

5-1-1972

## Interview of Bobby Orr

Bobby Orr

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### Recommended Citation

Orr, B. (1972). Interview of Bobby Orr. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/missions-history/43>

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## HARDING COLLEGE LIVING HISTORY OF MISSIONS

Interview of Bobby Orr by Don Shackelford

Shackelford: We have Bobby Orr visiting on our campus. Bobby is a missionary in Quito, Ecuador. He is supported by the Highland Village Church of Christ, in Austin, Texas. He is a graduate of Harding College. We are glad, Bobby, to have you on the campus. Let's begin by asking you to give just a brief outline of the work and its beginning in Ecuador today.

Orr: Well, the history as I know it, in Ecuador, began there some seven years ago, with brother Stinson. He's with the military, I think, in Ecuador. During his stay there, the Ed Sewell family came to Ecuador and began to work full-time. Brother Stinson didn't work full time with the work, but there was a congregation of a small group of native brethren when brother Sewell went down there, about seven years ago. He worked, and of course, I could see when I went, two and a half years ago, that he had done a lot of work; a great work I would say. He established quite a number of congregations throughout the country. Then, this past July, about a year and a half now, I guess, we were joined by two other families: The Ike Hamilton family from Louisiana. He is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Air Force. He is there full-time and he and his family are working with us now. Also, Dan and Vicki Knight, a young couple who finished two years at York College, in York, Nebraska. They are on the Master Apprentice Program down there. They are under the oversight of Ed Sewell and the work there, and of course, under the oversight of the elders of York, Nebraska.

Shackelford: Tell us a little about the country of Ecuador; the size of it, something about its religious makeup, and maybe cultural things that one would note in going down there to work and need to be aware of.

Orr: The country of Ecuador lies on the Pacific coast of South America. As you go south, it is the second country on the Pacific side. Colombia immediately follows Panama from the Central American countries. Ecuador is about the size, but doesn't have the land area of the state of Texas. It's not as big really. The cultural background of the country has been, as many of the South American countries, from Indian tribes. Especially in Ecuador, we have a lot of history of the Indians. The Inca Empire extended from Argentina all the way up into Ecuador. When the Spaniards came, with Fernando Pizarro, they conquered the Indians and brought the Roman Catholic religion. This is the influence, religiously, in the country although, we have to contend with many different religious denominational sects in our teaching and preaching.

Shackelford: Is Pentecostalism pretty pronounced there?

Orr: It's coming to be so.

Shackelford: What would you say are the major Protestant works there in Ecuador?

Orr: The Evangelical Church would be. Their basic doctrine is taught by a number of groups who meet under a number of names. The Evangelical Church began, or the church that is there, to the greatest extent, has been the result of the H.C.J.B. Radio program which is inter-denominational, and has been there since the beginning of the 1930's. We have to contend with that and their denominational teaching which is basically much the same as it is here in the States.

Shackelford: Is the population of Ecuador mostly Indian, or what would be their make-up?

Orr: No, now they have a European influence, Indians make up a good segment of the country, but it is not the majority Indian. I would say it is not, but we do have an awful lot of Indian blood in the country.

Shackelford: What about the occupation of the people? What are the types of work that they do, agricultural or economic, or mixture?

Orr: There is the higher and lower class. There is no middle class. There is either the farmer, the common laborer, or the working man.

Shackelford: What do they raise in farm crops?

Orr: Potatoes, corn, and in some areas on the coast, cotton. A lot of rice is raised as it is one of the staple foods as well as potatoes and corn.

Shackelford: What would be the makeup of the church? You mentioned that there had been several converted. Which classes do they come from?

Orr: The majority of them are from the low class of people. We do have some who come from the upper class.

Shackelford: What are some of the greatest obstacles that you see to the work in Ecuador; and some of the things that you will have to overcome as missionaries to the work there.

Orr: I've been discussing this with a number of people. We have many who are converted to Christ, that is they have been baptized into Christ, but it is very difficult to bring them to maturity in Christ. Many times they come because they can get their stomachs filled. That is what they can receive from those in the fellowship of the saints. We found a large number who are that way. When they see that they cannot get it, then they leave. So this is one big factor that we have had to contend with. The culture of the people is such that lying is the basic trend of the culture. It is nothing to lie if you can get away with it, and it is the thing to do if you can better yourself by it.

Shackelford: Do you think that Roman Catholicism is responsible for that?

Orr: I would tell you, yes.

Shackelford: That's been my experience in Italy, and in talking to others who have worked in Catholic countries. The attitude that they have toward, or mental reservation lends itself to that. Go ahead.

Orr: I think, probably, it is true. From my study of the Inca Culture, it was very much looked down upon by the laws that were set forth by the Indians, so it would have to have come some other way.

Shackelford: Is there anything else that you think of with reference to challenges or obstacles that one would have to overcome. I'm thinking more of the negative side of it right now.

Orr: Of course, if a person went to live in certain areas, it would be the living conditions you would have to live in that are very poor and can be dangerous to your health. You have to watch that very closely. But, in Quito, the capital, and other

larger cities, it is not such a great problem.

Shackelford: What about, say a man has children in either grade school or high school. What would be the problem with education that he might encounter?

Orr: In Quito, he can get all that is necessary from this particular inter-denominational group who have started this school there back in the thirties. It is called the Alliance Academy. It is in English, and they naturally study Spanish, but all the teachers teach in English. It is accredited and accepted by all the colleges here.

Shackelford: Tell us a little bit about the work that you are doing and the methods that you are using in evangelism in Ecuador.

Orr: Ed Sewell used, before I went there, a type of training school. I think he had it for about two years, if I'm not mistaken. He was not using it at the time when I went. He trained a number of young men in that way. Part of whom are still preaching the Gospel. Others have since left the faith. But at the present, we have been trying to use what we think of in terms of the Paul-Timothy method, taking with us brethren whom we see as very promising in their leadership ability and their firmness in the faith. We take them with us on trips of an evangelistic type of effort and teach them. We let them also preach and teach on these trips.

Shackelford: These young men that brother Sewell trained, did he help arrange for them to receive salaries from America so that they could work, or how were they supported?

Orr: No, but let's see. I say no, but he did on one or two occasions. He did have funds coming in from the States to help them in preaching the Gospel.

Shackelford: Are they now being supported by funds from the States?

Orr: Yes, they are. I think we have three now at present, who are...I take that back. Only one or two that we have now, two men, evangelists, who are supported by the Central Congregation in Quito, Ecuador.

Shackelford: How many congregations are there in Ecuador?

Orr: I think there are over thirty.

Shackelford: And what would you estimate the membership to be?

Orr: The membership now would be about 800-850. The total since the work began that were baptized, of course, is 1000-1400, and that is why I said before that the mortality rate is about 50%.

Shackelford: Do you find it easier to go out into new areas and preach and have audiences?

Orr: We found this very much so. For example, just the last part of last month, October, we, Ed Sewell, had campaigned for about a week up in the North part of the country, and there were 22 that were baptized from that effort. We get a ready audience in most every place that we go. We find open-air preaching and preaching in the parks very successful.

Shackelford: Is your preaching done entirely in Spanish, or do you use interpreters, or what?

Orr: No, we speak only in Spanish.

Shackelford: What would be your estimate, this is just to get your opinion, as to the advisability of a person trying to work in a country that is not English language country through interpreters?

Orr: Well, in a country like Ecuador and in Latin American countries, I'd say, forget it. You need to learn the Spanish language. I don't know what the situation would be in countries where I have not been, like in Africa, where one country has so many different dialects of the language. I wouldn't know.

Shackelford: Did you study the language before you went?

Orr: I studied after I arrived. I went to Latin America in 1970. First as we spent several months working with the church, but I was working with an English speaking church in the Panama Canal Zone and began to try to pick up the Spanish language. When I moved on down to Ecuador, I enrolled in the University there and took four courses which they offered and practiced at the same time as I was studying the language and I found it much easier. My personal opinion is that it was easier for me to go and to study while I was there. I have studied German while in the States and then I spent a few months in Germany. But I found it easier to go into the country, study in the university, or under a tutor or something, and be able to practice what I am studying at the same time.

Shackelford: That's interesting. I think that, basically, I certainly agree with you as that is the way I learned Italian. No doubt, had you had the opportunity to study here at Harding, it would have hastened the grammatical base for your getting into the language, would it not?

Orr: I would agree, yes. That was basically what I was getting in the University.

Shackelford: You would be interested to know that we are offering, beginning next year, a major in Spanish to go with the major in French and German that is offered presently.

Orr: That's very good.

Shackelford: Well, this is certainly good. I suspect that you found it very difficult in Panama being with Americans to really make any progress in Spanish, did you not.

Orr: Yes.

Shackelford: I think that the basic thing that I tell the fellas around here, is if they are going to foreign countries, get away from the American community.

Orr: I believe that is true, too.

Shackelford: What would you say about getting support to go into work such as this. You're sponsored by the Highland Village church in Austin. Something might be helpful, as you think back over it, for someone else who is getting ready to go into foreign mission.

Orr: Well, I can't think anything is specific right now. I might just relate how it came to be that I got my support. I didn't go on many campaigns. I thank the Lord

that I didn't have to do that. I went down to Ecuador with only receiving from one congregation here in the States which I was receiving in Panama, before I went to Ecuador, and they continued it when I went down there; \$100. I went down there, I believe, on faith. From that, through Ed Sewell, who was down there, who had connection with the Highland Village church in Austin which was looking for someone to support in Ecuador and that's how I came to be supported by the Highland Village church in Austin, Texas.

Shackelford: Well, you left Harding when?

Orr: In 1967; in the summer of that year.

Shackelford: Then you are aware, I think, that there has been a great deal done in missions offerings since then. I don't know what was being done at that time....

Orr: Yes, I know that there is. I received the bulletin. I am very encouraged by what I see and the emphasis that they are putting on missions, because it was not near what it is now I don't believe when I was here.

Shackelford: When I went to school, there were no courses offered in missions. Well, we are happy to have you on the campus. What are your plans now or for the immediate future? Are you preparing to return?

Orr: Yes, I plan to return. While in the United States I came to Searcy to visit a young man, Dave Hamilton, who is the son of the Hamilton family down there and is enrolled here, and the daughter of the Sewell family there, is enrolled in Freed-Hardeman College. So I came here to get Dave and to go to Freed-Hardeman to get Teresa and spend the Thanksgiving holidays with them. My plans are to spend until January here in the States visiting and visiting the church that supports me. On this trip also, I want to make a trip up into Missouri and visit some churches that I had contact with and preached for while I was here at Harding College. I hope that they may be able to help us some with some funds that we need very much in the work down there. When I talk about this, of course, my idea has always been to try, as soon as possible, to get the brethren to accept the responsibility of sending evangelists and preachers to evangelize the country in which we are doing the work. We feel we have made a great step forward and the congregation in Quito is now supporting two evangelists in the work. Although, part of that support is raised by the offerings that the North Americans that worship there give...

Shackelford: I was on a boat once with a man and he asked what I was and I said "I'm an American" and then I asked too. He was from Kansas.

Orr: Yes, we run into that. You come to distinguish more.

Shackelford: We wish you God's speed in your work. If you publish any bulletins or anything, please send them to our Bible department. We would be glad to have them, and if you need other workers, perhaps we can encourage some young men to come down that direction.

Orr: Well, I wish you would. We do need them, as they are needed in all the world, I believe.