired Version of the Bible and The Book of Mormon account of creation all testify that together, God the Father and Jesus Christ the Risen Lord created all things [See *glyph notes*, Vol. 5, No.4]. Guatemala is not only a beautiful country to visit, but also a place where The Book of Mormon comes to life in the history of the Maya.



Photo Credit: Tim Raffety and Donald A. Beebe



glyph quotes

My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me — 3 Nephi 12:26



By Sherrie Kline Smith

Semana Santa (Holy Week) in Antigua, Guatemala, commemorates the passion of Christ. The cobblestone streets are covered with colorful artistic *alfombras* (carpets) made of hand-dyed sawdust, flowers, and other flora materials. Crowds line the sidewalks to watch the procession. Penitents bear an icon of Christ that carries the cross preceded by clouds of incense and a marching orchestra playing funeral music.

This pageantry is considered one of the most extravagant and impressive of all Latin America, and as such, draws huge crowds. Because of this, we have never attempted to be in Antigua at this time since it also attracts pickpockets and other unsavory types.

Unbeknownst to us, the processions begin six weeks before Holy Week. Because Easter comes early this year, the second week fell on the Sunday we were in Antigua on our annual archaeology tour. Our group was to gather for a last meeting and then go to supper.

Our hotel was once a two-story colonial mansion built around a courtyard. It was

the annex of the main hotel where others of the tour group were staying. As those of us in the annex prepared to leave, the hotel porter informed us that the street was filled with people and we probably couldn't leave until the procession had passed.

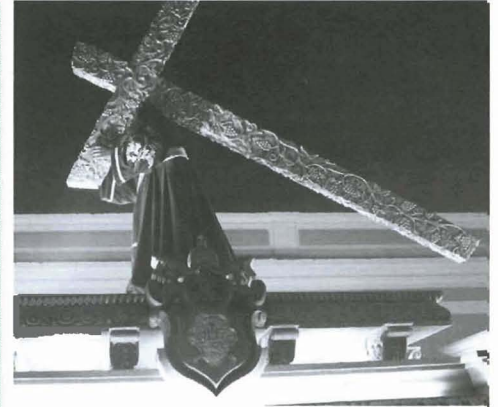
When I heard this I excitedly rushed to the roof for a good view. I was thrilled that I was going to see this event I had read so much about.

The large *anda* (platform) with its life-size image of Christ carrying the cross and an angel in the front and another image on the back weighs about 3 tons and requires 80 men to carry it. After a certain distance, the bearers change. As each man on either side steps away, another steps in to replace them and so on until a whole new group supports this massive platform on their shoulders. Not far behind is a smaller, similar one with an image of Mary, and this one is carried by nuns.

After it passed, our group walked to where we were to meet. We had our annual "awards" presentation, and just as we prepared to walk down the street to the restaurant, the procession was once more in front of us. This time our group joined the throngs of people and walked behind the platform carrying Christ.

Several thoughts came to mind. One, I was surprised that so large a crowd was so

Photo Credit: Don Beebe



Penitents bear an icon of Christ that carries the cross preceded by clouds of incense and a marching orchestra playing funeral music.

reverently silent, and second, I wondered if I had lived during Jesus' time would I have followed him as he carried his cross? What would it have been like to be part of that jeering crowd? I hope I would have been a believer walking with the disciples. If so, I would have been filled with despair, unaware yet of the miracle of the resurrection to come.

Members of our group reacted differently to this experience. One said, "What idolatry!" and another, "That was very moving." Both were right. But the question for us today is, will we follow Jesus and carry our cross?

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