

GUATEMALAN DISTRICT PRESIDENT

A 'David' In Stature, 'Goliath' In Gospel

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PATZICIA, GUATEMALA

Pablo Choc, 37-year-old president of the Atitlan District, is a David in physical stature, but a Goliath in the Gospel.

Pres. Choc is a descendant of the Maya Indians. These pureblooded descendants make up almost half the population of Guatemala. The remainder of Guatemala's population is of mixed Indian and Spanish descent, with of course, some others who have moved into the country since the Spanish conquest.

Pres. Choc is considered wealthy according to the customs here, but he lives and dresses like the rest of the people. He says it's because he doesn't want to be different from the people of today or yesterday.

His "wealth" can be gauged from the fact that he is able to average about \$50 a year over what his family uses. He also receives \$30 per month as custodian of the Capilla Mormona in Patzicia. This is the building used by the Patzicia branch and for housing missionaries. Like other Church buildings it also is used for schooling purposes during the day and on certain evenings during the week.

Pres. Choc farms 20 acres, which is planted mostly in corn, some wheat and squash. He, and four sons who live at home, do all the farming by hand. The cultivating of the land is done with a large hoe, and the annual rains are depended upon to do the watering of the crops.

The main diet is corn, which is made into tortillas, and they make a hot drink from corn. Beans, and a few vegetables which they grow on a small plot of ground close to their homes, add to the daily fare.

Their homes are on quarter-acre lots in town. The house area is enclosed by an adobe wall, and within the wall are adobe huts with thatched roofs. One of the buildings is the kitchen where all the cooking and eating is done. The fire is in the middle of the floor, with the family sitting on the floor and eating without the aid of utensils.

Another small building is for the parents and tiny children, to sleep, another for the older children. There is a building for their married son, Serapio, 18, and another for a niece and her husband. Chickens, pigs, a cow and calf, and a horse share the yard.

The family walks to the farming fields about two miles out of town. They take the cow and calf along so the animals can graze on the tall grass and woods.

Besides their married son, the Chocs have four other sons, ages 17, 10, 8, and 6, and three daughters, 14, 1 and 6 months. The 17-year-old is living on a ranch near Coban, run by Cordell Anderson, a former missionary to Guatemala. The boy will return home to aid his father, after he has learned some of the rudiments of farming and crop rotation.

Pres. Choc first met the missionaries 12 years ago. He was working in the fields when the elders first knocked on his door and talked to his wife and brother. They didn't want anything to do with the elders, and told Pres. Choc about them when he came home that evening.

However, he was interested in what they had to say, and he sought them out and asked them to visit his home and discuss religion with him.

"Their sincerity made a deep impression on me. Also the way they prayed in



Pablo Choc
... descendant of Mayas

the name of Jesus Christ' pleased me very much. I felt they were praying to a person and for a purpose. I had always felt that was the way a person should pray," he said.

He was baptized April 30, 1960, and ordained an elder Dec. 2, 1962. His wife didn't join the Church until eight months later.

He has worked as a local missionary, the equivalent of a stake missionary, and during the two years he served had 10 baptisms. He served four years as branch president, and has been district president for the past year.

Pres. Choc realizes that his people must change to progress.

"I desire that my people progress. I realize this more as I see them help a sick member of the branch harvest his crops, or see them come to the branch building when help is needed for repairs," he added.