

In October 2016 - a group of seven UUCAers traveled to Guatemala some of the scholarship students sponsored by UUCA.

**A Report from UUCA traveler to Rabinal: A visit to a Mayan family
by Bud Hensgen**

Today we passed a morning in the home of Diega and her mother-in-law, son, and daughter. Diega's husband is at work outside town in the fields. Her son, Lester, 17, is tending the shop where the family sells potato chips, little toys, and other little stuff. There are several of these little shops in the neighborhood, so they don't sell much. The daughter, Delsi, 12, is in school. She arrives later during our visit.

The mother-in-law, Victoria, is 80 years old, and she is a survivor of the massacre during the 1980's. Her husband was killed in the massacre. Victoria had 7 children, and, after her husband's disappearance, she had to raise them on her own. One of them, Alejandro, now Diega's husband, came to Pacux (pronounced "Pacush") when he was 7 years old. He had no opportunity to go to school. Pacux is the community where many of the Maya people, who were forcibly moved from their villages, were settled to make room to flood Rio Negro for the dam.

The family speaks Mayan Achi in the house, and doña Victoria doesn't speak Spanish. Diega and her husband and the kids speak both Achi and Spanish. The kids learn both Achi and Spanish in School. Here there are public schools in grades one to 6 (escuela basica). There are no public schools beyond that, so you have to pay to go to secondary school, grades 6 - 8 (escuela primaria). Then you have to pay also if you go to high school (escuela secundaria). I think Lester said his family pays about 125 Quetzales (\$17) every month for school for each of the kids. Delsi thinks of quitting school to help support the family, but her father tells her to stay in school, and he goes sometimes to work on the coast harvesting bananas, cutting sugar cane or picking coffee to pay for school.

The house is very simple, concrete block wall enclosing the house and courtyard. the courtyard is basically a dirt courtyard with several flowers and plants, including two small coffee trees and a couple of orange trees and a fenced chicken yard with about a dozen chickens running around. Two dogs and one cat hang around.

There is running water, sort of. There is a toilet right off the courtyard, but after using it, you pour a bucket of water into it to flush. There is a big concrete sink and an area for cutting and cleaning. This deep sink is filled with water, which you have to pump up from a well. You take water from this sink for cleaning dishes and stuff. There are a couple of fish swimming in this deep sink, which will get cooked at some point. On the other side of the courtyard is the cooking room, with wood fire for making tortillas. When the tortillas were done, we ate them along with chicken soup, made with one of the chickens in the yard.

The friendliness and hospitality of all the family was remarkable. In fact, wherever you go along the unpaved streets of Pacux, as well in Rabinal, folks smile and say hello and are willing to stop and talk with gringo visitors.