

# NEWS FROM NORM & KATHY

August 2010

## Tezoatlan Translation & Sebastian

Sebastian was 50 years old, an alcoholic with a second grade education, when he trusted Christ as his Savior. He was 55 – quite elderly for his small Mexican community when he began translating the Scriptures into his Tezoatlan Mixtec language. He had no training, no help, not even an alphabet beyond the Spanish one he'd learned in school, but he saw a need. While he could understand a fair amount of what he read in his Spanish Bible, his wife could not, nor could many others who attended the Bible study in their village. His heart burned to help them.

Finally one day he decided he had to try. He bought a notebook and set out to translate the resurrection story in Luke 24. It was hard to spell Mixtec words using only Spanish letters. It was even harder to understand the biblical concepts and express them in his own language. It made his usual work plowing rocky fields and hauling firewood down mountain trails seem easy. Nevertheless he kept at it.

He took his beloved notebook to every Bible study, but he didn't read from it out of fear that he might have mistranslated the precious Word of God. Then one night as he watched his neighbors sleeping, wiggling or whispering to each other through an unintelligible service, he knew he couldn't wait any longer. He slowly stood up, and moved to a position underneath the only light bulb in the room. With trembling hands, he opened his notebook, took a deep breath and began to read. Slowly, haltingly at first, he read those words from Scripture, gaining strength and confidence as he read on.

Several people gasped as they realized that he was reading in Mixtec, their heart language. Then the room grew quiet. No one moved or spoke or slept. Tears rolled down a few cheeks. The light of understanding shone in their eyes. Sebastian read on for a long time, and when he stopped, he knew that no one present would ever be the same again.

Time passed and Sebastian's notebook filled up. His farming suffered. Money grew tighter, but God always provided for his needs. He kept translating, and he kept on sharing those newly translated verses with his wife and neighbors. He read at four or five services each week, and the walls began to come down. God was no longer a "foreigner." God spoke Mixtec, and the words went straight to Mixtec hearts.

Four years later, Wycliffe members John & Judy Williams came to Sebastian's village, looking for someone willing to move six hours away and teach John his language so they could make books and translate the Scriptures. John could only stay in the village one night, but God led him straight to Sebastian, who asked just one question: "Do you want me to leave with you tonight or in the morning?" (Continued page 2)



### Newsletter Spotlight

**Sebastian was old and not trained, but he wanted his wife and friends to have the Scriptures in their language. How could God use this man?**

### Translation Story Follow Up

Kathy, I and our friends Bob & Colleen Hitchcock who were visiting from Washington state, attended the Tezoatlan Mixtec New Testament dedication in March 2008. We included this report about Sebastian to relate the story behind the translation.

John and Judy Williams, Wycliffe members, were translators on the project. They worked with Sebastian, and also his son Emilio and grandson Gerardo.

Emilio read John 14:1-5, at the dedication. Gerardo was the dedication master of ceremonies and the conductor of the band that guided the singing.

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As Sebastian and John worked together, Sebastian eagerly appropriated the new alphabet symbols that made his language easier to write. He just as eagerly contributed to every aspect of their translation and literacy work. Thirteen years later, with joy and thankfulness, Sebastian held in his hands a draft of the whole New Testament in Tezoatlan Mixtec.

Not long after that, God took Sebastian home, his task completed. The New Testament was joyfully dedicated in 2008 and is now being used by Sebastian's people in both written and oral forms.



Kathy and Norm reunite with Ken while visiting Boston in July. We were thrilled to see him and learn of his family news.

We stayed with the Bett family at their farm in Kenya in 1996 during our field training for Africa. Ken was 11 years old and we had not seen him since that time. He found our email address and contacted us. We were visiting our daughter and family in Boston where Ken is now attending college on a student visa. He told us he had not thought about other parts of the world until our visit with his family in Kenya expanded his thinking.

Other happenings:

July 24th we attended Dick Jones' memorial service. Dick, who passed away at 89, was Norm's good friend and mentor of 50 years from scouting days. Dick's passion for mentoring young men was confirmed and validated by many who were in attendance. He was an inspiration to many.

Mexico branch conference originally scheduled to be held in Mexico was moved to the office in Catalina, Arizona. The ten days of meetings were completed on August 25th. Kathy and I originally planned to drive to Mexico after conference to work there, but we have been delayed.

Kathy sprained her knee while climbing stairs to join the small group she was leading at conference. I took her to emergency, but x-rays showed no damage and no need for surgery. The orthopedic doctor gave her a cortisone shot and the knee is slowly improving, but she still has pain. We will return to Mexico to work until December when Kathy recovers and is able to travel.

Prayer requests:

Our Mexican visa renewals will be granted without difficulties when we return to Mexico  
Kathy's knee to heal and the pain to fade away  
Kathy's preparations for teaching "Birds" in October at the FES school session  
For good health for our prayer and financial partners  
Our son Matt and family who have moved to Georgia with the US Army

Praises:

We have our own house to live in when we are working in Catalina, Arizona  
For our spiritual nourishment from our church in Tucson when we are there  
Kathy's knee does not need surgery  
How God continues to provide for our needs through our faithful partners

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