

HOLY WEEK



SEMANA SANTA, or Holy Week, is celebrated in every part of Latin America. It is a time of almost continual religious observances, of colorful processions, of vivid passion plays. Churches are beautifully decorated for the occasion with green growing things and golden fruit. Scenes depicting events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection are erected in many of them. During the days of mourning, the church bells are silenced and *matracas*, or wooden rattles, are used to announce the services. Altars and saints are covered in many of the churches during this time.

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday with the blessing of palms in the churches. Some of the people carry simple palm branches, but many have attractively woven and decorated figures. Banners, crosses, spears, and letters are among the many unusual forms.



Some of the smaller towns have processions every day during Holy Week, but in most places nothing much happens between Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday. On Thursday special altars known as *monumentos* are decorated with flowers and lighted candles. People go from church to church to view the *monumentos* until they have visited seven different churches. On this day also, priests wash the feet of twelve of their altar boys or members of the parish to commemorate the washing of the feet of the twelve disciples by Christ. Small villages love to dramatize the Last Supper and the betrayal and arrest of Christ (SEE HOLY WEEK PAGE 5)

ONE DAY'S JOURNEY

Benito Juarez, "Great Reformer" of the 19th century was born in the small pueblo of Guelatao, about an hour and a half away from Oaxaca by bus, and slightly less by taxi colectivo. The ride to Guelatao is half the fun. The point of departure for the trip is the monument to Juarez some 3 km. out of town on Ninos Heroes de Chapultepec. From there, highway 175 heading northeast turns into a veritable roller coaster, offering stunning panoramic views of the valley of Oaxaca and the mountains and valleys beyond. The pueblo is picturesque, there are many flowering trees on the main street; also on that street is located a small museum dedicated to Juarez. An interesting sidelight: there is a man in town who is an expert in herbal medicine. One of my housemates went to see Priciliano for some mudpacks applied to combat a cold. The senora of our house tells of a friend who suffered from acne on a good part of her body, which could not be cured by her doctors in New York. After a visit to Priciliano, she improved greatly and vowed to return during her next vacation. The pueblo of Ixtlan is a couple of km further up the highway, a 20 or 25 minute walk for those in fair shape. The highlight of the pueblo is a 17th century templo. Unfortunately during this authors visit it was closed and the interior could not be viewed. For the strong of limb there is a monument and statue high on a hill overlooking the town which undoubtedly offers views even more spectacular than those available in Guelatao colectivos to Oaxaca depart from Ixtlan. From Guelatao one would need to catch the bus back.



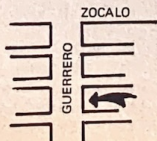
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Oaxacan Personages:

FRANCISCO TOLEDO



Toledo is Toledo. According to the writer Luis Cardoza y Aragón, this unique artist broke the monotony of art in Mexico: What does he represent? Something more than his esoteric world with its unmistakable form, line, color and composition. He copies nothing, imitates nothing; he is always inventing. Toledo cannot be grasped through reason alone. Of Zapotec Indian origin, Francisco Benjamin Toledo was born in Juchitan on July 17, 1940. His father was a merchant and his mother worked dyeing cloth with indigo. From childhood he was trained in the trade of his grandfather, a shoemaker. In this atmosphere of craftsmanship, he traveled through the towns of Oaxaca, together with his family, and he lived for a

time in Minatitlan, Veracruz, and Arriaga, Chiapas, as well. Toledo began to show his talent for drawing at a very young age. He used to draw on the walls at home, and his father, grasping the fact of his son's genius, left the drawings untouched when the time came to paint the house. In sixth grade Toledo became the official artist of his school: he was put in charge of making maps, honor rolls, diplomas, etcetera. It was a privilege other children envied. At the age of 17 the shy and introverted young man traveled to Mexico City, where he registered in the School of Design and Crafts. There, under the guidance of Francisco Castellar he learned the trade of lithographer. Toledo had his first exhibition

in 1959, in Mexico City's Antonio Souza Gallery. With Souza's encouragement, he went on to show an exhibition in Texas' Fort Worth Art Center that same year. Souza also urged Toledo to visit Europe and make his way through the museums of the continent. So with his scanty earnings and a few addresses given him by Souza—among them those of Rufino Tamayo and Octavio Paz—Toledo set off. After a stay in Rome and Venice he traveled to Paris. There he received help and encouragement from the painter Tamayo and the ballerina Rocio Sagoam—who took him into her home—and for a time he studied in Stanley Hayter's engraving workshop. Upon returning to Mexico in 1965, he put on another exhibition at the Antonio Souza Gallery; during that period he was working not only in paint but in lithography, engraving, sculpture and ceramics. At the same time he began working on the design of the tapestries that he makes together with

(SEE FRANCISCO T. PAGE 4)

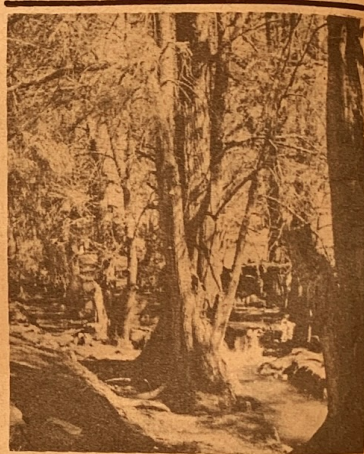
THE CAVERNS OF SAN SEBASTIAN DE LOS FUSTES

For a day in the country, which includes a bus trip and a long walk on a dirt road along a meandering stream with lots of sun and fresh air, a trip to the caverns of San Sebastian de los Fustes might just be up your alley.

A friend and I left Oaxaca at 6:00 a.m. on a 2nd class bus (3000 pesos each) and travelled along MEX131 on the direct route to Puerto Escondido. After 2 hours and after passing through Zimatlan de Alvarez and Sta. Maria Ayoquezco we got off the bus at a road junction. Here there are several stands selling soft drinks, beer, tacos, etc. and we inquired about onward transportation to San Sebastian and were told there were buses but no one seemed to know when and so we decided to walk.

We walked and walked and walked on a dirt road along a pretty stream lined with trees and boulders and 2½ hours later arrived at San Sebastian, a very small Chatino village. No buses ever did pass us and we met only 4 or 5 people

along the way, mostly men carrying machetes. They belong to the town and the entrance has a wrought iron gate which is locked. We descended into the caverns and the cool air hit us right away. There is no light whatsoever except for the lanterns and everything is pitch black. The caverns extend for about 300 meters and are vast with arched ceilings and lots of natural rock formations suggesting turtles, vampires (yes, there are bats) virgins, bears, etc. and stalactites. I expected to meet Harrison Ford or Bela Lugosi at any moment. You must also watch your step very carefully as you could fall off into oblivion. The exit is uphill all the way and then we walked down the mountain back to town. We were told that there was a direct bus back to Oaxaca at 1:00 p.m. We had beer, waited, and lo and behold the bus arrived and luckily there were 2 empty seats. After way and were back in Oaxaca at 3:30.



We saw a soft drink stand and inquired about visiting the caverns. We were told to go see the Mayor (Agente Municipal) which we did, and he supplied us with a guide and two miner's lamps for a total of 10,000 pesos. Let me comment here that there are no restroom facilities or restaurants in this village. You must bring your own food. The guide led us down the road and up a path up a mountain. I was huffing and reached the entrance to the caverns which was probably another mile. You cannot visit the caverns on your own as I do not recommend this trip to those with physical problems and a fluency in Spanish is a must. This was a unique experience. tod

LOS FAROLES

A new little gem of a restaurant is Los Faroles, located about blocks south of the Zocalo in a primarily residential neighborhood. What was a private home has been transformed into a bright, sparkling clean, cheery eatery. The specialty here are the "botanas" a sampling of traditional Oaxacan fare. For 25,000 pesos two people can stuff themselves on chorizo, guacamole, spiced pork, pig's feet, light, airy cheese quesadillas, giant crispy tortillas (tlayudas), sliced green chiles with cream and cheese, string cheese, etc. The nice thing here is that rather than bringing everything out at once on a giant platter, it is served on small plates, as courses, so everything is fresh and hot. If this is too much for you, they also offer chiles rellenos, chicken with black mole, and enchiladas among other things, along with a variety of soups. Plans are in the works to offer a comida corrida in the near future. Beer and liquor are available. Los Faroles is a nice addition to the local restaurant scene.

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MEXICAN HAIR OF THE DOG.

While on vacation in Oaxaca, many who enjoy a cocktail or two, tend to overdue it a bit. Let's face it, booze is VERY inexpensive here except maybe for bourbon and scotch and you don't HAVE to get up and go to the office. Hey, that's great, why not? But then there's that dreaded thing called a "hangover". It's not much fun going to the Sunday market in Tlacolula with a splitting headache. What to do? Here are some foolproof remedies to fix you up, both local and otherwise. Surely one of these will do the job:

1. MENUDO- Hot, spicy tripe soup. An ancient Aztec cure-all
2. YERBA DE BORRACHO- Local magic herb infused in hot tea.
3. CALDO DE CAMARON PICANTE- Aknock-your-socks-off very spicy shrimp broth.
4. SUERO- Lots of ice in a tall glass, add 1/3 lemon juice, and fill with light beer.
5. BULL- Fill tall glass with ice, as above, but use a mixture of lemonade and rum and top with dark beer.
6. PIEDRA- Equal parts of Fernet Branca and tequila in a brandy snifter. Down the hatch!
7. VAMPIRO- Sangrita with tequila and ice in a salt-rimmed glass.
8. ASPIRINA
9. HALF ANISETTE, HALF TEQUILA
10. MAS SLEEP
11. VITAMINAS
12. MAS BEBIDA
13. NO TOMAR

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST: AA
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(CONTINUED FROM P. 5)

On Saturday morning the Mass of Glory takes place, and the sombre part of Holy Week is over. Church bells once again ring with a deafening clamor; firecrackers go off in happy bursts. In some places effigies of Judas are hanged or burned.

In most places Easter is just another Sunday. There are very few religious processions and no profane parade of new clothes either inside or outside the church.



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Las Chalotes

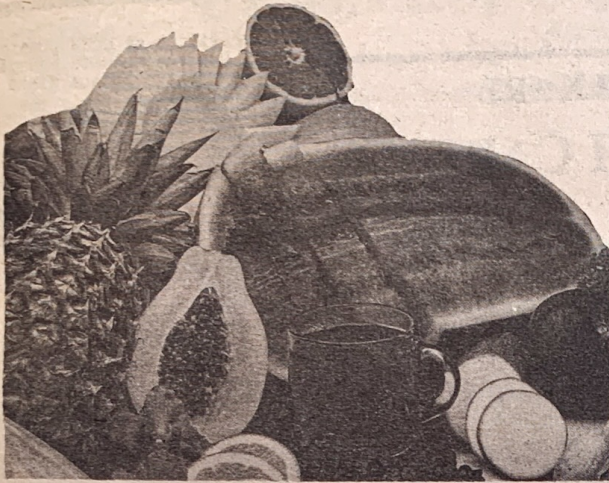
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STRANGE FRUIT



As you walk through any of the public markets in town you will be struck by the fabulous array of beautiful fresh fruit available. Many, like oranges, apples and pears, are very familiar, but others will be completely unknown. I went shopping with a friend and bought all the fruit I was unfamiliar with and here are the results:

- CHICOZAPOTE**- The size of a lemon with edible brown skin and an orange/brown interior. To me it tastes a bit like sweet potato.
 - JIOTILLA** Looks like a small pine cone. Brownish red with transparent scales. Deep red inside with many tiny edible seeds. Used to make a refreshing drink and to flavor sorbets.
 - CHABACANO**- This is actually a cherry plum with a nice intense flavor.
 - TEJOCOTE**- Orange in color, size of a walnut. Dry interior with pit, peel to eat. Plum like flavor. Not very good.
 - ANONA**- Greenish brown rough skin. Cut in half and eat with spoon. Sweet custard like interior with black seeds. Delicious. My favorite.
 - COYOL**- Brittle greenish brown shell. This is the fruit of the palm. Hard nut like interior. Forget it.
 - ZAPOTE NEGRO**- Smooth skinned, green w/ black tinge. Black, custard like interior w/ black seeds. Sweet and good and lots of iron in it!
 - GRANADA DE MOCO**- Oval shaped, orange in color. Hard shell. Interior is mucous-like with edible seeds.
 - MAMEY**- Football shaped with a brown bark-like husk. Reddish brown interior with large pit. Also very sweet and custardy like. Agreeable strange flavor. One is enough for 2 people.
- At the time of my shopping, guanabana, nispero, nanche, zapote blanco a good medicine if you have sleeping problems) and others were not in season, or not to be found. You will also find many kinds of bananas, mangos, huge ugly but delicious tangerines, guava huge, delicious papaya and golden sweet pineapple.
- Make yourself an exotic fruit salad!
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ZOCALO SHOPPING FULL OF VARIETY

If you sit on a zocalo bench or at one of the sidewalk cafes for more than a minute. You will be beset by a never ending stream of vendors. Do not be offended. These people are trying to earn a living and you can get some excellent values if you bargain. Prices are always subject to wide differences but we offer the following shopping hints and approximate prices to help you get started:

- BRACELETS**- These woven "pulse-ras" are very popular among American teenagers and are sold for \$2-5 dollars in the U.S. Zocalo prices range from \$1000 pesos to \$5000 (30 cents each to (1.80)
- WOOL RUGS**- Amazingly rug prices on the zocalo can be cheaper than at the villages where they woven. Prices very based on size, complexity of desing, and the No of tourists in town. for a 30"x 50" rug expect to a minimum of 80,000 pesos. To check if the rug is wool or not, tug a few febers loose, roll them into a ball and light it. If it stinks to high heaven. It's wool; if it disappears in a poof, it's cotton; if it melts into a shiny blob, it's acrylic. The brighter colors by the way, are more likely to be synthetic dye.
- REBOZOS**- These colorful shaws are another inexpensive useful offering. Prices 30,000 pesos \$ 10 U.
- FLOWERS**- Who can resist the roses and gardenias? For 3,000 pesos (1.08 U.S.)



ONYX CARVINGS Windchimes, chess boards, and carved animals are made of onyx. Boards range around 25,000 pesos (\$9.00) and animals 4000 pesos. (\$1.45).

IF YOU'RE NOT IN THE BUYING MOOD, simply say "No" to the vendor and direct your attention elsewhere. Do not get into a bargaining war unless you are serious about buying the item.

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