

Harsh Reality of Juarez, Mexico

By: Dan Ott

We stopped Monday afternoon at a newly constructed lookout on the outskirts of town. After reaching the top of a winding, steep, one-lane, guardrail-less road, we collectively gasped at the view. Juarez, Mexico has a unique beauty. We could see miles across the desert valley encircled by craggy, brown mountains. But when we had climbed out of the van and found our way to the edge of the metal terrace, I gasped again. Directly below and for miles again, I saw nothing but poverty: one-room cement block dwellings, narrow and worn dirt roads, garbage in the streets, stray dogs and pet chickens. While a Spring Break trip to Juarez was my 'bright idea,' I must admit that I was not fully prepared for the lack and need that we found there.

Our host, Jaime, explained that this city of two million was composed, in no small part, of people who had come north in hopes of crossing into the United States. Their efforts thwarted and their resources depleted, they end up squatting in Juarez, often never finding their way to the 'promised land' or back home. Make no mistake – these people are not without hope and certainly not without pride. Many of them are ambitious people who are more than willing to work hard for a living. All of them are resourceful and resilient people who face daily challenges the likes of which we comfort-

able, first-world people can hardly imagine.

The work that we did during the week was modest. We helped to build a security wall in the back of the family center where we stayed. The facility had been burglarized a couple of weeks before our arrival (I guess we were part of the security force for the week too). We also sanded and painted some chairs and tables for use in the day care run through the family center.

More importantly, we had our eyes opened. We learned about Mexican culture. We toured a piñata factory (a two-room, family-run production), experienced the Juarez market, and took in a show of Mexican folk music and dancing. Josue, Jaime, Pastor Felipe and our other gracious hosts probably taught us much more, though. We had wide-ranging discussions, shared meals together, and worked side by side. These experiences gave us understanding far greater than any tour could.

We also learned about border issues. We took a trip to the Rio Bravo (barely a trickle really). There we saw a stunning display of U.S. power and resources. Our small band of naive Americans and one fully visa-ed Mexican guide drew the attention first of a security camera looming high in the sky, then an SUV that seemed to position itself to speed toward us,

and finally a fully armed helicopter that came close enough for us to exchange (perhaps less than earnest) waves of greeting. Jaime gave us some of the history of the re-channeling of the Rio Grande to the Franklin Canal that provides additional security if one were to escape the cameras, the SUV, the barbed fence and the helicopter. He also relayed some sad anecdotes of would-be-immigrants, who had drowned in that canal, dehydrated in the desert outside Juarez, or otherwise met their demise in pursuit of their dreams. Dreams constituted mostly of the mere escape of desperate poverty.

Since our return, I've been asked several times, "How was your break? What'd you do?" When I answer that I went to Mexico, the response is usually something like, "Oh wow!" or "You lucky so and so..." I usually grimace inside at this, remembering the harsh reality that we encountered in Juarez. But I'm beginning to realize that those of us on the trip were and are truly lucky. We are lucky to have the opportunity to understand some of the sources of poverty and ways in which U.S. policies affect our neighbors to the south. We are lucky to have the opportunity to do some small part to help improve things for a few of our neighbors. We are lucky to have met and come to know some very proud, resourceful, hopeful and loving people. Viva Juarez. Viva Mexico.

Former President Campaigns for His Wife

From: Staff Reports

An estimated 1,800 gathered on DeTamble Terrace of St. Andrews Presbyterian College to hear former President Bill Clinton campaign on behalf of his wife, Sen. Hillary Clinton, who is running for President.

"I am delighted to be here," said Clinton. "Dr. Hopkins, I want to thank you for welcoming me here and your Student Government President Perry Morris for welcoming me here. "My Scotch-Irish ancestors would be proud of me being at St. Andrews Presbyterian College today," he continued.

President Clinton acknowledged the sad history of the day marking the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, remembering his time as a senior at Georgetown University listening to the speech of Robert Kennedy in Indianapolis announcing the death and the riots that followed in cities around the country.

"We need to make a commitment on this day that equal opportunity for all will be real in our lifetime," he said.

Mr. Clinton outlined several of the reasons that he believes Sen. Clinton will make the

best President, pausing to acknowledge a sign held up in support of Sen. Barack Obama. "It's okay you can hold up your sign," he said from the podium. "I don't blame you for trying to get your message out on our dime. Now you decide whether I'm right or he is. That's what the election is about."

"Hillary's got a lifetime record of change and I believe she would be the best chief executive, which is what the Constitution says the president is," he said. "She is the best person I know for looking at a problem and recognizing what changes need to be made to make the situation better."

Mr. Clinton shared a question he asked his wife early on the campaign trail about what would make her feel that she had done a good job after her presidency was over.

"She said there are three things," he said. "One is if Americans are better off when I quit than when I started. Second, if the young people have a brighter future when I quit than when I started. Third is if our country and this world is coming together instead of pulling

apart."



Former President Clinton. Photo courtesy of Rooney Coffman

Mr. Clinton ended the appearance by shaking hands, posing for photos and signing autographs.

This is the first known visit by a former President to Scotland County.

Five New Titles Arrive at St. Andrews Press

From: Staff Reports

by her work t(here).

Miles is available for \$6 while t(here) is \$10. The Cairn is the small press literary magazine and the continuing legacy of the internationally recognized St. Andrews Review. Edited this year by Tom Heffernan, visiting professor of English, with student editor Johnson assisting, the publication includes works submitted throughout the year by a variety of poets and short fiction writers. It is available this year for \$8.

Gravity Hill is the student literary magazine, comprised of the works of students, faculty and staff members. Kimberly Neal is the student editor for the piece named in honor of the Scotland County landmark of lore. David Bell, assistant professor of creative writing, is the advisor of the magazine. Cost to purchase this collection is \$5.

Joe Ingle's Rock the Boat is a single chapter memoir about his time at St. Andrews. It is a part of a larger memoir, *Beauty and Madness: Growing Up Southern* being prepared for publication. A North Carolina native, Ingle currently resides in Nashville, Tenn., with his wife and daughter. He received a bachelor's degree from St. Andrews before graduating from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. While living in East Harlem, he visited the Bronx House of Detention, beginning a lifelong com-

mitment to prison ministry. He became ordained as a United Church of Christ minister and has worked with prison populations throughout the region. Much of his creative material reflects this life of ministry to the condemned. Rock the Boat is available for \$10.

Two additional works, by Marlon Carey and Jean Jones, are in production and should be released before the end of the academic year.

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