



*Long Journey Home
A Bus Trip Through Mexico
by Jean Easley*

On our first trip to Guatemala in 1981, we had driven a van to the field for a missionary but found it necessary to return to the States on our own. Since there was not enough funds for plane tickets, we bought bus tickets from Guatemala City all the way home to our folks' place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Our luggage consisted of nine boxes and suitcases, plus carry on things. It was early Friday morning about 6:30 a.m. and we were on our way.

Having left the mission field with what we thought was enough cash to take us through the long journey through Mexico, we found at every turn that more money was required than we had planned. It was tips, plus having to pay extra fees for our big pieces of luggage to be checked. At the bus station in Tapachula, Mexico, we were, through no fault of our own (believe me), separated from our checked luggage which left on an earlier bus from which we were excluded. It was peculiar enough to begin praying then that we would see our luggage again in Mexico City.

Upon our arrival at the busy bus station in Mexico City at about 9:00 p.m. Saturday evening, the luggage was no where to be seen. All night on Saturday night, it did not come. Bus after bus roared through that large, airy Mexico City depot. But still, no luggage appeared.

Since the start of the journey early Friday morning, I had not slept. Gene can rest some in an upright position, but not I. Saturday passed into Sunday. Our canned meats for the trip were confiscated at the Mexican border because they were Central American products. It was slim pickin's from there on. We had brought some juices, crackers, cookies and boiled eggs. We ate those for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Thankfully, we did have some pure water along, but not nearly enough. Sunday came and went. No help could be found in the offices of the bus line. It seemed that everything could wait until Monday when there would be police officers and travel agents with whom we could file complaints. Still we waited.

By mid-day Sunday, we were so hungry for some hot food, we decided to put our carry-on things in a lock box, take a bus from the terminal to a busy part of town, and look for a restaurant. In miles and miles of searching, we found only a large, modern-looking department store. It had a snack bar.

What would be the harm, we thought, of eating a couple of those tacos? So, we did. When our stomachs started to turn, we wished we had gone hungry. Both of us fell ill, desperately ill, in that great, cavernous bus station. Searching the length and breadth of it, we finally located two flat benches, not too far apart, stretched our selves on them, prayed for God's protection, and slept. How long I do not know, but it gave us strength to go on.

We were praying fervently that God would retrieve our luggage, wherever it was, and bring it back to us. In those boxes were some of our most prized possessions--teaching materials; we could not leave them! One man came along Sunday afternoon, said he spoke English, and wanted to help us. When we told him our problem, he said he probably could not help us. He disappeared around the corner, never to be seen again. About that time, we cast all of our care upon the Lord (again), praying, "God, if ever we are to see our precious books and teaching materials again, you will have to come to our rescue! You will have to do it. We cannot help ourselves!" Sunday night was spent trying to keep warm and moving from one place to another all night long.

It was Monday morning about 9:30 a.m. when a bus unloaded our precious cargo! Nothing every looked so good as those old, beat-up, treasure-filled boxes and luggage! Thirty-six hours in that cold, unfriendly place; but God was faithful, and we were once again on our way.

Our departure for Monterrey and the U. S. border farther along necessitated taking a taxi from one Mexico City terminal to another. More money was spent here on fares and tips than anticipated. One luggage handler threatened to liberate us of our luggage when we wouldn't agree to his outlandish charges. We sent for the police, and he disappeared. At the next terminal, there was a long wait until evening about 4:30 p.m. for the bus headed north. Meanwhile, Gene went for a walk to find something to eat (our boiled eggs had long since ruined). He came back with some poor-looking bananas, which we devoured ferociously with a cold drink.

Then, the ticket man demanded additional payment for our luggage to be checked (again) from this terminal to Nueva Laredo, across the border from Laredo, Texas. Our funds were about gone. Gene told him that he did not have any more pesos. In reality, he had a \$20 bill in American money in his shoe to spend once we crossed the border, but there were no pesos left. After some haggling, he permitted our things to be loaded anyway, just as the bus was about to pull away!

To be honest with you, except for dropping my little Instamatic on the concrete in a little, dirty rest room somewhere, I cannot remember much of the rest of the trip through Mexico. For the first time in my life, I found any position and slept. Soundly. Hour after hour. We arrived in Nueva Laredo, Mexico, about 8:00 a.m. Tuesday morning. Luggage was again loaded onto another bus to cross the border to catch the next Greyhound in Laredo, Texas. When we got to Laredo, we had to hurriedly check our luggage in (again) in order to catch the next bus out. No time to eat or drink a thing. We were told that without paying extra (which we did not have), we could put only four of the largest pieces into the cargo area, and the rest, we would have to carry into the passenger area of the bus. We had luggage spread all along the luggage racks of that bus!

We made San Antonio about 1:00 p.m. Here again was the hurried transfer of luggage from one bus to another waiting one. And again, no time to eat or drink anything. I had to stay with the stuff, while Gene did business with the ticket takers. After we had transferred all of our things from one passenger section to the other bus, I tried to go back into the station for a quick drink at a water fountain I had noticed. The unsympathetic driver shouted, "Lady, you can get off if you want to, but we're leaving!" Embarrassed and still thirsty, I returned to my seat and cried. In Dallas at about 9:00 p.m., we finally had a thirty-minute rest stop. Lo and behold, that station had a Burger King restaurant! Out of Gene's shoe came our last \$20, and, hungrily, we made our way to the line and ordered hamburgers, fries and shakes. After doing without for so many days, it was the best food we had ever eaten!

The trip on to Tulsa took the rest of that night. We arrived at about 4:00 a.m. after five days and nights without a bath. Still, we waited 'til about 6:00 a.m. to call the folks. It had snowed, and there were sheets of ice everywhere in Tulsa that day. We had no warm clothing to wear in the freezing cold. But, Mama's home cooking and a hot bath helped us to feel we were really finally home. Our complete physical recovery took several days, but we had brought home with us the precious knowledge that God can be found when you search for Him with all your heart.