



Oaxaca Times

Oaxaca's English Tourist Newspaper **FREE**

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CULTURE SHOCK

BY GARY A TOLLMAN

Perhaps you have asked yourself, 'what am I doing here in this place, because I really don't like it', or 'how did I get myself involved in this situation', or possibly 'I hate this place, the persons here are not the kind of people with whom I want to associate'. Maybe you have heard an inner voice say something to the effect, 'frankly, I made a mistake coming here, and I'm going to leave as soon as possible'. All the above expressions represent responses one may have experienced when faced with culture shock. All of us who have made cultural changes have faced culture shock in one form or the other. There are reactions from complete and total panic to minor irritations. The truth of the matter is that it is difficult to make cultural changes, and it takes courage to do it. Making cultural changes is an emotional risk we take

with our life, and will examine the social implications that can have a better occurs in this Some 17 years ago after an extended youthful years I had Mexican border in language in high frequently visited Mexican girlfriend Sonora, and I and her family. the Eastern part 1974, while in decided to take our rented car. few miles past south in in my youth, seemed a sense talked about almost the insecurity This was continued destination into a walked

for this reason we some of the emotion involved so that we understanding of what situation. I returned to Mexico absence. During my lived at times near the U.S.. I studied the school and college, and Mexico. I even had a who lived in Hermosillo, spent time there with her As time passed, I moved to of the U.S., and finally in Tucson with my wife, we de- a trip south of the border in As soon as we were but a the border town heading terrain which I had known all the sudden everything unfamiliar, and I began to feel of insecurity. My wife and I our feelings and we both felt same way, with possibly her being slightly more intense. her first visit to Mexico. We driving until we reached our . We checked , hotel and around the city. I had forgotten more Spanish than I

realized and this contributed to my uneasiness. I was going to be the guide. Our anxiety continued. We felt unsure of ourselves. We felt uneasy about eating the food and drinking the water, and we were afraid to be out of the hotel after dark. We were

At times we all feel hopeless in our lives, and it seems our life is flying by before our eyes and we still haven't the essence of what life is all about. We may wonder what can we do to change things so that we can experience more of what we sense is there. We think that if this or that would only happen then we would feel differently. We then come to realize that it's up to us to do the changing. We may decide to take a trip to another country, another culture, as a remedy. The idea energizes us, and we make contacts with travel agencies and learn about travel packages. We decide to take the risk and travel to

Oaxaca, a foreign city in a foreign land. Until we made this decision, we had lived our life pretty much according to routine. We had gone to the same place every year for our vacations, worked the same job, shopped in the same stores. Now, we are making plans to spend our two weeks of vacation in Oaxaca, Mexico. Our friends indicate they are envious. We buy the book "Let's Go to Mexico" to familiarize ourselves with the city and the surroundings sites.

We even try to learn some Spanish. The day of our departure arrives and we land in Mexico. We change dollars into pesos and wait for our 3:00 PM flight to Oaxaca. For some reason, which we don't understand, our flight is cancelled. There is going to be another at 5:00 PM, but it is also cancelled. We are assured there will be another at 7:00 PM. We are by this time rather exhausted, and to our chagrin this flight is also cancelled. Finally, at 9:00 PM we take off for Oaxaca. We

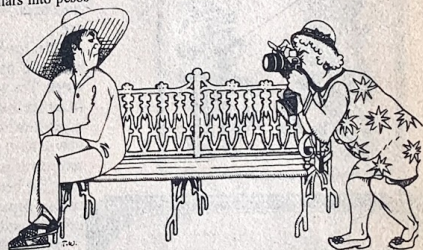
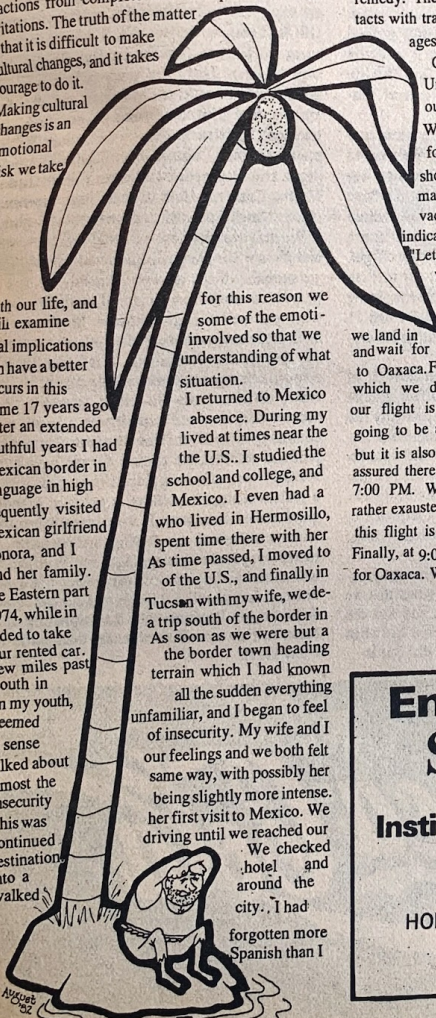
never know exactly why the flights are cancelled but the indication is that neither the pilots or flight attendants showed up for the flights. We think that nothing like this would ever occur in our country. Fortunately, our room in the hotel is still waiting for us. The hotel is not like what we are accustomed to, but it seems clean and comfortable. We are happy to finally have a place to lie down. We feel dirty and want to bathe. However, there is only one small towel per person and no wash cloth. I believe this is when we begin to feel culture shock.

The following morning after a somewhat restless night we are again faced with an unfamiliar and foreign environment. When we go to the restaurant for breakfast, the waiter cannot understand us we can't understand him. We finally got something to eat, and then have to wait what seems like an eternity to get our bill. Our patience is wearing quite thin. We begin to think that the people don't like us and that gringos are being discriminated against. We hope that things will improve.

We take a walk after breakfast and it seems everyone looks at us as if we are from another planet. There are many vendors who keep approaching us trying to sell us things we don't want. And the people seem dirty to us. We see much poverty and people beg us for money. We wonder what is the correct thing to do, give or not give.

We want to go shopping to buy gifts and we are

To page #2



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HOME OF THE OAXACA TIMES

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TALE OF TWO CITIES

My First experience in Mexico came from the dock of a ship, watching the Sierra Madre loom closer until we slipped between the cliffs into that spectacular bay of Acapulco. I was breathless with excitement until we reached the dock, from which point onward I was breathless for other reasons. The smells and sights and activities that greeted me ashore were intensely and surprisingly unpleasant, from the beggars and trinket-peddlers and every form of pollution at the west end of the Costera to the high-rise hangouts of the filthy and pseudo-rich at the other. I was relieved to escape back through the cliffs that night.

A year later I arrived in Oaxaca, wondering en route how reality would measure up to my advance reading, and still apprehensive from my previous Mexican experience. I need not have worried. The differences between the two cities, for the most part, are obvious, but I'm fascinated especially by the reasons for the differences.

Cities possessing inherently attractive characteristics (environmental, cultural, historical) can't help but be affected to some extent by the foreigners who come to visit. When you're having someone over for dinner, for example, you may clean the house and put on your best clothes, but you're not likely to build a new house or buy all new clothing. That, in my estimation, is precisely the difference between these two cities, and the reason lies largely in the character of the local people.

Oaxacans have not been corrupted by foreign influence. They have not been robbed of their values and they have not seen fit to change their way of life. What they do and when they do it, what they eat and how they interact with each other -- the basic fabric of their culture -- is sustained by foreign income, but not changed by it. This fabric has been woven for millenia by the local climate, terrain, and available resources. Its patterns were not significantly altered by some of the most notorious invasions in history -- those of the Aztecs and the Spanish -- and I doubt they'll succumb to the tourists either.

Yes, a more recent visit to Acapulco indicated that efforts to clean up the smelly forms of pollution and suppress the desperate throngs of beggars have been

By: Larry West

quite successful. Nevertheless, the character of the city has been irreversibly altered. We'll know the same has happened in Oaxaca when we can no longer see the mountains through the high-rises, when the children (and teenagers!) no longer hold hands with their parents, when lovers stop kissing on the sidewalks, when the comida corrida is replaced by the hamburger, when blusas bordadas and camisas de mantas are given up for foreign clothing, and when it has become urgently important that everything be done today (this minute, NOW!). Fortunately, none of these things are likely to occur any time soon.

CULTURE SHOCK

by: Gary A. Tollman

* From page #1

directed to the market. We are shocked to see raw meat hanging along the street, and the odor is offensive. We return to the hotel to eat lunch, and begin to fear that the food is contaminated. We begin to feel irritated and don't like feeling this way. Nevertheless, our unpleasant feeling grows worse. We begin to hate this place. It seems ugly and contaminated. What are we going to do? We have hardly arrived and we are ready to leave. We think that if we could just be back home everything would be fine. Our life and comforts to which we are so used to have vanished.

We begin to have problems going to sleep and when we do sleep we have nightmares. We want to call our family or friends and let them know our predicament, but are afraid to admit that we have made a serious mistake in coming here. Our culture shock is growing in intensity. If only we could be at a Holiday Inn in the U.S. everything would be alright. We decide to stay in our room the next day reading anything in English we can find. We feel better doing this, but can't imagen staying in our hotel room 11 more days. We are angry with everything and everyone.

What has been described above is an example of what can happen when someone suffers culture shock. The people written about have probably felt fortunate that they were able to return home in a few days. However, at times the distance and time involved don't permit us a quick return to our familiar surroundings. In these instances the emotional problems can become more difficult with symptoms of serious depression, anxiety, and at times psychotic episodes and suicide.

What are we to do if we are experiencing symptoms of culture shock? First, it is important that we understand what is happening to us, and that the phenomenon is not uncommon. Be aware that when one changes cultures for the first time that one is

EDITORIAL

Welcome back to your spring break vacation with us! You are having again the pleasure to enjoy the unique Oaxacan Traditions, Our food, Mezcal and flavored waters are going to be part of the fun, but must of all you'll be shopping buying lots of things from the folk art of the artists of the 16 ethnic groups of our land.

You may don't have enough money to get all you want, but remember even an small item will be a very symbolic way to take the spirit of love and friendship of our beautiful and talented indigenous groups.

We really appreciate your letters and support and remember we are here for your questions and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Garcia C.



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 - 17.- SPRING FESTIVAL MUSIC ALL DAY LONG
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 - 21.- Civic ceremony-BENITO JUAREZ BIRTHDAY
In Guelatao 45 minutes by bus.
 - 23.- Music- noon time- Santo Domingo Museum
At 6 p.m. Music from the coast of Oaxaca.
 - 30.- Music -Noon time- Santo Domingo Museum.
- Cultural Center "Ricardo Flores Magon"
(on Alcala Street)
- 14.- French Movie-" His last Letter"-8 P.M.
 - 15.- Art Exhibition- At 7 p.m.
Music at 8p.m.
 - 18,19,20- Play- At 8.p.m.
 - 22.- French Movie- At 8.p.m.
 - 23.- French movie At 8.p.m.



OAXACA CUTLERY

A Lifetime souvenirs

by: L & L Geiger

For Generations oaxacans have produced beautifully handcrafted knives, swords, and kitchen cutlery. With many styles to choose from, elaborately engraved, or plain. They are one of Oaxaca's best bargains. Whether you would like a simple hunting knife, an engraved serving set, or a "Conan the barbarian" style sword, they can easily be purchased in one of the "mercados" or one of the cutlery stores. However, generally speaking the cutlery stores tend to have a better selection, and better quality of cutlery. For a few extra pesos, usually 3 - 5 US dollars, one can have personalized engraving done, your name, wedding date, etc... Bear in mind that this usually takes a couple of days. But is well worth the wait.

The quality and workmanship all starts in the workshop, where the blade is carefully cut out of "an old car spring", that's right! Many use old car springs, which is made of high carbon steel, and provides flexibility, polishes to a very high shine, and holds an excellent edge. Next, the craftsmen grinds the blade into shape. He then tempers the blade to ensure that it will hold an excellent edge. This is done by heating the blade until it's cherry red and then dipped in oil to rapidly cool it. The blade will now be polished.

For the craftsmen who molds the guard to the blade, the next step is to carefully fit the mold around the blade. He will then pour the molten brass into the mold. After removing the mold he will then fit the handle which can be made from a variety of material usually wood, bone, leather, or



horn. Then he will fit on the "end cap" to the end of the handle. Now he begins the final step. He will file down rough edges and then polish the entire knife to a beautiful high gloss finish. So, if all goes well the end product is a beautiful handcrafted knife.

Since the procedures used are the same as those used by their fathers and grandfathers, it could take a week to make

one knife, depending upon the knife to be made, as we know the finer the details the more painstaking the work.



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Bienvenidos amigos

Welcome, reader, to the Oaxaca Times.

Oaxaca, is a beautiful, clean, colonial city with friendly people and a nearly perfect climate.

OAXACA TIMES aims to provide you, the English-speaking visitor, with valuable information which will enhance and enrich your stay. Write, call (6-3443), or come by our office M.Bravo #210 (some maps have N.Bravo which is incorrect) with your tips and recommendations about Oaxaca.

Our office is 4 1/2 blocks north of the Zocalo at the Institute of Communication and Culture, A.C. Come by and get acquainted.

But, above all, enjoy our beautiful Oaxaca.

Yolanda Garcia C.

Publisher.

Do you need to exchange... Think about us

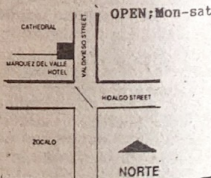


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HOLLY WEEK -OAXACA | Benito Juárez

by: Fr. James M. Gibson, C.R.

As "Good Friday" dawns, all signs of the presence of Jesus are removed from the churches: altars are stripped of their cloths, the communion bread -- the Body of Christ -- is removed from its place of honor; and believers begin a day of fast and sacrifice in commemoration of the day Jesus Christ was executed, being hung on a cross to die. That Friday is full of tradition here and across the world. People put aside their normal occupations in order to re-enact the passion and death of Jesus in the streets and in the churches. In place of the celebration of the Lord's Supper (the only day of the year when the Mass is not celebrated anywhere) Christians gather in church to hear proclaimed from the Bible the account of the passion of Jesus; and one by one they pass to reverence the cross, the symbol of the death that Jesus, the innocent one, suffered to obtain forgiveness for the guilty, sinners of all times and places. Indeed, the day Oaxacans call "Viernes de Dolores" (Sorrowful Friday) unites Christians in a unique way to Jesus as the source of their faith and their life.

The goal to which Holy Week and indeed all of Lent is directed is the Resurrection of Jesus, which is commemorated beginning on the evening of Holy Saturday, "Sábado de Gloria". The "Easter Vigil", as the rite is called, begins with a blessing of fire and the lighting of the Easter Candle, symbol of the light of Christ who shattered the darkness of death by rising from the tomb to a new life. Water is also blessed, to be used in Baptism as the initiation of the Christian to the life of Christ and his church. With the evening celebration of Holy Saturday commences the Easter Season, a time of joy when fasting and penances are left behind and feasting is the rule of the day.

An interesting historical note: when an image of Mary, "Our Lady of Solitude" (Virgen de la soledad) was found years ago and moved Oaxacans to make La Soledad their patroness and source of traditional Christian devotion, an image of Jesus risen from the dead (Our Lord of the Resurrection) was found together with La Soledad. This image of the Risen Jesus is to be found today in the church of Carmen Alto on García Vigil Street.

The primary celebrations of Holy Week here in Oaxaca are to be led by Archbishop Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño in the Cathedral church at the following times:

About this time of year, throughout Mexico one hears comments concerning plans for the vacation period of "Semana Santa" -- Holy Week. The week which culminates with the celebration of Easter Sunday, which this year falls on March 31, is much more than a traditional break from school and work, however. This week which we call "Holy" has a universal religious tradition extending back almost 2000 years.

Holy Week begins this year on Sunday March 24, a day Christians call "Palm Sunday", Domingo de Ramos. On that Sunday palm branches are blessed and carried in procession at Catholic churches as a remembrance of the reception Jesus Christ received in the city of Jerusalem: he who was to be arrested and killed a few days later was welcomed by the people at their Passover festival and proclaimed as "he who comes in the Name of the Lord." Those who participate in this church celebration keep the palms in their homes throughout the year as a sign of God's blessing.

Later that same week Christians will gather on the evenings of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday to celebrate the central mysteries of the Christian faith: the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead. These three days form the heart of Christian tradition here in Oaxaca and around the globe.

On the evening of "Holy Thursday" the Catholic Mass recalls the evening in which Jesus shared his last supper -- the Jewish Passover meal -- with his closest circle of followers, his twelve apostles. As a part of this church celebration twelve men have their feet washed by the priest-leader of the ritual. This action recalls the example of Jesus to his apostles when he who was their teacher and Lord became their slave by washing their feet.

The same evening recalls the words of Jesus over the bread and wine -- "This is my body," "This is my blood" -- which form the basis for the Mass celebrated daily in so many churches throughout the world. The celebration of Holy Thursday concludes with a period of adoration of Christ, present in the bread which He declared to be his body. Believers traditionally spend time in prayer and song in the various churches until midnight.

PALM SUNDAY, March 24: 5:00 P.M. - Blessing of Palms at Cathedral; procession to La Soledad for Solemn Mass at 6 P.M.

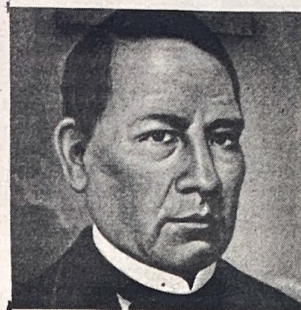
HOLY THURSDAY, March 28: 7:00 PM

GOOD FRIDAY, March 29: 5:00 PM

HOLY SATURDAY, March 30: 10:00 PM - Easter Vigil

EASTER SUNDAY, March 31: 7:30 PM - Mass of the Resurrection

*** * ***



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SOLAR ECLIPSE of the CENTURY

Four hundred years ago the Mexicas observed the eclipses of the sun and they used to believe that the Sacred Jaguars went up to the space across the darkness of the sky to eat the rays of the sun, so they could see the brightness of the sky.

In the Nahuatl language this phenomenon is known as "tonatu cualco" which it means "the sun has been eaten".

The Mayas used to know the sun eclipse as "chi -bil-kin" which means; "bite to the sun".

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