

As part of Global Youth Network trip Georgetown man Mexico-bound

By **HERB GARBUTT**
Staff Writer

Jason Smith's only experience outside Canada or the United States was a vacation to Cuba. While there, he stayed in a luxurious resort but his most memorable moment from the trip came when they visited a local village and played baseball with some of the residents.

Smith said playing on inter-mixed teams and having the whole village gather to watch the game gave him the feeling being accepted and being a part of their culture, if only for a short time. The defining moment of the trip was when one of the people from the resort gave one of the Cuban players his cap and his glove.

"The look on his face was incredible. He was so happy," Smith said. "I'd like to make someone that happy but I'd like to have something to give them, some sort of skill rather than just material gain. I'd like to give them some sort of service or teach them something to be self-supportive."

Smith will get that opportunity next month. The 24-year-old Georgetown resident will join 10 other university students on a trip to Mexico as part of Global Youth Network to work with church and community groups to build houses and help set up YMCA-type sports programs for inner city kids.

Smith, who will graduate from the chemical engineering program at McMaster University this spring, will leave for Mexico City on May 1. The 13-member team, which includes two

experienced group leaders, will spend three weeks in Mexico City and the last week in a nearby village.

Smith is not only looking at this as a chance to help but also as a chance to learn.

"It's going to be a learning experience for us, too," he said. "All through school I've been learning from a textbook. This is going to be real life experience."



JASON SMITH

Smith has already started the learning process. A friend at university who is also taking part in the trip has been giving him lessons in Spanish. He said he is curious to find out what Mexicans know about Canada and find out if what he knows about Mexico is actually true.

Smith said he wishes he had found out about this kind of opportunity earlier. Because he is graduating this year, he may not have another chance to be involved

this type of program again.

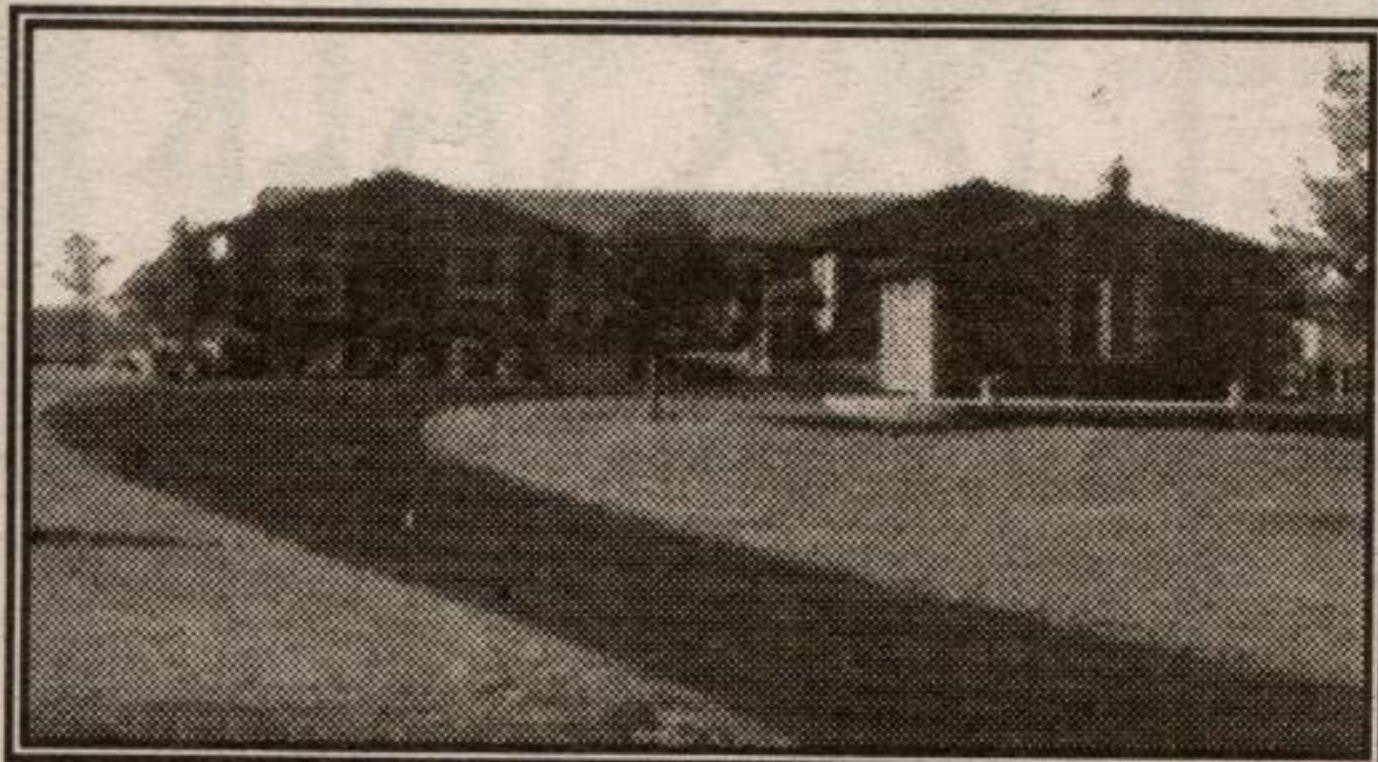
One thing he is sure of is that this trip will be much different than his last one.

"I'd be very disappointed if it was a vacation because I really do want to make a difference," he said. "I want to see the country and be there with the people instead of going to the Hilton where you're going to meet a bunch of other Canadians and Americans. This way I'm going to learn what it's like to live as they do—to really live with the people."

Smith's only obstacle remains fund-raising. He must raise \$2,000 to pay for expenses, which include transportation, accommodations, meals and training for the month. Anyone interested in contributing can reach him by calling 877-1736 or 905-523-0416.



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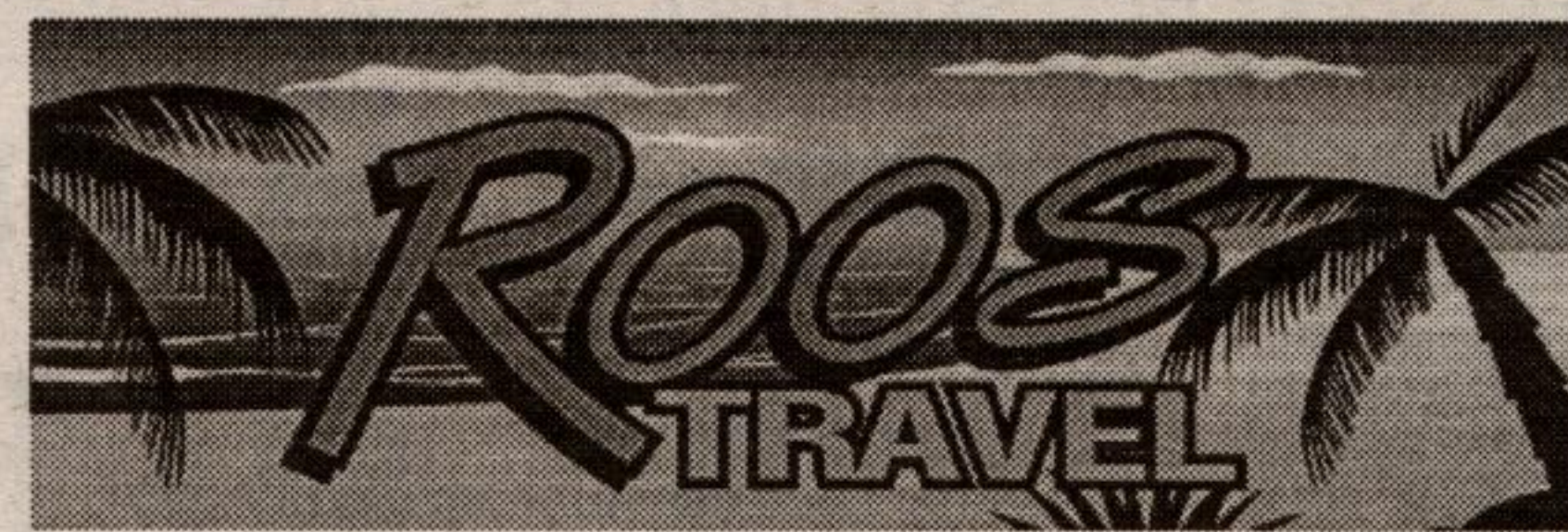
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