
Force behind Assumption College's Mexico Mission

William (Bill) Sadd, former professor at Assumption College, writes of the extraordinary experience of knowing Sr. Lupita Lama, RA. With his permission, we share his memories with you.

In Memory of Sr. Guadalupe Eugenia Lama, R.A.
1916 - 2011

It’s been almost 15 years since I last saw Sr. Lupita, but my memories are still fresh and vivid. My den features numerous photos and mementos - of Lupita, the Otomi, fellow Missioners, Encarnacion’s hand-stitched wall hangings, a small clay house made by Enrique. Numerous other items are hidden away in photo albums and plastic bins. The ten weeks that I spent in Mexico on five Mission trips are firmly ingrained in my DNA.

I almost didn’t get to see Lupita in June 1996. She was retired (finally, at age 80) and living in the R.A. community in Querétaro. I was not planning on going to Mexico when, on Graduation Day, one of the leaders had to suddenly cancel. A plane ticket was available, I had my passport ... and 48 hours later I was flying into Mexico City.

I was a Management Professor when I decided to go on my first Mexico Mission in 1992 as a 52-year old "student." Our group of about 35 students and leaders spent a number of Sunday evenings during the Winter semester bonding and becoming oriented to the goals and experiences of the Mission.



We flew to Mexico City the Monday after graduation and gathered at Aguilas, the RA compound. That's where I first met Sr. Lupita - white haired, short in stature, and reflecting her 76 years of demanding service around the world. Her warm countenance radiated an immediate infectious welcome - and it only got better from there. She was semi-retired, serving as the community librarian and tax advisor. Each year she would come out of retirement to serve as interpreter, mentor and guide for a new batch of gringo missioners from the States.

Arriving in the Otomi Indian village in San Ildefonso, three hours bus ride out into the high desert, we moved into the Mission compound established by the Religious of the Assumption under Lupita's leadership in 1978. There we became observers of Lupita's impact on the village. Children ran up with their greetings, Otomi women quietly approached to offer welcome, the men showed their respectful deference.

One afternoon, we gathered in the Mission dining room where Lupita enthralled us with the history of the Mission. Her engrossing tale went on for several hours. I was taking notes on every scrap of paper I could find. (This "lecture" became the nucleus of the 50-page booklet I wrote upon returning home.)

One of my lasting images of Lupita was at the chapel in the colonia of El Rincon where we had hiked for a Mass. There she stood in her traditional Otomi habit with a purple shawl, wearing an Assumption baseball cap, Nike "Air Jordan" sneakers, a high-tech digital calculator watch, and her cane, hanging from her folded arms. I could paint that portrait today (if I could paint!).

Following the 1993 Mission, I had the honor to successfully nominate Lupita to receive an Honorary Degree at the 1994 Graduation ceremonies and to be her host. She was clearly embarrassed when President Hagan referred to her as "the Mother Teresa of Mexico." It was the same humility she displayed in San Ildefonso when, as translator for Fr. John's homilies (in English), she would omit his praise of the work of the sisters.

For five years, we corresponded regularly. We had formed an unbreakable bond (it's not difficult with Lupita). As the years went on, however, our correspondence waned and I lost connection with her, except for occasional reports from Fr. John or Sr. Cecilia. It was a sad, helpless feeling to receive news of her declining health and increasing dementia.

I had been expecting the news of her passing for some time and when it came, there was a mixture of sadness and relief. She was a very special woman who touched many people in this world, including me, bringing comfort and support. I have lost a dear friend - an amiga - but she lives on in my heart ... and in the "shrine" to her and the Mexico Mission in my den.

Bill Sadd ... aka Guillermo "El Gordo" Triste
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Editor's note: Sr. Lupita was born in Puebla, Mexico in 1915, did her novitiate in Belgium in 1934 and then became a missionary with her remarkable intelligence, creativity, and wit..... to the Philippines in 1936, to the USA in 1957, back to the Philippines and the USA again before going off to Japan. Brilliant yet humble, a born leader, Lupita requested that her last assignment

be with the indigenous Otomi people of San Ildefonso, north of Mexico City. There, together with her student and colleague, she prepared the way for Assumption College's Mexico Mission, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

1915 Born in Puebla, Mexico
1934 Belgium (Novitiate)
1936 Iloilo, Philippines
1957 USA
1961 Manila, Philippines
1964 Japan
1970 USA
1976 Prepared to go to India
1977 El Salvador
1978 San Ildefonso, México
1989 Peña Pobre, Mexico
1991 Águilas, Mexico
1994 Querétaro, Mexico
January 19, 2011 reborn to eternal life