



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

I'll never forget Mary Hill.

A registered nurse from Southern Alabama, Mary had a husband who died 10 years ago when her deformed daughter, Cindy, was born. Later Mary began to feel a strong compulsion to leave Alabama and go to Mexico as a missionary. She applied to several mission boards, none of which would think of considering a near-40 widow with a physically deformed child as a missionary candidate.

But God is not limited to mission boards—especially those who limit Him. And so two years ago Mary Hill packed all her belongings into her little Volkswagen and took off for Mexico. A few friends back home agreed to send her some money each month, but many of them promptly forgot all about their promises after she was gone. Even this could not deter Mary Hill from God's call.

I met her last week in Guadalajara. Cindy attends the mission school run by Nathan Booth and is making remarkable progress. Mary, a member of a Methodist Church, is working with their small medical clinic in the village of La Vega, about 40 miles outside the city. She and Cindy drive out several times a week to spend the afternoon and evening examining sick people who walk in from miles around. She dispenses a few basic drugs and if necessary takes people to the hospital in the city.

The "clinic" is simply the tiny bedroom of a small adobe house. The ceiling is sticks and mud and there are no screens in the windows. The door is a cloth curtain. She had already seen 30 patients and others were lined up outside waiting to get in.

"What happened to these people before you came?" I asked Mary.

She shook her head sadly. "They died. If a child broke an arm or leg he simply grew up with a horribly twisted limb. Now, with just this basic medical help, they are able to overcome many diseases, and, at the same," she grinned, "I am able to tell them about el Senor Jesucristo."

"What do they do about a toothache?" I asked.

"We have no dentist," she said, "so they just have to let it rot out. We can give them aspirin but if the pain gets too bad they stick their finger in an electric socket to numb the pain."

Mary has learned from experience to charge each patient for a visit, although she gives the drugs free (most of which she has to buy herself). The fee: Two pesos (16 cents). "They appreciate it more if they pay," she says.

Mary stayed that night until after 10 p.m. treating patients. Then she and Cindy packed their instruments and remaining drugs into a couple of old cardboard suitcases and drove their VW back into the city. This last week a fine young Mexican doctor ~~volunteered~~ volunteered to help at the clinic for the next several months until he is transferred to Durango. That will help immensely.

The mission boards would not have Mary Hill. But God wanted her just the same. Following His leadership, she has saved countless lives—and at the same time pointed her equally poverty-stricken Mexican friends toward abundant life in Christ.

I gave her what little money I had in my pocket and asked her to buy something for herself. She smiled through the tears and said, "Thank you, but if you don't mind I can buy mucho drugs with this—and saving lives is far more important than a new dress."

You can understand, perhaps, why I'll not forget Mary Hill.