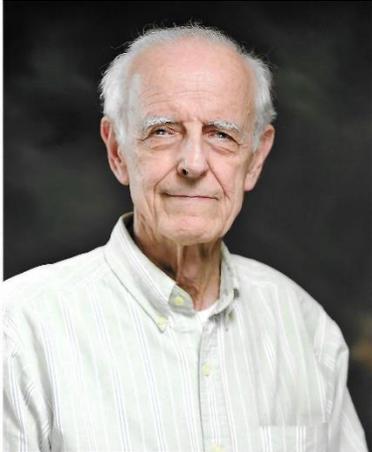


Dr. John T. Baker of Dallas, Texas
**Receives the Certificate of International Volunteer Service from the American
Dental Association**

By Dr. John T. Baker, FADI



This August, the American Dental Association sent out the **Certificates of International Volunteer Service** for 2016 to the ADA members who achieved this recognition of service. The recipient dentists gave volunteer service to relieve pain and suffering of people in disadvantaged countries. In 2015, only 62 dentists achieved this recognition. In 2016, there were only 22 recipients. Dr. **John Baker** went on 38 mission trips over 19 years to serve the impoverished Mexican people in the most primitive secluded wilderness settings of Mexico. Dr. Baker is a full time practicing dentist of 49 years in practice in Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Baker relates here some of the aspects of his mission service:

For 20 years, my best friend Bob Burluson & I had been exploring the most secluded & impoverished areas of the Chihuahuan Desert in northern Mexico & adjacent Texas in the United States. Bob decided to do as much as possible to help these disadvantaged friends that we had come to know. Through the Baptist River Ministry Program, Bob started mission work that included habitat improvement, education, infrastructure development, medical & health clinics, dental clinics & more. I became the dentist for this endeavor, which involved caring for these wonderful people in three small villages & several outlying goat camps.

These Mexican Indians exist in the most primitive imaginable conditions, living in brush huts, caves, lean-tos, brush arbors, & dug outs-a 150 year ago type of existence with dirt floors & cooking outdoors for the most part. Needless to say, with our equipment which included compressed CO2 tanks & high speed drills, we were able to give these people as fine a dental care as any place in the world. Working under a tree, a brush arbor, a tarp, & sometimes in an adobe hut, we performed fillings, extractions, periodontal cleanings & surgery, & all types of care instructions to these impoverished people. All the while with goats, chickens, turkeys, hogs, donkeys, horses & dogs competing for our work space. Some of our oral surgery was of the type, that had we been in the United States, we would have put the patient in the hospital & used general anesthesia. However, as is often the case, God provides the healing & the protection for these types of emergency situations in such primitive settings.

We had many unusual experiences such as being taken into custody & having to work on "their" family, & having men with guns come up & having us do dental work on them all day as they held their firearms across their chest as we worked & while the others stood in a circle around us with their rifles ready, waiting each for their turn. But by & large, my dental care for these people was the most satisfying aspect of my 49 years in dentistry, as these families became my regular patients, seen & helped 2 or 3 times each year for 19 years. It has been wonderful.

This is just a short over view, & I am writing a book about these experiences. It will take a book to share the experiences of these missionary adventures.