Go-Global Trip to Mexico ~ Summer 2009

Harry Hueston, Keith Price, Robin Capt & Cindy Lewis (Faculty Sponsors)
Saturday June 13, 2009

Today we woke up bright and early! We arrived at seven am and the hotel restaurant was closed, so our lovely sponsors entertained us while we waited. We shared a funny story about how five girls pulled a full sized bed and a twin bed together and four of them slept together. This happened because the fan in one of our hotel rooms was broken and hanging by the wires from the ceiling and the shower had no water pressure and was dripping along the wall. We noticed at breakfast that all of the silverware was placed on the left side of the plate. For breakfast one of our eating options was Molletes which is a bullet shaped bread sliced open spread with refried beans and melted cheese on top, the ones that ate this said it was wonderfully delicious. When you open the butter packages it did not look like American butter, it looked like a miniature dozen of eggs. We had a choice between fruit or juice, which was freshly squeezed and had pulp and seeds. Then we went on a walking tour of San Miguel de Allende (SMA) with our translator/tour guide Dali. We were shown around the downtown area which included the central plaza and the church. We noticed the beautiful architecture dating back all the way to the 1500s. We learned a lot of the information about the history and culture. Some of the things that we notice that were different from our day to day lives were: the people clean their own patio, sidewalk, and street areas; the roads are cobblestone, the roofs of their houses are their backyards and their dogs live up there, people wash clothes by hand in the park (this is a tradition), they still use donkeys to carry supplies, and there are no traffic signals/signs or speed limit. We ate lunch on our own from noon to two pm. We met in front of the Church of San Miguel to continue our walking tour. This time we focused on the history of the Roman Catholic churches around SMA. Then tonight we had a group buffet dinner at a bed and breakfast that has an unusual mask museum. They performed a dance by giant puppets with people inside of them. We were surprised to learn that a folk toy maker was visiting and we got the pleasure of listening to his life story and how he creates his works of art. We also learned about the different types of textiles and symbols of the Mexican culture. This place was owned by former Americans. We were surprised to see how big the place was after we got into the gates, just looking at the front of the gate it looks small but it is HUGE. Tonight we are relaxing and enjoying the cool temperatures of the evening time!

Desiree’ Escoto
Ashley Prock

Sunday June 14, 2009

Today we attended our fabulous breakfast at 7:30am as usual and it is a great way to get the morning started. Following breakfast we had the opportunity to attend a traditional Catholic mass. The church was called La Iglesia de San Rafael. Mass in Mexico is a bit different than mass in the United States, people here sing every song in acapello and some of the readings are also done in song which is very interesting. Conversely, Mark Anglin thought it was very interesting even though he did not understand a word. The symbolism and traditions allowed him to follow along. As opposed to most Protestant churches where talking and socializing is the norm until the minister calls the congregations to order, the Catholic custom is to remain silent while in the church at all times. As a side note, Eucharist is given different to the congregation due
to the swine flu scare. The Eucharist is now dipped in the cup of wine as opposed to having everybody drink from the same cup.

After mass the entire group attended a well known tradition in San Miguel known as the “Dia de Los Locos”. This is a celebration of the day of the crazies and thousands of participants dress in different costumes. These costumes range from similar Halloween masks to elaborate paper mache head dresses. The parade was exciting but exceptionally long, almost 5 hours, and consisted of every costume imaginable. There was certainly no political correctness in many of the costumes. It was interesting to see that so many people were so involved that they would line up along. There were easily 100,000 attendees at this social event. The highlight for the children was the throwing of the candies although Magdalena was struck and nearly blinded by one of the candies. Additionally Simon was pooped on by a pigeon watching the parade go by. The parade was well organized and the use of security was excellent. The parade was also very colorful. The use of religious and pagan symbols as well traditional Mexican music was evident through out the entire event.

The group has also come to a realization that nobody possesses any artistic skills whatsoever! Just kidding, we actually had several students who exceeded expectations with their ability to artistically express themselves with the exception of Dr. Hueston who continues to show no artistic talent!! (not kidding). Dali our tour guide introduced us to this art form Oaxaca and showed us of his ceramic plates that he had completed. We were then given the opportunity to create our own, and surprisingly everyone put forth quite an effort.

Hasta Luego,

Sandra Saenz
Mark Anglin

June 15, 2009

Everyone started with breakfast this morning at 7:30. We are encouraged to sit by someone new everyday at breakfast, and I think that is working so far. We are all getting to know each other pretty well.

The Criminal Justice students left at 9:00a.m for Guanajuato to learn about the Mexican Supreme Court and the state penitentiary system. We were accompanied by Santiago Ramirez, an attorney in Guanajuato. We first stopped at the Supreme Court, “Poder Judicial.” We got to sit in the actual court room where the Supreme Court judges meet and hear cases and make decisions. One of the judge’s secretaries gave us all of the following information, which Santiago translated into English. (We had to compare notes later to make sure we got it all!) The Supreme Court is made up of twenty-one judges. Ten of them are criminal, and ten are civil judges. One of them is the president of the Supreme Court. The president is elected by secret ballot and serves a 2 year term with the option to get elected for another 2 year term. The twenty judges can be elected in two ways for the Supreme Court. One of the ways is that there are three high-rank or popular lawyers nominated by the governor, which are then voted on to determine which one gets on the Supreme Court. Another way is take an exam made up of written and practical parts. The three highest scores are then voted on. The judges can serve two seven year terms. We found more things in common between our Supreme Court and theirs, than we did differences. The most common difference was that our judges can serve life long terms, where the ones in Mexico can only serve a total of fourteen years.
After the Criminal Justice students left the Supreme Court we went to the General Directors of Executions Penitentiaries and Social Re-adaptation headquarters. We had to wait about an hour to meet with them due to an emergency security meeting they had to have. This caught our curiosity, but unfortunately, we do not know what the meeting was about. During our down time we got to see Guanajuato from a high viewpoint. It is a beautiful city with many, many, many colorful houses up the sides of the mountains. At the director’s office we learned that the penitentiary system in Mexico is not near as bad as they show in movies. The director requires that prisoner’s are allowed to “keep their dignity.” I think the definition of “dignity” is left up to the director’s discretion. However, the prisoners’ basic needs are taken care of. Their main goal is to rehabilitate the prisoners, rather than to punish them. They have work programs for the inmates, but they are on a volunteer basis. They are not required to work, although 70 percent of the inmates do work. Eight percent of the inmates are women. All of the inmates are encouraged to develop culturally and also, to develop a skill they can use when they finish their sentence. I found many differences and many similarities in Guanajuato’s prison system and the United States’ prison system. We found their main mission of rehabilitating the inmate, rather than punishing them to be a novel idea. For the most part, the Mexican prison system is working for the prisoners, rather than against.

Once we left the director’s headquarters we went back to our hotel in San Miguel where we met up with the Education students to compare experiences and stories about our days.

The education group met after breakfast to plan for the week. We planned reading activities for the girls’ orphanage and social, fun and interactive activities for the boys’ orphanage.

After our meeting, our schedule allowed time for shopping in the Mercado and lunch on our own at a nice restaurant.

Shortly after a satisfied stomach we anxiously loaded taxis to meet the girls at the orphanage. Upon arrival we were greeted by a sweet, friendly girl and were directed to an empty spacious room. As the children were coming in we began interacting with them by playing ring around the rosies. The number of children rapidly increased so we transitioned into a game of hokey pokey. It was interesting to observe the importance of body language. Eye contact, gestures, and the use of our hands made the game easy for the children to participate even though instructions were given in English.

After a couple of exchanged chuckles and giggles between the children and us we gathered on the floor and listened to our instructor Cynthia Lewis read “Buenas Noches Luna” to children. The purpose of our visit to the orphanage was to teach the older girls how to read to younger children. Therefore, after Mrs. Lewis read the book the older children were instructed to find a younger child and read them a book using the skills they had learned by participating with Mrs. Lewis. We took on the role of support and encouragement and a few times reinforced the skills they were supposed to be practicing while reading to the children. It was amazing to see how quickly the older girls learned the skills they were taught. The smile on each W.T student revealed the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment we were hoping to achieve.

We concluded our visit with a tour of the orphanage. The tour allowed us to see where the children sleep, eat, do their homework, their laundry and play. At this time we also took advantage and captured some bonding moments between the W.T students and the children.
The visit to the orphanage was an emotional and learning experience for each and every one of us. It gave us the opportunity to grow in more areas than one and I believe much of what we experienced today will be applied in our classrooms.

Both groups had great experiences today that taught us many lessons and created many memories that will be shared forever.

**Shayla Mannin and Suzie Limas**

June 16, 2009

This morning the education students had the opportunity to observe in a school. We all split up and went to different classrooms. I observed a 2nd grade class. When we walked in, the students all stood and greeted us very nicely. Every time someone came into the room, they were to stand and greet the person. Most of these classes have between 30 and 40 students in them, or more, for one teacher. It was kind of overwhelming to not know exactly what was being said, but I could catch on to what they were doing. They did vocabulary and math while I was there. One funny thing was that the teacher put on a CD of music for the students to listen to while they were working, and the song that played was “Santa Claus is coming to town” in Spanish. It was pretty funny. At first I thought it was just a song to that tune, but then I heard the word Santa Claus! Then this afternoon, we went to the boys’ orphanage for the first time. We took a tour of the orphanage and then played some games with the boys. We are using a lot of ESL strategies when working with them and speaking in English. Many, many hand gestures and non-verbal communication is so important to help the kids understand what we are talking about. At this orphanage, they have about 25 boys there right now and most of them don’t have much communication with their families. The orphanage at one time has had up to 70 boys there.

Now for the CJ student we got to experience and learn about the structural layout of the San Miguel de Allende Police Department. Each one of us including Dr. Price and Dr. Hueston were blown away on the similarities our police layout and procedures were! Yes, there were some differences especially when detaining a person. In the words of Dr. Hueston, “Let me tell you…this is freaking nuts!!” We were shown demonstrations by the police cadets and their trainers how they detain and search someone on the streets. The tactics that they used were identical to our tactics however, it seem that they had a better strategy at some points when searching someone on the streets. Then we got to see where they detain the people who are arrested and shown where they slept which was on the floor! Then we got to take a picture inside a holding cell, which was very fun but only for the moment. We also got to see their communications center and learn how they respond and handle each call. We got more information however to an average reader it could get very boring. But I will say again the similarities were very much identical.

After the tour and demonstrations in the police department we went over to the municipal court of San Miguel. At this point it got confusing very confusing to understand all there procedures and policies. To make a long and confusing story short, this part of their criminal justice system is not the same as ours. On the contrast it was very interesting to learn how they ran their system and compare it to the way we would do things. But the big eye opener was not demonstrated nor discussed. It came later on our group discussion that people in the US have viewed Mexico as a horrible place. Why, because the media only shows us what they feel is important, which is all the drug and killings happening at the border. How would we like it if the only thing shown of the US was the gang
violence in LA or NYC! We would hate it because that does not reflect the entire US. So why do we assume that about Mexico as a whole? People warned us that we need to be careful and really at times over exaggerated situations. However, for me this proved that people assume that what they see on TV is what they expect Mexico to be like. Ask the students now and their answered would be totally opposite.

Then tonight, the EDUC and CJ students all came together to learn how to Salsa Dance! It was a lot of fun! We just learned some of the very basic steps.

By Tiffany Smith and Juan Carlos Vidaurri

**June 17, 2009**

This morning started out as usual 7:30am breakfast. We all came together and ordered then went our separate ways around 8:45. The education department all jumped in some cabs and headed back to the same school we observed in yesterday. Today we all separated into different classrooms alone rather than with a partner with a few exceptions. I was with Mrs. Cindy Lewis because the third grade teacher we observed with requested some assistance yesterday. As we observed we noticed the classroom consisted of mainly boys. There were forty-two students that were enrolled in the classroom, but seven were absent today. During one part of the class two older girls came in and did a nail check. They were checking to ensure the children had all cleaned their nails and hands. This was for health purposes to make sure everyone was washing their hands frequently and properly. We then returned back to the hotel a little after noon. We had a short time to eat lunch and rest. We then headed off back to the boys orphanage. Today we were greeted with many familiar faces. They were very excited for us to be back. We started off with a review of some things we did yesterday. We did the hokey pokey and played math games with soccer balls we introduced to them yesterday. They were a little crazy, but were all having a good time. We then divided into three groups for the boys to rotate and play three different games with us. The games included: Hi Ho Cherry Oh, Candy Land and Chutes and Ladders. The boys all did great and really seemed to learn. We spoke to them in English and they were counting back in English in no time. The smiles on their faces make it all worthwhile. Every day we are building a better relationship with them. We ended with hop-scotch and drawing with chalk. Although there is a language barrier we are still able to communicate and have a great time.

After breakfast the criminal justice department headed out to city hall on the square. We all walked together because it was not too far. This particular city hall is the first in all of Mexico. The mayor’s secretary began by giving us a tour of the place. As we first walked in there were two murals on the side. One was a painting of the Indians and the other a history of San Miguel. As we continued on we headed up a stair case and there was a large statue of Ignacio Allende. We then entered a room where the town hall conducts their meetings; however, very few people are allowed to enter this room so we considered this a great privilege to see. We then returned down stairs and entered into a court yard. We were told there was a dungeon located underneath this court yard. The interesting part was they only discovered it around ten years ago. The courtyard also used to be the old jail and above this courtyard was a guard tower with gun ports. We then went next door behind the tourist information center to meet with many high ranking officials of the town. This group of people included: the mayor’s secretary, the police director, the district attorney, and the human rights representative. The mayor was presently out of town on business otherwise he would have attended also. They treated us with great respect and were as excited for us to be there as we were to be there. They were taking pictures of and with us while we were doing the same. Each representative
got up to speak about their individual jobs and the roles they played in Mexico’s criminal justice system. They then gave us a break and provided us with a light lunch for refreshment. We then returned back to the hotel and had a little time to rest. We then met around 8:00pm to discuss and recap all of today’s events. It was a lot to take in, but we learned and gathered so much information about their criminal justice system. We were then all free for the night to have dinner and prepare for tomorrow. The day ended with a torrential down pour and we all enjoyed the cooler weather it presented.

By: Aaron Mason and Brandi Galarza

June 19, 2009

Today we started our morning as usual with breakfast and a short meeting, about what we had done the day before. After breakfast, CJ and the Education student had an easy morning off. We took some much needed rest and then we went shopping. At 4:30 p.m. the CJ and the education student went together as a group to the boy’s orphanage. We the education students wanted the CJ student to experience what the education students had been doing the last three days. When all eight taxis arrived at the orphanage the children start to run toward the taxis, for a minute they paused because they saw strangers coming out of the taxis. After they saw us their little faces lit up as usual. Mrs. Lewis started out by giving the CJ students a tour of the orphanage, while the others played with the children. When we all got back together we played the Hokey Pokey and seemed to put the children at ease with the new people that came with us. Then, we separated into two rooms to play card games. While we were paired up with the CJ people and playing games with the children, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Captain went to get chicken to feed the children. I think this was the best part of all when we all served the children and the madre’s (nuns) chicken. It was nice to see the education and CJ students coming together. It was hard to say good bye for us education students because we had already gotten attached to them the last three days. It was even hard for the CJ students to leave. For the CJ students this was a new experience. The events for the day were canceled. We were going to the hot springs but it didn’t work out because of the rain. We were all kind of disappointed but we had the whole day to relax. Most of us really appreciated the time to shop and catch up on some sleep. The majority of the CJ students went shopping for souvenirs. At 4:30 we all gathered together and left for the boys orphanage. It was a blast. The boys were excited to meet new men. They were instant celebs. We started out by taking a tour of the facilities. It was truly gorgeous. I never would have expected the orphanage to have some much room. Everything else in the city was cram-packed but the orphanage had a lot of room. We saw the grain silo that was turned into a church. It had gorgeous blue glass that allowed light into the room. It was very nice. After the tour we began playing with the children. We played the hokey-pokey and catch. The children really enjoyed it. They all flocked to the guys. It was fun all around. The rain started so we had to move to the indoor games. We mostly played card games and worked with the children on counting. We later fed the children chicken. The boys all sat down at a table and the students fed them. I could tell that both the children and students really enjoyed it. When we left the boys were really sad; they wanted to play longer but we had to go. It was a great learning experience for us.
June 20, 2009

Saturday morning we woke up and had breakfast, and then listened to a women’s issue discussion. A woman was there to tell us about her issues with raising five kids and the troubles she encountered on the way. Some include Rosas living arrangements, her history of abuse, having a child at age 13 that is carrying a 20 year olds child and also caring for her father who is bedridden.

After that we were briefed on the history and importance of Aztec dancing, and what it means to the locals. To let you get a better idea of what the dance entails; we were given multiple doodads that were essential in the dancing process. Doodads such as wrist and ankle maracas, and feathered headbands were used to symbolize the Aztec tradition. We all danced to the beating of the drum by Juan Carlos and the smell of the incense burning around us.

For lunch we were joined by local college students from the university here in San Miguel. Throughout lunch we talked with the students about the college life here in the city compared to that of at West Texas A&M. There were some similarities, but with that there also came many differences between the two. They were very nice and also very eager to hear about our life, just as much as we were towards them.

Folk singing along with a mariachi band… This made us stray very far out of our comfort zones. This was the most interesting and challenging activity of the day, at least for Tiffany and I! To start out we were given songs that were printed in both Spanish and English, but the kicker was that we had to sing in Spanish. It started off difficult, but five songs and one traditional Mexican tequila shot later we were very confident in our singing abilities.

All in all today was a very eventful and challenging day for not only the students but the professors as well. The highlight of the day was watching Dr. Price dance with the lead singer of the mariachi band with a sweat drenched shirt and beet red face in front of the hysterically laughing students and colleagues.

Tiffany Taylor and Jeff Ludlum

June 21, 2009

Today we started the as always with breakfast at 7:30 am. Then we met up at 9:00 am to adventure off to Guanajuato. We had many stops along the way including one of them which was the church of the crazy priest. This church is sometime referred to as the Sistine Chapel of Mexico because it is painted on from the floor to the ceiling. Sometime in August there is a pilgrimage that starts at 11:00 pm and they walk through the night, to end in San Miguel. The people in San Miguel will cover the streets with rose petals for the entry to the town.

After that we gathered back onto the bus and headed to another town of Delores Hidalgo where we were able to buy beautiful pottery. After the pottery place we had an hour and half to eat and we all ate at a place called the stage coach. This place was delicious. It reminded of an American restaurant without air-conditioning. When we got finished eating we had a chance to walk around the main square until 2:30. They had everything ranging from clothing to car washes to ice cream.

The next stop was on the out-skirts of Guanajuato, the golden church that looked over the city. The church was built by a man that moved to Guanajuato for Mexico City to have a silver mine. He prayed to one of the saints to allow him to get the main silver vein. When he hit a very big silver and gold vein he built the church in honor
of the Saint. He was building it so splendid that the Bishop pressured him to stop building. Everything in the church was covered in gold leaf. After the tour of the church for Dr. Henderson we took a group photo on the steps in front of the church.

Final destination we arrived at Hotel Meson Del Rosario. We got our keys and went to our rooms. We found out that some of the rooms did not have enough beds for everyone that was suppose to stay there. So we had to get that all situated before we could venture off into Guanajuato.

Jacob Miller and Eric Stewart

Monday, June 22

Today Dali took us on a walking tour of Guanajuato. Our first stop was el callejon del beso or the kissing alley. The story is considered a Romeo and Juliet story, and the legend says that if a couple kisses on the third step of this alley, they will have good luck for and if not they get bad luck. Then we went to the market which was in a big warehouse with a clutter of little stands. Then we went to a building that was used as a shelter for the people of Guanajuato during the revolution. It was virtually impossible to penetrate, however Pipi was able to get close enough to the building to burn the door down. He accomplished this by attaching a flat slab of rock on his back and walking up to the door. Once the door was burned they entered the warehouse and killed the people inside. From there we walked a few blocks to the Diego Rivera museum, but it was closed. We still learned about Diego Rivera and Frida Carlo through Juan Guzman’s photographs. Their strong personalities and personal expression through their artwork showed their connection and Dali said “They were meant for each other.” Our walking tour ended at a candy store called La Catrina with extravagant skeleton artwork. Then we went to lunch on our own and I had the best food of the entire trip at a little café. We had a cozy room to ourselves, fast service, and delicious food. After lunch we took a public bus to the mummy museum. The bus was crowded and bumpy because of the roads. At the museum we walked through several rooms with mummies that had been exhumed from their tombs because of failure to pay tax by part of their families. Over time they began to realize the thick walls in which the bodies were kept preserved the bodies. It was fascinating to see how some were so well preserved they had their clothes and hair. For some we were able to read their cause of death. After the museum we had the opportunity to blow the rest of our money on shopping, and were instructed to be ready at 4am to catch our flight in Leon, and finally go home.

Magdalena (Magz) Ortega

On Monday, we started the day by going to the Callejon de Beso. This translates to the alley of the kiss. I didn’t realize how famous this alley was in Mexico and across the world. This landmark gets put up there with being as famous as the museums. Legend has it that if you and your mate go to this alley and do not kiss, you will have bad luck for seven years. We also had an interesting conversation about the different types of kisses you could try with your lover, but I don’t think I’ll go there. Most of them involved double meanings. After that, we went to the Alhondiga. This was a grainery that was built in 1809. This is the same place where Pipila helped to fight the Spanish troops. We also got to see the outside of Diego Rivera’s house. I really wish we could have seen it from the inside, but it was closed. Our next activity was a lot of fun to do. We got to go to the bottom of the steps at Guanajuato University and raced to see who could make it to the top first. After that, we got to go into the University and see some of Diego Rivera’s art work. After a lunch break, we got to see the Mummy Museums. How
interesting! There were so many different mummies in different stages of mummifications. One of the more fascinating mummies was the lady who had her arms twisted. They believed this woman was buried alive for a couple of reasons. One reason is because most mummies are either buried with their hands to their sides or crossed over their chests. This woman was twisted around as if she had struggled to get out. The other reason was they found her face down when they exhumed her body out of her casket. This museum is also home to the world’s smallest mummy. It was a fetus that they found along with the mother that had been mummified. The most interesting thing happened to me at the end of the day. As I was looking for a souvenir stand that made custom necklaces, I was approached to become an extra in a Latino television series called El Pantera. Within the next couple of hours, the production team had sectioned off the plaza so that they could film an episode for the upcoming season. That was definitely an exciting way to end my time in Mexico!

Simon Fesehai