

An Aussie in Mexico: The only Moonie in Christian group walking into the hills

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A willingness to pay indemnity sometimes helps.

I was the only Moonie with a Christian youth group on their walk into the hills (Queretaro, Mexico, 1980). Since it was late afternoon, the leader had a problem. He wanted to hurry everyone back before dark.

Solution? Get the guys to race each other home. Quick solutions sometimes cause extra hassles.

Extra Problem? One of the guys stepped on a loose stone sending it careering further down the slope on the zig zag path. This rock was like a slab, about 5 in x 5 in x 15 in (12 cm x 12 cm x 36 cm) and solid.

If most of the boys were racing uphill, guess who was downhill.

Morena wasn't as popular as her blonde sister. No-one went out of their way to help her, except herself. Now was no exception. With the rock leaving a trail of dust on its descent towards the girls, she escaped further right onto the steeper part of the slope to hide behind a solitary shrub. After all, if you drew a straight line, the rock would easily pass her on the left.

That was her mistake. Boulders don't follow a straight line.

Like water, this one would bend with the curve of the hill right onto the steeper section where she had rushed. Ten feet (3 m) behind her, the slope turned into a 40 foot (13m) cliff.

I was the last person that rock would pass before it got to Morena. The girls were spread across two levels of the zigzag path. Morena had been on the lower one directly below me. What to do? Frantic tactics came to me.

I couldn't just yell instructions. My Spanish wasn't good enough and a panicking 14 year old wouldn't listen.

I couldn't slide down the slope and drag her away. If she resisted, we'd both be in danger.

I was up to Plan C, pay indemnity.

I looked at the rock's progress, the way it rolled and tumbled, and realized, "That moves like a rugby ball. Twice as long, but a rugby ball. More than anyone else in this soccer nation, I know how that thing is going to bounce."

I can stop this.

Crablike, I crawled onto the steeper section, and secured my foothold. My sports experience guided my movements. My stance was cricket keeper style, knees bent ready to spring. My hands were forward, goal keeper like.

I still had three long seconds to go. "Was this a bad idea?" Beyond the rock, I could see the boys' mouths drop open.

I could almost hear the word, "In-dumb-nity"

Plan D came to mind. Stand aside and pray it doesn't smash her? No good. Even just a glancing blow could send her over the cliff.

I focused on the rock. "I can do this. I can ... oh, no."

Snagging something, the rock catapulted off the gravelled surface twenty feet away. It cartwheeled through the air. Once it touched down, six feet in front of me, there was no telling which way it would go. If I stayed there, I'd become its first victim.

I had to cover the distance before it bounced. Volley ball, cricket, rugby, even swimming training kicked in. I dived forward and reached it with a hand either end and planted it onto the ground, moving all my torso weight on top of it.

It worked ... mostly.

The erratic bouncing stopped, but the momentum of that hefty rock had me sliding downhill over the loose stones. My feet couldn't find a foothold on the gravel-like surface. I was slipping backward towards the cliff.

"Plan E. What's Plan E? There's got to be a Plan E!"

I was willing to keep the rock in check until I knew the girl was safe, then roll off and ...

I stopped. I wasn't sure why – I didn't care why – but I stopped.

Relieved, I heaved the rock, avoiding Morena, to continue its path over the cliff.

"But what stopped me?" I thought looking around.

One of the other girls placed her fist on the rocky surface for me to tread on her as a foothold. Cathy was the least athletic, but smartest of the group. It must have hurt her, but she kept her fist there without complaint.

Boy, was I glad she opted for her own Plan C, and not Plan D.

We made it back to town by dusk. The youth group weren't sure how to thank me. I suggested letting me lead one of their bible study sessions and spoke on the topic, "The Heart Of God".

It occurred to me that in the days leading up to that, I had prayed about :

"No greater love... than to lay down his life for another" and I had prayed over how small a number of people I may be willing to risk myself for.

Spirit world put me in a situation to answer that question.

I now am more careful about what I pray for.