I'm learning how many Chilis make the soup spicy enough without blistering our lips.

What the heck are they doing?

Tim & Annette's notes to their friends

Late Summer '96

Things I like and don't like about living in Mexico:

I like that you can have a 4 course meal in a restaurant for under $2 (and it comes with a drink). I don't like that the first thing taxi drivers usually say is, "*You're not from around here are you?*". I like our spectacular view of the volcano - El Nevado - from our bedroom window. I don't like that it's like 50° every morning and evening in the middle of the summer and that heating is unheard of. I like that there are no leash laws (I like dogs lying in the middle of the road, it reminds of how it was when I was growing up on Lookout Mtn.) I don't like that almost

(Continued on page 2)

"Gastro-perks" a Mexican plus

I wish I could send with this letter a tamale like the one I'm eating right now. . . a gastronomical delight! Our tutor asked around and found the most highly recommended tamale vendor in town and every once in a while she'll bring us a bag. My favorites are "rajas"—strips of green chilies and white cheese with a tomato sauce tucked inside cornmeal dough wrapped and cooked in a corn husk. Tim prefers the ones filled with chicken and molé [English cookbo oks call it a "chocolate chili" sauce but you have to try it to understand it.] These are some of the perks of living in Mexico!!! Knowing where to get good tamales is one example of insider information that our tutor Dora Luz helps us with. Although we're paying her to help us with our Spanish, her Mexican view of Mexicans that

(Continued on page 3)

Eight months and counting in México

As I sit here in a sweatshirt and wool socks I can't conceive that it's August, and that we've been here eight months!!! The months have been happy and have flown by. It's easy to lose track of them without the seasonal and festive markers that we're used to like spring flowers and fall leaves, Memorial Day and Labor day forming bookends on a summer highlighted by 4th of July. Even mutually celebrated holidays like Easter feel different here. But we have new seasonal markers to learn, like the rainy season, corn harvest, and Sept 16th – Mexico's independence day from Spain. We feel enriched by our many new historical and cultural perspectives. I have an even deeper appreciation for the Reformation now that we live in culture shaped by the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition, leaving Mexico's cultural transformation through confronting God's Word still in the future. I often wonder what Mexico would look like if the Reformation had reached here. There are practical aspects to our new knowledge too. . . I can make salsa from scratch and I'm learning how many Chili Chipotles to add to make the soup tasty without blistering our lips. These mundane tasks are part of a bigger, more difficult to

Annette has really gotten into this cross-cultural thing. Here she is weaving.

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Youth are the perfect target: idealistic enough to give themselves completely to God and big dreams, young enough to change patterns.

General Stuff

You know like, "I'm doing this. She's doing that." That kind of stuff.

I guess you've been getting our monthly letters. It's amazing how difficult it is to write an interesting letter each month. You'd think that once every 30 or 31 days we'd experience or do something inspiring and of interest to everyone. . .not so. When we sit down to write about all the wonderful ministry stuff that is flowing out of our lives, all of the sudden they seem very uninteresting. But I can honestly say that we're glad to be here. Our #1 responsibility is still learning the language and the culture. Oh sure, we have contact with people in churches here (last week we were asked to speak at a youth group meeting) and we have contact with others in our neighborhood (we've shared a few meals with neighbors). And hopefully there is some ministry going on in all that. But career type ministry... well, that's still a few months away. And speaking of Spanish, I'm starting to really get a handle on it. OK so every once in a while I tell people, "I've got loose stool" instead of "I'm feeling worn out" like I meant to say. But hey, whatd'ya expect from a 31 yr. old gringo. ☺

nobody wears shorts 'cause that means I can't. I do like that here you can take a bus to just about anywhere in the country at just about any time for peanuts (and the buses are nice). I don't like having our drivers licenses lost by a Mexican courier service that says they have no way of tracking a parcel nor is willing to give us a refund for the original fee. I like that nobody ever says, *"Don't do that. Our liability insurance doesn't cover us if you get hurt on our property."* I don't like that when the person on the phone or behind the counter tells you *it will be ready tomorrow...* it won't. I do like the food. I don't like carrying the groceries all the way back home from the store (ie: not having a car). I do like our neighbors. I don't like that they warn us not to trust people... even less that their advice is not unfounded. I do like being here in Mexico. I don't like that all our friends can't be down here with us (like you for example ☺).

Eight Months and Counting

(Continued from page 1)

quantify objective called learning to live and work outside of the U.S. This may not seem like a great accomplishment, but without it we won't be able to stay here. Neither of us has gone through total "culture shock" [yet?] but we have had our share of "culture stress" where we really have trouble with a particular aspect of life here (for example, the cultural propensity to take advantage of the other guy.) It helps to remember what we've been taught about Christianity and culture.

On one hand, though distorted by sin, all peoples reflect the image of God in a unique, beautiful way. On the other hand, as Christians we are aliens wherever we live on this earth. So we are pleased when we find godly aspects of this culture that we can learn from, like their patience, long-suffering, submission, and loyalty. And we agonize as we see the horrible grip of sin—oppression, injustice, and abuse—pervading governmental, religious, social, and family structures. You know the feeling. . . sometimes the world is overwhelming. "What can I possibly do? Where do I start?" We know youth are the perfect target: idealistic enough to give themselves completely to God and big dreams, young enough to change patterns. ☺

Christians are being jailed, fined, thrown out of town, and even murdered for their beliefs

A newspaper "La Reforma" recently printed an article "Youth at the End of the Century" which cited a survey of youth 13 - 24.

I Admire Most:

Mother — 57%
Father — 45%
Modern Artists - 26%
Teachers —15%
Athletes —11%
Classical Artists -6%
Myself —5%

I Admire Least:

Ernesto Zedillo -27%
[current president]
Carlos Salinas -27%
[ex-president]
Politicians — 23 %

Do you trust:

The family
a lot— 71%
not at all— 3%
The Catholic Church
a lot— 20%
not at all— 29%
The Government
a lot— 0%

"Aguantar"

"*Aguantar*" is a Mexican word that captures something central to the Mexican character. It means "to bear or endure, to put up with". Although they may complain vehemently and often about the corruption and ineptness of their leaders (each one of the last 5 presidents has left office with more than a billion dollars from the public coffers in his pocket), that doesn't mean you will see grassroot led reforms or revolution as in Tienaman Square, the Philippines, or Romania. That's just not part of the Mexican character. As Patrick Oster, author of The Mexicans says, "the glass may be half-empty in Mexico, but it's also half-full. There is joy and laughter and love of children. There is artistic talent and hard work. There is patience and, most of all, an ability to endure."

While generally a desired characteristic, at times it can express itself in an exasperating disinterest in making their lot better. They drive visiting do-gooder reformers batty. On the other hand this characteristic combined with Christian integrity can result in the heroic, as is happening in many Mexican towns where Christians are being jailed, fined, thrown out of town, and even murdered for their beliefs. ☺

(FOR MORE ON THIS STORY SEE OUR OCT. LETTER)

TAMALES: A MEXICAN FRINGE BENEFIT

(Continued from page 1)

she gives us is almost as important . She helps us process things we see, read, and hear. Did you know that the USA is enemy #1 in the Mexican culture?! It's true... in Mexico's military, the U.S. is the country that Mexican army officers war-game against. Or did you know that if a Mexican's back aches it is because some thing is wron with his kidneys? You'll never hear a Mexican saying,"Oh, my back's killing me." They'll tell you that their kidneys are hurting them. *Go figure.* Another little insight is that when Mexicans see a young (read single and under 40) tourist travelling by themseves they assume that the tourist's family does not care for them. Why? Well, because a Mexican family would never let their child travel by themselves... It's just not right. What would people think?! So if you travel solo in this country remember to ge a signed note from your

mother or father saying that you are indeed cared for (some Mexican states require it to be notarized.)

Here are a few other interesting tidbits that we've learned since we came to México: It's more fattening to eat the soft inside part of a roll than the hard outside. Eating red meat makes you very irritable. Tortillas make you fat. The correct way to eat corn-on-the-cob is with mayonnaise and grated cheese instead of with butter and salt. Some sort of fat is the #1 ingredient in every truly Méxican meal (well, almost.)

Who knows... all I know is this tamale is delicious! ☺

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What the heck are they doing?

. . . with deep gratitude praying for overwhelmingly wonderful people like you who care about us and shower us with love in the form of prayers, letters, and financial support.

We are now online and would love to get your e-mail address so that we can bug you over the internet. OK, and because sometimes we get lonely without our friends. Send us a note and we promise to write back... really!

mexikids@infoabc.com

Week at a Glance

"What the heck are they doing now?" seems to be a common question, so we thought we'd give you a peek into our daytimer.

Sunday—Visit a local church and enjoy the 3 to 4 hour service Rest and read something edifying Watch "Siempre y Domingo" (a Mexican Ed Sullivan Show) to help us stay up with what's hip south of the border.

Daily (at best)—exercise, devotions, working on "continuing language progress skills" like reading, writing. memorizing parts of the spanish Bible, listening, and talking in Spanish, and of course with deep gratitude praying for overwhelmingly wonderful people like you who care about us and shower us with love in the form of prayers, letters, and financial support. Talk with our neighbors.

Tuesday & Friday—Meet with our tutor (4 hrs): check our homework, writing and gramatical exercises; read a selection of Spanish literature for work on pronunciation, comprehension, vocabulary, and cultural understanding. Laugh at the mistakes we made.

Wednesday—Have a meal and meeting with our team for fellowship, prayer, and to go over our respective schedules.

Thursday—Prepare for (ie: reading 14 - 20 chapters in Spanish and answering pages of questions) and attend Project Timothy youth led Bible study. [Annette is now helping the author, our team leaders wife, revise and prepare this 3 year inductive Bible study]. Tape "Seinfeld."

Necessities of life—grocery shop (this includes hand-carrying the groceries home), boil water for the day, cook stuff from scratch, clean dishes the old fashioned way, hang laundry on the line, remember how much God loves us and how much we love each other!! ☺