



Oaxaca Times

Oaxaca's English Tourist Newspaper

Volume 5 No. 42

January February 1993

FREE

FURTIVE LUCK

Today I fight alone with a word.
The word which belongs to me,
and to which I belong: beads or
tails? eagle or sun? OCTAVIO PAZ

Jan William

herby cast the die of this brief text, this small excess: like the umbilical cord presented to young warriors in tec society as an aid to capturing the enemy. For what is at stake, after all, is the body, abetted by history. We long to lift the darkness of that failure of knowledge, the disturbing opacity of what is yet to come, and conquer the long night of uncertainty. However, nothing is more perilous for man than sudden change of luck. Our weakness is increased by this lurch, and our vulnerable sire soon despises what was granted. Fortune is not only blind to those she embraces, but she yields to her own pressure, and as the Romans used to say, "The Goddess of Fortune can single-handedly thwart the forecasts of a hundred sages." As some philosophers would have it, Luck is no more than the time for our ignorance of the profound causality of the Great Universal Machine. The furtive interpret luck as a divine election, a reward or reward, a guarantee of commerce between the higher powers and us their creatures. How could we be indifferent to them, we mortals, the product and the pride of creative Intelligence? In one form or another luck accompanies us or it abandons us, but there is no human language that lacks a



category for the aleatory and indeterminate in life. Our attempts to explain, to justify and to foresee are the most explicit token of our limitations. As Pierre Simon de Laplace put it in his well-known *Philosophical Essay Concerning Probability*: "An intelligence which, at a given moment, becomes cognizant of all the forces in nature... could condense the motion of the largest bodies in the universe and that of the slightest atom into a single formula; nothing would seem uncertain, for the future, as well as the past, would be constantly within its ken." The drama of the vainglorious mirage of Narcissus is also that of the spirit's insatiable, tenacious curiosity. We wish that there might be as many possible cases as there are possible positions for a point on a plane. Calculations and figures as the epitaph of metaphysics. When the frail skiffs of everyday life are in danger of capsizing, the popular Spanish idiom says that we are "running fortune" [*correr fortuna*]. Against the inevitable—in itself a heroic effort—we

wage a daily battle. The countless ambushes dogging even the quickest among us have turned us into stalkers of ill omen. The vastness of the days has become an open book in which we learn to read and decipher the arcane designs of Lady Luck. There is no familiar gesture, no trivial event, without its layers of significance. The plain of Sufficient Reason has become a thick wood; transparency has become opacity. And Nemesis, the personification of retribution, has turned us from furtive hunters into the prey of the very signs we stalked. And we test Fortune through a thousand rites to conjure our luck and build a hermeneutics out of universal analogy. Thus the world buries its head in the sand, thereby losing the last grain of common sense. While superstitions and omens, divination and evil eyes, are links in the chain of our servitude, they nevertheless sow the poetic seeds of a thousand imaginative flow-

Enjoy learning
SPANISH

Enroll
Today!



Instituto de Comunicación
y Cultura, A.C.

HOME OF THE OAXACA TIMES
SCHOOL FAX: 91(951) 6-32-65
307 ALCALA ST. 2nd. FLOOR.
TEL. (951) 634 431

4 BLOCKS
FROM
ZOCALO

Continued on page 2

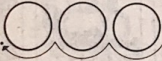
FURTIVE LUCK

ers. If, in scattering a fistful of corn, one grain falls upright, it augurs death. One prodigious and sinister grain inscribes my death. silences my voice. When sparks fly from the fire, someone is approaching to harm us. Who is coming? Who is knocking at my door at this late hour? Who will be the messenger of my death, the angel of love? So as not to suffer such omens, we seek consolation from the *tonalpouhqi*. And this shadowy diviner will tell me that I came to see the mirror in which my dread will be clarified. And not because he ordains it, but because the ancients and the ancestors ordained it in speech and in writing, I must strain myself, weep and do penance. I shall buy *amatl* and white incense and offer them to the Ancient God of Fire. Children, brothers, do not be sad, faint not, for we had already understood our fate before leaving. But when the owl cries, it is to herald adversity, sickness, misery and death. Slaves shall flee, and the house will be destroyed.

The owl calls
And the Indian dies;
It may not be true.
But it happens.

As Sahagún wrote, "evil things are always multiplying," and even I do not know how to extricate myself from this web in which I am trapped. I must conclude in haste because all these superstitions, to quote Sahagún again, "are like a disease that corrupts the Catholic faith." For this reason, and like all the other unbelievers, I too am on the way to scratch my fortune. ☺

**THE NEW PESO
IN MEXICO AS OF
JANUARY 1, 1993**



As of January 1, 1993, Mexico will have a new monetary unit called the "Nuevo Peso" (NS), or "New Peso". The value of a New Peso will be equal to one thousand current Pesos, and will be divided into one hundred cents (¢).

The currently circulating banknotes and coins will continue to be used along with the new banknotes and coins. The New Peso banknotes will have the same designs and colors as those of equivalent value currently in use. The only difference is that New Peso banknotes will have different denominations. The new coins will have different designs, and will be smaller—and more practical—than the current coins.

Why is the New Peso being introduced?

The New Peso is meant to facilitate monetary transactions. With its decimal point three places to the left, the New Peso will make commercial transactions and calculations simpler. Another benefit is that amounts in New Pesos will use less space in computer systems and on forms.

Which banknotes and coins should be used to make payments?

As of January 1, 1993, payments may be made with either the current banknotes and coins or with New Pesos. In order to avoid confusion, New Peso banknotes will have the same designs and colors as the current peso banknotes of equivalent value.

NO NEED TO SAY 'NO SE LEARN SPANISH TODAY

In the wintertime there are many schools offering Spanish classes to foreigners. Beware! Many of these schools are out to make fast money, prices do not necessarily mean quality education. When choosing a school, be sure to select one where teachers are university trained to teach Spanish as a second language.

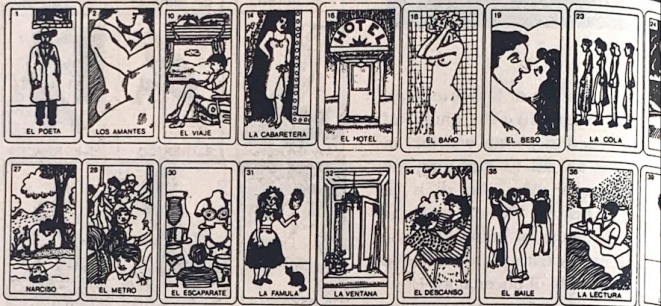
In Mexico university degrees are very much a status symbol. But having a degree in foreign affairs chemistry or anthropology does not qualify one to teach Spanish.

Yolanda Garcia C., Director and Founder of the Institute, lived in the U.S. and has been on the Faculty of Languages at the Benito Juarez

University in Oaxaca for many years. In her able direction, the Institute has excellent offer English Tourism classes for working in the industry and publishing. Contact the Oaxaca Times to assist Oaxaca's visitors.

The Institute of Communication meets all the requirements for quality at a fair price. Please contact us at our school at:

307-12 Alcalá St.
Oaxaca, Oax. 68000
México Ph. 6-34-43



= "ALFA" =

The photo store

One hour quality and economy processing of prints & slides

213 Guerrero st ☎ 4-49-67
Oaxaca, Oax.



How should prices be displayed?

Throughout 1992 and until February 28, 1993, prices must be displayed in both current Pesos and in New Pesos. For example.

Product A \$8,540
 NS8.54

As of February 28, 1993, prices should begin to be displayed only in New Pesos.

How should checks be written out?

Until December 31, 1992, checks must be written out in Pesos. As of January 1, 1993, checks must be written out in New Pesos. The amount indicated in figures must be preceded by the symbol "NS" and the amount spelled out must be followed by the words "Nuevos Pesos". As of January 1, 1993, if the amount spelled out on a check is not followed by the words "Nuevos Pesos", the bank will be unable to cash it.

How should credit card vouchers be made out?

Until December 31, 1992, credit card vouchers must be made out in Pesos. As of January 1, 1993, they must be made out in New Pesos. In order to make the transition easier, some credit card vouchers will register charges both in Pesos and in New Pesos.

For example:

Amount	Cash payment
NS11.52	NS11.50
NS11.53	NS11.55
NS11.57	NS11.55
NS11.58	NS11.60

Check and credit card payments must be made out for exact amounts, without rounding off. Note that rounding off does not apply to prices. For example, suppose you buy the following two products:

Product	Price
A	NS 8.54
B	NS 3.03
Total amount	NS11.57

The total amount of your purchase would be NS11.57. If you were to pay in cash, the amount would be rounded off to 11.55 New Pesos.



ECCLESIASTIC LOTERIA

In the 1940s, a scene from a neighborhood in Mexico City (or Guadaluajara, or San Luis Potosí). Every other day, the family lounges in the living room: cousins (even the faithful friend who, sometimes, makes a social call) are there but not to fail. The evening gathering is usually pleasant, reaffirming the impartial, benevolent character of the family institution. It requires the participation of all the generations. Seen from the outside, it is no easy task: how to impart another fragment of an endless number of repetitive actions, with a certain atmosphere? How to genuinely overcome boredom?

This dilemma is false because everybody understands the nature of "family" and family entertainment, as they know the impossibility of being sincerely "among one's own" due to feelings of guilt. Family entertainment reduces the participation of adults, adolescents and children into infantile experience. This is the way of the world: the interaction between grown-ups and kids, the embarrassing imitation of childish language, is inevitable.

That all-fashionable institution of the Family Gathering, is now held hostage to powerful enemies: movies and radio. Nevertheless, the family perseveres, cheers up its own company, transforms the repetition of two or three basic jokes into eternal love, and is continually fascinated by parlor games. This is how our ancestors, those who know how to make the most of a life, without stimulants, have entertained themselves.

Yes, those classic board games! Ah, the game of Man's Bluff! Ah, the game of Truth or Consequences—at parties where many families first establish contacts which later become indestructible alliances of fortunes, of hopes for fortunes! Ah, the pleasure of old sing-alongs!

Children laugh at the simpleness of adults in turn celebrate the naive laughter that is in its own simpleness. Everything in family gathering is traditional. For more than two centuries, people in Mexico have played *La Oca* and *Snakes and Ladders*, a game where morals are represented by the scenes that overturn hopes, and where good



works always have uplifting results. (Twenty years later came the success of *Monopoly*—in Mexico its best-known version was called *Turista*—that fatal trap of acquisitive psychology that transforms each player into either a Rockefeller or a parking attendant.)

We all know that the marvelous era of parlor games is over. During the days of Porfirio Díaz, diversion had a different meaning: the family tried to compensate each of its members for the freedoms that were not within their reach, and to congratulate each of them for being there within the world that consolidates loyalties and attachments. And the *salón* (the illusion of a distinguished, affectionate place) was the goal of both rich and poor, beneath the constant, tranquilizing gaze of a priest. In Mexican society under Porfirio Díaz, the puerility of the parlor legitimized the sordidness of the brothel.

The family gathering can change in unexpected ways. Today, the family priest appeared—somewhat odd since he rarely accepts responsibilities that keep him from consoling the sick and those redeemed by poverty. He was effusive with his brethren—within the limits allowed, of course, between earthly beings and celestial category.

ries. And, curiously, he brought a gift: something which, he declared, fascinates those at the seminary. It is a parlor game called *Liturgical Lotería*.

The family is flabbergasted: How did they get permission for something like this? What might the Bishop think of it? Isn't it an absolute irreverence to couple the crudeness of the *Lotería* with the solemnity of sacred symbols? What has been happening in this country since the Revolution? Hadn't there been enough persecution of believers years ago when Mass was held in secret?

The family priest watches them from his spiritual throne, smiling with a majesty that promises his devotees a good day at the parish, and calming their anxieties with a brief sermon: "My brothers, my children, there is nothing evil in that which is done with a pure heart. Sin builds its nest with intentions, and God judges the soul as he sees it. This liturgical board game is nothing but an innocent pastime, because you yourselves are innocent, and because its goal is highly educational. Those of us obliged to bare the torch of faith and to attend to the knowledge of faith, have become increasingly aware of the ignorance that reigns among certain believers. They go to church, yet with each day they identify fewer objects of worship. Who now can distinguish between a falsidistry and a monstrosity? Who immediately identifies a canopy? There are even acolytes who confuse the stole with the rochete. The person who created this game—with the approval of the ecclesiastic hierarchy—had pious intentions, and wanted parishioners to take an interest so that they could appropriately name or distinguish between a tunicle and a maniple.

The aunt, an old maid who accomplishes ritual functions (she kept her virginity to the delight of future cynics!) classically interjects:

—Say what you will, Juan Bernardino, I don't believe you. How can I accompany sacred objects such as the pastoral ring, the chalice or the pulpit with the profane shout of *Lotería*? I will never go along with it.

—The indifference of those of you with regard to the deeds of the Spirit is much worse. While here, shouting *Lotería*, you will increase your knowledge of the Church.

Discussions inevitably lead to entertainment. Parlor games continue on their road to extinction. ☺

MUSEO DE ARTE CONTEMPORANEO DE OAXACA



RUFINO TAMAYO

ABIERTO (OPEN): 10:30 A.M. A (TO) 8:00 P.M.

TODOS LOS DIAS - EVERY DAY

MARTES: CERRADO - TUESDAY: CLOSED

DONATION SUGGESTED

M. Alcalá 202 Teléfono 6 84 99