

## Earthquake victims' Christmas

by Robert Lothian

MEXICO CITY—Pilar, Morcela, Euchresia, Narcesso, Eduardo, Ramon—children of families left homeless by the Sept. 19 earthquake in Mexico City.

The children live with their families in tent camps set up in parks and on the streets in one of the city's poorest sections, Colonia Morelos, which was hit hard by the quake.

Christmas had looked bleak for the children, but they were treated to a special Christmas fiesta Dec. 24 by members of the original medical team sent to Colonia Morelos by the Salvation Army in September. The 17 volunteer doctors and nurses had collected \$18,000 in the San Francisco area, which they used to purchase toys and candy for over 2,000 homeless children invited to the fiesta.

Clutching numbered tickets and with their parents watching from outside a fence, the children wildly appreciated the toys, pastries, candy, and entertainment provided by the volunteers.

A clown and a Mariachi band performed on a stage made from concrete blocks destined to become new houses. The Salvation Army has purchased two block-making machines at \$60,000 each with international aid funds. The machines will each produce enough concrete blocks each day to build two three-room homes, said Major Glen Gilden, spokesman for the Salvation Army in Mexico City.

Gilden said the Salvation Army has operated in Colonia Morelos, an area characterized by unemployment and alcoholism, for 51 years. The earthquake only compounded an already-desperate situation, he said.

According to Gilden, over 600 Salvation Army volunteers served over 500,000 earthquake victims with meals, clothes, blankets, tents, medical help and over one million liters of purified water, in the three-month period between the quake and Christmas. Gilden said that 1250 families remain homeless in Colonia Morelos alone. The Salvation Army's La Esperanza center in the community continues to serve 5,000 meals a day, he said.

Four tent camps were visible from the site of the Christmas fiesta. In one camp, set up in a park, a small Christmas tree stood in the midst of cookstoves, ropes, and water cans. Children from the camp played in the park. A large tree nearby had been decorated with lights.

At another camp, cars whizzed by just feet from an outhouse set up on the parking strip of a major street. Old blankets covered the

crude structure. A large plastic water reservoir stood on the corner with spigots for use by the camp residents.

Mexico City's water is not suitable for drinking, and Gilden wondered whether the homeless were drinking it and suffering diarrhea and dysentery. "My concern is about people who don't have facilities to boil water," he said.

Gilden said the Christmas fiesta brought some fun and excitement into the lives of children for whom the holiday may otherwise have been sad. "This is probably the only Christmas they'll know," he said, as the children ran and shouted in what amounted to a controlled riot.

Eleven-year-old Ramon has his arms filled with a large toy truck, bags of peanuts and candy, fruit drinks and a box of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Other children carried dolls, soccer balls and games. Their glee was evident.

Ramon lived in a camp nearby. His family's home had been destroyed, he said, but his large family had escaped unharmed. He continued his studies in a nearby school.

Watching her six children from outside the fence was Juana Rodriguez, whose home had also been destroyed. Unfortunately, her brother and sister were killed, but her immediate family survived. She said that problems continued with the slowness in the way aid was coming to the "damnificados," earthquake victims. She hoped for a new home built with some of the concrete blocks stacked nearby.

Bob Lothian is on a six-week sojourn in Mexico.



Celebrating the first official state and federal Martin Luther King Day in honor of the civil rights leader, state government officials joined 200 people in a march around the Capitol. Speaking afterward to a crowd of about 300 people in the Oregon House of Representatives chambers, Rep. Margaret Carter, "mother of the bill" that created the King holiday, called for an end to state investment in

white-ruled South Africa. Carter also called for appointments of more Blacks and women to state boards and commissions and to the state appellate courts. She warned, "We cannot become self-satisfied, for if we do, we shall not overcome."

[Photo: Richard J. Brown]

Manx cats, the breed known for its lack of tails, call home the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea.

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## Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation newspaper drive

The Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation has launched an on-going newspaper drive by opening an account at the Sunflower Recycling Company, 2230 S.E. Grand Ave. Those wishing to drop off their newspapers and deposit them to the Sickle Cell Anemia account must tell the receivers that the paper is for the Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation Fund. Please be sure to obtain a receipt and mail it to the Portland Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, Inc., 3802 N.E. Union Ave., Suite 206, Portland, OR 97211.

The hours of the Sunflower Recycling Company are 10-3 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Those wishing to donate their newspapers to the fund must not use the drop box. Those who are shut-ins or do not drive may call the center for a monthly pickup at 249-1366. This drive is for the patient emergency fund.

**WINDSHIELD FLUIDS**  
Ever wonder why your windshield washer fluid isn't up to par? Hot weather can rob the fluid of its alcohol-cleaning component which means the container can be full but the windshield is getting smeared, not cleaned. Tip from the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association: Periodically, run the wiper fluid till the bottle is dry, then refill with fresh solvent so you'll be ready for grimy days' driving.