

San Lucas Toliman Mission News

September, 2009



Dear Friends,

The little Juan Ana Farm on the southern edge of San Lucas is a beehive of activity even though the African honey bee hives have been moved out to Pachitulul just beyond the western edge of San Lucas. We were sure those bees would not be real happy with the stone-cutting, dirt moving, concrete pouring, and general grunts, shouts, and laughter that can go hand-in-hand with hard, heavy work that was planned next door to their hives. So with those bees in their new and peaceful home in Pachitulul we could start the stone-cutting as well as the grunts of hard, heavy work that would be going on for the next three years.

In March of this year of 2009 the three phases of the doubling in size of our coffee processing area began. Catholic Relief Services received a large grant to facilitate the growing, harvesting, processing, and marketing of high quality coffee produced by small coffee growers. Friends of Josiah and Katherine Mooney working for CRS and searching for possible participants in this mammoth effort, accepted Josiah and Katherine's invitation to see what we have been doing in this very area of the highest quality coffee production over the past seventeen years. Representatives of the program liked very much what they saw and invited our 'coffee people' to participate. Beginnings were like beginnings are supposed to be: slow, lots of discussion, somewhat confusing, and then the giant step forward.

The first of the three phases was to begin in March of 2009 and end on the last day of September of this same year. To begin with there were to be many interviews with small coffee producers who have been bringing in their coffee to our program for many years. Opinions were sought, suggestions gladly received, and ways of how our program could facilitate their coffee production and delivery requested. Persons from ten different Communities in and around San Lucas were asked to participate and did so happily. Information gathered was for the

most part positive, suggestions well made, and ways of improving were more than a few and much appreciated. As the hard physical work began, seminars continued for small producers of high quality coffee. These seminars included meeting representatives of the five different Coffee Producing Groups chosen to participate from different parts of Guatemala, experts speaking of ways to participate from different parts of Guatemala, experts speaking of ways to maintain the highest quality production of their coffee, the role of cooperatives in coffee production, proper steps in coffee production from the nursery to the harvest, proper processing procedures including roasting, grinding, and packaging. There were even present representatives from different coffee buyers throughout Guatemala. Participants spoke highly of the seminars even though at times they did seem long and their was so much information to 'carry around in my head!'

It was the hard, heavy, hot work that caught my eye - and - admiration. Julio Cesar Morales, a young local architect, was asked to do the plans and



Julio Morales, Edy Morales, & Julio Cesar Morales



Representatives from CRS visit the project in progress and speak with Edy Cesar (arms crossed). working to learn a trade or working to get away from gangs, drugs, and alcohol abuse. Because the area of work begins some twenty meters above the level vegetable gardens of the Juan Ana Farm and then rises quickly to a height of some fifty meters above the gardens there are challenges that take some ingenuity to meet. We started our coffee processing area in this part of the little farm because it is so full of rock that we couldn't really use it for anything else. Also, the water that

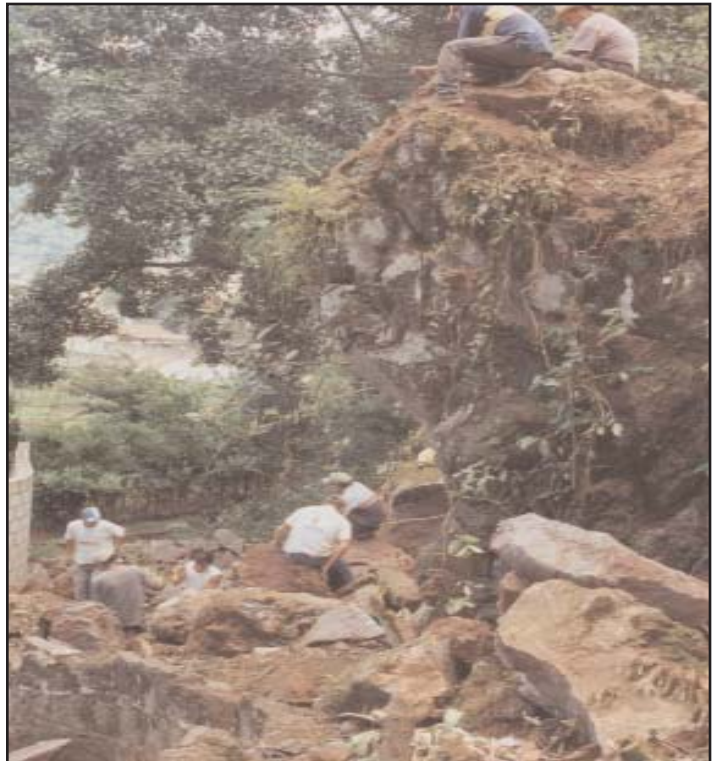
guide the work. His father, Julio, had been one of the initiators of our own coffee program these many years ago and today a key person in the whole coffee operation. Julio Cesar's younger brother, Edy, was asked to be the local accountant/bookkeeper for the whole effort in San Lucas and area. Again, Edy has been an important figure along side his Dad in our coffee efforts over the past twelve years. Twenty men were chosen to begin the work. Four are master stone-masons and rock cutters and the rest of the young men are



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Steps had to be built...



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had been used for washing the coffee could be easily brought down by gravity to the dry composite pits and vegetable gardens allowing for a second use of that precious commodity. The very steep cliff-like area demanded rock cutting with the workers standing above, below, or alongside of the huge rocks needing removal.

Retaining walls had to be built with the rock cut from the site so a level area could be formed on the 'cliff' allowing for level concrete patios to be poured for drying in the sun. A long ramp had to be built into the hill side so coffee could be taken up from the washing tanks to the drying patios above and to both sides of the tanks. A major challenge was the design and building of a road twisting its way up a very steep mountainside to the receiving tanks awaiting the freshly picked coffee beans. Those beans must pass through a machine called a 'pulpero' located on a lower level that takes the outer hull off the coffee and leaves two small beans to be washed and then dried in the sun.



A long ramp had to be built ...

Removing some cut rock and leaving others, hauling sand, gravel, and block from 'down below' to 'up above' became the work of guests and volunteers. The sun was hot, the climb steep, the materials for building heavy but guests and volunteers kept right at it during the long morning of work - 6:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Afternoons brought us the welcomed rains so the long mornings had to be used to advance the work. Guests and volunteers made an incredible contribution to the huge work effort.



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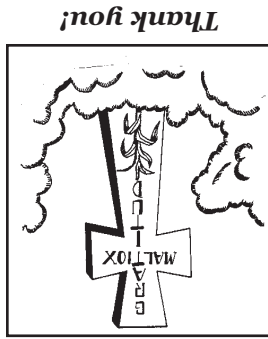
and biggest step is well underway and will be able to be 'celebrated' with this the 2009 / 2010 good coffee crop!!!

It has been some kind of effort slowly but surely 'growing' on a mountainside that would allow for nothing else to 'grow'. Most must be 'up' and running by late November when we will be receiving the first of this year's coffee crop. It is earlier than usual because of the early rains (February) and coffee blossoming shortly after those short but sweet rains.

This past year's crop was way, way down in volume. That is normal for coffee - one year a good one, then the next a lot less coffee growing on the trees. This year we look forward to not only a good year but also an earlier harvest. Hope to 'make up a little' for last year. We do have a long way to go before all is finished with the generous CRS Project. However, the first

If you have not tried the Juan Ana coffee, please give it a try. You can order it via two web sites - www.juananacoffee.com and www.sanlucasmision.org.

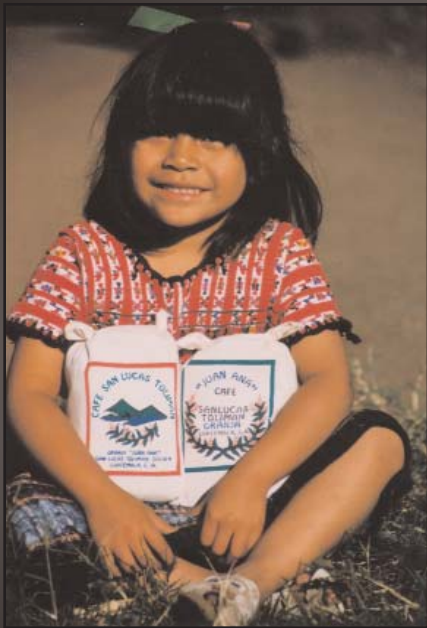
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Thank you!

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*We work hard
to get you
the very best coffee
- and -
lots of it!!!*