

## **2008 Pan American Lectureship Reflections**

### **Quito, Ecuador**

By Bob Young

The distance from Houston to Quito has not gotten shorter in the last twelve years—still 2850 miles, although the trip seemed shorter this time without a stopover in Panama. The five-hour flight meant arrival in Quito at 11:15 PM in the midst of a continuous rain. Immigration was without incident (although slow), and getting the luggage and the group together only lengthened the required time. After a full day of travel, by the time we saw our hotel room at 1:00 AM, we were certainly ready for bed.

Saturday morning dawned overcast (as did most of the week). A leisurely breakfast with Berto and Carmen Murillo and Greg Smith reminded us of one of the primary reasons we were there—to learn about what God is doing and about how he is opening doors in Latin America. We visited about Berto's new commitment and role in helping Hispanic families, we talked about Baxter Institute and the work we share there, we talked about Honduras, and we dreamed about the future. Throughout the lectureship, the breakfasts at the hotel were superb—and always too much. Breads of every kind, maracuya juice (passion fruit) every morning—too sour for Jan's taste so she mixes it with orange juice, but I like it straight.

Saturday lunch with Kent and Phyllis Allen was likewise delightful—the pork in the fritadas scared off the girls (Kent and I had ordered the carne asada), so we men shared our steaks with the women and I got almost all of the pork to myself! We shared our stories, talked about missions, and caught up on the intersections of our lives.

Sunday morning dawned brighter, but not yet sunny. Worship at the Quito North church was wonderful—shared singing, the communion thoughtfully shared in unison according to a tradition that has developed among many of the Ecuador churches, and Bob Brown's sermon, climaxed by the baptism of four precious souls into Christ. We shared lunch with Bob and Ridglae Stephens, Juan Jose Flores (a Baxter graduate now working in Ecuador with a local church and teaching part-time at the Quito School of Biblical Studies), and Oswaldo and Lourdes Albarracin (another Baxter graduate now teaching at QSBS). The QSBS chorus did a wonderful job with four-part harmony (quite an accomplishment for the Spanish-speaking ear!), and the entertainment was equally enjoyable.

The week continued on schedule—lectureship sessions each day (from about 8 AM to 1 PM), afternoons free, and evening sessions from 6PM to 8 PM which meant we were right on schedule with the traditionally later Ecuadoran dinner schedule. Monday at noon we were able to squeeze in some time with Bob Brown and Monday night with Miguel and Rosa Aguilar as we dreamed about Baxter and the possibilities for the future. Tuesday morning breakfast found us enjoying a delightful time with Howard and Jane Norton.

Wednesday was devoted to a day trip to Otovalo, an ancient Indian market believed to be the oldest bartering and trading market in the western hemisphere. We enjoyed Otovalo, but since we had been there previously, we took most of the day to go to Ibarra and to visit with Juan Jose Flores about his work with the church in Ibarra. We were privileged to eat lunch with his family,

to visit in their home, and to have a personal tour of Ibarra, along with a visit to the church building, well-situated directly across from a public recreational park.

Thursday marked the concluding day of the lectureship—a spiritual feast continually filled with good things. Some lectureship guests returned to the U.S. on this day. Thursday afternoon we rode the Teleferico (a cabled tram) to the top of a mountain overlooking Quito. At an elevation of almost 13000 feet, we were amused at the numerous “no running” signs, reminding that high altitudes make breathing more difficult. We were not only able to enjoy an overview of Quito; we also had a fairly clear view of the highest active volcano in the world—over 19000 feet.

In late afternoon, after we returned from the visit to the summit overlooking Quito, Bob Stephens and I met with a group of Quechua brothers whom we had helped to purchase a building on our previous trip. They have wonderful plans for continuing to reach out with the gospel of Jesus. The concluding banquet is always a highlight of the Pan American Lectureship, and this year was no different. Tomorrow (Friday) we will begin the post-tour extension with a visit to the equator and the opportunity to visit several Ecuador churches, but that story will be told in another “reflection.”