

Ecuadoran economy during the last decade.

In 1982-83, Ecuador suffered severely from changes in the Humboldt (*El Niño*) ocean current. The frigid waters from the south, laden with fish, changed their course and deprived Ecuador of a source of much-needed foreign currency. During those same years, flooding wiped out crops and beaches, and greatly impeded the transport of oil. Not until 1985 was productivity back to normal.

In March 1987, an earthquake raked Oriente, the eastern province, killing more than 4,000 people and crippling the 500-kilometre (310-mile) pipeline that funnels oil to the coast. The pipeline has been repaired and is back in working order. In 1988 the economy grew by eight percent, after the contraction of the previous year, thanks to the rebound of petroleum output to the levels preceding the earthquake of 1987. Should the present



Making friends at San Cristóbal, one of the Galápagos islands. During his voyage on the *Beagle*, Charles Darwin studied the fauna of this remote archipelago and published his conclusions in *The Origin of Species*. Much of Ecuador remains as pristine as it was in Darwin's time.

Rotary in Ecuador

by Alberto Di Capua

For more than 60 years, Rotary has been a positive influence in Ecuador. Many people have been helped, and much has been done in the spirit of fellowship and cooperation.

There are 36 Rotary clubs in Ecuador, in amazingly diverse areas. Some are in the high Andean valleys and plateaus, such as Tulcán, at 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) above sea level. Others, like Manta, are on the seaside, overlooking the Pacific. Still others are in the heart of our agricultural areas, such as Santo Domingo de los Colorados, or right in the center of the Amazon jungle, as is the case for Mendes.

In spite of our geographic and climatic differences, the degree of cooperation and integration shown by our Rotary clubs is remarkable, as evidenced by the many projects involving different clubs. The first Ecuadorian Rotary clubs, Quito and Guayaquil, were founded in 1927. Gradually, other clubs have been added, covering our territory with an efficient, tightly knit network. Ecuadorian clubs used to be part of a larger district, shared with Colombia, but growth led to the creation of District 440, which comprises the entirety of the territory of Ecuador.

Practically every area of social concern has been positively affected by Ecuadorian Rotarians. Examples range from schools created and run by Rotary to educate social workers, to student scholarships provided by Rotarians; from day-care centers for children of working-class families, to pacemakers for heart patients. The programs of student exchanges—both national and international—have been especially well received.

A truly unique project is the agricultural center at Huaca, where Rotarians run a school that teaches modern farming techniques to young people of the area. The school calendar takes the farmer's own

calendar into account, timing classes to accommodate farm work schedules. The students have three-day periods of intensive courses, alternated with three-day periods of leave and homework.

The agricultural center and school is promoted and sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Tulcán, Ibarra, and Quito, as well as by the Rotarians of District 704 (parts of Ontario and Québec, in Canada, and New York, U.S.A.). The Rotary Foundation has granted more than U.S. \$200,000 for this school.

Health has been a major concern of Rotary in Ecuador. Both polio and gastrointestinal diseases have been targeted and are being brought under control. Some parasitic diseases such as infestation with *tenia choli* (a serious health threat, common in many tropical areas of the world and acquired by ingestion of viable larvae in insufficiently cooked infected beef or pork) have been the focus of campaigns of the Rotary Club of Valle Inter-oceánico. A new and modern institute for the treatment of cancer, created by the Rotary Club of Loja, is an invaluable resource to much of the country.

The recent outbreak of a cholera epidemic in neighboring Peru has posed a new challenge to Ecuador's sanitary authorities, as well as to local Rotary clubs. Last March, specific actions for the prevention of this mortal disease were discussed during the 53rd conference of District 440 (Ecuador). They are now being coordinated by Guillermo Sosa, a member of the Rotary Club of Quito and a leader of the PolioPlus campaign.

Many other projects and programs have been implemented in recent years. Much effort has been devoted to improving the living conditions of children, but many senior citizens have benefited as well. Rotary is a key element of the social fabric of our country. It is the loom for many efforts that unite, integrate, and help to transform Ecuador.

• Alberto Di Capua was governor of R.I. District 440 (Ecuador) in 1969-70.