

PURE RELIGION

A Thirst for Clean Water

While serving as full-time missionaries in Guatemala City, Elder David and Sister Patricia Hall of the Santa Rosa California Stake became aware of some Guatemalans' acute need for access to clean water. They learned that children are especially vulnerable because their small bodies can't fight off infections when weakened by water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid.

When Elder and Sister Hall visited the mountainous villages surrounding the southeastern city of Jalapa, they were shown eight wells. The wells had been drilled in a cooperative effort between local residents and a charitable organization specializing in well construction.

Because the wells had to be dug deeper than anticipated, the villagers found they needed stronger pumps, generators, and electrical service lines than the ones they had planned to use. But they didn't have adequate resources to make the needed improvements.

The Halls described the situation to local priesthood leaders. They received approval to use humanitarian funds to assist the villagers in completing the project.

Residents provided all the necessary labor. They also formed community organizations to receive training in sanitation, water conservation, and methods for maintaining the wells in the years to come.

One villager, named Maria, was observed serving meals to people working on the water project. When a pump was turned on and water began to flow from a tap near Maria's home, she wept with joy. She explained that she had given birth to 14 children. Seven of them had died as a result of water-borne diseases.

"I'm so happy," Maria said. "Now my surviving children won't have to live with aching backs from carrying water. And they won't feel the sorrow I have felt—seeing some of my children die because of the unclean water my husband and I gave them, when we had no other choice."

"We've been involved in several wonderful projects," commented Elder Hall, "but the one in Jalapa may be the best because it benefited so many people like Maria. The Church helped a little and the villagers did the rest."

