



The IGUANA



Volume 15, No. 11

May 30, 2003

Hard to the Corps

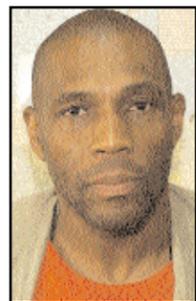
Daughter teaches retired Marine about roughing it

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

When you think of roughing it in the bush as part of the Corps, the first thing that comes to mind is the Marine Corps, not the Peace Corps.

A former Marine recently visited his daughter working in Nicaragua with the Peace Corps and admits he's been awakened to the rigors of volunteering.

"The Peace Corps is no joke. It's truly hardcore," said retired Staff Sgt. Gregory McCurtis on his way back to the United States.



Gregory McCurtis

"Nothing I experienced in the Marines comes close."

His daughter, 22-year-old Keisha McCurtis lives in a remote part of Nicaragua called Boca de Sabalos, Rio San Juan, where she is an hour's travel through dense

jungle to the nearest village with another Peace Corps volunteer.

"It's very remote and isolated. There's nothing there but trees, trees and more trees," said McCurtis, who traveled through Soto Cano Air Base in mid-May as he made a winding way to Nicaragua. McCurtis' career in the Marines took him to many corners of the globe including Somalia, Kenya, Japan and Korea. This did not prepare him for the lifestyle his daughter accepted in an effort to help in a village of about 1,500 residents.

There are no roads, only dirt paths. No plumbing, only outhouses that amount to little more than a hole in the ground. Only a few of the wooden huts built on stilts have access to spotty electrical service. The nearest phone is several hours by boat. The nutritional mainstays are beans and rice.

"Rarely did the Marines ever put you out there with nothing. We had field sanitation and radios ... you felt the force of

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Photo by Spc. Chuck Wagner

Soldiers shower kids with love

ARFOR played host on Soto Cano Air Base to nearly 100 children from Tierra Santa Orphanage of La Paz May 22. See story and photos on page 4.

Military travelers must split disbursement

By Staff Sgt. A. J. Bosker
Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON—All military travelers must now select the split disbursement option on their travel voucher claims to directly pay their government travel card expenses, according to finance officials.

Split disbursement requires travelers to tally up their GTC expenses and authorize enough funds to be sent automatically to Bank of America to pay off their charges, said Michael G. Weber, Air Force travel card program manager at the Pentagon. Any remaining travel settlement will still be sent to the traveler's personal account.

"Although this change was mandated by the 2003 National Defense Authorization Act to reduce the number of delinquent travel card accounts, split disbursement really is a win-win for everyone," Weber said. "It simplifies the payment process for travelers, gets the bank their money more quickly and reduces the number of delinquent accounts."

Nearly half of all Air Force travelers already use split disbursement on a regular basis when filing their vouchers because it simplifies the process for them, Weber said.

"Airmen no longer have to wait for their travel money to be

credited to their personal accounts before they can mail a check to the bank," he said. "It saves them the cost of a stamp or a trip to a bank branch and gets the money to the bank within two or three days."

By having all travelers pay off their travel card bills automatically, the Air Force should see a decrease in the number of delinquent accounts, he said. This is especially true if a traveler returns from a TDY as a billing cycle is about to turn over, because they can pay off the card before their account becomes 30 days past due.

If a traveler charges more to their GTC than they were authorized, they still must select split disbursement and also reimburse the bank any additional charges, he added.

Supervisors and approving officials are required to verify travelers selected split disbursement before signing off on any voucher, he said.

"If split disbursement is not selected on a voucher, it will be returned to the traveler to be redone," he said. "This may delay the processing of the claim and potentially put the traveler's GTC account into a past-due status."

Although split disbursement is not yet mandatory for civilian employees, Weber encouraged them to take advantage of its timesaving benefit.





Corps

From front page

the U.S. government backing you up," he said. "Where my daughter is right now – whatever is there, is there. It's a very do-it-yourself environment."

And its unlikely the military would send a soldier to such an isolated village alone.

"The toughest thing for her is the lack of intellectual stimulation. Even though she speaks the language, the conversation is usually very straightforward and simple," McCurtis said, imitating a typical exchange. "What are you doing? I'm cooking. Oh, you're cooking. Yeah." Silence.

She does a lot of reading, he noted.

"You have it great here at Soto Cano. You think this is third world, but this is paradise compared to the real third world," he said.

McCurtis lugged several bags of supplies for his daughter, in which he packed bug spray, mosquito netting, sandals, boots, batteries and a book on resident mid-wifery, which is his daughter's main task in the village.

McCurtis' trip to Boca de Sabalos involved several days of expedition-like travel he compared to scenes in the movies "African Queen" and "Romancing the Stone," all to spend just 24 hours with his daughter.

From Soto Cano, he took the base shuttle service to the Tegucigalpa Airport where he boarded a flight to Managua, Nicaragua.

There, he hopped on a Cessna 208B, a plane that holds only about a dozen passengers. It landed on a dirt runway in San Carlos, Nicaragua. To reach Boca de Sabalos he traveled several hours by boat on a river.

"You learn in life – the more remote and isolated a place is, the more beauty there is. It's incredible to experience first-hand the serene beauty of it all," he said of his float beneath the jungle canopy.

"At the same time, there is disease, pestilence, the whole nine yards. When we got to the village, I saw a lot of amputees, or people deformed at birth from vitamin deficiencies."

Several bottles of vitamins were also in the

goody bag for his daughter.

"My only concern in visiting her was with her security, her safety. Other than that, I know a person can adjust to anything, and she's doing that," he said.

His daughter is likely to finish out her full two-year service, although several other volunteers who traveled to Nicaragua at the same time have already quit.

"She was realistic going in, knowing she can't save the world, but that she can make a small difference. She understood her purpose was mostly to educate. Teaching lasts a lifetime. Her work only lasts while she's there," he said.

Growing up with a semper fidelis father also helps.

"With her, 'uncle!' is not an option. She's the kind who thinks once you start something you finish it," he said.

McCurtis now works with the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, where he might need to brush up on crocodile-fighting skills – he has another child who intends to study in Australia.

U.S. soldiers in Vietnam to recover casualties

By Maj. Jamie Gayton and Lt. Col. Stan Heath
Army G-1

WASHINGTON – One of the Army's Vietnam veterans still on active duty recently visited the fire base where he was stationed 34 years ago.

Lt. Gen. John M. Le Moyne, the Army's deputy chief of staff, G-1, visited U.S. soldiers last week in Vietnam who are there to recover American remains from a crash site in Ba Ria-Vung Tau. The soldiers are assigned to Detachment 2 of Joint Task Force-Full Accounting and the Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii.

The joint team is in Vietnam combing through thousands of tons of mud extracted from the ground and then screened for fragments by hired Vietnamese locals with supervision from the JTF-FA/CILHI team.

Recovery teams enter Vietnam and conduct full-blown recovery site operations about four times a year for about 30 days at a time. As the Army G-1, Le Moyne has oversight over the CILHI team located in Hawaii.

During his visit May 9-12 to recovery site 1538 in Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Le Moyne was briefed by the recovery team leader Capt. Tod Pingrey and the lead anthropologist Dr. Pete Miller. He was escorted by the JTF-FA detachment commander Lt. Col. Steve Hawley.

The team had built a work area above the wetlands and a raised walkway to and from the crash site to enable soil stabilization and extraction.

Pingrey's team had already recovered glass from an aircraft cockpit and fragments from a fuselage confirming that the recovery site location was accurate. Le Moyne toured the site receiving briefs from each of the section leaders and then sat down and held an informal question and answer session with the team.

"The NCOs were superb," Le Moyne said after the trip. "Their work is important to the American people and to their fellow soldiers."

Le Moyne also addressed issues and answered questions about soldier career paths and recovery missions. CILHI is scheduled to merge with JTF-FA in October under U.S. Pacific Command. The resulting joint organization, while retaining all current capabilities of



Lt. Gen. John M. Le Moyne in Vietnam examines a map showing a U.S. crash site while he is briefed by recovery team leader Capt. Tod Pingrey. (photo by Maj. Jamie Gayton)

both CILHI and JTF-FA, would become more efficient as unity of command and unity of effort will enable seamless coordination and recovery operations throughout southeast Asia and the world, Le Moyne said.

Following his site visit, Le Moyne took a drive to visit an old fire base site where he had operated. Le Moyne said he was amazed at the difference in the country from how he left it as a young officer.

"I couldn't even tell a war had been fought there," Le Moyne said. "The effects of a peace-time economy were striking."

Le Moyne then traveled to Hanoi and along with Ambassador Raymond Burghardt attended meetings with Vietnamese government and military officials. Le Moyne thanked Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Dinh Bin and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army Lt. Gen. Nguyen Duc Soat for their outstanding support in efforts to recover unaccounted for Americans and share information about possible recovery sites.

(Editor's note: Maj. Jamie Gayton is the aide de camp and Lt. Col. Stan Heath is the public affairs officer for G1.)

SUBMISSIONS

The Iguana is always looking for submissions. Any articles, photos or letters to be submitted to *The Iguana* should be sent to the PAO at charles.wagner@jtfb.southcom.mil or delivered to the Public Affairs Office, Bldg. D-06. If you have questions about possible submissions call ext. 4150 or 4676 to talk to the editor.

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Content is edited, prepared and provided by the Joint Task Force-Bravo Public Affairs Office, APO AA 34042, in Building D-06. Telephone numbers are 011-504-234-4634, ext. 4150 or 4676. Fax is ext. 4550. or DSN 449-4150/4676. Readers with story ideas should call the Public Affairs office. All photographs are property of JTF-Bravo unless otherwise noted.

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Rescue team responds to mock crash

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

Joint Task Force-Bravo and the Honduran military combined for lead-up training and a crash response exercise May 19-21.

Members of the search and rescue team, 228th Aviation Regiment, ARFOR, the Medical Element, the Honduran 1st Paracadista Battalion at Tamara and the 2nd Battalion Special Forces faced the scenario of a downed American aircraft. They had to locate the craft, reach it on difficult terrain, secure the area and rescue crewmembers.

A total of 32 U.S. and Honduran soldiers contributed in reaching the Black Hawk helicopter which was reported crashed on the Honduran's Tamara airfield complex May 21.

The exercise was organized to be as realistic as possible, including details such as the Search and Rescue team drawing weapons after the initial alert and contacting mortuary affairs after finding a dead crewmember at the crash, said Capt. Kimberly Jensen, team officer in charge.

Reaching the downed Black Hawk involved a sweaty, grueling trek across brush and barbed wire under heavy rucks and rescue equipment, she said.

The crash scene had on-site injuries, 'walk-away' injuries and a death, each of which demanded different responses.

"It went really well. The coordination with others, like the 228th and MEDEL, was excellent," said Jensen, who admitted these kinds of exercises require a lot of work. "We couldn't have asked for a better reaction. The fact that it was a bi-lingual exercise was limiting. It was definitely a challenge, and we used a lot of hand signals to communicate. But overall, it helped all of us work together."

The Honduran forces are invaluable participants in the exercises – as they would be in a real crash – because they add a crucial element of population control, Jensen noted.

Photos contributed by Sgt. 1st Class Lance Harris and Sgt. Elvis Saucier

Above and center, participants move mock victims during the exercise May 21 near Tamara. Bottom left and right, members of Joint Task Force-Bravo's Search and Rescue team learn various skills during lead-up training on SotoCano Air Base for the combined U.S.-Honduras crash response.





Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

The slip-and-slide runway ARFOR soldiers set up on the baseball field was a popular way to cool down for children who spent the day on Soto Cano.

ARFOR hosts orphans on base

By Spc. Chuck Wagner
Editor

Over 100 children wanted to see if soldiers can have fun when they arrived on Soto Cano Air Base May 22.

They found that ARFOR had set up activities to entertain them for hours, even prepared a lunch to refuel them. And they had a blast!

Children from the Tierra Santa Orphanage in La Paz were bused onto base where ARFOR prepared the sports fields with several age-appropriate activities including a slip-and-slide runway, drawing, face-painting, soccer, biking, and several mass participation relay races.

"We visit the orphanage every month," said Capt. Kimberly Jensen, who organized the day's events along with Sgt. 1st Class Luis Lamb. "Each year we bring them on post once. That way people who can't often go on weekends get to see the children. And the children get to see an environment they're not used to. They are thrilled by simple things like the grass and the hot water in the bathrooms. These are things we take for granted that they don't have."

About 20 soldiers volunteered to help with the events.

"The soldiers really made it happen," Jensen said.

The company commander, Capt. Stacey Moore, First Sgt. Jonny Stone, and Staff Sgt. Todd Robbins spent the morning cooking lunch.

"Not a scrap of food was wasted," Jensen said. "And they took food home for those kids who couldn't make it."

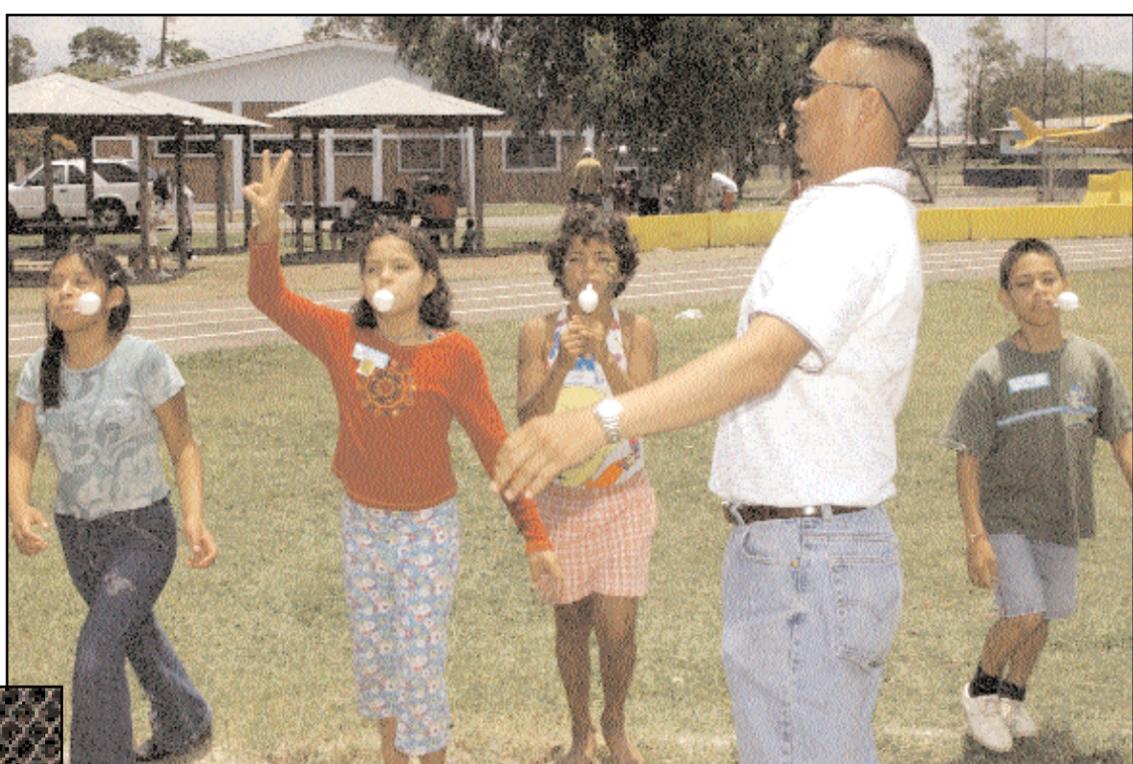


Soldiers hand out burgers and hot dogs to children who ate lunch with soldiers on base.

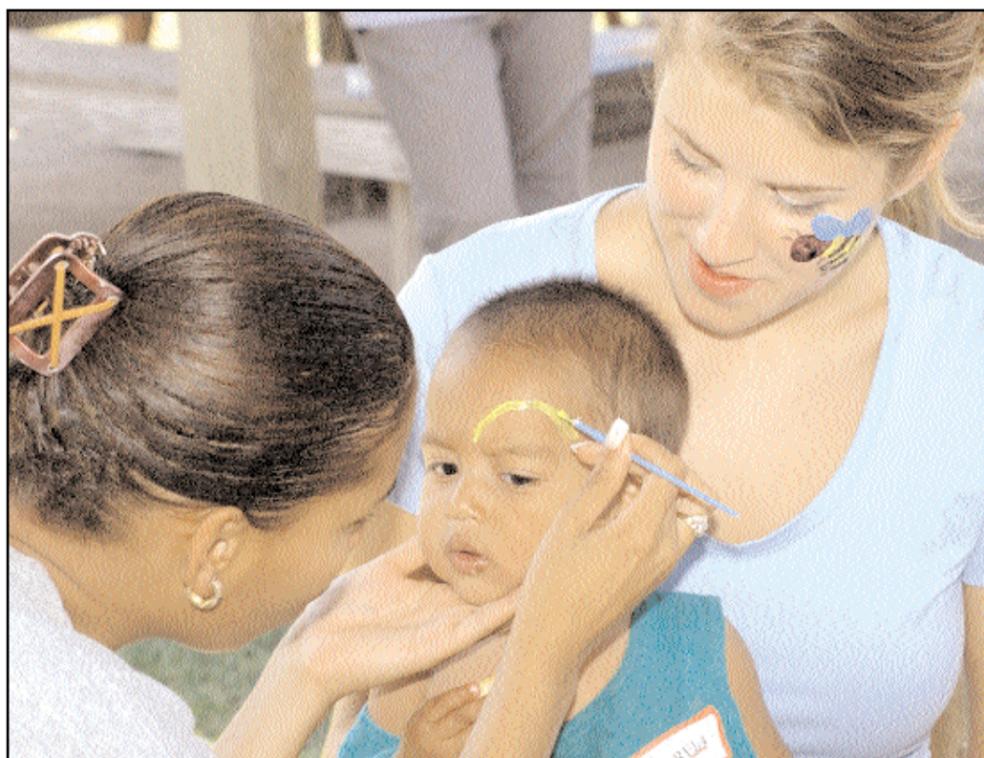




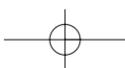
Kenneth Losoncy learns how to pronounce a boy's name from name tag. Below, the children enjoyed several activities, including soccer.



Spc. Rafael Rodriguez announces the start of the egg relay. The children held the egg on a spoon between their teeth and raced across the field.



Above, Cpl. Jihan Gutierrez paints a design on the face of a child held by Spc. Lydia Nolan. Left, Sgt. Kim Laurinaitis and a young friend.





Fun is the Day full of activ



All eyes are on the ball when Staff Sgt. Joe Flores bats it during volleyball on the sand court just in front of the newly opened Club Med bar. MEDEL staff held an organizational day May 22 which included a variety of sports activities, games and awards.

Photos by Spc. Chuck Wagner

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Maj. John Steed aims carefully before tossing during a game of horseshoes. Left, Spc. Michael VanderHayden and Staff Sgt. Gregory Adam combine talents in a three-legged relay.

the best medicine activities refreshes MEDEL



After heating up the volleyball courts, MEDEL competitors such as Sgt. Angel Luino jumped in Soto Cano's base pool for team swimming relays. Left, Sgt. Derrick launches the volleyball. Right, it takes concentration and good hands to compete in the water balloon toss, as Staff Sgt. Ronald Moore demonstrates.





Honduras' majestic Mayan city

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Carla Pampe
Public Affairs Director

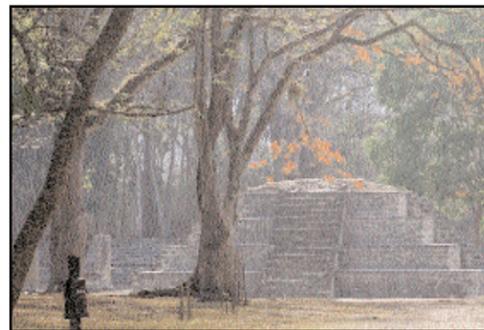
Of all the trips offered to Soto Cano personnel by the Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, perhaps one of the most interesting is a visit to the Mayan Ruins at Copan.

Tucked away in the beautiful Copan River Valley near the western border with Guatemala, the ruins are one of the most celebrated Mayan sites in all of Central America.

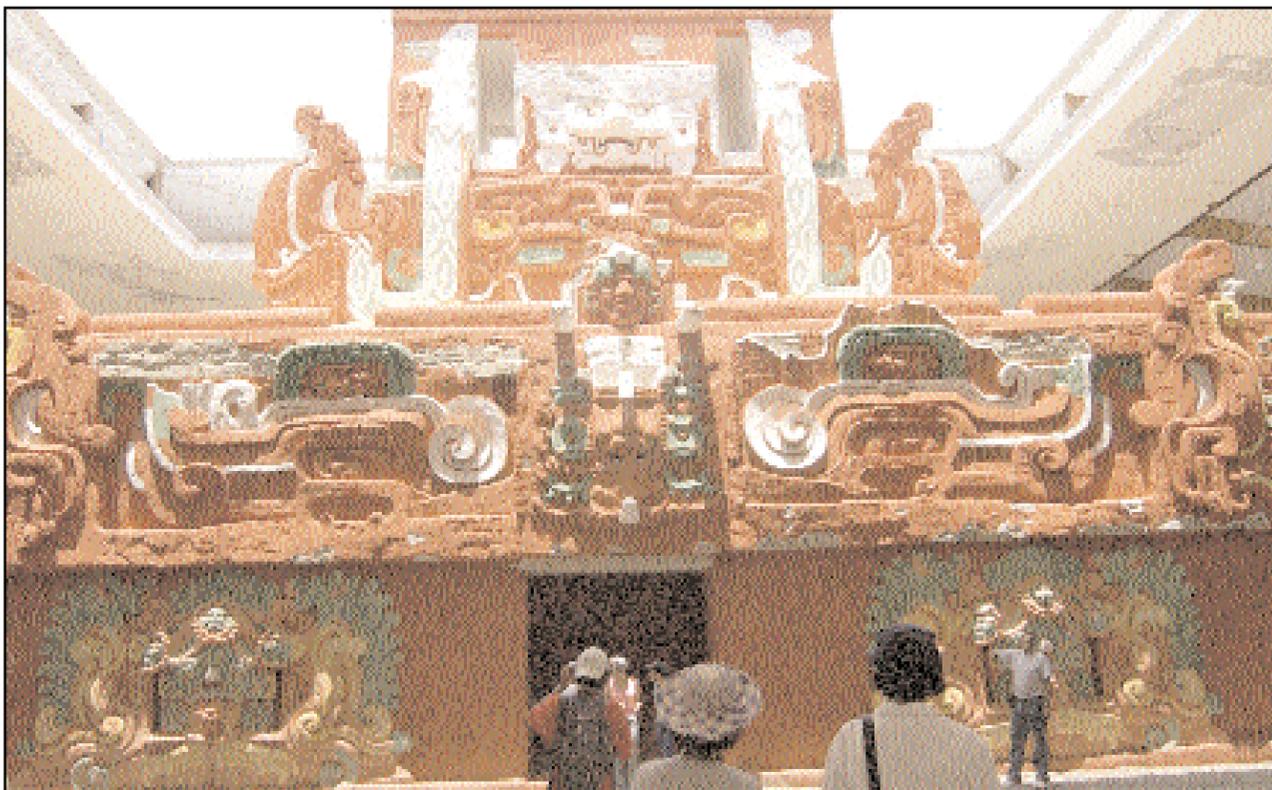
The ruins were originally discovered in 1570 by Diego Garcia de Palacio, but were not rediscovered and explored until 1843 by American explorer John Lloyd Stephens. Stephens came across Copan during his travels looking for Mayan civilizations. When Mr. Stephens entered Copan, it had been deserted for 800 years. The people living in the area did not know what it was. He bought the ruins site from a local landowner for \$50.

Since the 1970s, Copan has been extensively explored and excavated by numerous archeologists. A large amount of the ruins have been restored, and are open for public viewing, including two tunnels beneath the ruins. There is also a museum on the site, as well as one in the nearby town of Copan Ruinas.

For more information on traveling to Copan, contact the MWR office at 4268.



Above left, the walls of the temple have some of the most detailed Hieroglyphs at Copan. Above right, the first sight to greet visitors is the beautiful view of Structure 4 surrounded by blooming trees in what is known as the Great Plaza. Left, the face on Stela B.



One of the most impressive sights in the museum located on the ruins site is the full-scale replica of Rosalila, the temple buried within Temple 16. Archeologists discovered the entire temple intact, but to make it visible to the public, Structure 16 would be destroyed. Instead, they built a replica with the colorings thought to have been used on the original. Left, there are nine magnificent Stela located in the plaza, depicting several of the 16 Mayan Kings of Copan. This one is of 18 Rabbit, the 13th King of Copan, who ruled from 695 AD to 738 AD.

