

GOD BUILDS A BRIDGE OF FRIENDSHIP IN MEXICO

The Birth of Puente de Amistad

Before 1991, Open Bible had no presence in Tijuana, Mexico. The church in Guadalajara, 1000 miles south, was prospering. Sean Dunn and others had visited Tijuana, the border town below San Diego, but there was nobody at all affiliated with Open Bible there, not even in San Diego, where Open Bible had twice planted churches that no longer existed. But Milton Stewart had been praying for ministry opportunity in Mexico for years, while he had served as the Pacific Region Superintendent, and his successor, Don Bryan, had continued. Finally, it was time.

Don Bryan and Paul Canfield, Executive Director of Open Bible International Ministries, began to make plans. Don had a résumé in his file from many years before of an engineer-turned-Christian-schoolteacher in Concord, California. Ed Daley was asked to meet with them and to pray about going to Tijuana to inaugurate a ministry there for Open Bible, one that could be used by our people to get first-hand experience on the foreign mission field.

At first, Ed felt he could not go to that city because as a teenager growing up a couple of hours north of the border, he had been to that city as a carousing, drunken, tourist without Christ. He did not want to face the tragedy he saw there, the little dirty children trying to sell gum to the tourists, the teenage girls trying to sell themselves, and the godlessness of it all. But after weeks of prayer, he agreed to consider it, and applied when the International Ministries Board requested applications.

Once the plan was put into motion, Don and Paul went to Tijuana to “scout out the land.” They knew nobody and only had one contact there – an independent missionary that an Open Bible pastor had met at a conference. While there, both of them heard separately from the Holy Spirit very clearly, “Don’t build your own nest here; work with those who are here already.” So the idea of starting a church was set aside, and in obedience to God, the plan was to offer help to the pastors already there. Our discipleship training program, INSTE, would be offered to all the churches, in addition to our plans to bring teams to minister to the people. The program would be named “Puente de Amistad,” which means Bridge of Friendship. That selfless, obedient decision proved to be the right way to go about things in Tijuana, as we eventually found all the pastors willing to work with us in unity.

Ed arrived in Tijuana in early January of 1993, two days before the arrival of El Nino, the heavy rainfall phenomenon named after the Christ child, because it usually starts around Christmas. Soon Tijuana was under a thick layer of mud and water. It was an ignominious start to the work there. Tijuana had for years been a hotbed of sin and corruption of soul and spirit, a stronghold of the enemy. It was started as a bar/brothel just across the border, and with the establishment of many U.S. military training bases at the beginning of WWII, quickly became the focus of wild “last flings” by men heading to the South Pacific for the war. It was still known mainly as a place to indulge appetites.

It appeared that with the three weeks of heavy rain, the spiritual powers over the city were letting us know we were not welcome. The enemy had the pastors in the city fighting with each other, distrustful of all Americans, and in a chaotic state of spiritual confusion. It became clear he was totally opposed to anyone coming there with a selfless spirit.

Our first task was to find a place for teams to stay while visiting Tijuana, but with the muddy streets it was impossible to travel anywhere. A team of youth pastors came down to visit during a lull in the rain, but while they were riding through town in the 15 passenger van purchased for Puente de Amistad, they were caught in a flash flood. At a policeman's order, the van was driven over the divider in the boulevard to escape the onrushing flood waters. But what about Ed's car following behind with Steve Poetzl and three additional pastors? It couldn't make it over the divider! No problem! The youth pastors in the van got out and LIFTED the sedan over the divider, and both vehicles and their passengers escaped the flood!

The youth pastors took part in a weekend of prayer to begin the ministry in Tijuana with a spiritual covering and a notice to the enemy that God was mounting a fresh attack against his hold on the city. The weekend, inspired by Dick Douglas and attended by seven Open Bible lay people from around the U.S.A., involved prayer in high places and key locations in the city, like City Hall, the Tijuana University, and the border monument. It was another excellent step to set the stage for an assault on the city by an army of obedient and unselfish workers.

By June, when teams were scheduled to arrive, the search for a place for teams to stay had become desperate. Each potential location was thwarted by unusual circumstances, most notably the desire by local ministers to "lay low." Mexico had just passed a law requiring all churches to register with the government, but many were afraid to comply and wanted to do nothing to attract attention to themselves, like having a group of Americans living there for a week!

Two teams had come at spring break, one from Eugene Bible College and one from several churches in Oregon, but they had to stay at the Youth With a Mission base. They built two houses for families flooded out in January and did some excellent ministry with dramas and puppet shows taught by YWAM, but there would be no room for any more such teams in the summer since YWAM was well booked up with hundreds of visitors of their own.

Because Don Bryan, Paul Canfield and Steve Poetzl had been faithful to let God set the agenda for the ministry, God provided all that was ever needed at every step, in many cases through obviously miraculous intervention. He had used Sean Dunn to give us the contact with YWAM, and used Roger Keller in Santa Rosa to give us a contact with an orphanage called Colina de Luz (Hill of Light) just south of Tijuana, in the little town of La Gloria (the glory). Both of these God-ordained contacts provided housing for our first teams. Our first team stayed at the home of Sergio Gomez, a former Tijuana pastor who had dedicated himself to building homes for small families. Sergio was on the Board of Directors of both YWAM and Colina, and he had observed our spring teams and offered

to help. Jim Drake, director of Colina de Luz, also let teams stay at the orphanage, an unforgettable experience. Jim, Sergio, and the YWAM leaders, John Liotti and Sean Lambert, were invaluable to us in the first years of Puente de Amistad. But their help was only temporary, their ministries were growing and they needed their space for their own ministries. We needed our own base in order to continue.

As the word spread about the wonderful ministry the teams were having in Tijuana, more and more pastors and youth pastors wanted to bring teams. We often had three small teams together at one time. Concord Christian Center, Ed's home church, sent a team of fifty-five! We scrambled to find additional housing, using hotels, Bible schools, Ed's house, any space we could find. There were times when two days before a team's arrival, it was not known where they would be staying. The need for a base was enormous, but despite hours of searching with numerous real estate agents, no place could be found that was both appropriate and affordable, and it was becoming obvious that a large base would be needed, as the popularity of Puente was resulting in great demand for accommodation. We really needed a miracle!

We had made acquaintance with a young Christian attorney, Rudolfo (Rody) Rogriguez, who had the ministry of providing legal services for churches at no cost. He had helped us with our certification as an accepted ministry in Tijuana, and had prevented a problem a couple of times when someone offered us a great piece of land at a super price. Rody had done the title search and found that the people purporting to be the owners were not, and would have taken our deposit but left us with nothing.

Rody also worked with wealthy people in Tijuana who wanted to invest money in the USA, as that was his specialty. He came to us with a client who owned a gorgeous piece of land on the east side of Tijuana. It was in a huge tract of land that a developer had constructed with roads, street lights, sewers, electricity, in fact, all the infrastructure necessary for an upscale residential area. The empty home lots were being sold to people who could then choose to have one of the model homes constructed or could do their own building. Rody's client, who had just become a seeker of Christ, wanted to sell us a lot her husband had been given in return for services he had rendered to the developers, which she had then acquired in a divorce settlement. It was actually several lots connected together, in a cul-de-sac (dead end street), which was perfect for our needs. We could have our privacy, not disturb neighbors, and easily develop security. It was a lot at the end of the street, had a big turnaround design which provided ample room to maneuver buses or vans and had tons of on-street parking. It was too good to be true. The most amazing thing was she would sell it to us at half the market price! God had now used yet another person to help us do what was otherwise humanly impossible.

All of our friends in Tijuana were amazed at this tremendous piece of property at such a low price! Since the lots were on the east side of town, the market value was a lot less than anything in the west or central areas of town, yet it was just a short distance from the location of the first homes we had built for flood victims, which had become the focus of much of our ministry. We had also started a kids' kitchen to feed poor children there and had built additional homes. We were able to minister in any way we wanted at a

church that was started close by on a piece of property we had been given by the city (unheard of for a non-Catholic church group), where many of the children of our kids' kitchen had started attending along with their parents! Alvin Morales, the pastor of the church, was a good friend of many of the members of the Open Bible church in Tujunga, California, where he grew up! God had obviously been paving the way for our ministry in Tijuana for many years.

Obtaining the property in Tijuana was just the first step in developing the base. And the enemy had not given up trying to discourage and impede us. What we were told would be a two to three month escrow dragged on for 18 months. At every turn, the process was delayed because none of the authorities would believe that we were buying it at the low price. They all assumed the seller was trying to avoid her seller's tax by telling the authorities one price and actually charging us a lot more. On two occasions, the Men of Vision tentatively scheduled a construction project for the base, only to have to find a project in another country when we ran into yet another unexpected delay. It appeared on one occasion that we would never be allowed to actually complete the purchase. But praise God, we finally closed escrow in June of 1997 and hired an architect highly recommended by our attorney to begin the preliminary design. The Men of Vision scheduled their trip to begin construction of the first phase of the base March 29 of the next year. Everything was on target. Little did we know that an even more amazing set of miracles would be necessary before the Men of Vision even arrived.

The first curve the enemy threw at us was the unexpected promotion of our architect to a job in Ensenada, which took up much more of his time. When we hired him, he had a job with the Mexican Tourist Agency and had a lot of time to do work on the side, but in this new job he was responsible for about 100 government buildings that were all very much in need of repair. We had given him 30% of his fee up front, as is the normal procedure, and he assured us he would have the design done by September, as called for in his contract, but apparently even he did not anticipate how busy he would be on his new job. Plus, we found that although he had been very good at reviewing designs submitted to the Tourist Agency, he had limited expertise in grading, drainage, and structural design. He had even hired an engineer to do the structural portion, unknown to us. Fortunately, Ed Daley was able to do the surveying, grading design, and drainage plan for the property, leaving the architect to just do the site layout.

While waiting for him to do that, we began "cleaning and grubbing" the site by hand, using teams coming down to do ministry. We had always had teams do one day of physical labor during their ministry time, and they were all excited to get involved on our very own property. Sergio Gomez brought an outhouse to the site, we hired a backhoe operator to dig a latrine, and we had "sanitary facilities" on the property, which was necessary as no other buildings existed in the area of our lots. It was quite humorous. When Arturo Mendez, the Open Bible pastor in Guadalajara and the President of Open Bible's Mexican Association, came to Tijuana to sign the final papers, a Polaroid camera was used to take a picture of him on the empty site, next to the outhouse, which was called Open Bible Tijuana in the caption. He thoroughly enjoyed that little joke.

We will never forget one team from Eugene Bible College. Ed asked them to dig out a slope that had resulted from a neighbor doing grading for some condominiums on the property next to us, which was outside our tract. We were worried that we would be restricted from building up to the property line on that side due to the slope, since the Mexican laws about property lines are very different from ours, and the slope could actually give the neighbor rights upon our land. They had nothing but picks and shovels, and the ground was hard and dry, no grass at all. One of the students was a girl from Iowa. She was a farm girl, and all the boys on the team had to really exert maximum effort to keep up with her pick work!

But when September came and the architect's work was due, he had let us down. Ed suggested we needed to fire him and hire another, since in Ed's opinion even the preliminary design was inadequate. But we gave him another chance after he sincerely promised to have it by the end of the month. But when Ed left for vacation in Kenya in October, we were told it would be ready when Ed got back. It wasn't. He finally got it done and took it to city hall to submit it for approval just before Christmas, but he never showed it to us. In fact we didn't know he had submitted it until two days after Christmas when Ed called him. But the bad news came in early January. He had submitted it to the office of commercial construction permits, instead of the office for residential permits. They were forced to deny it right away because as we knew when we bought the property, no commercial construction was allowed in our tract! And he had designed it to look more like a hotel than a private residence. It was a total disaster!

The severity of the situation cannot be overstated. The Men of Vision were due in less than three months and were expecting the grading to be done, footings to be in place, and the slab poured. And we didn't have any permits, and according to the man we spoke with at the Planning Department, we had absolutely zero prospects of getting permits at any time. They were totally opposed to our construction! The situation seemed as impossible as it could be.

Ed made a call to Dave Bethany, Ray Rexius' construction coordinator for the Men's team. He said it was too late to cancel the trip, the men had asked for time off from work a long time earlier, and already had their airline tickets purchased. He was very agreeable, and said they would just do whatever could be done when they got there, even if it was just doing the grading by hand. We were in a terrible quandary. It would be disastrous to waste a trip by the Men of Vision to just do menial labor, and not much of that.

But INSTE came to our help. Luis Moreno had become totally fascinated with INSTE and talked his pastor into allowing him to be the coordinator for INSTE at San Pablo Church, the second largest Christian church in Tijuana. Luis was very unorthodox, not to mention unreliable, and all Ed's friends had told him not to work with Luis. But they had become good friends. Luis just happened to know the Director of City Welfare Services personally and could arrange a lunch with him. The man was the mayor's right hand man and could arrange a meeting with the mayor for Ed. That was the only way to get the Planning Department to reconsider our submittal. At the meeting, as Luis had advised,

Ed told the man everything Puente de Amistad had done for the poor people of Tijuana. The list was long, and left nothing out: homes built free for flood victims; construction done at orphanages; food, clothing, and blankets distributed to poor families; mattresses for Mixteco families, the poorest of the poor; scores of houses and two schools painted, so the rain would not ruin the cheap plywood used by the poor; a complete set of playground equipment brought all the way from Shaver Lake, California, and installed at a children's home; and over 100,000 free lunches given over the years to children at the flood refugee colony. Even Ed was amazed to see the large accumulation of social services rendered by Open Bible teams through God's inspiration and provision, and the list of course did not include our evangelism and work with churches, through which over a thousand souls had been led to Christ. Ed had put these services in a short letter, and the man said he would take the letter to the mayor and ask him to meet with Luis and Ed.

We never had the meeting, but a meeting was set up with the planning department official who had turned us down. He was ordered to tell us what we would have to do to modify the project to get it approved by the residential office, which was an hour to the east, near the property, and the place the design should have been submitted in the first place, but now could not be submitted without the planning department releasing it.

It was a ray of hope. The meeting was a very difficult one, the official was obviously upset, and didn't really want to help, but had to obey the mayor, and gave us a set of guidelines, not specific items, that had to be done to render the design acceptable for a residential area. The building had to have just one outside entrance, and the entire footage had to be accessible from that one entrance. (We had made the boys' dorms and girls' dorms separately accessed.) The big bedrooms and bathrooms had to be changed to normal sized rooms, such as would be found in a regular home. The soccer/basketball court had to be eliminated, and there had to be no signs or any other identification of the building. It had to look, both inside and out, like a private home. There were never to be complaints from neighbors about noise, so no church services could be conducted on the site. And all parking would have to be off-street, behind a big wall.

We now had a plan of action. We first had to hire a new architect who could work quickly, very quickly. The new one was young and hungry, and not very busy. He was offered a large bonus if his modifications were done by the end of January, so the review process could begin. Ed would do all the leg work, taking the drawings to the planning office over an hour away, then go back the next day to get the review comments, bringing them back to the architect, and repeating the whole process as many times as was necessary to get the final approval. Another El Nino had arrived, and the roads to the office were piled with mud, making the trip last two hours or more, but the work had to be done and approved quickly. The architect was clever. He made the bathroom that is now upstairs in the girls' dorm, which he designated the "master bedroom," with a shower and a Jacuzzi, a toilet and a bidet, so it could be easily modified to two showers and two toilets after the inspection. (As it turned out, we never had to put in these expensive items.) His brother looked at the drawings, and said, "Who is that for?" When the architect told him it was for his church client, the brother said, "He must be a cardinal!"

With miraculous grace given to us by God at the residential planning office, we got the permit in early February. Now we just needed to get the site graded and the footing trenches dug. Normally, you can find men sitting on their own backhoes by the side of the road in new areas of town where there is a lot of construction, ready to rent themselves and their machine for a couple of hours or so. However, due to the extensive damage caused by the El Nino rains during January, all backhoes and cleanup crews were working overtime, so not a single piece of equipment was available. We hit another roadblock.

Ed was in the habit of meeting with Sergio Gomez and Alvin Morales once a month for prayer. At the next meeting, only Sergio arrived, and he was not at all busy, which is very unusual, so he asked Ed how he expected to get the site ready for the Men of Vision, as that had been Ed's prayer request. When Ed explained his plan, Sergio, who normally was a man of faith, said it was impossible to do it with volunteer labor; we needed to hire a contractor. He had a son-in-law who was a grading and trenching contractor, he would ask him to help us as a favor to Sergio. He was married to Sergio's daughter who was director of another orphanage that Sergio had started and then turned over to her. They owed Sergio a favor.

Sergio's son-in-law showed up at the site the next day, and he gave us a huge estimate, far beyond our budget, for doing the work. He said he would have to start the next day in order to get the slab done by the time the Men of Vision arrived. Ed told him his boss, Paul Canfield, was in the Philippines and would have to be contacted and sent a copy of the estimate in order to give his approval. But the man wanted to start the next day. He said he would pull a man and a machine off another job to get ours started, taking a chance that Paul would approve the whole slab installation. If not, he would just charge us by the hour for one day's rental of the equipment and the operator, as long as Ed was there to supervise the operator, place grade stakes, and check the depth of the trenches, etc. So he started. Paul was not able to respond the first day, so they came out the second day, too. On that day, Ed heard from Paul: we just could not spend that much on the construction. So when the contractor came in the afternoon he got the bad news. He was upset, as now he was behind on the other job, but God must have spoken to him, because he said, "Well, today is just about over, and we have only a half day to finish for you, tomorrow is Friday, why don't we just finish this tomorrow?" So the grading and trenching got done even though every piece of machinery in town was booked up for weeks and working overtime! Only God could have made that happen!

A group of men from Calvary Temple in Springfield, Oregon, and Bethany Open Bible in Tacoma, Wash., came on a three-day weekend to attempt to place all the reinforced steel in the footing trenches, pour the base of the footings, and then construct the footing walls to bring the footing up to ground level. The site had a lot of loose fill soil on it, so some of our footings would be four feet deep, requiring lots of steel, poured concrete, and concrete block risers. It was a monumental task to do in a three-day weekend, but Darby Kruger of Bethany was on the team. He was a very good leader, was from Springfield,

and actually a concrete contractor by trade. What a miraculous provision! The Holy Spirit really guided us that weekend.

At one point we were way over on the calculations of how much concrete we needed to pour the footing base. The budget allowed only a couple of concrete truckloads, but the calculations called for over six truckloads. Had Ed made a mistake with his rudimentary geometry calculations? How could the concrete contractor be wrong? Ed asked for a minute to think about it, walked about fifty feet away and prayed. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit showed him that it was not the bottom of the footing that needed to be level, but the top. The trenches had become overly deep on the first day the men began working because it had rained hard two days before they had arrived, and though the trenches were covered with plastic, a lot of water seeped in from the sides of the loose ground. The resulting mud in the trenches had to be dug out with hand shovels, so now the trenches were a lot deeper in some areas. To make the trenches even all along the bottom would take a lot more concrete. The contractor was not at all wrong, he was doing it just like any contractor would do it, but in Mexico the major cost is in the concrete; the labor is cheap. In the USA, concrete is much cheaper than labor, so you would never use manual labor to shore up the deeper trench areas to do a stepped pour of concrete, because the extra labor would be much more expensive than the extra concrete. So the team just put some inserts in where the footing floor was unlevel, and the pour was done with the two trucks of concrete and thousands of dollars were saved. Ed had no experience with footings, he could never have figured out that solution if given all day, but the Holy Spirit provided it in less than a minute.

The footing walls still would not have gotten done before the team had to leave had it not been for another unusual “coincidence” that God used. Mark Brandt, missionary to Papua New Guinea, was in the states and had asked Ed if he could come to see the base property and the kids’ kitchen, etc., in Tijuana. Open Bible missionaries always have very close relationships with each other, if not through contact at conferences and conventions, then just because they are all working for the same family. Ed and Mark had met only briefly once when Ed itinerated in Springfield and they spoke briefly after the service. But when Mark heard some men from Springfield, Oregon, his home church, were going to be there, he coordinated his itineration schedule to be there at the same time.

On the last day of the weekend, Mark was there to work with the men. Mark is a huge, strong man and a great worker. The other men with construction experience had to leave the day before according to the original plan, so it was Mark, his son Jonathan, and Darby’s team of very willing but not very knowledgeable workers. Mark started working on mixing the mortar, a key part of the work that requires expertise and stamina, but then after about an hour he left that task with Jonathan, and started working on the blocks. In a few minutes all the men were watching him. He was working so hard and fast he was laying about three blocks to every one anybody else laid. They were amazed. Mark saw them watching and said, “Look guys, you are not building a wall with these blocks, they are in a footing trench below the ground that will be filled in with dirt and then the slab poured over the top. NOBODY will ever see this wall, it doesn’t have to be pretty,

just strong! So slap that mortar up there as fast as you can, keep a straight line, and don't worry about what it looks like." And then he went back to work, and all the other men tried to do it like him and keep up. They laid about four times as many blocks per hour as they had done the day before when they didn't have Mark's example, and though none could keep up with him, all the blocks were in place and the footing risers completed as the vehicles pulled out to take them all to the airport. If God had not brought Mark there, the work would not have been done before they left, and there was no more time: the spring ministry teams were arriving for Easter break and there was no opportunity for any more construction teams to come. The ministry teams had been scheduled for months. It looked like the Men of Vision would just have to pour the slab while they were here, and since the concrete takes several days to dry, they would get only about a third of what they wanted to do done. We would therefore have to wait until the following summer to have a base of our own capable of housing teams. But that was a lot better than the prospects appeared in January, when it looked like we would not get anything constructed at all for many months, if not years. We were okay.

However, God wasn't done providing miracles yet. Each team usually requested one work day for their teams, and a very large team was coming from Bend, Oregon. The work project was usually the last item planned, as it depended on who needed work done that didn't take skilled labor when the team was here. Kent Valentine, the Bend youth pastor, asked over the phone if there was any work at the base, as the team would love to be part of the base construction. Ed said there was a huge amount of dirt that needed to be moved to fill in the footing trenches. It would be very hard work and the team would sweat profusely and get caked with dust, but if they were willing to work we would buy the wheelbarrows and shovels and they could do as much as they wanted.

What a team! Not only did those kids work like mules, pushing heavy wheelbarrows through the thick sand and over the steep ramps placed above the open trenches, but they kept at it far longer than anyone had dreamed they could in the hot, dry sun which they were totally unused to at that time of the year. In Bend there were still patches of snow on the ground! Several of the adult male chaperones on the team decided they didn't need to travel around with the team all week (we did the work their first full day in Tijuana so the trenches wouldn't fill up with water if it rained again), but they had enough construction skills among them to do the final leveling and preparing of the ground between the trenches, place the plastic liner that protects the slab from the incursion of ground moisture, tie the steel netting over the plastic to hold the concrete in place until it dried, and to place the reinforcing bar in the footing blocks to extend the steel frame upwards so the steel in the walls could be connected to the footing steel after the slab was poured. These men had no idea they would be doing this before they came, and Ed had no idea up until two days before they arrived that the project would be that far along!

So all was ready for the Men of Vision to pour the slab. But God had still a better plan. The next team was from Bethel Open Bible in Lodi, California, and they "just happened" to bring a concrete finisher with them! Their male chaperones worked at the base for the actual pouring of the concrete from the trucks, and then the concrete man came back two nights in a row after dinner and did the concrete finishing, which involves getting down

on your knees and smoothing the entire slab inch by inch with a hand held smoothing device. He had only the light from the headlights of the van, and had to work there until past twelve the final night. With incredible, amazing, provision by God, the slab was in, and it would have three days to dry before the Men of Vision were scheduled to arrive, so they could put up the walls and we would have a base! This was less than eighty-three days from the day the permit application was totally denied by the city! The provision of God through all the individuals as well as the teams was stupefying, for lack of better words. May He receive all the glory and honor for the tremendous miracles He performed so that mortals could accomplish His plan!

Some of the Men of Vision team arrived on the weekend. All that was at the site after the spring teams left was the empty slab and the outhouse. But the Men were used to going to a country where there was a whole Open Bible community, with churches and houses to store tools and building materials, women to cook for them, and men to help with the task. In Tijuana, Open Bible had one missionary and the occasional visitors. No church, no people, nobody. But we had God. And He had given us friends.

On Thursday, Sergio Gomez sent the three men who worked with his teams out to the base. They were free for just one day, as a team had left on Wednesday and another was coming in on Friday. Sergio and Ed had designed a little shed, built similar to the simple houses built for the poor, and Sergio had given Ed a list of materials to order. The materials arrived on the site Thursday morning. Sergio came by and dropped off his men, and by the time he came to pick them up a simple, lockable plywood shed with no floor was in place. Three of the Men of Vision arrived that night as that was the best time for them to get flights from their states, and the next day they went and put the roof on the shed, including an overhang to provide an area out of the rain for the open-air kitchen. For the first time ever, the MOVE would have several women with them to do the cooking. While the roof was being put on, Ed went out and found the largest refrigerator and stove available in Tijuana, bought them, and had them delivered to the site where the Men helped the delivery men unload them and set them in place. The refrigerator was placed inside the shed, where the men cut another door that could also be locked. Ed also bought 10 eight foot tables and forty folding chairs. He brought them out to the site in the Puente van, which had a back seat that could be taken out to make it a cargo van. The site was thus made ready in just two days for the Saturday arrival of the rest of the Men of Vision.

Dave Bethany is an awesome construction supervisor. He kept thirty men completely busy with almost no slack time for two weeks, even though many of them had not done construction before and had to be trained on the job. It was an amazing site. The enemy still had some tricks up his sleeve, but they were to no avail. It actually rained quite a bit and even snowed! Technically, it wasn't snow but hail, but it accumulated on the ground and the men made snowballs with it to throw at each other. Snow NEVER falls in Tijuana, and this was April by now, but even that day we lost no construction time, as the hail came during the lunch break. In fact, we only lost one hour of work all week due to the rain, though it rained a good amount. It was a great sight to see the men sitting at the table in the street at the end of the cul-de-sac, with building materials all around. Luis

Moreno had a Christian friend who had provided all the lumber at a very low cost. And Rudolfo provided a Christian engineer who performed the required inspection during construction. This man saved us a fortune because the structural engineer had vastly over designed the building, requiring almost three times the amount of steel reinforcing bar as was necessary. The structural engineer had put so much steel in the design that the walls were strong enough to support a three story building with a concrete roof. He had designed it this way just to protect himself. But Rody's engineer cut down over half of the steel required, not only in quantity but in diameter and saved us thousands of dollars and days of labor.

God took care of the MOVE, too. According to Dave, they usually lose a lot of man-hours of labor due to illness caused by strange food and water and the expected injuries that occur when untrained men work in a crowded site for hours a day. It was miraculous that only one man got sick – and that was due to dehydration because he didn't drink the Gatorade our wonderful cooks kept bringing around all day, and drank only drinks with caffeine with his meals. There was only one little arm injury that occurred when a man tossed something up to the roof and pulled a muscle. He was back on the job the next day. Dave said that was nothing short of miraculous.

We also had a task he did not know how to accomplish. The dining room had a big picture window fifteen feet wide. The lintel over the window, in a concrete block wall, has to be one solid piece of poured concrete with steel bar inside to support the weight of the wall and ceiling above the window. Dave had no idea how it could be lifted into place, even with 30 men available, it was that heavy. So he had it poured on the ground out of the way of the work, and waited on the Lord. The day we needed to install it, he looked at the construction crew next door working on the condominiums and saw that they had on their site a rare piece of equipment specifically designed for just that task. It was probably at least a million to one chance that that precise machine would be right next door on that day. Ed had a relationship with the foreman in charge of the construction, having gone over to talk to him several times, and the man agreed to rent the machine and the operator to us during their lunch hour, so his employer could not complain of lost time. We just had to "donate" a reasonable amount of money to the foreman and the operator. It was truly amazing. The machine placed the beam, and we continued on without missing a beat. Waiting on the Lord had proven to be the best plan!

A lot of additional details of the MOVE phase of the construction could be provided, showing similar intervention by the hand of God, but we must take time to talk of the next incredible phase of the project. When the MOVE left, they had accomplished an amazing amount of work. Thousands of blocks of wall had been installed, about ten trucks of concrete had been poured into the wall and ceiling beams, a plywood roof had been installed and shingled, a huge water storage cistern had been dug and blocked in, and the footings for a wall around the property had been trenched and poured. This was all done in two weeks, with a couple of days taken off for rest and ministry style "sightseeing." It was a great experience for all. The last night the team shared and prayed together in the dining room, looking out that huge window overlooking the lights of Tijuana, and everyone's heart was touched by the wonder of what God had done, and

how clearly He wanted us to continue bringing the love of Christ to the people of Tijuana.

What we had after that phase was a fine shell, but it was not yet suitable for habitation. So the next visit was made by a truly remarkable group of retired people: Open Bible's Mobile Kingdom Builders, led by Robert Haynes, in his last project before giving way to Earl Dukes. Earl was also on the team and brought the team down again after replacing Bob. They came with their recreation vehicles (the MOVE had stayed in a hotel) and parked around the site, having their meals all together in the street, as the base dining hall was their main shop area. Once again, it is startling to see how God provided just the right people. A big need was beds, made in a bunk-bed style out of lumber available in Tijuana. One of the MKB had spent his whole career as a furniture man! There was also a certified electrician, and a tile man for the kitchen. (The Women's World Fellowship of Pacific Region had provided \$10,000 for the kitchen, so it would be American quality.) But most necessary was Earl Dukes' ability and willingness to do the plumbing. The style of plumbing in Mexico is very, very different than in the USA. At first, what the architect had drawn for the plumbing mystified everybody Ed showed it to. Even Dave Bethany couldn't figure out the vaults, which must be put in anytime the sewer pipe makes a turn or bend. Fortunately, God provided a wonderful neighbor named Jose, who was building a house for his brother nearby, who let Dave come over and see the vaults so he could figure them out. He had the MOVE pour the vault inserts before they left. But nobody would work on the plumbing for the base, because it seemed such a crazy way to do it. Ed had one discussion with a plumber who had come down with one of the teams prior to the MOVE, and he was going to do some plumbing, but wanted to do it the American way. Ed said the permit to move into the base would be issued only if the plumbing was Mexican-style as designed. But Earl and another MKB not only did exactly what the design called for, they performed "live" plumbing, because the toilets in the base were being used by then as the outhouse was no longer suitable. Plumbing a sewer line that is carrying sewage at the time is a totally disgusting and difficult job, but Earl and his assistant did it joyfully. All of the seniors had incredible attitudes.

When the MKB left, the base was ready for habitation. About two weeks later our first summer teams came, staying in our own Puente de Amistad building on our own Open Bible Mexico property. It was a glorious time for us.

As you can see, the glory really goes to the Lord as the founder of the base, as only He could have made it possible. One of the men with the MOVE made a cornerstone, and asked Ed to sign in the concrete before it was dry and put something fitting as a motto for the base. The man put the impression of a hammer in the concrete, Ed signed his name, which in the concrete is indecipherable, which is fitting, but in letters easy to read he wrote: "A La Gloria de Dios" which means "To the Glory of God." The cornerstone can still be seen on the lower corner of the right-hand building as you approach the main building. That cornerstone was placed and this story was written to let all who read them know that all the glory for the founding of Puente de Amistad and the ministry that has been performed by the teams that have visited Tijuana, Mexico, must go Him who miraculously provided. Amen.