

stroll to the plaza and ended up playing frisbee with some guys. It was fun alright.

Tuesday, February 19

Train was late -- arrived 8:15. We left at 8:45 a.m. Spent all day on the train, realizing that we were not getting anywhere. Met Florean from Germany.

Wednesday, February 20

Arrived in Palenque at 5:00 at the train station (5 miles out of town). Got a hotel -- and slept. Met Dennis, Czech immigrant to Canada (British Columbia). Took a ride in his car out in the countryside.

Thursday, February 21

Went to the ruins and to Agua Azul with Dennis. At Agua Azul we met up with a Doctor who lives in the N. Frisian Islands.

Friday, February 22

In the afternoon we went to the ruins again. Hiked a little in the jungle. Met a man who says he must walk 2 - 3 hours to get home (through the jungle). Spent a lot of time looking out to the plains of Chiapas.

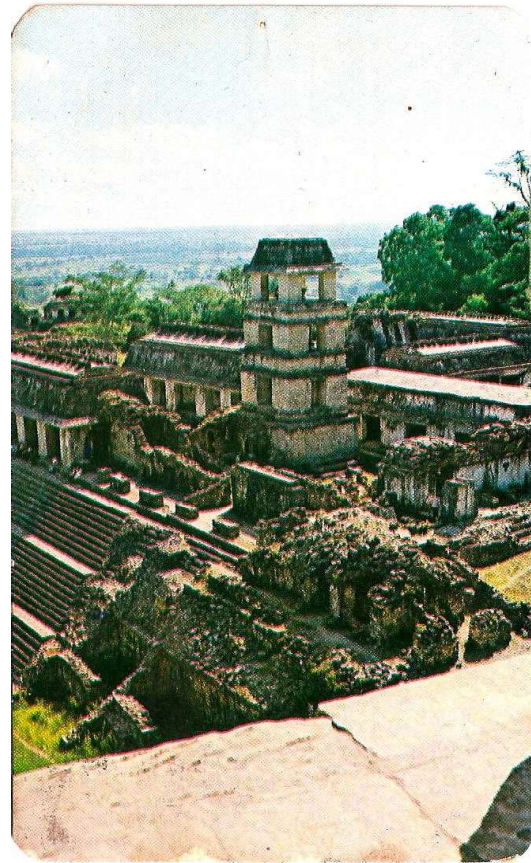
Saturday, February 23

Got up early and caught the bus to San Cristóbal de las Casas. It's a nice city. Old, colonial. The weather here is cool. Walked a lot during the day. Bought some tamales in the evening.

Sunday, February 24

Went to the market, which was hopping. Met some women from Chamula who wanted to sell me a belt. I didn't like the colors of the ones there, but they said

The Mayan ruins at Palenque in Chiapas are impressive -- located on the first upswell of the highlands and looking out across the plains toward the Gulf of Mexico. The image below is a postcard that I bought.



This is a postcard I sent to my folks showing the market area of San Cristóbal. Sellers come in from the surrounding towns, and apparently each town has distinctive style of dress. Makes for a colorful experience.



they'd make one like I wanted. I'll get it tomorrow. Thunderstorm in the afternoon, so I took a long nap.

Monday, February 25

Went to the market in the morning. Checked on my belt, but it wasn't ready -- the woman had it around her waist and was working on it. Played frisbee in the afternoon at a soccer field and once again met some little kids. Went and got my belt. I liked it, but the Señora who made it wasn't there. Oh well -- I'll thank her later. Ordered a "block" for Dad at a printshop.

Tuesday, February 26

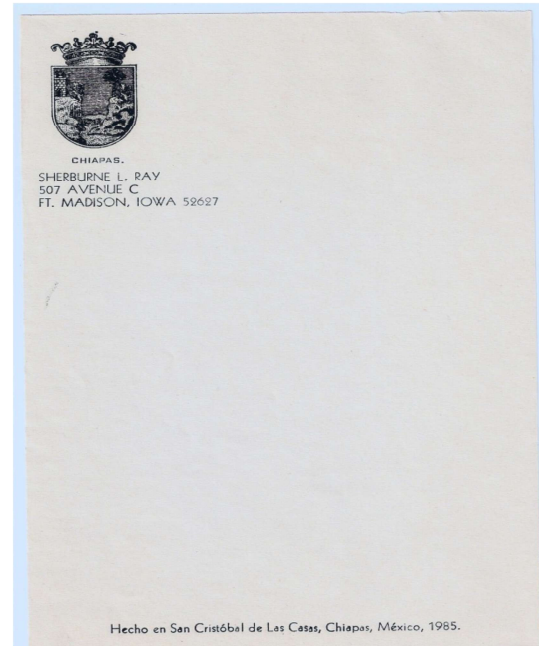
Went to San Juan de Chamula. The inside of the church was fascinating -- candles, chanting, people kneeling. Had to pay to get out -- extortion. Hiked back (10 kilometers) with a guy named Gary from Colorado. It was a nice hike through the mountains. Bought a copy of the Popol Wuj -- stories of the ancient Quiches of Guatemala.

Wednesday, February 27

Got a haircut -- good and short -- in the morning. Went to Na Bolom, the home of Franz and Trudi Blom. Quite interesting. Went to a poetry reading by Monica Mansour.

Thursday, February 28

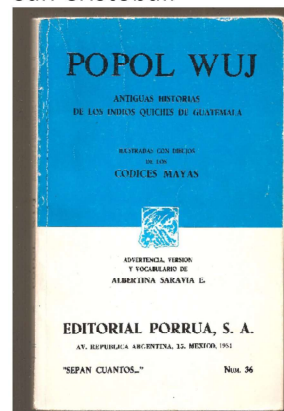
I talked with Sister Lucía this morning. She's with the Christian Committee of Solidarity, a group which helps Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas. We talked for about an hour and a half, and she really encouraged me to go see some of the



This is the belt woven for me by a Mayan woman in the market area of San Cristóbal. She had the material tied around her back and then stretched over to a tree -- a "backstrap" loom.



Cover of the book, "Popol Wuj," that I bought in San Cristóbal:



From page 1:
"This is the beginning of the ancient histories of the Quiché...It will declare and demonstrate the revealed and the hidden of the Maker and Creator, who is the Mother and Father of everything."

refugee camps. She gave me some explicit directions and the names of people to ask for. I talked with Jon and we decided to "go for it."

Friday, March 1

Had a nice bus ride to Comitán. Nice mountains and pine forests. Saw some elephants (circus). Found a place to stay and explored Comitán. It's a nice clean city, though nothing special.

Saturday, March 2

Got up at 6:10. Heading for the town of Tziscão by 7:45 a.m. Arrived at 9:00 and talked with the priest, Padre Alfredo. He repeated the things Sister Lucía said on Thursday. He told us how to get to the various camps. He said that a year ago there were checkpoints so that a person couldn't go, but now only spot checks by Immigration. He said, though, that he couldn't take us because if we did encounter the Migra, there would be problems.

We decided to hike the 7 kilometers to the camp. The hike was very beautiful -- through the jungle forest.

Campamento Cascadas

Facts: Arrived July 1982

2 days traveling

Came as a group

Don't want to go to

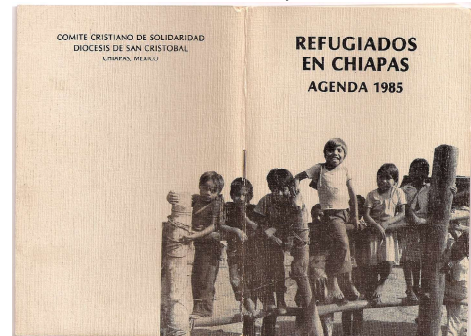
Campeche

Clothes and food in short supply

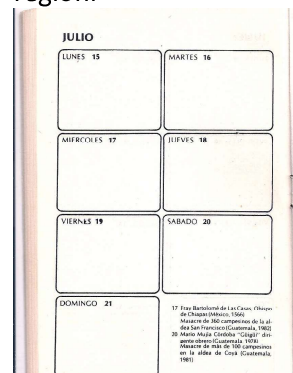
Said church can't help everyone since there are so many

Women can't embroider for lack of material

This is an agenda (planner/calendar) I got at the diocesan office in San Cristóbal. It was published by the Sister Lucía's group: the Christian Committee of Solidarity.



This following page of the agenda mentions the event that precipitated the flight from Guatemala of the people in the two camps we visited: on July 17 of 1982, some 360 people were massacred in the nearby town of San Francisco -- just a few miles south of the Mexico border. Ironically, July 17 also marks the death of Bartolomé de las Casas (in 1566). He was an early defender of the indigenous peoples of the region.



Notes from the planner page shown above:

- 17 Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, Obispo de Chiapas (México, 1566)
Masacre de 360 campesinos de la aldea San Francisco (Guatemala, 1982)
- 20 Mario Mujía Córdoba "Güigüi" dirigente obrero (Guatemala, 1978)
Masacre de más de 100 campesinos en la aldea de Coyá (Guatemala, 1981)

--Threats of violence don't

Men have some work
Didn't see the violence of the
army
Saw people fleeing after the
San Francisco Massacre and
decided not to wait around.

Campamento Yalambojoch - talked with
catechist

Came July 1982
3 days traveling in rain
Came mostly as a group
720 in camp
220 kids going to school
Have a dining room for kids
They saw some of the
violence -- saw people killed
Men have little work
Some women embroider with
material supplied by the
church
Food and clothes in short
supply
Government agency,
COMAR, provides items
grudgingly
Men must go to Comitán to
request stuff
Camp has same name as the
town where the people come
from
At home there weren't lights,
cars, highways, etc.
Don't want to go to

Campeche

--Don't want the "good stuff"
offered

We came across these three children as we
walked up the lane to the Yalambojoch refugee
camp.



When we arrived, we were met by a group of
elders who took us to the school building. We
had to explain who we were and what we were
doing. The building was filled with men from the
camp, and we could see the kids peering in
through the gaps in between the posts that made
up the walls. Eventually, the men seemed to
accept us, and they related their experience
fleeing the violence near their home.
Yalambojoch, Guatemala, is only a few miles from
the scene of the San Francisco massacre.
Apparently, these people left their town a few
days after that event -- in July of 1982. They had
been in Mexico for 2 1/2 years when we visited.

This house was outside of the main camp, but it
shows the typical construction used. The school
was similar, but had a concrete floor.



They'd rather die than go to
Campeche or back to
Guatemala

YALAMBOJOCH

Sunday, March 3

Went back to Comitán after walking through the national park (Montebello) a bit. Went to a movie: "Breakin'."

Monday, March 4

Went out shopping -- bought a bag like the ones the campesinos use. Changed money. Decided to stay another day in Comitán. After supper had a good time exchanging personal anecdotes with Jon.

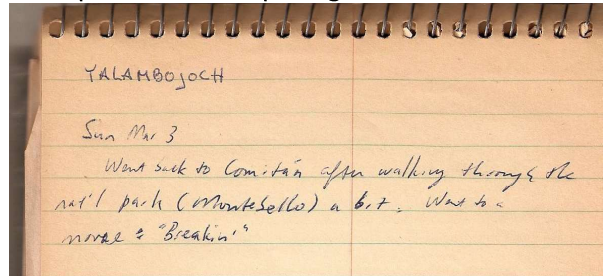
Tuesday, March 5

Took the bus to Tuxtla via San Cristóbal. Got a hotel then found the museum and a nice botanical garden. Had some good tomatoes for supper. Jon called home at 11:15 p.m. and found out from his folks that Dad had died on February 21. I called home right away and said I'd be home as soon as possible.

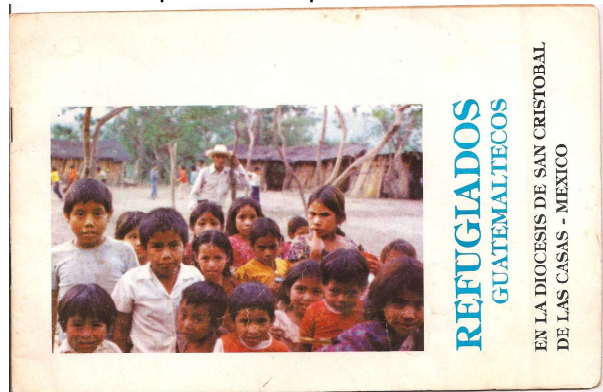
Wednesday, March 6

We were able to catch an 11:20 a.m. flight from Tuxtla to Mexico City. Jon left for Houston on a 2:20 flight. I waited around for a night flight and left for Chicago at 9:30.

This is a little snippet from my journal. Someone wrote "YALAMBOJOCH" on the page -- probably to help me with the spelling.



This is the cover of a booklet put out in 1983 by the Diocese of San Cristóbal and the Solidarity Committee. The booklet strove to help people on the Mexican side understand the reasons for the Guatemalans' arrival, the help that had been offered by the local church, and the needs that remained. I picked this up in the diocesan office.



The trip and the journal ended suddenly with the revelation (March 5 entry) that my Dad had passed away. The March 6 entry is the last one. Jon has told me that the trip was a life-changing experience for him and no doubt contributed to his life-long work in peace and justice activities. For me, the image of the three Mayan children has stuck with me. As I prepare to spend a year teaching in Guatemala, the town of Yalambojoch has again come to mind. I hope to visit there, to speak with some people who lived in the Yalambojoch refugee camp in Chiapas, and to connect my past (as represented in the journal) with my present and my future.

-- Don (June, 2013)