

## Description of our Honduras Trip: May 2010

By Bob Young

[Picture: The Baxter Administration Building]



### Tuesday, May 11

Tuesday, May 11, was our travel day, and the trip to Tegucigalpa was uneventful. We generally overnight in Oklahoma City so that we can get to the airport about 5:00 a.m. We slept reasonably well or at least as well as you can when you are subconsciously expecting a 3:45 a.m. alarm. The flights and connections went smoothly. We arrived in Tegucigalpa about 15 minutes early just before 11 a.m. local time. Something that doesn't happen very often was that our bags were among the very first to appear on the baggage carousel so we were able to claim our bags and go through screening and customs without the long lines and confusion that is often part of the process. Howard and Jane Norton, president and first lady of Baxter, were awaiting us as we exited the secured area of the airport.

Actually the more exciting part of the beginning of our journey involved our trip to Oklahoma City on Monday afternoon before our flight. The weather man was predicting stormy weather with severe storms along the interstate (I-40), so we decided to leave McAlester earlier than normal. We drove through the advancing front about the time we passed downtown OKC—the temperature dropped from 90 degrees to 68 degrees in a few minutes. Except for some quite large hail and slow traffic, we had no problems. When we got to the motel, the television in the lobby was reporting serious tornado damage and several traffic accidents in the areas east of OKC that we had just come through perhaps an hour earlier. Anyway, we were thankful for our safety and the decision to make the trip to OKC a little earlier than usual.

As we left the Tegucigalpa airport and traveled to the Baxter campus, it was good to see Tegucigalpa back to an apparently normal situation. As we neared campus, we were unable to access the street to enter campus by the back gate due to an accident between a motorcycle and a bus. We entered at the main gate, and were blocked by a dump truck and some dirt work being done on campus. After some maneuvering, we got parked by the CELO building and saw that some of the initial dirt moving for the construction of the new president's house was underway. We walked the rest of the way, and will take care of our luggage later.

Lunch in the cafeteria allowed us to greet many of the employees and students at Baxter. After lunch I was able to get our Internet access set up and everything was working fine while we were in the cafeteria, but to my dismay, when we got to our apartment, there were problems. It appeared the signal was not strong enough for me to access the Internet. Another temporary setback; we will have to reset access or come up with another plan. After unpacking and a short rest, we began the task of getting set up for our stay—check further on the Internet

access, get purified drinking water, find an office work area, work with the staff to plan activities, etc.

Although it would have been possible for me to go to the cafeteria every time I needed Internet access, I wanted to set up access in the apartment if possible. Fortunately I was able to identify a small work area in the administration building where the signal was relatively strong, and interestingly, the problems at the apartment disappeared on the second day and there were no more difficulties with the Internet—only that the connection was very slow compared to what we are used to in the US. So many of these things we take for granted in the US but they take a lot of time in Honduras and in many other mission fields. Sometimes, things don't work, despite our best efforts. This time, we succeeded with relatively few difficulties and only a few hours invested in our initial setup.

The evening plans included a meal and visit with Howard and Jane Norton—our first real opportunity to debrief, catch up, orient, and develop the details of the plans for this visit. We compared calendars, identified appointments that were already in place, and visited for several hours. It was getting late on Honduran time (no Daylight Saving Time); it was really feeling late to our bodies which had gotten up very early on US time. One thing that is generally true—a 20 hour day usually means a good night's sleep.

### **Wednesday**

On Wednesday morning, the birds were awake by 4:00 a.m. and I was ready to arise not long after. On Tuesday afternoon, I had accepted an invitation to speak in devotional this morning, so I needed to put some finishing touches on my chapel talk and make a few notes. We were to the cafeteria by a little after 6:00 a.m.—the coffee was almost ready, and the conversation is always enjoyable as the kitchen workers and students arrive, plus we checked email.

#### **[Picture: Bob speaking in chapel]**

The devotional time was encouraging, and the students were appreciative of the little gifts we had brought—La Cruz en mi Bolsillo. I always enjoy the songs; the words of many Spanish songs seem especially meaningful to me. After some visiting with students and a quick trip to the apartment, I was ready to go to the airport to pick up Dan Coker. On the way to the airport, Howard and I were able to visit and make additional plans for topics we needed to discuss during this visit.



We continued those conversations as we waited for Dan's flight to arrive. Delivering Dan to the hotel and returning to campus made lunch a little late.



**[Picture: Harris Goodwin and Bob]**

I had scheduled a visit with Harris Goodwin for the afternoon. We went to his house and visited for about two hours about various things, especially about the history of Baxter. We returned to campus about 4:00 p.m., in time for another brief meeting with Howard.

I went and holed up in my little office for a while, and after supper went to the apartment to study, choosing to skip the reception which welcomes guests to the seminario. We will

have enough time later in the week to greet seminario guests. After some study, we got another good night's sleep.

### **Thursday**

Not yet being accustomed to Honduras time, I awoke early again and enjoyed a hot shower before my study and reading. Today seminario begins in earnest. My class is not until tomorrow, but I still wanted to review my notes and refresh my thoughts about the things I had prepared for my class.



**[Picture: Jan and Suyapa Chacon]**

We got to the cafeteria about 6:30 a.m. and were able to greet many seminario guests as they arrived, and to renew several acquaintances. We ate breakfast with Dwight Tomkins. After breakfast and a devotional, the seminario speeches and classes began. (There will be little free time from now until the seminario concludes Saturday noon.)

### **[Group Picture: Some of the Baxter Graduates present at Seminario]**

I spoke briefly at the luncheon for the egresados (graduates), extending greetings from the board and beginning the process of collecting stories for the website. In the afternoon, I attended classes, and then returned to my office to work and study. During an afternoon break, I checked with Martin Murillo to understand the current status and access to CELO (Extension Course for Leaders and Workers). I was pleased to learn that these courses are now available by electronic mail; they are also available for transfer to a CD or thumb drive provided by the student. The material is available gratis. The only cost is when one enrolls in the CELO program as an official student eligible for graduation.



This means that one must work through the written materials, which requires a small payment to cover the costs of the printing and the mailing. There is no tuition charge per se. Using the printed materials for official credit allows students to return the material for grading, and to be eligible to graduate. There are currently over 300 CELO students.

Before the evening program, Oscar Chirinos made a presentation on behalf of admissions. The admissions department is working toward a goal of 30 new students for 2011, and already has 35-40 applications. For 2010, we have 58 students but still expect two more students from Cuba by the end of next month. Dan Coker's presentation this evening was especially good.

## Friday



**[Picture: One of my class sessions]**

I anticipated that Friday would be a busy day—primarily because it was the day my three classes were scheduled. About four hours of the day was spent in teaching and leading discussions—a process I describe as “brain frying”.

Howard gave a very good report on the state of Baxter as the day began. My classes went well, were well received, and generated much discussion. Harris Goodwin attended my class;

also David and Suyapa Chacon, Dwight Tomkins, Jorge Vargas, and Geovanny Moreno.

**[Picture: Teaching my class, listening to a comment from one of the class members during the discussion]**

Before the evening lesson, the chorus sang. The chorus is much improved, and the addition of the women's voices is especially good. Dan did a superb job again—as usual.

## Saturday

Saturday morning brought the concluding activities of seminario. The official end of seminario is Saturday lunch. After lunch, I enjoyed some extended conversations with Howard and Dan. We talked about mission principles and various details of effective mission work and decisions which help move mission work forward. After we took Dan to visit a friend, I caught up on emails, writing, and various projects until it was time to get Dan and take him to his hotel. We went out to eat with Howard and Jane and continued conversations about missions, especially about applications at Baxter. A short time at the mall allowed us to get a few groceries and other items to keep us going through the weekend.







## Sunday

**[Picture: Jan, Jane Norton, Howard Norton, and Dan Coker before the Combined Worship on Sunday]**

Sunday dawned bright and sunny, and I was really looking forward to the united worship of many of the churches in the Tegucigalpa area, plus those seminario guests who had not returned home on Saturday afternoon. The united worship is always a special event, usually with as many as 7 or 8 nations represented. It is an opportunity to see and greet lots of people, and this year was no different. There were about 800 present.

We ate lunch with Howard and Jane at their apartment, enjoying roast and potatoes with the trimmings. They had also invited Dwight and Dan, so we spent the afternoon visiting, took a break from visiting to enjoy ham and cheese sandwiches for the evening meal, and concluded the day with more visiting. It was a wonderful day spent visiting about lots of different things—reminiscing, sharing missions stories, thinking about more effective efforts, and enjoying the kind of fellowship only available to brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Monday

With seminario past, this week and the next will follow a more normal schedule. It has already become apparent, based on the many meetings and appointments that have been added to the calendar for this visit, that it is unlikely that we will be able to visit Catacamas, even though that was a part of our original plan.

After breakfast we shared the 8:00 a.m. prayer circle. This is a unique time of sharing prayer requests with the employees, and we try to attend every time we are on campus. On this trip, we did not miss any of the morning prayer circles.

After chapel, I received an invitation to preach at the Kennedy congregation on the following Sunday, so that means another preparation. I did not bring any “sermons in my pocket” on this trip, so this will be a preparation “from scratch”. The advantage is that I will be able to do all of the preparation in Spanish, which will make the presentation much easier.

After chapel, it was time to go to the Marriott for an appointment to check on arrangements for the Pan-American lectureship and graduation. Dan, Howard and I went together and barely returned to campus in time for lunch.

We lingered a little after lunch, visiting and sharing, but the contractor (Lionel Juarez) for the house construction appeared and wanted to visit about some details. That meeting concluded just in time for a 2:00 p.m. meeting with the attorney. This meeting was an opportunity to debrief about various legal matters, but the primary point of discussion was an update about the status of accreditation, a review of the December board actions, and discussion of future options. Howard and I had invited Dan to be a part of this meeting, because of the discussion of accreditation and his past experience in the Honduran education system.

At 3:00 p.m. we had a meeting scheduled with the Baxter faculty so that Dan could share information about the Bible survey materials he has written. This meeting was held in the second level of the cafeteria. On this day, there was lots of dust in the cafeteria due to the

renovation of the group area under the cafeteria, a renovation which will provide more windows and light, and a general updating of the area. After the meeting, Howard and I met, primarily to debrief about accreditation.

We went out to eat together (Howard, Jane, Dan, Jan and I) and it was almost 8:00 p.m. when we got back to the apartment. The heavy rains of the afternoon and evening had really cooled the air. I worked for a little while, and the coolness of the evening meant a quick sleep when we went to bed.

## **Tuesday**

It was raining when I got up during the night, and continued to rain until almost dawn. Nevertheless, the morning dawned sunny and bright with a fresh breeze and shining water crystals on the leaves.

The morning schedule was typical—to the cafeteria for coffee and early conversation, breakfast, prayer circle. Dan spoke in chapel, and it is always necessary to leave campus as soon as possible after chapel in order to make the airport connection timely. After we got Dan delivered to the airport with some final conversation and coffee, we had to hurry back to campus in order to leave for a lunch invitation with Pacheco and Mercedes. Hector drove us to his parents' home—it was not hard to get there, but a little complex. The meal and conversation were delightful—chicken and steak, rice, beans, platano, avocado, and all the trimmings.

After we returned to campus, we spent a fairly light afternoon with visiting, Jan's Spanish, emails, reading, and the first steps of the sermon preparation for Sunday. The first week was catching up with me. I was tired, and therefore did not begin some of the writing projects that I need to catch up on for the board of directors. Tomorrow will be another day.

We stayed at the apartment and did not eat supper. A student couple, Cristian and Diana Catalina, came to visit us in the evening, a chance for them to practice their English and for us to get to know them better. They did not stay very long—they needed to do homework; they especially were concerned about their need to study Hebrew. (Catalina is also doing the licenciatura program.)

## **Wednesday**

It is amazing how quickly the days go by—at times so quickly that they seem a blur. Chapel came quickly today and provided a little break from more discussions of the house and of the construction which occupied almost all of the morning. Since Howard was involved in this discussion and was constantly being called away from the discussion to handle various details, I was able to see how much time it takes to meet the needs of groups. This morning there was a group that needed shovels, a group member who had lost his billfold and needed to make a call to the restaurant where they had eaten the previous evening. Do you have a bucket? Do you have a cell phone we can borrow? Another group came by campus and Howard greeted them and visited for a few moments. I concluded that groups can take a lot of time!

This was the day that Howard left for a brief trip to the United States for another treatment on his eye. Pacheco took Howard to the airport. At Pacheco's request, I went to the airport with him so that we could visit. I was not sure what he wanted to visit about, but he seemed

anxious to have the opportunity to share, so I went with him. We spent about an hour over a coffee and granita.



**[Picture: Bob speaking at the program at the clinic]**

The conversation could have continued longer, but I had to hurry back to campus to speak at special program in honor of Dia de la Madre (Mother's Day) at the Clinic. I gave a few words of welcome and a brief encouragement from Scripture, and led the prayer for lunch. We joined them for lunch and enjoyed the time with the mothers in the nutrition program and having a few moments with Dra. Xiomara, director of the clinic.

**[Picture: Bob Speaking at the Mother's Day Program]**

In the early afternoon we left campus to pick up a few things that we needed, and then spent the late afternoon in the apartment—reading, working, and studying. I think we both enjoyed the relaxation and feel refreshed for the rest of this week. It is hard to believe that we have only one more week at Baxter.



We ate supper with the students in the cafeteria—bananas and beans, with tortillas and crema. We devoted this Wednesday evening to Bible study and Bible reading since we were planning to attend mid-week service on Thursday evening.

### **Thursday**

Today started normally—coffee and conversation, breakfast, and prayer circle. After prayer circle, we walked to the site of the house construction to see the big rock that had fallen off the hill during the excavation process the day before. The rock was about 8 feet in diameter. I spent the rest of the morning in my office, working primarily on board reports, with a break for chapel. I worked on some information to be presented to the Baxter committee of the board and a report on our accreditation conversations and status, and also worked on my sermon for this evening at Los Pinos.

I had borrowed two books from Howard for reading, so this day provided a good day to try to make a dent in that added task. Jan is now meeting with students at both 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to work on her Spanish and their English. I worked in the office all day, and went to review the construction project again just before the end of the day. We have had more rain this late afternoon—it is raining almost every night and most afternoons.

We ate a quick bite of supper in the cafeteria at 5:00—quick because Timoteo was ready to leave for Los Pinos at 5:15. Two students (Leonardo y Ramon), both of whom are volunteers, go to Los Pinos on Thursdays. We went to Timoteo's house to pick up some things we needed

and had the opportunity to see his house and the work he is continuing to do by way of upgrades on his house. It is very nice, overlooking the back of the property of Baxter. The drive to Los Pinos was long with much late afternoon traffic. It was raining very hard. It is only about 12 kilometers, but the drive takes at least 30 minutes. On this day with lots of traffic, the drive was almost an hour. The road goes up and up and up, and eventually goes from concrete to dirt. Severe washouts across the road made the road very narrow, with a steep drop right beside the road. In some places, there were houses built down the hillside. There are about 25000 people who live in the barrio Los Pinos. We arrived at the church building and were able to tour the building and see some of the recent improvements, including a kitchen where I remember a big rock had previously been. Timoteo led singing and I preached. We were very warmly received. Timoteo's wife always takes the bus to Los Pinos on Thursday afternoon to make visits with the women. The church has mostly women—about 70 members, plus 80 to 120 children on Sundays. They have a lunch program on Sundays, often feeding as many as 150 children. The church is totally self-supporting, receiving no outside contributions, except they receive brigades to help with the work during the summer. It was very rainy as we returned home. Timoteo and his wife go up to Los Pinos at least three times each week—Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, and sometimes also on Saturday.

### **Friday**

We had a nice visit with Chris Paul and Jim Risk at breakfast today. They are from the North Central church in Indianapolis. They are in Honduras working on a corn-planting and analysis project in an attempt to raise yields based on the seeds used and factors such as fertilization, soil preparation, etc. They are planting in May for a November harvest. A group from North Central comes each summer and we enjoyed talking to Jim and Chris about the various dynamics of groups and the importance of groups that support the primary purpose of Baxter. I was able to share the Baxter perspective and they suggested several items to be checked about how groups work, how we communicate with groups, etc.

On this day, I was able to get in a good focused time of work and reading before chapel, and after chapel I met with Selvin to discuss various areas the Baxter committee might need to address. Then it was time to go to the airport to get Howard. We got back to campus in time for lunch. Jan and I enjoyed lunch with Howard and Jane, especially hearing the good report about the treatments on his eye. I was back in the office earlier than normal because I had a meeting with Ruth at 1:00 p.m. to help her with the Spanish side of the website.

That meeting was cut short because of a 2:00 p.m. meeting about the house. Lionel Juarez, Miguel Angel, Howard, and I met until shortly after 4:00, and then I met with Howard for about an hour.

Friday dinner in the cafeteria was simple--tortilla cheese sandwiches. We did not accept the invitation from Jim and Chris to go to La Cumbre to eat, but instead decided that it had been a long day (and a long week) and that we would enjoy the evening relaxing with conversation and reading.

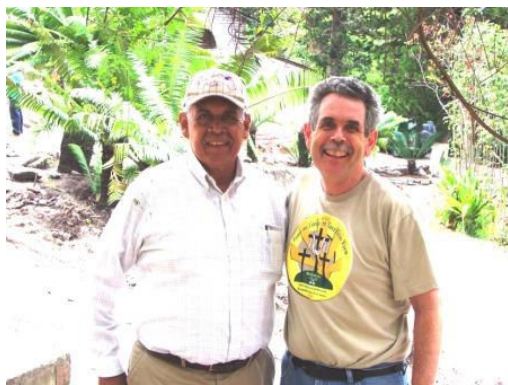
### **Saturday**

Even though it was the weekend, we generally followed our normal schedule on this day—up early, to the cafeteria for coffee and conversation, and breakfast. Saturday breakfast is not



served until 7:30 a.m., but the coffee was still ready early. We wanted to eat breakfast with Jim Risk and Chris Paul one more time as this was the day of their departure. We had a nice visit and they seemed appreciative of the things we had shared the previous morning after groups and Baxter's purpose.

After breakfast, we decided we needed to do some laundry. There is a washing machine and dryer available, but they were quite dirty and had not been used recently. We cleaned out the washing machine and dryer so we could do laundry—and were able to get that done by late morning. We spent most of the day in the apartment, and opted not to eat lunch at the cafeteria since the Baxter employees were busy preparing for an evening wedding, and we were anticipating a good meal with Noe and Gloria in the evening as soon as the 4:00 p.m. wedding concluded. I was happy to have the time to catch up on writing and board matters, and to finalize sermon preparation for Sunday.



**[Picture: Lionel Juarez, contractor for the new construction and Bob]**

We went for a walk in the afternoon to view the site preparation and also to examine the site below the clinic where they were dumping the excess dirt and rock. Lionel Juarez was on site supervising the work so we had a nice visit with him. We greeted Phil Waldron as we returned to the apartment—he and his family were on campus for the wedding.

It started really raining about 4:00 p.m., the exact time the wedding was scheduled. About 5:30 we walked to the administration building in the rain to check on the wedding—no one had seen Noe and Gloria yet, and the wedding had not started. It was really raining hard. We walked back to the administration building at 6:45 (still raining hard). The wedding had just started. We decided that we would wait for Noe and Gloria in the apartment since the rain was so intense. We finally ate a bowl of oatmeal at 7:30, Noe and Gloria came by about 8:15, they had left the wedding early to check on us. Since it was already late, we rescheduled our meal together for Sunday late afternoon. Noe and Gloria had walked to the apartment in the rain but at least they had an umbrella. Another example of how things do not always go as planned and have to be readjusted.

After Noe and Gloria left, Lupe Mayo sent word that he would pick us up at the front gate about 8:30 on Sunday morning—one of the students (Maria) walked from her apartment to share the word (Lupe had called Jane and Jane called Maria who brought us the news).

We went to bed a little earlier than normal. It had been a good day of relaxation and study, but we were still a little tired. The altered schedules and many unexpected meetings and events seem to wear emotionally and require more energy than normal.

## **Sunday**

On this day, we decided to eat breakfast in the apartment rather than the cafeteria. Although it had rained most of the night, it was a very nice morning with beautiful sunshine. We met Lupe and Patricia right on schedule. Phil and Donna Waldron had also decided to go to Kennedy, so

Jan enjoyed having English speakers to visit with. At Kennedy, we had the typical participants' prayer circle, I enjoyed preaching, and the congregation seemed appreciative. The Kennedy church is renovating their building with their own efforts and funds—they have reversed the use of the two floors so that the church can now worship on the upper floor without any visual obstructions.



**[Picture: Bob preaching at Kennedy congregation]**

After church Lupe dropped us off at the mall (our request) and Jan and I enjoyed a leisurely meal together at Fogoncito, then sat in the mall and watched the people. We bought a few items at the grocery store and took a taxi back to Baxter.

We had a restful afternoon, basically characterized by rain, rain, rain. Sometimes it rained quite hard. We were to meet Noe and Gloria at 5:00 p.m. Fortunately, we walked to the front gate between downpours, and got there in a light sprinkle which was getting heavier by the minute. Then the heavens opened! At least we had some measure of protection in the small waiting area next to the guard house. I have never seen the street in front of the campus so full of water. Noe and Gloria arrived right on time, and we went to the mall, lingered over a sub at Quiznos as the pleasant conversation turned to one thing after another, then enjoyed some ice cream, and a little grocery shopping before returning to campus. It was a quite enjoyable afternoon and evening, but it was about 9:00 p.m. when we got back to campus and the apartment.

### **Monday**

The morning schedule is routine by now. After prayer circle, I worked on some ministry things for the church in McAlester—a bulletin article, worship arrangements, emails, and I was able to complete all the ministry things I needed to do before chapel. After chapel I began preparing some thoughts for chapel tomorrow since I have been asked to speak.

This day we were scheduled to receive two visitors from a mission work in Guatemala, so after lunch, Howard and I went to the airport to meet our guests, Hawatthia Jones and Byron Benitez. We spent the rest of the afternoon meeting, and then ate dinner with the Waldrons, the Nortons, Hiawathia and Byron at Pizza Hut.

### **Tuesday**

I spoke in chapel on this day, and then it was time to resume meetings with our Guatemala guests. After lunch, we took Hawatthia and Byron to the airport and returned to campus in time for the administrators' meeting at 3:00 p.m. The day was filled—but not with the expected and scheduled activities.

Jan and I had been asked to eat the evening meal with Alex Bravo y his wife Jennifer, students from Nicaragua. We had a delightful time and enjoyed a unique Nicaraguan dish called Indio Viejo (Old Indian). I had met Alex in Nicaragua in 2007 on a mission trip with the Edmond

church while he was still single, so it was nice to meet Jennifer and catch up. We visited until about 8:30 p.m.

### **Wednesday**

Today brought another typical beginning to the day: up early, work in the apartment, read, to the cafeteria, breakfast, prayer circle. After prayer circle, I met briefly with Howard, and then went with Miguel Angel to the Clarion and Intercontinental hotels to try to finalize arrangements for December graduation.

After lunch I met with Oscar Chirinos about groups. He is the campus coordinator of groups. He shared with me a list of 2010 groups, and I began adding the group information to the website. That task was interrupted by a 2:00 p.m. meeting with a representative from the Marriott Hotel—more conversations about graduation possibilities.

I spent most of the rest of the afternoon helping Ruth with more details on the Spanish side of the Internet, and then Howard, Jane, Jan and I went out to eat with Dudley for the evening meal.

### **Thursday**

Today is our travel day—normal schedule, final conversations with students in the cafeteria and in brief visits to the classrooms. Because Jan and I were traveling on separate tickets, we chose to go the airport a little earlier than normal so that we could try to arrange seating together. Howard and Jane took us to the airport, and the early arrival allowed us a nice, leisurely visit before our departure. As we were in the waiting area for departures, we saw Norm and Denise Easter arrive on the same Continental plane we left on.

The trip back to the US and home was uneventful, but it always seems a long day by the time we settle in to our own beds—usually a little after midnight!