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## My Mamey Tree...Again...This Might Be the Last Time

I have written often about my Mamey tree. I hesitate to bring this topic up again. You might remember, it was my poor Mamey which almost bit the dust in the Hurricane of 2004. At that time I thought it was a



Zapote tree. I didn't know the difference. When I found out it was a Mamey, the Maya told me that the person who had planted the Mamey would die when it gave fruit. I was the person who planted the tree. But not to worry, it wasn't bearing any fruit. Until this year!

A few weeks ago, I grabbed one of the Mamey. It was hard and rotten. So that one didn't count. But last week, I grabbed another and it was ripe and delicious. Now, we will see what happens.

Did you notice the "we"? That's me and Jim and Sheila. Since November, Jim and Sheila Christiansen have joined me here in Merida. I am happy to introduce them to you in this newsletter.

I played cards with Jim and Sheila twenty years ago when we were all studying Foreign Languages at the Maryknoll Language School in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Over the years, I kept in touch with them as they continued their work with the poor of Peru and Bolivia, got married, and ministered to indigenous people. Last year, because of their experience, I asked them to come to Merida and evaluate our work with the Maya. They were impressed with what we are doing, and I was impressed with them. I asked them to come and work here for five years.

I know the work I have begun will not continue very long after I retire or die. (I can't forget the Mamey!) Jim and Sheila are working with me to start small groups in each village, to develop leadership among the people and eventually set up structures which can continue and even enhance the programs we have begun. They are really excellent at not taking over, but rather working with the people.





After 500 years of being told what to do, the Maya often feel that they have nothing to offer this world except to work for low wages. They are understandably reluctant to assume leadership, to criticize the systems which enslave them, or to take direction of their own lives. So it is going slow. But sure, we have a wonderful group of women in Noc-ac, who study the Bible and try put the words of Jesus into action. The men of Suytunchen have taken charge of the Carpenter Center which we began three years ago and are beginning to produce their own furniture for sale! There are new groups and new programs in Cosgaya, Sierra Papacal and Komchen.



Preparing a Budget on \$65 a Week!



Carpenter Center in Suytunchen



Last week the men and women of Suytunchen, with the help of Jim and Sheila set up a program for the other pueblos where the issues of budget and financial planning were discussed.

You might laugh about the “financial planning” topic when you only make \$60 dollars a week and have two kids in school, it is more difficult, but just as important to make a budget and try to keep it.

I am grateful for Jim and Sheila’s leadership. I am happy that I can still beat them at cribbage! But more than anything, I have hope in the future for our people. Slowly they are assuming their own leadership, and directing their own lives.

I have not said anything about the severe economic crisis which has affected all of us. We have had to cut back some programs but I remain confident that, with your help, we can continue and make this world a better place. Thanks so much for whatever you might be able to do. May God Bless You!

***Together, we can make this world a better place!***

*Fr. Bill*

If you have internet access, visit our updated Web site: [www.mayamissions.com](http://www.mayamissions.com). It includes lots of pictures, maps — even some videos of the Carpenter Center in Suytunchen and work by Our Novices at Oasis San Juan during their visit in February. There is an easy an secure way to send donations.

