

March 25, 1971

Blind Mexican Boy May See Because of Christian Concern

by Orville Scott

LAS TRUCHAS, Mexico (BP)--A 1,500 mile long chain of cooperation by Christians from this tiny village in the interior of Mexico to a hospital in Waterloo, Iowa has given a nearly blind Mexican child a chance to recover his eyesight.

The chain of events that began here involved at various points an interdenominational team of Christian doctors, a Christian mining engineer, the El Paso Baptist Association, the River Ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Wings for Christ, a group of Baptist pilots based in Fort Worth.

Bucking High velocity headwinds that increased a four-hour trip to seven, Wings for Christ concluded the incredible journey of six-year-old Martin Madriles to Waterloo, Iowa, where he is undergoing a series of eye operations.

Martin was blinded at birth when his eyes were mistakenly washed with iodine instead of the proper silver nitrate solution. Because Martin has seven brothers and sisters and his father makes only \$12 a week, there was no money for medical aid which would have relieved his six years of misery.

Last summer, a volunteer, interdenominational medical team called Mission Medica Independiente spent a few days here in this small village. Tucked away in the scenic mountains, Las Truchas has no cars or trucks, no church, organized law enforcement, or medical or dental care.

The medical team treated 1,300 people here in a few days. Las Truchas has only 68 people but thousands live in the surrounding mountains that rise to 10,000 feet.

Martin was brought 18 miles on a mule to see the eye doctor. The doctor felt that the diminutive six-year-old's right eye should be removed lest it rupture. But he felt the left eye had possibilities for sight restoration through a corneal transplant.

Word of the child's condition was passed along to people on both sides of the border.

A doctor on the medical team contacted a friend, Priscilla Gohman, secretary to Harold Scarborough, superintendent of missions of the El Paso Baptist Association. Miss Gohman contacted Elmin Howell, coordinator of the Texas Baptist River Ministry and Howell called in Wings for Christ.

The University of Iowa Hospital in Waterloo agreed to donate the surgical services and the Knights Templar Eye Foundation promised to pay \$750. El Paso Baptists raised funds to pay transportation from Las Truchas for Martin and his father. Meanwhile, concerned persons in Texas and Iowa have been deluging the family with offers of assistance.

Gary Anderson, a mining engineer who made the trip with them, said, "Never in my life have I seen so many denominations, Catholic, Mormon, Presbyterian, Baptists, cooperate so this has given me a new faith." Anderson, a Christian layman, lives in Mexico.

Martin travelled the 18 miles to Las Truchas by mule and the 50 miles to Chihuahua, Mexico by jeep. In Chihuahua, Anderson suggested a hair cut for Martin, whose long braided hair had never been cut.

"No," responded the father, "if he is able to see after this, we will take him on a pilgrimage to Fresnillo Zacatecas and make an offering of his hair to the gods who are responsible."

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When the little group arrived in El Paso, they were guests in the home of Miss Goham.

Martin was so fascinated with a transistor radio given to him by Miss Goham that he told everyone he met, "Mira, el radio Que La senorita me regalo." ("See the radio that the young lady gave me.")

During the trip to Dallas, he reluctantly surrendered his prized possession to Anderson for a few moments, only to ask on his return, "where is the little box that makes the noise?"

When the big plane arrived at Love Field in Dallas, a television newsman asked with concern, "Son, are you anxious to get your sight back?"

"If God wills," came the answer softly in Spanish.

Ten Dallas families, who heard the telecast, asked for Martin's clothing sizes. The group, which asked to remain anonymous, will send clothing to the child both in Iowa and at his home in Mexico.

From Dallas, Harold Cain, a Fort Worth building contractor and a pilot in Wings for Christ, flew Martin, his father and Anderson to Waterloo.

Cain's sense of urgency was "heightened by the doctor's prediction that Martin's eyes could rupture.

Awaiting Martin at the University of Iowa Hospital was a surgical team of three doctors, including a famous eye surgeon.

On examining the child, the surgeons gave Martin a 90 per cent chance of recovering his sight in, not one, but both eyes.

Among the many lives touched by Martin along his 1,500-mile journey by mule, jeep, auto and plane, are a number of Mexican-American women studying English under Miss Goham.

"For a year, they have been tuning me out when we came to Bible study," said Miss Goham.

"But after they learned of the events surrounding Martin," she said, "they were suddenly attentive when I talked to them about the Bible. The meeting of human need was something they could relate to."

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BP Photo to be mailed to Baptist state papers from Dallas BP Bureau.

Mobile Health Units Planned
In Honduras By Baptist Laymen

3/25/71 BAPTIST PRESS.

ATHENS, Tex. (BP)--Amigos Internacionales, a non-profit mission action organization for Christian laymen based here, has signed a contract with the government of British Honduras to operate mobile medical-dental units there beginning January, 1972.

The units will be staffed by physicians and dentists on the volunteer rosters of Amigos Internacionales, Spanish for "international friends."

Amigos President Jim Wren, a Southern Baptist, said his organization needs 125 physicians, 125 dentists and 50 other Christian laymen with a wide range of professional skills to add to its roster before beginning the once-a-week flights into British Honduras.

Wren, who also serves on the Executive Board of Texas Baptist Men, an affiliation to the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the Baptist men's group will help in the search for additional qualified personnel and supplies.

The Amigos organization has been deeply involved in medical missions projects since its organization five years ago as part of the River Ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and with projects of Texas Baptist Men.

The organization was formed through the efforts of Wren and John LaNoue now a youth associate in the Texas Baptist State Missions Commission. LaNoue built Amigos first mobile unit when he was Baptist Student Union Director at Henderson County Junior College, here.

British Honduras, located below the Yucatan Peninsula, has a high literacy rate but is in need of skilled professionals. Skilled laymen, besides medical personnel, would be made available to consult with the government about how to improve facilities and services. Such laymen would include engineers, agricultural specialists, teachers, cattlemen, veterinarians, construction engineers and many other categories of people.

"From the top personnel of government and industry to the Indian living in a thatched hut, the country is wide open up for Christians to minister to spiritual and physical needs," said Wren. "The door is wide open through this project for evangelism. Our effectiveness will be increased because British Honduras is an English speaking country."

Besides staff, Amigos Internacionales will provide drugs and equipment and will operate under the ministry of health's chief medical officer. Only one government physician is currently available in each district of British Honduras.

Three initial units will not compete with existing national medical, dental, nursing or drug dispensing facilities and all professional personnel must be approved by the chief medical officer, Wren said.

However, government leaders have agreed to license qualified medical personnel and will waive customs duties on all Amigos equipment and supplies, Wren added.

He said the British Honduras venture is "the cornerstone upon which to build a medical-dental ministry that will expand into other parts of Central and South America in the Caribbean area."

The Belize Times, published in Belize City, British Honduras, noted that the new policy is designed "to take medical service to every nook and corner of our country...."

Amigos will provide transportation from point of origin of the professional personnel and all internal transportation and lodging. Amigos will set up living facilities at its base in Stann Creek Town. The country's government has offered the use of government houses until Amigos facilities are ready.

In the initial stages, Amigos will operate a land mobile unit in Punta Gorda in British Honduras's Tolgo District and a land unit in the Stann Creek District. A barge clinic will reach some 10,000 people between the two districts, accessible primarily by water.

Wren said that Christian physicians, dentists and other professionals interested in volunteering varying amounts of time for service in the project could contact him by writing to Box 444, Athens, Tex., 75751.

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Joint Baptist Meeting Slated
In Houston For Six State Bodies

3/25/71

HOUSTON (BP)--Six Baptist groups in Texas have agreed to hold simultaneous conventions in Houston Oct. 25-28, with a joint evangelistic rally scheduled in Houston's Astrodome on Oct. 27.

Announcement of decisions made by each of the groups to participate came from Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, during a planning meeting for the meeting here.

Four of the conventions which will participate in the joint sessions are black, and one is Mexican-American.

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"This historic meeting will show the world that we have moved past the stage of talking about unity and have become a symbol of unity in the Oneness of Christ," said Allen, who spearheaded the movement to arrange the joint sessions.

Seven Baptist groups in Texas were originally invited to participate, but one of the two white groups, the Baptist Missionary Association, decided not to participate.

Allen told the planning meeting here that the Missionary Baptist Association President indicated that they would meet in nearby Beaumont, Tex., during the same week, and would encourage its members to go to Houston for the joint Astrodome evangelistic service. Later, however, Allen said this was incorrect.

Instead, the Missionary Baptist Association committee voted down their president's recommendation and decided to meet in Waco, Tex., with no involvement in the joint rally. Allen said that the conservative Baptist group had not informed the joint steering committee of its decision until after the planning meeting here.

Allen said he deeply regretted the decision, saying he had hopes that all Baptist groups in Texas, white and black, would joint together in the historic meeting.

The meeting will be the first of its kind.

Each Baptist group originally had plans to meet at separate times and places all over the state.

During the day, each group will meet individually. At nights, they will meet together in joint session.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas, with 1.7 million members, is the only predominately white group involved, now that the Baptist Missionary Association has decided not to attend.

The Mexican Baptist Departmental Convention, the predeominately Latin American group, is a departmental convention of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Predominately black groups are the Baptist Mission and Education Convention, the Missionary Baptist General Convention, the Texas Baptist Convention, and the American Baptist Convention in Texas.

Combined membership of the six groups is an estimated 5 million.

About 13,000 Baptists are expected in Houston for the meeting, an attendance of 50,000 is anticipated for the Astrodome evangelistic rally, Allen said. A choir of 8,000 voices from the various groups will provide music at the rally.



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