

CLASS VI STUDY TOUR TO MEXICO AND COSTA RICA

March 18, 2003 - Bryndon Meinhardt, Scribe



The Class VI International Study Tour Seminar began for half the group at the Kansas City International Airport. The other half of the class left from Denver. The group that left from Kansas City checked through security and it seemed like in no time at all we were landing in Houston. The group that left from Denver was not so lucky. They had a snowstorm come in that would end up dumping 47 inches of snow on Denver. Their flight was delayed for three hours. It seems like they made the most of it. They were the last flight out of Denver that day. The snowstorm caused the Denver group to miss the Houston flight to Mexico City. They were able to make the next flight to Mexico City.

We arrived in Mexico City around 8:30 PM central time. Overall we had a great flight. After doing all the custom's paperwork and getting our passport stamped, we met outside baggage claim. Then we met Fred Capelle and Edwin Rabadet. Fred would be our tour coordinator for the entire trip and had organized the international tour for KARL. Fred explained he had organized over 40 tours of many countries. Fred was in the Wisconsin rural leadership program. Edwin was our Mexico City tour guide. Edwin thought it would be a good time to exchange dollars for pesos

at the airport. The exchange rate was 10.99 pesos for every dollar. After a roll call we headed for the bus.



On the bus Fred explained it would take about half hour to get to the hotel. At the hotel we would have some refreshments at the restaurant. Edwin pointed out that Mexico City is the largest city in the world. He explained about the historic building and streets we went past. Edwin also told us that Mexico City was built on a lake.

We took the bus to the Majestic Hotel. This is a Best Western Hotel on the main square in Mexico City. Edwin said this is the second largest square in the world. Our hotel was across from the Mexico Capital where the Mexico congress meets. The National Cathedral was on the adjacent side of the square. The hotel was wonderful and truly a great place to start the tour.

The group checked in and then went to the restaurant for food and drinks. It was a long day so the Kansas City group retired for the night. At 12:30 a.m. the Denver travelers arrived. After a quick check-in they collapsed for a short night.

March 19, 2003 - Kevin Suderman, Scribe



After a fairly late evening arrival in Mexico City we started Wednesday morning with an early breakfast at the historic hotel. Our bus arrived late and we finally got moving in heavy traffic about 9:00 a.m. On our bus ride to the office Agriculture Trade Office for a briefing with their staff and the U.S. Wheat Associates Edwin (our tour guide) pointed out many historical sites and avenues. He also explained about Mexico City and how it was the largest city in the world with over 25 million people. This includes over 25% of Mexico's population of around 95 million people.

As we moved along at a snails pace through traffic we learned of some of the country's economics. We found that the average wage of a person in Mexico was about \$6800 dollars per year. We also learned that the gas sold for around \$2.15 per gallon and that driving 10 miles in rush hour traffic would probably take about 1-1.5 hours. It's for this reason that many people take the Subway, which can cover the same distance in 20-25 minutes (if you can get on). This city has major growing pains and with the high altitude one of the major problems, beside traffic, is pollution. This problem is compounded by ever changing weather patterns.



After a lengthy bus ride we finally arrived at the ATO, offices of U.S. Wheat Associates. Mitch Skalicky welcomed us to Mexico. Briefings on agricultural trade and the political situation were provided by Steve Wirsching, Ann McElroy, and David Williams, Sr. Agriculture Attache at the US Embassy. Mitch and staff explained that USWA is the overseas arm of the 19 major U.S. State wheat boards including Kansas. Steve explained that since 1980 USWA has been instrumental in helping to double imports into South America. He also explained that Mexico's 2nd largest trading partner is the U.S.

Ann McElroy explained a little about Mexico's political system and how it relates to what the organization can and cannot get done. "It's a three party system and no one gets along" stated Ms. McElroy. She also stated that corruption is always present and bribery is still one of the best ways to be sure you get what you want done.

David Williams told us that there are 25 million rural poor in Mexico. He also explained more about how the government helps the Mexican farmer with backdoor politics. These include blocking shipments with investigations, port restrictions, and actual bans. These all are ways, which the government uses to show its dislike for the U.S. regulatory process for imports.

Mr. Williams also spoke briefly about NAFTA. He said there is a lot of Anit-NAFTA sentiment in Mexico however, NAFTA makes up more than 20% of Mexico's GDP. He also stated that Mexico actually has a trade surplus of 30-40 billion dollars to the U.S.

Kate DeRemer joined us for the rest of the session at the ATO. She is a representative from the U.S. Ag Trade Office. Kate explained the importance of Mexico as a trading partner. She informed us that Mexico is the 3rd largest importer into the United States and that we have had a 6% annual increase in imports into Mexico. Kate informed us that Mexico is investing heavily in processing of food and fiber and will have an increasing need for Wheat and other food manufacturing products. Kate then gave us some demographics, which were amazing. Mexico is 74% urban dwelling. 5% are wealthy, 55% are middle class, and 40% are lower class. With an average wage of about \$6800 there is very little extra money to spend after buying food. Tourism is another major component of Mexico's economy. 80% of tourism in Mexico is from the U.S. and mainly along both coasts

Finally Kate explained how hard it is to start new relationships between Mexican and U.S. interests. She explained that Mexican businessman desire face to face contact. They are very unreceptive to non-personal contact. Most professionals want to know you personally before they will do business with you. Mexican businesses also expect you to extend credit. Financing a purchase, or long term payment agreements are much preferred over a C.O.D transaction.

Next it was time to move on to the SAGARPA offices. SAGARPA is the Mexican equivalent of the USDA. Here we met with several staff members, which explained their jobs. The office has 7 different departments covering all of Agriculture. They collect information on 450 different commodities for statistical analyses on a monthly basis. They do this through 192 different offices across the country. Along with the agricultural information they also track specifics about lifestyle, and income.

For more information on SAGARPA (in Spanish) you can find their website at :
www.siea.sagarpa.gob.mx



After SAGARPA we headed to the Pyramids of Teotihuacan. We ate a late lunch at a local restaurant with our guide Edwin followed by a chance to look at the ancient city and pyramids built around the time of Christ through 200 AD. Some of us even had the opportunity to climb to the top. More can be learned at the cities home page: <http://archaeology.la.asu.edu/teo/>



After a short but rewarding afternoon at the pyramids we headed back into Mexico City to the national Anthropology Museum. This place is an awesome sight and with only about 2 hours there was no way to view everything in it. The museum holds artifacts from before the time of Christ and is an amazing treasure of history.



Our final stop of the day was dinner. It was hosted by the US Wheat Associates via the Kansas Wheat Commission at the Villa Maria. We dined on excellent traditional Mexican food including steak and various other cultural dishes.

After dinner it was time to go back to the hotel where the bed didn't seem quite so hard after a long day.

Thursday, March 20 – Daryl Strecker, Scribe

After a traditional Mexican buffet breakfast at the Majestic Hotel in Mexico City we were picked up by coach and off to visit the Central de Abasto, a major fruit, vegetable, meat, and flower distribution center. Prior to arrival, we were met by Rosa Ma. G. de Rivera and Lisa Anderson,

both work for the U. S. Embassy in Mexico. They assisted us in our tour and answering questions.

Upon arrival at the Central de Abasto, we were welcomed by, Dr. Juan Ignacio Cruz, the president of Central de Abasto, and Jill Guzman. Dr. Cruz showed us a short video about the market along with answering many questions.

The Central de Abasto is the largest market in the Western Hemisphere. It was opened in 1982 and sits on 210 hectares or approximately 520 acres. On an average day at the Central de Abasto there is approximately 17,000-22,000 tons of goods on display with an additional 105,000 tons in freezers. There are approximately 3,150 dealers in this market and an average of 276,000 people visit the Central de Abasto daily.



After the informative video, Dr. Cruz gave us a tour of the market. We saw all aspects of the market. First he led us through the fruits and vegetable sector. We were all amazed at the size of the market and the varieties of goods on display. I believe Brian Maloney describe the Central de Abasto best with "It's like a farmers market on steroids." After walking through this part of the

market, Dr. Cruz took us to the beef and poultry sector, fish and seafood sector, along with the flower distribution center. The Central de Abasto was amazing and very impressive.



After the tour of the Central de Abasto, it was back to the bus and off to Queretaro. But before we could start the trip we had to grab something to eat, some good old American food, a choice of McDonald's, Burger King, or Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Our trip out of Mexico City, took us past the United States Embassy and a vast number of protestors. This was a very eye opening experience to see such hatred towards the American Government and their efforts in Iraq.



Due to heavy traffic around Mexico City, because of the holiday weekend, our trip to Queretaro took considerably more time than expected. We arrived at the New Holland plant in Queretaro about two hours late, so our tour had to be cut short. Although we were pressed for time, we received a warm welcome and an excellent tour from Luis Torres. I can speak for the entire class when I say it was very impressive. The factory was spotless. It was nice to compare this facility to the one in Hesston.



The New Holland plant employs around 2000 people. The average income is approximately 5000 pesos a month. Which is roughly \$500/month. This plant works 2 shifts 5 days a week. The plant manufactures the 100 Series Tractor. Each shift turns out approximately 33 tractors, which figures to be close to 18,000 tractors annually. After the tour and a short informative video, it was off to meet our home stay families.



After a brief meeting with the home stay families our group split up and headed home with their hosts. I roomed with Brian Maloney, Jeff Crist, Matthew Brent, Ryan Higbie, and Dennis Metz. Our hosts were a mother, daughter, and granddaughter. Their names were Mary Carmen, Mary Carmen Martinez, and Mary Lou. After a traditional supper of tamales, daughter Mary Carmen introduced us to palomas, a local drink made of tequila, Fresca, lime, and salt. We had a relaxing evening visiting and learning more about each other's culture. The mother Mary Carmen taught English at a local grade school, while daughter Mary Carmen taught Business at a local College.



So our conversation was very comfortable, because both spoke very good English. I asked a few others in the class to describe their home stay and what they did. Here are a couple of others experience.

Melanie Mainquist and Holly Martin spent their home stay with Leena Greer, an English teacher. Fluent in English, she asked numerous questions about how to pronounce several words. She specifically wanted to know the correct pronunciation of the word "Focus" because she knew it was very close to a word she shouldn't be teaching her students. That night consisted of a tour of Queretaro followed by watching the beginning of the war in Iraq on TV.

Tim Luginsland and Barry Purdy stayed with Jose and Lilian Morrett. In addition, Lilian's brother, Richardo was available to help as a translator. Richardo had lived in the United States previously in New Hampshire and worked on a dairy for two years. He spoke fairly good English. Initially, they viewed the site for the next day's festivities of Benito Juarez. They also viewed some very beautiful properties that were homes when they were built, but are now government buildings. Then, they returned to the Morrett's residence in a secured neighborhood for appetizers, dinners, and desert.

Friday March 21, – Daryl Strecker, Scribe

Friday morning we woke up to a breakfast consisting of chilaquiles, a traditional Mexican breakfast made of tortillas, sauce, tomato, onion, chilies, chicken broth, cheese, and sour cream. Both mother Mary Carmen and daughter Mary Carmen were home because Friday was a National Holiday, the birthday of Benito Juarez, as well as the first day of spring. Benito Juarez was the first president of Mexico.



After breakfast at our home stays our class reacquainted at the Hotel Obispado in Queretaro, for a chance to visit a local market. The local market offered a number of different goods. It was very interesting, but also difficult to appreciate after visiting the Central de Abasto. After a brief visit there we headed to Gigante, a store similar to that of Wal-mart, to pick up some necessary goods, such as phone cards and water.





Around 2:00 that afternoon we were met by our host families at our motel for a fiesta dinner in honor of Benito Juarez. We listened to traditional music as well as had a wonderful traditional buffet. Following dinner we had the opportunity to continue our celebration with the breaking of a pinata. We all had a great time, especially the kids. After dinner and our celebration, we had the rest of the afternoon and evening on our own. Many people took this time to visit the local vendors and shops. Queretaro is a very beautiful city, so this was a great opportunity for us to see the city and experience the atmosphere of the holiday.





That night the class had reservations for supper at a local restaurant in the city square. The city square was full of people, celebrating to local musicians playing on stage. It was a beautiful evening and a nice way to enjoy the holiday.



March 22, 2003 - Paul Shields, Scribe

We started the morning with a breakfast meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture Development for the State of Queretaro, Hector Lugo. Hector gave us a brief overview of the responsibilities of his department. The main purpose is to improve the life and income of the local producers in the State of Queretaro.

The south part of the state is the most productive and the North part is the driest and the least productive. Producers grow corn, wheat, vegetables and raise beef, pork, poultry, goats and dairy cattle. The state raises 32,761 dairy cattle and 140 million poultry. Currently the state imports grain from other states as well as the United States.

Our hosts then left us with gifts of posters and information on Queretaro. Everyone then loaded on the bus (everyone that is except Mary Lou and Kim who couldn't get in their room to get their luggage and were left behind to catch up by taxi) The rest of us headed for Rafael Trejo Alvarez's feed plant.

Rafael produces feed for local producers under the brand XZ 2070. He produces cattle, dairy, pig, chicken, sheep, goat, and dove feed. Feed is picked up or delivered in bulk or bag with the majority in bulk. His major customers are dairies with a total production of 70,000 tons per year.



Rafael maintains a small herd of cattle for testing new feeds. He shares this information with his customers as a service. Currently he is importing corn and milo for his feeds from the United States.

After our tour we were treated to a cool drink and a complimentary bottle of tequila.



After leaving Rafael's we stopped at a local McDonald's to pick up Mary Lou and Kim. After the ladies rejoined us we met with Samuel Zepeda who is the area Asgrow corn dealer. Most local farmers use the traditional open pollinated corn but Asgrow has been working with local farmers showing them the advantages of planting hybrid corn. Samuel pointed out that 10% of local farmers still farm with oxen. We then enjoyed a meal of local foods and drinks. As we were leaving we had the opportunity to see corn being planted with oxen. We proceeded on to Mexico City for our final night in Mexico.



March 23, 2002 - Kim Riemann, Scribe

Long before the sun was to rise and way before the rooster crowed we began Sunday morning by leaving the hotel at 4:30 A.M. for an early morning flight from Mexico City to San Jose Costa Rica. The anticipation, even at 4 AM, to get to our new destination was rising as we looked forward to the things we would see and people we would come in contact with.



Upon arriving we were greeted by our travel guide Lloyd Martinez. Lloyd proved to be a refreshing new addition to our group. His excitement, enthusiasm, and knowledge about his country was very much appreciated.





After a leisurely lunch Lloyd showed us many of the sights around San Jose. The first being a coffee plantation, as the coffee bean is one of their most prominent crops. He explained to us the life cycle of a coffee seed from being planted in nurseries until they are a year old and then transplanted into the ground. Due to the high elevations coffee beans take longer to mature, interestingly the first harvest takes place on the forth year. Harvest usually takes place between the months of November to January, in which all beans are hand picked and shipped to the mill for processing.

The afternoon followed with a little shopping at souvenir shops and taking a bus tour around the city. Costa Rica, known for it's beautiful woods, wagons, and coffee beans were enjoyed by all of us as we looked for things to take home for our family members and friends.



Lloyd led us through the downtown and the city of San Jose pointing out major sights such as Costa Rica University, which enrolls nearly 30,000 students, the National Theatre built in 1897, and the National Museum. It was shared with us that the National Museum used to be the headquarters for the Army. The military was banned in 1948 and all monies formally for it went to education. Today, in remembrance of the youthful lives lost at war the National Museum serves as an education center. It is stated, "An educated country is a free country."

The remainder of the afternoon and evening was spent with free time in which many of us took time walking around the city, enjoying and park and visiting with each other.

March 24, 2003, Scribe – Barry Purdy

This day started out with our group coming together in support of Jeff Koch's news of tragedy at home. Jeff Koch was notified on Sunday that his best friend (Lance) lost his life in a car wreck on Saturday. Lee Mattix read a statement that he prepared for public presentation in Independence regarding the state of our community and nation with the prospect of a possible war in Iraq. Lee then asked Jeff to share his expressions of feelings about the passing of his

friend Lance. After Jeff shared his expressions of feelings to the group, we had a moment of silence and Lee lead us in prayer.



At this point we boarded our tour bus for transport to the United States Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica. Upon arrival to the Embassy, we were witness to long lines of individuals waiting to enter as a gentleman washed off the front entrance, due to a demonstration the prior day. The demonstration was against President Bush's advance on Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Once we were allowed to enter the Embassy, we listened to briefings by Todd Chapman, Mark Dulin, and Victor Gonzalez.

Todd Chapman is from the **US Embassy, Political and Economic Section**. He gave an overview of the economic climate in Costa Rica. Todd stated that "Costa Rica has the longest running democracy in Latin America." They abolished their Military in 1948 and invested that money to Social Services and Education. Todd stated that "Education is made available to all citizens of Costa Rica from birth until death and is highly emphasized. Todd also indicated that Costa Rica is supportive of the United States Government. Todd is currently working on terms for a Free Trade Agreement with Costa Rica. Costa Rica also has many challenges, which include the ag sector, services sector (state controlled), and slowing economic growth compared to population growth.

Mark Dulin is the Director of Exotic Disease and Pest Surveillance in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. He graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in Veterinary Medicine. Mark discussed and presented a power point presentation regarding the Screw Worm Eradication Program which provided funding of approximately \$40,000,000 to Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Mark expressed that there exists some political games in Costa Rica such as holding up exports from the United States for several days or weeks for no apparent reason. He also indicated that some people in Costa Rica and Nicaragua use questionable livestock handling techniques as he showed us a slide which showed a cow being transferred across a river tied to the side of the boat by all four legs. Mark also cautioned that people in Costa Rica eat Horse meat. He also indicated that erosion is a very big problem in Costa Rica due to the substantial amounts of rainfall annually of up to 200 inches.

Victor Gonzalez, Agricultural Specialist in Costa Rica, was available to provide Statistics from the Costa Rican Ag Statistics Department and answer questions. The top five ag products for Costa Rica are Bananas, Coffee, Pineapple, Plantains, and Mangos. Victor indicated that Chiquita, Dole, and Del Monte all own and control plantations in Costa Rica. He indicated that land prices are approximately \$3,000 per hector for Ag land and \$180 per square meter for Residential Property.



Next, we boarded the tour bus to travel through the rain forest toward Earth University. Upon arrival, Earth University provided us lunch, which included Pork and Chicken, Rice, Beans, and Pineapple. After lunch, Jorge Rojas and Nicholas Rodriguez showed us a short video about Earth University. Jorge Rojas was a tour guide with Earth University. Nicholas Rodriguez was a student.

Earth University caters to students from 19 countries which have tropical agriculture production. The students graduate from the University with a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy. The University provides classes for 400 students. The faculty includes approximately 30 members that live on campus, which originate from around the world including the United States. The University works on environmental research projects such as small and organic crops & livestock production.



Jorge took the group for a tour of the Universities Banana Plantation and Processing Plant. The Bananas are cut down from trees and placed on a mechanical rail machine, cover with plastic, and pulled to the plant as a group of approximately 20 bunches at a time. As they arrive, they are uncovered, removed from the branch, and placed into a water trough. Next, the bananas are sorted, placed in trays, brushed with preservatives, and placed into boxes for shipping. It appears to be a very simple operation. The facility used for processing is an open sided shed. The workers in the processing plant are paid less than \$1 per hour.



After loading the tour bus, we traveled to Costa Flores, which is the world's largest tropical flower farm. The group was treated to a 1 hour guided tour of the flower farm. At the end of the tour, we were given a beautiful tropical flower arrangement.



Once again, we loaded the tour bus and traveled to Venecia for home stays with host families. Many class members chose to give their tropical flower arrangements to their host families in Venecia, Costa Rica.

March 25, 2003 - Mary Lou Peter, Scribe



After having breakfast with our host families, class members met and toured the Jose Maria Vargas Arias Elementary School, which has 750 kindergarten-sixth graders. Students attend either morning or afternoon classes, with 450 in the morning and the balance in the afternoon. We saw a computer lab with approximately 19 computers.

School was "in session" during our tour, with students dressed in uniforms of either light blue dresses or light blue shirts and dark blue slacks. The six-year-olds using the computers seemed as curious about the Kansans as we were about them. The school has a band room and a library, and a class of kindergartners sang a song to us (Are You Sleeping, Are You Sleeping, Brother John...). We sang to them Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (who came up with that??)

Across the street from the school, above a convenience store, is a regional office for Dole, the giant U.S.-based fruit company.



On the way to visit a pineapple growing area, we learned from our TERRIFIC tour guide, Lloyd, that the national bird is the Clay-collared Robin and viewed tapioca trees and other crops.



When arriving at Omar's farm, we found that he not only farms, but protects part of his land from the public to safeguard areas where pre-Columbian artifacts have been found.

We were told that there are indications that indigenous people of long ago got three corn crops a year – not so hard to imagine when you think of the amazing climate there.

Many of us found the Mimosa plants fascinating. They grow wild in pastures and along roadways and are known as the "sensitive" plant. When a person touches them, they curl up.



We later met with Christian, an agricultural engineer, who'd worked for Dole for six years before starting his own pineapple production/export company. He gave us a history of Dole and Del Monte in Costa Rica, including the competition between the two to come out with new varieties. He talked with us about the production process, and said Costa Rica's biggest competitor in the pineapple business is Honduras. Christian's operation typically yields 80 tons of exportable fruit per hectare. The area he produces in typically has 150 inches of rainfall per year. The plants take 9 months to produce mature fruit. Pineapples are typically the #3 or #4 export of Costa Rica, behind exports by Intel (technology) and bananas. Pineapple planting is done manually, but fertilizing and harvesting are done by machine.

Costa Rica is losing its share of the world coffee market to up and coming producers such as Taiwan.



After returning to our host families' homes to freshen up, we all gathered (along with our host families) at the home of Francisca and Omar for a great party, featuring plenty of Costa Rican good and music. Even the children had a good time dancing!



March 26, 2003 - Jeremy Patterson, Scribe

Wednesday started with us all saying goodbye to our host families and giving them our gifts. The bus came around and picked us all up, and we were off to meet with Francisco Mora, of the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, in Venecia. His position is similar to an extension agents in the US. He trains farmers and works with livestock producers. The top 4 products in his region are tubers, pineapples, grains, and organic agriculture. The region is the largest bean and tuber producing in the country. His presentation was done in power point, but in Spanish so Lloyd our tour guide translated.



We then went and had lunch in Quesada, and were on our way to a livestock market, when the group put their leadership skills to use and stopped the bus to look at sugar cane being harvested. We then walked out to visit with the workers, found one who spoke English, and got an explanation of the operation. Further exploration by the class found an expo and cattle auction going on across the road from the sugar cane field, so we went over and found the manager of the sale barn who spoke English also and gave an explanation of the way the sale barn runs and the cattle market in Costa Rica.





Mary Beth found an American National named Jim Hamilton who came to Costa Rica in 1968 with the Peace Corp and never left. He now has a cattle ranch and Eco Tourism hotel near the sale barn. We had him come on the bus and give a talk explaining his operation, land values, \$3,000-\$4,000 per acre, and his background. During this portion of the tour the class really put their adapting to change skills to work.





Then it was on to the La Fortuna and the Arenal Volcano. We stopped in town to pick up necessities, water, postcards, phone cards and the more local currency. We were just east of the Arenal Volcano and realized this towns life (tourism) and death had been and would be because of the volcano. We then traveled closer to the volcano to check into our motel cabins, probably the most comfortable rooms we had stayed in to this point (with air conditioning). We were North of the Volcano and were pleased to find it somewhat active. We freshened up, then went to the hot springs for a dip, then supper at the restaurant there and then more swimming before returning to the motel. The hot springs were beautiful and the food was good.



We were able to see an occasional clump of lava come out of the top of the volcano and cascade down the side of the mountain. Many stayed up late to watch the natural fireworks. All in all, this was one of the better days of the tour.

March 27, 2003 - Dusty Mullin, Scribe



The day started with a 7:30 breakfast at our Hotel Tacaotal in the shadow of the Arenal Volcano. We loaded the bus at 7:45 and began what was one of the most memorable bus rides of the trip. We were on our way to the Villablanca Hotel to meet with Dr. Rodrigo Carazo, **the former President of Costa Rica**; and while all of the roads were paved, they were far from the straight, flat by-ways that most of us are used to in Kansas. I dare say that most of the class had no idea how maneuverable a 60 passenger charter bus really is. Pass the Dramamine please.



We finally arrived at the Villablanca Hotel. This is an area that is owned and has been developed by Dr. Carazo. The Hotel Office sits at the top of a mountain and offers an outstanding view in every direction. Dr. Carazo met us at the office and we then transferred to view his dairy and composting operation. Dr. Carazo is primarily concerned with ecological issues and prides himself on what he refers to as low impact farming.



Our first stop was the compost sight. Dr. Carozo does not use any chemical fertilizers on his farm. Instead he uses the manure from his dairy and pig operation, together with shredded paper from his hotel and coffee bean hulls to create compost for fertilizer. This mixture of material is piled in long rows inside one of Dr. Carozo's barns. He then relies on California Red Worms to do the work. According to Dr. Carozo, he imported about a million worms and currently has about 20 million. He told us that the worms will eat four times their body weight each day (similar to a KARL member at a sponsored steak dinner). It takes the worms about 10 to 15 days to compost one of the piles. Once the worms finish a pile, they will automatically migrate to the next pile and begin the process again. Dr. Carozo is convinced that this is the future of fertilizer in the tropics. He compared chemical fertilizer to drugs stating, "Chemicals are like giving drugs to the land, it will become a drug addict."





Following the compost discussion, we walked back over to Dr. Carozo's dairy. The dairy milks between 70 and 130 cows depending on the time of year. They milk twice a day. He milks a variety of breeds but pointed out to the class a Normandy breed that he noted was particularly well adapted to the tropical climate. Dr. Carozo brought the first embryo of this breed from France to Costa Rica. According to Dr. Carozo, the milk fat content from the Normandy breed is about 4 ½ percent, and the production is about 80% of that of a Jersey. While touring the dairy we had the unexpected privilege of learning how Costa Rican's try to get a dump truck unstuck. It was a most unfortunate day for the poor guy that got the truck stuck and then had to try to get it out while the former president of Costa Rica and 33 gringos watched.



Following the tours we went back to the Villablanca Hotel for lunch and a brief question and answer period with Dr. Carozo. Dr. Carozo expressed concern over the decline in agriculture in the central valley region of Costa Rica. He anticipates that the economic future for that part of the country lies in the development of tourism.





As we departed from the Villablanca Hotel, we stopped at a beautiful chapel located on the grounds. Lee Matix lead the class in the singing of the doxology and then gave a brief message taken from Matthew where Jesus calms the storm. I have never known a preacher who could give such relevant messages in so few words and such short time. Lee shared that before calming the storm, Christ rebuked the disciples concerning their attitude. Lee challenged us to remember that when situations aren't what we would like, we need to focus on our attitude and allow God to handle the circumstances. A relevant message indeed. Jack then sang the Lords Prayer to close the service.





We were then back on the bus and headed to Punta Leon on the western coast of Costa Rica. We stopped along the way at the Tarcoles River and viewed native crocodiles. There were between 15 and 18 crocodiles sunning themselves below the bridge.



We finally arrived at Punta Leon and managed to get to the beach as the sun was setting. It was a beautiful sight to watch the sun set on the Pacific ocean. We enjoyed a free evening for dinner, lounging on the beach and some even managed to find a place to watch the KU / Duke game.

Then we mowed the grass.

March 28, 2003 - Bryndon Meinhardt, Scribe



Friday started with free time. Some of the group started with a nice breakfast at the hotel restaurant. After breakfast there was an optional rainforest hike. Lloyd led the hike and it ended at the beach to enjoy the rest of our morning of free time. Most of the group ended up on the beach. It was a great beach of white sand on the Pacific coast. The water was great and the sun was warm.



We loaded the bus at 12:30 p.m. Lunch was on our own. The group made a quick stop for water and a few snacks, then we were on our way to the airport in San Jose. The trip would take about two hours. It was our last chance to enjoy the winding roads of Costa Rica.

The first thing we had to do at the airport was pay our exit tax. It was \$6500 colones or \$17. Lloyd helped us check in and then we had to say good-bye to Lloyd. Lloyd was a great tour guide. Then we waited for the plane. We took off around 6:00 PM and landed in Mexico City at 8:35 PM. We were tired so we found our luggage, got on the bus and took off for the hotel. The group checked in and ate a quick bite at the restaurant. We had a 4:30 AM wake up call to get to the airport so the flight was a great time to get some sleep.



We were on our way home.



"With Leadership Comes Responsibility"