

Tamarindo Update

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Making a difference in El Salvador

Volume 3, Issue 1

Spring, 2007

Rufina Amaya Marquez, El Mozote survivor, dies



Rufina Amaya Márquez, the only survivor of the El Mozote massacre during the El Salvador civil war, has died. She was the most eloquent witness of the massacre in 1981 of 900 campesinos, most of them children. This massacre is considered the worst atrocity in Latin American history. She died of a heart attack March 6 in the San Miguel hospital, according to family members.

Over the years of visits to El Salvador, many visitors to Guarjila had the opportunity to travel to El Mozote to meet and speak with her about her survival. We learned about her courage and willingness to fight for what is right.

Newspapers and radio stations ignored what she had to say when she tried to tell what had happened, and it was not until U.S. newspapers published her accounts that Congress began to debate cutting off funding to aid the Salvadoran regime. Her testimony revealed location of the remains of the assassinated and pointed out the guilty, who were never charged. A long series of ARENA-led governments continue to affirm that there is "no reason to open the wounds resultant from the war."

Today, El Mozote is a quiet town. Families have moved back into town, but many buildings remain deserted. In the clearing stands a metal sculpture of a family father, mother, son and daughter holding hands in silhouette. On the front is a description: *They did not die. They are with us, with you and with all humanity.*

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Above: John Guiliano and Rufina Amaya stand in front of the memorial to those assassinated in El Mozote.





Medical/Dental team team visits Guarjila

By Tom Funk

In February, I had the opportunity to return to work in the Ann Manganaro Clinic in Guarjilla as part of an eye care delegation. The first delegation traveled there in 1998. This year, our team consisted of George McCord, M.D. (ophthalmologist), myself (optometrist), Bud Frutkin (attorney and president of the Tamarindo Foundation who matched donated eyeglasses to patients' needs), Ernesto Chavez (attorney and interpreter) and Tamarindo's Luis Lopez, "Chele" Enemias Henriquez Romero and "Chamba" Salvador Serrano Bonillo who also acted as interpreters. Assistance was also provided by Connie Tellman. Dr. McCord and I performed eye examinations while Dr. McCord also performed pterygium surgeries. Ophthalmic drug companies donated a large supply (valued at over \$50,000.00) of eye medications for the treatment of eye infections, dry eyes, glaucoma and other problems.

During our first visits, we found that many people had advanced cataracts and were practically blind as a result. Many simply needed reading glasses to be able to sew or cook. Many, if not most, were bothered by chronic eye irritation as a result of increased ultraviolet light exposure (14 degrees north of the equator) and environmental irritants (dust during the dry season and cooking smoke). We found a much higher incidence of pterygia (an inflamed area that expands from the nasal part of the whites of the eyes onto the cornea). and the incidence of primary open angle glaucoma seemed higher than in the U.S. Lots and lots of people needed glasses, especially farsighted and reading glass prescriptions.

In those early years, we found that very few people had received surgical eye care or had obtained glasses prior to seeing us. In returning this year, after a 4 ½ year absence, we noted some differences, like the presence of more cars and televisions in Guarjilla and a few more people coming to us having received modern cataract surgery with intraocular lenses in the capital city or in Cuba. Some wore glasses that they had received elsewhere.

This year, while the eye team focused on providing glasses to about 85-90 of the 120 or so patients we saw and on providing pterygium surgery for several patients, we also reassessed the needs of the population. We found that more eyeglass prescriptions need to be fabricated more precisely, people would probably like frames that look nicer (who wouldn't?), cataract surgeries should be performed using intraocular lens implantation, if possible, and more pterygium surgeries need to be done. A lane of permanent eye equipment to be used by visiting doctors would help facilitate management of chronic problems like glaucoma and dry eyes.

An unforgettable highlight of our experience was when a patient who was preparing to undergo pterygium surgery came to the clinic mid-day and sang three or four songs for his surgeon (Dr. McCord). So while the yin/yang feeling of satisfaction for being able to help at all alternates with the frustration of being able to do so little, there is the undeniable fact that a need exists. We look forward to being able to do more in the future.

Dr. Tom Funk examines a young woman's eyes at the clinic.



The medical/dental team from Indianapolis with John Guiliano in Guarjila in February.



The Guarjila Clinic



Dr. Bill Tellman, assisted by Marlene, prepares a young frightened patient for dental work.

By Jennifer Grontkowski

I was so very excited for February 17, 2007 to get here this year. I was eagerly waiting getting back to El Salvador and returning to the people. We lost a day due to weather but the Medical Team at the Ana Manganaro Clinic was very prepared for us. The clinic had all the patients screened and ready for us to start. It is a joy and a blessing how we all worked so well together.

This year only Dr. Bill Tellman and I went from the Dental Team. He saw up to 25 patients each day, doing fillings and extractions and I performed dental teeth cleanings on about 17 patients a day. The town comes out in volumes but they are apprehensive. Most of them are afraid of me because the majority of them have never had a cleaning in their lives, just drilling and fillings. However, they trust and never complain if something hurts -- it always amazes me.

This year compared to last, we both saw a lot more decayed teeth. For the young children most of this decay was in their baby (primary) teeth, and we hope to educate them regarding proper brushing and flossing. It is especially important to try to influence the children so decay does not affect their permanent teeth. For the adults, the decay was primarily on their first molars because people get them when they are 6 or 7 years of age.

We saw a little girl with abscessed teeth who said she was in no pain. Another 17-year-old had brittle enamel. I held back the tears when I touched and cleaned around them. I knew it had to hurt but she just wanted them cleaned. Bill and I told her to come back the next day because we wanted to do more for her, she never showed up. She is so beautiful but I know she hides her smile.

This decay is getting worse because of changes in their diet in regards to the amount of sugar they intake. One goal is for us to continue to work with the Medical Team but begin educational programming with the school. Our vision is to get funding for a fluoride program in the school. We also would like to provide the clinic with a dental chair that can be used all year round. Our hope is that dental school students begin to come to the clinic to do their rotations.

The Medical Team always tells me how muy cansada (very tired) that I must be. Honestly, the people give me so much energy from their spirit and from them giving me the opportunity to help them. I pray to keep making a difference and give back to them what they give to me and looking forward to the next dental/medical visit in February 2008.

St. Francis High School raises funds for the Tamarindos



St. Francis High School in Mountain View, California, with a little help from its friends, is providing support for the Tamarindos in several ways.

According to Salvador Chavez, director of Campus Ministry at St. Francis, each year there is a homeroom fund raising project. Each homeroom decides on a charity or social action it wants to take on. This is for two reasons: to fulfill the schoolwide goal of making students good citizens cognizant of their global responsibilities; and to continue the school theme this year of family. The Holy Cross concept of family includes those in need beyond our school boundaries. One of those is the El Salvador Tamarindo group. Three homerooms signed up to collect monies for the Tamarindos this year. Final amounts raised will not be known until June when school ends.

One senior at St. Francis, in particular, has really taken fundraising for the Tamarindos to heart. Tamara Caruso, a St. Francis student who participated in an El Salvador immersion experience last summer, raised over \$3000 for the Tamarindos. She organized a free throw shoot-a-thon with her little brother's basketball team from St. Joseph Elementary School in Fremont. Each student who participated pledged "x" amount of money per free throws made in a certain amount of time.

Here are her words:

This past summer I visited with John and the Tamarindos in Guarjila. I was extremely struck by the needs of the community, their openness and welcoming spirit. I hope to return one day to help in any way I can. John had asked all of us to give a presentation about our trip to Guarjila using our pictures, in an effort to each raise \$200 to help the Tamarindos in their rebuilding efforts. This past Christmas season we held a shoot-a-thon with the St. Francis girls freshman and junior varsity basketball teams and the St. Joseph seventh grade boys basketball teams. We hoped to improve basketball skills while raise funds for a charity. The coaches allowed us to name the Tamarindos. I passed around pictures and explained the economic situation in El Salvador, my experiences with the loving people of Guarjila, and how I was affected by my visit.

We were able to raise \$3627. We hope this will go a long way toward helping the families in Guarjila.

Moms (of students who travel to E.S.) reflect on their visit to Guarjila

Roberta Furger and Reuben Hetz

Our daughters traveled to Guarjila, ES, last spring with a group from St. Mary's College High School. They spent ten days living with the Tamarindos and came back changed – transformed by the people, the place, the experience. Changed so much, in fact, that we felt compelled to travel to Guarjila ourselves to try to understand more about the community that had come to mean so very much to our daughters and their classmates.

In July of last year we traveled with a smaller group of students to return to Guarjila. We went to learn.

For first-time visitors, Guarjila may seem simple, unremarkable. The humble homes are connected by a series of unpaved roads that flood the first summer storm. The hotel was more like the hostels of our youth, not quaint boutique inns of our adult travels. We quickly came to recognize the beauty of the place, however – the lush green foliage, the incessantly chatty birds with their distinct songs, the open air church that serves as a reminder of the civil war that ravaged the country took so many lives. We also grew to understand that it isn't just the physical place of Guarjila to which our daughters feel connected.

The connection is the people. There is a generosity of spirit that inspires and amazes, a warmth that makes Guarjila feel like home, although it is nothing like the homes where our daughters sleep each night.

There is John Guiliano, of course, the heart and soul of the Tamarindos and the consummate host, always just a little nervous about the guests, worrying that they not feel the connection or understand the beauty of the community. There are the young U.S. folks who come back to Guarjila during college and after. And there are the Tamarindos themselves, the youth and young adults from Guarjila who open their hearts and homes to dozens of traveling youth each year. (continued on the next page)

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We arrived on a stormy night when soccer games were in full swing and the pupuseria was open for business. We were welcomed as old friends or beloved "aunts" as some of the Tamarindos called us. Chele took us on a walking tour of the town, sharing bits of history as we walked. We were treated to a daylong excursion to La Palma. We visited a local women's cooperative and went to Chalatenango for market day. We ate at Betty's, filled up on pupusas in the evenings and enjoyed many hours of visiting with our hosts.

It would have been easy to feel like an outsider, given the language barrier, the difference in age. What does one say to two middle-aged moms who were crazy enough to follow their daughters to Guarjila? Of course, we felt welcomed.

Months later, back at home in the San Francisco Bay area, we continue to feel the warmth that enveloped us last summer: Chele's smiling face as we load into the van for a short trip; John suiting up to referee a soccer game or calling a Tamarindo meeting to order. Nancy and her girls sweeping the shop floor and sitting down crosslegged to read Charlotte's Web; the roosters crowing and pupusas sizzling.

Like our daughters, their classmates, and the thousands of students who have traveled to Guarjila over the years, we too are connected to that small rural town. We are connected to the Tamarindo, to the remarkable people who call Guarjila home and who, in their willingness to share their story, make us feel as if it is our home too.

Auction Fundraiser begins later this spring

Leave your suits and dresses in their garment bags and join us from the comfort of your home in the Tamarindo Foundation, Inc.'s first online auction! The auction will feature a variety of valuable items including original paintings, autographed merchandise, gift certificates to popular restaurants and stores, and much more to benefit the Tamarindos and the Ana Manganaro Clinic. The auction is scheduled for later this spring.

You don't need to purchase a ticket for our auction! To participate, individuals will just need to be registered with E-bay.

**Watch for details and links on the webpage:
www.tamarindofoundation.org**

More information will follow with specific dates and directions for registering through email communication

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For information or to contribute to the newsletter, contact Clara Pile at

scpile@aol.com



TAMARINDO PROFILE: Chele perseveres as a Tamarindo

Enemias Henriquez Romero "Chele"

Perseverance is a word that best defines Chele. He joined the Tamarindo group when it first started in 1992. "Honestly, I joined the group because I wanted to learn how to ride a bike." He was one of the children that grew up in Guarjila that at age 9 had probably seen bombers as birds and bombardments as fireworks but just knew that soldiers usually stopped him and his mother searching for "weapons" when returning home from the market in town. And yes, this blond, quiet boy, thought learning to ride a bike was a good enough reason to help start the Tamarindo group to give kids the chance to learn that sports, faith and community are possible practices and not empty concepts. He learned that even after surviving a cruel war, a boy has the opportunity to become a grown up who can confidently walk around as an independent person, a boy that has turned out to be a great athlete, a youth leader and a well-respected person today in Guarjila.

Due to his natural curiosity and by experiencing contact with the many US school delegations, friends and a number of visitors that annually visit the Tamarindo, he became fluent in English. He also attended high school and completed two years of computer programming afterwards. But being a soccer coach is his real passion. Currently 24, he is still the same child. "I have to either play soccer, or read scores or watch a soccer match everyday. It is impossible for me to live without one of them. My perfect day is when I help my sister and my father at home in the daily chores, work out in the Tamarindo's gym, coach the Indiana soccer (local team), and spend the rest of the day in the Tamarindo doing some planning and helping to develop weekly programs."

In El Salvador, the general attitude of young people like him is to find the way to illegally immigrate to USA. Chele is the opposite. He could have easily followed his three siblings to Virginia and found a job looking for some false fortune like the others who go to the US. But "I am disappointed that people leave this community to pursue a life where there is no freedom. I rather stay and be part of the change we must seek in this country".

And when it comes to be around the kids in the Tamarindo's afternoons, he is a *like fish in the water*. "I love to work with kids, I enjoy talking to them, getting to know them, welcoming the new members and serve a counselor, as a guide. Besides coaching soccer, I believe that being a Tamarindo is my real talent."

Tamarindos begin cultural encounters with the arts

By John Guiliano

In January, the Tamarindos began a new program called "Encuentro Cultural Tamarindo" (Tamarindo Cultural Encounter). The program will invite Tamarindos to the world of art and culture by attending concerts, visiting museums and other national cultural events throughout 2007.

The Tamarindos began their encounters by visiting the Tin Marin Museum and the National Planetarium. (The Tin Marin Children's Museum is the only children's museum in El Salvador that provides interactive experience through its permanent exhibitions on science and technology, environment, telecommunications, culture and other areas. The museum plays an important role in raising the cultural and educational level of the country not only through such experience-based exhibitions but also through music festivals, art exhibitions and other events.)

Fifteen Tamarindos attended a performance of Rossini's "Il Barbieri di Siviglia." It was performed by an international cast from Europe, South America, and El Salvador (Salvadoran artists for the first time).

Needless to say, the Tamarindos were both excited and curious about their first night at the opera. We would love for friends of the Tamarindo to be sponsors for other cultural encounters throughout the years by giving a gift to the Tamarindo Cultural Encounter Fund. Help the Tamarindos discover the world of the arts. In making a donation, you can specify the fund.

Foundation continues support in Portillo, E.S.

In addition to Guarjila, The Tamarindo Foundation continues to support the school in Portillo, E.S. for special projects. There is continuing support for teacher salaries and student scholarships. The students at St. Pius X Elementary School in Indianapolis collect school supplies as well as funds to support students' learning.

The foundation's work (before it officially became a foundation) was centered on Portillo's redevelopment. St. Pius X Parish was the initial sponsor for Portillo projects. The foundation has assumed responsibility for continuing support of the families in Portillo through the education of their children.

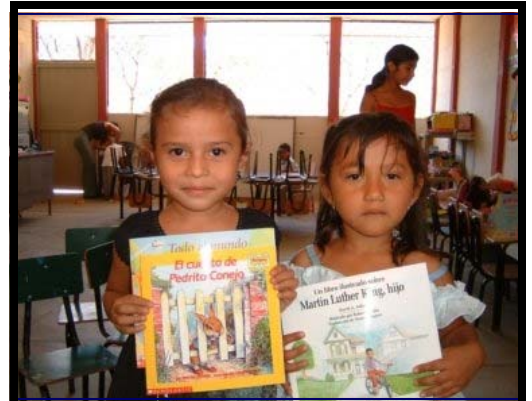
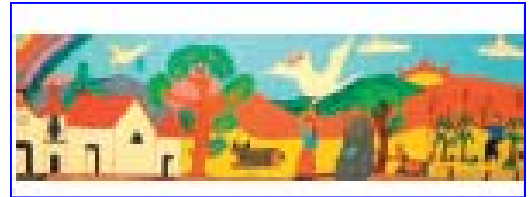
Pictures to the right are of children attending the Portillo school.

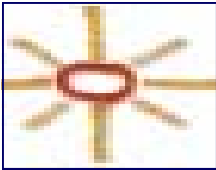
The top picture: Diana and Marisol show off new books sent by families from St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis, IN.

The second picture: Two boys attending Portillo School.

The third picture: Blanqui and a friend stand outside their classroom in Portillo.

The bottom picture: Blanqui, Maritza, Juri and Norma on their way to school in Portillo.





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