

## **Billy Graham crusade in Puerto Rico billed as largest in history**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

It was billed as the largest global crusade in history, and perhaps the greatest media event as well.

Global Mission was a Billy Graham crusade held in San Juan, Puerto Rico in March and beamed by satellite television to viewers in over 165 countries. Millions of people around the world heard the famous evangelist as he preached in English and his message was translated into 150 languages.

In Quito, radio station HCJB broadcast the crusade around the world in English and Spanish.

Beginning with a special "Now is the Time" broadcast on March 19 which provided background information on Mr. Graham and the crusade, the station followed with broadcasts of the actual crusades March 20-22. The programs were fed via satellite from Puerto Rico to Quito via Trans World Radio facilities in Bonaire.

In our Quito studios, producers Curt Cole and Allen Graham taped the ninety minute programs as they came off of the satellite, and edited them down into a daily 57 minute presentation. The programs preempted the normal daily flagship program "Studio 9" which draws a large audience. It was the hope of programmers that this would make the crusade messages available to as large an audience as possible.

The English Language Service broadcast Mr. Graham's message in English along with the Spanish translations to all of its major target areas, including Europe and the South Pacific as well as North, Central, South America and the Caribbean.

Other language services including Spanish and Portuguese were planning to rebroadcast the services at a later date.

Producers said they weren't sure what response the special broadcasts would bring. Reports from listeners have begun to arrive at the Quito studios, indicated that they were appreciated.

Especially heartwarming was a letter from a listener in Ireland who wrote: "I had so wanted to hear Billy Graham and was very disappointed there was no transmission of the Global Mission near us. In fact, I did not know of any in Northern Ireland at all. I was prepared to travel to attend one. So, you can imagine my delight when I was searching my shortwave band on Monday at 7:30 a.m. and came across your program.

"I just want to thank you for your faithfulness to God and to let you know of the great blessing that program was to me. May the Lord bless you as you continue this worthwhile service."

Meanwhile, Nearly 1,300 residents turned out in the small tropical Ecuadorian town of Puerto Viejo to watch the Graham crusades via satellite. The crowd, reported to be primarily church members, sang praise songs, bowed in prayer, and watched the

Graham sermon as it was projected on a six by ten foot white vinyl screen which had been constructed by local craftsmen.

Puerto Viejo is in an economically depressed agricultural area near the Pacific coast of Ecuador. Nearby banana plantations have felt the effect of import limits imposed by European countries, and some town residents were still at the site of recent armed clashes along the Ecuadorian-Peruvian border during the crusade.

Eight churches in Puerto Viejo planned the services, with help from resident missionaries. Participating congregations included Mennonite, Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and an independent indigenous church.

Church leaders organized a cadre of local members to serve as counselors both during the crusade and afterwards. Enthusiasm ran high as church members anticipated reaching their neighbors for Jesus Christ. However, local pastors said they were disappointed with the attendance. No commitments were registered the first evening, while 15 people went forward the second evening, and 66 the third. Sponsors blamed a lack of adequate publicity for the low attendance.

Leaders reported only luke-warm response to the broadcast crusade the first night when the entire program was shown to the audience. Part of the reason, they said, was the use of English with subtitles for the first part of the program. On the last two nights local leaders substituted bands and other musicians to replace the music and introduction on the tape. Pastors said this localized the event and offered the community more opportunity to be involved.

One church member made an 8-10 hour round trip by bus to Guayaquil each day to pick up the tape of the previous-day's crusade which had been recorded by a local television station. A video-projector was flown to Ecuador from the United States for use in the services.

Similar events were held in the Ecuadorian cities of Cuenca and Guayaquil.

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