



St. Mary's Principal, Sr. Perpetua, Tim Doherty, Hector Barcenas Barretto, Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez, and Joe Schleper Jr. from the *Shakopee Valley News*, October 18, 1967.

paper, the arrangements for their visit and transportation costs are taken care of by the International Cultural Exchange Program, while other expenses are taken by their family and the host families. Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez, or Big Bill, had his brother, who was 14, who was living with another family in Kansas City, Missouri, also under the same program.

Both the Schleper and Doherty families were members of the St. Mary's Catholic Church in Shakopee, and both Big Bill and Hector went to school at St. Mary's 7th grade where Joe Schleper Jr. and Timothy Doherty also attended. Hector wanted to come to the United States to learn English. Though he learned some English in Mexico, Hector wanted to learn English "like the 'natives' speak it."

Big Bill lived with the Schleper family on 7th and Main, across from Hiawatha Park. Beside his "brother" Joe Jr., Big

Bill also had fun with the rest of the family, including Linda, Jeanne, David, Little Bill, Gary, and Tommy. (One more child, Jen, was born in 1972.). The family enjoyed camping and traveling around the area with their blue station wagon.

At one point, during a friendly scuffle, Big Bill gave Hector a black eye! Rose Marie Weidner Schleper, when she saw it, said, "This program has taught us that boys and boys, no matter which country they came from!" She added, "The whole family loves Billy. We will be sorry when it is time for him to go back to his home in Puebla, Mexico."

In fact, when Big Bill left, the family asked his family in Mexico to return to Shakopee the next year, and sure enough, Big Bill again lived with the family in 1968, also.

Over the next several years, the Schleper family had several exchange students, both boys and girls, from Mexico and other Central American area. But they all remember their first exchange student, Big Bill.



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**Guillermo Billy
Martiñ Lopez**
In Shakopee 1967, 1968



Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez, age 11, was an exchange student to Shakopee in 1967, and then returned the following year and stayed again with Joseph and Rose Weidner Schleper and their 7 children.

The seventh grade student from Puebla, Mexico. Puebla is the capital and largest city of the state of Puebla, and the fourth largest city in Mexico, after Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara. A colonial era planned city, it is located in the southern part of Central Mexico on the main route between Mexico City and Mexico's main Atlantic port, Veracruz, according to [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puebla_\(city\)#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puebla_(city)#History). The city was founded in 1531 in an area called Cuetlaxcoapan, which means "where serpents change their skin," between two of the main indigenous settlements at the time, Tlaxcala

Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez. Along with his parents and four other siblings lived in Puebla, Mexico. The city was the fourth largest city in Mexico. Can you imagine the difference between his home town and his adopted home town of Shakopee, Minnesota? In Shakopee in 1967, about 7,000 lived here, compared to 3 million people in Puebla, Mexico. Today, in Shakopee, there are about 41,000 living here, including 8% Latino/a.



and Cholula. The city is also famous for *mole poblano*, *chiles en nogada* and *Talavera pottery*. However, most of its economy is based on industry. Being both the fourth largest city in Mexico and the fourth largest Metropolitan area in Mexico, it has a current population of 3,250,000 people, and the city serves as one of the main hubs for eastern Central Mexico.

Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez, called Big Bill by the Schleper family as they already have a Little Billy, who was six years old. Big Bill was in Shakopee for two months as part of the International Cultural Exchange Program, according an article, *Local Families Hosts Foreign Exchange Boys* in the **Shakopee Valley News**, October 19, 1967. Big Bill lived with the Schleper family, while the Doherty family hosted Hector Barcenás Barreto, age 12.

The exchange program originated in

Mexico, and operated under the approval of all Catholic Diocese in Mexico and participated Catholic Diocese in the United States. The program was not limited to Catholic participating, but rather the exchange students are placed in homes where their parents' religion is practiced. The students used their school vacation period to visit a host family in another country. Guillermo Billy Martiñ Lopez and Hector Barcenás Barreto lived with their host family, and attend school with the families other children.

The main purpose of the exchange, according to the article, was acquaint the youth in Mexico, Central America, and the United States with actual values and truths of each others' cultures by means of living experiences in them as guest members of host family.

The boys arrived at the Minnesota/St. Paul International Airport on September 19, 1967, along with 50 other 12 to 18 year old students. According to the