

BELIEVERS INTERNATIONAL

September, 2002

NEWS

When Rebekah and I visited Octojub in September of 1988, it took us three hours to climb the rocky uphill trail that provided the only access to the tiny, isolated community. That was our first trip into the area, and we found that the people who lived at the top of the mountain did not have much in the way of conveniences – no electricity, no reliable water supply, and very little tillable land. But they did have a church. Three times a week, thirty or so believers would gather in the little mud and stucco structure to hear the Message of the Hour translated from Spanish into their Indian dialect – Huastecan.

A short time before we arrived, a hurricane had swept through the area, destroying crops and damaging homes. We went to see how we could be of service to these brothers and sisters who lived among the rocks and coffee bushes that blanketed the summits of this central Mexico mountain range.

Photos and reports on that trip, and a second trip that was made the following year, were published in *Only Believe* magazine, issue three and issue seven. **You can read both of these stories at our web site: www.onlybelieve.com.**

Until recently, the passing years generated very few

be visited by – believers who lived nearby, a mere five-hour walk. But their most important connection to the outside world was the faithful visits from Brother Roberto Murillo.

Brother Roberto is the missionary who first brought the Message into this area of Mexico and helped to build the Octojub church in 1973. For thirty years he has brought books and tapes to the pastor and others who could read, preached to the small congregation, prayed for the sick, and delivered food, clothing, and financial assistance during times of dire need.

It was through Brother Roberto that I learned in 1999 that severe wind and rain, followed by unusually cold weather had caused serious damage to the mud building where the saints worshiped. It was literally falling apart, he told me, and something needed to be done before it collapsed.

I contacted a couple of churches here in the States that I knew were looking for a missionary project to sponsor, and together we were able to contribute \$5,000 over the next two years to replace the old church building. Construction of the new sanctuary (directly behind the site of the original church, and nearly twice its size) began early last year. The work was completed this past May.

This seemed to be a good stretch of road, so I slowed down to get a picture. It wasn't a smart move. We lost momentum, and barely made it to the top of the hill.

changes for the saints on the mountain. The children grew up, married, and had their own children (which tripled the size of the congregation!). Brother Isidrio, the pastor in 1988, stepped aside a few years ago, due to the obligations of caring for his large family, but he still helps the new pastor, Brother Barnabus, from time to time, and he still lives next door to the church. Occasionally they would visit – or



Brother Barnabus is the pastor in Octojub.

Once again Brother Roberto called me with a request from the believers in Octojub. They wanted to know when I would be able to come down for dedication services. He told me that they had decided not to have services in the new building until the church was dedicated, and they would not dedicate the church until I was able to be there! He also hinted that within the past year there had been other major changes on the mountain that I would want to see for myself. We set a date: July 24th.

I drove from Tennessee in my mini van, loaded with clothing, toys, and other donated items, and met Brother Roberto in Monterrey, where he was one of the speakers at the regional fellowship meeting. An estimated 400 people attended this annual event that was sponsored by the local church and pastor Pablo Lopez. The church building was not large enough to hold the crowd, but interestingly, the city allowed them to close off the street in front of the building and install a large awning that stretched across the entire width of the street. The overflow of people were seated here during the service, and after each service, tables were set up under the awning and all the people – yes, all 400 – were fed.

As soon as service ended on Sunday morning, Brother Roberto and his long-time friend, Brother Ancelmo Rodriguez, a pastor from Monclova who sometimes accompanies him as he travels into the remote areas of Mexico, squeezed themselves and their few belongings into the van with me, and we headed south for Temapaz, a drive of two days.

Until last year, Temapaz marked the end of the road, and the beginning of the arduous trail that led to Octojub. But this time, as we neared the cluster of buildings that were the only evidence of civilization we had seen for nearly two hours, I could see that the road had been extended. Winding and

climbing around the side of the mountain, this final two-mile stretch would take us right to the door of the church in Octojub! No more three-hour treks up the mountain!

I could tell that it was definitely a 4-wheel drive kind of road, much rougher than the 40 miles of gravel we had just come across. I was intimidated, but decided to risk it. What an incredible ride it was, straight up and into the clouds. At one point I slowed down to take a picture and thought I'd never regain enough momentum to make it the rest of the way. We literally scraped our way to the top.

And there it was – Octojub, just as I remembered it... except for the huge concrete utility pole! It looked so out of place, and it dwarfed the one-storied church and the scattering of thatched huts. But it was not an illusion. Electric power had finally arrived in Octojub. I learned that a truck large enough to carry the utility poles could not negotiate the new road, so manpower was employed. One hundred men from the area worked in relay to carry the forty-foot concrete poles two miles, to the top of the mountain. Each of the 60 homes in the area now has a light bulb!

To me, the convenience of having electricity to my door would definitely be a 'big deal,' but this story, which was told to us that evening by Brother Barnabus, illustrates the fact that electricity is not as important to the people in Octojub as one might think: A couple of weeks before we arrived, a bad storm with lots of lightening had knocked out the power. After

several days, Brother Barnabus began to wonder whether or not it would be repaired in time for the church dedication. He walked to Temapaz and called the electric company, which is fifteen miles away in Aquismón. As it turns out, they didn't even realize there was a problem. Even though people travel back and forth to Temapaz daily, he was the only one who was concerned enough to report the power outage. Everyone else just turned on kerosene lamps again, and life continued.

Once he reported it, the electric was fixed immediately, and we did have lights in the church for service.

The brothers certainly did a commendable job in the construction of the new church. It is a simple concrete block structure with a tin roof – sturdy and dry, with plenty of room to grow. They have even built a bathroom nearby. Talk about modern convenience!



The new church is twice the size of the old church (inset), and was built on the same spot.



With my friend, Brother Felipe.

When everyone is present, there are about 70 who attend the services, but many now work in the valley at various parts of the year to supplement their income. About 50 were there for the dedication, which took place on Wednesday morning. One family walked for five hours to join us.

We had to have a translator, because the majority of the people only understand the Huastecan dialect. Some of the young adults and school-aged children can understand Spanish, but very few read at all. The nearest school is a thirty-minute-walk away, and attendance is hit-and-miss, to say the least. Until now, their isolation has precluded an

education, but that will probably change shortly.

Our faces have been changed by the passing of years, mine more than most, but I still had no difficulty in recognizing Brother Felipe and Sister Agustina. On our first trip to the mountains, as soon as we arrived, tired and footsore after the long hike, they had washed our feet as an expression of greeting. They still live in the same simple home where we took a picture of them in 1988, and now they are caring for their grandchildren, who are very sweet natured, just like their grandparents. Esther, the pretty little girl holding her baby sister in one of the photos we published 14 years ago is now married with two children of her own. Baby Margarite is also married and lives nearby.

One of the things that really touched me was when I saw that the water system we had installed in September 1989 was still in use. Back then, the people were carrying water from a spring that was more than a mile away, down through a ravine and up the side of another mountain. We ran a waterline from the spring to a large holding tank, just above Octojub, and from there it was gravity-fed into the fifteen or so homes that made up the community at the time.

Now there are 60 homes with about 200 people who are still being served pure water from the pipe we laid so many years ago. Everyone has a faucet to their door. The pipe and holding tank are still in good repair, and I was told that only one time, during a brief drought, has there not been enough pressure to make it run. It has been a tremendous blessing to everyone, and has literally changed their lives.

On Thursday morning we were on the road again. There are now 102 million people in Mexico, and about 29 percent of that number are Amerindian (native Americans). Two hours south of the Huastecan community there is another group of believers who are of the Nahuatl tribe. Generally, these people are more educated than the Huastecans and are able to read and speak Spanish, as well as their tribal dialect. Brother Angel Martinez has been the pastor of this group for six years.

Along with the clothing I had brought with me from the States, I also had a bicycle that had been donated for Peru, but we were not able to ship it to that country. I knew that there would be someone in Mexico that would need it, and as it turned out Brother Angel was that person. At church that evening, he announced that we had brought some clothing which he would be handing out, and that we had also brought him a vehicle!

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It was very encouraging to see that the water system we installed fourteen years ago is still operating perfectly.



I don't think he would have been any happier if we had brought him a car, because he wouldn't have known how to operate a car (neither could he afford the gasoline). He and his wife sorted clothes according to needs of each family and handed them out after service.

In each place that I visited, the people expressly asked that I convey their appreciation to the saints whose contributions have enriched their lives. On their behalf I would like to say "God Bless You," and from my wife and myself, thank you for making it possible to touch lives and be a blessing to so many through the years.

Brother Martinez handed a bundle of clothing to each family after service.

I saw the first of the many articles on the subject in the January 21, 2002 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*: "Hormones On Trial," proclaimed the headline, followed by, "Medical wisdom about menopause therapy is coming under question."

I thought, "It's about time!"

As any woman that is over 50 years of age knows, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) has been a strongly recommended treatment for the symptoms of menopause for decades. In 1966, Dr. Robert Wilson published *Feminine Forever*, a book which promoted the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) as a means of turning back the clock for women of a 'certain age.' Aggressive marketing campaigns by the drug companies quickly followed. By 1980, most doctors were recommending HRT for all women between the ages of 50 and 75, both as a cure for hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms, and also because the drugs appeared to offer long-term health benefits for the bones and the heart. To reject the drug, they insisted, would be to seriously jeopardize your health by subjecting you to an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and osteoporosis, not to mention 'premature aging.'

Today, an estimated 13.5 million women in the United States take hormones during and after menopause. But sadly, all the claims that have been made over the past 40 years, indicating that the use of hormones would keep a woman healthier longer, have now been proven wrong.

A definitive study by the Women's Health Initiative has shown that the hormones in question – estrogen and progestin – actually *increase* a woman's risk of developing cardiovascular problems and cancer. In fact, the findings were so conclusive and shocking that the National Institutes of Health stopped the 16,600-woman study years short of its scheduled completion. In April, the Journal of the National Cancer Institute released these findings: A study shows a 54% increased risk of ovarian cancer among women who use some forms of

hormone replacement therapy. "Indeed, even in healthy women, it [HRT] may increase heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots. In addition, estrogen is known to *fuel* the growth of existing cancerous tumors, and progestins may increase breast cancer risk."¹

"Ten years ago, it was almost malpractice not to endorse estrogen. Now the bubble has burst," declared one doctor in a *Time* magazine report.² Many women who have been on HRT for years are now left to wonder what effects the drug may have on their future health.

For those who follow the ministry of God's prophet and messenger, Brother Branham, these new findings come as no surprise. *What we knew about hormones more than forty years ago, medical science is just now learning.* "Don't you let a doctor give you any hormones," we were told in 1957, "that's the first case of taking cancer."³

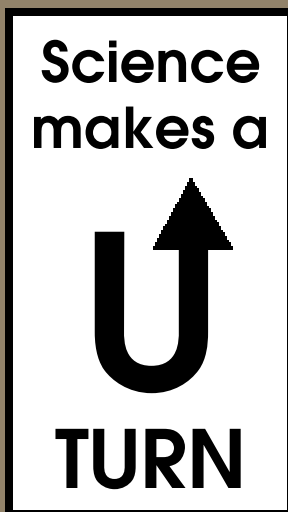
Years before Dr. Wilson's book was published, the prophet cautioned women facing menopause of the risks involved in the hormone therapy: "Like some of you sisters going through the time of menopause, and they give you this hormone shot. Don't you do it. You just trust God.

Hormone is a wild cell, and you're just *putting cancer right in you*, see. Doctor, don't think I'm trying to take your place here, but I've done met too much of it in the prayer line."⁴

Thank God we did not have to rely on scientific studies and assumptions to know the truth regarding HRT. A study of quotes from the Message of the prophet on the subject of Menopause is available upon request.

– *Rebekah*

1. *US News and World Report*, January 21, 2002
2. *Time*, July 22, 2002
3. *LOVE*, 57-0519e
4. *GREATER THAN SOLOMON IS HERE* 63-0605



Believers International News is published by Believers International, Inc., a non-profit Christian ministry dedicated to the furtherance of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Message of His prophet, William Marrion Branham.

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