



# Oaxaca Times

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FREE

## A UNIQUE FEATURE OF LENT IN OAXACA

**ALTARS DECORATED WITH FLOWERS ARE ERECTED AT THE FRONT ENTRANCES TO ALL CHURCHES.**

Oaxaca is famous all over México for its religious pageantry and many of the events which occur here during the lenten season are unique to this area which takes pride in preserving it's heritage.

On Friday, March 5, 12, 19, 26 between 7-9:00 a.m., university students from all over the city will converge on Benito Juarez Park, commonly known as "El Llano". The girls stroll (this called a paseo) in groups around the large park and the boys bring flowers to give to the girls whom they consider the prettiest. This is the perfect time for flirtation.

Finally, after competition, one of the girls is chosen and awarded the title of "Madrina de Viernes". This is repeated for seven consecutive Fridays. Various bands play during the festivities including the States Marimba Band.

On the 4th Friday (Mar 19th) at 12:00 noon, is the celebration of Samaritan Day. This is in honor of "La Samaritana", who, according to the Bible, was able to give Jesus some water in defiance of the Roman guards.



Two beautiful girls from Oaxaca

Altars decorated with bouganvilla and other flowers are erected at the front entrances to all churches and flavored waters (fruit drinks) are dispensed, free of charge, from huge earthenware jars to the public who arrive with their own containers.

Some of the flavors offered are: horchata (cinnamon & almond), chilacayota (pumpkin with brown sugar and lemon rind), tamarind, melon, pineapple, jamaica (a dried flower), etc. The same afternoon dances are held at schools and government offices with marimba music for dancing.

On the 6th Friday, Apr 2th, at 7:00 a.m., another paseo is held in the Alameda (like the earlier ones held at El Llano) and it's worth a visit to go to the nearby Juarez Market to try the tamales made with vegetables.

At the beginning of Holy Week (Apr 4th) all

churches will have daily religious services. Check the Oaxaca Times for special ceremonies.

**SEMANA SANTA**, or, Holy Week, is celebrated in every part of Latin American. 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.

**H**oly Week begins on Palm Sunday with the blessing of palms in the churches.

*Continued on page 2*

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4 BLOCKS FROM ZOCALO

# A UNIQUE FEATURE ...

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. One town which name is SAN ANTONINO (25 minutes from city) will be the place to go at 10 A.M. a very traditional ceremony will be held.

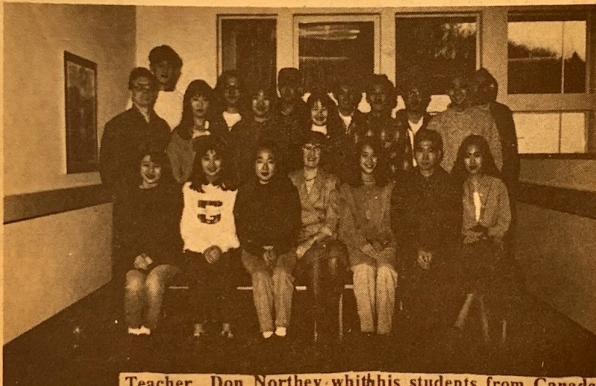
Some of the smaller towns have processions every day during Holy Week, but in most places nothing much happens between Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday. On Thursday special altars known as monumentos are decorated with flowers and lighted candles. People go from church to church to view the monumentos 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. 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



The good samaritans giving a flavored wa...

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 easter parade of new clothes either inside or outside the church.



Teacher Don Northey with his students from Canada.

## STUDENT GROUPS MAKE OAXACA THEIR DESTINATION

Student groups from all over are finding a pedagogical paradise in Oaxaca. 60 students from The Canadian College a school for Japanese undergraduates in Vancouver, spent January here learning cooking and weaving skills through the ICC School. Weavers from local Zapotec villages came to our school to demonstrate their unique hand-weaving technique, which is done without the use of a loom. They then took field trips to a Zapotec house, where they were taught how to make tortillas, tamales, enchiladas and other good things.

Close on the heels of the Japanese group came 14 pupils from the Marin County Day School in California (El Norte). Bound out with local families, the pupils took a two-week course in Spanish at the ICC. Though the boys and girls missed their homes in the States, they enjoyed the cultural and social interchange with their (young) Oaxaca housemates.

If you are a teacher or school administrator who would like more information on how your students can take advantage of the rich Oaxacan environment while learning about the Mexican culture, contact Sra. Yolanda Garcia C. at the ICC. For information outside Mexico call: (52)951-6-34-43. For information inside Mexico call: (52)951-6-32-65.



The San Francisco Students

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE ROYAL KIND

Prince Charles? The Prince Charles?" As a casual tourist and British ex-pat, a visit from our second most debated Royal was the last thing I expected during my stay in Oaxaca. But that's what it said in the program for the Conference on Indigenous Medicine being held at the Cultural Centre on the Alcala. Thursday at 10:00 a.m.

Ten o'clock came and went. And 11:00. We should have taken our cue from the Indian women in the exhibition. At 11:00 a.m., they were just starting to spruce themselves up and set out fresh flowers.

My scouting expedition into the street revealed Embassy types in tropical suits scurrying between the Art Museum -where the Prince was having lunch- and the Cultural Centre, and traffic jams as beautiful folklorico dancers scurried into the Museum to perform. By 11:30, the bouquets were untouched and even the "acknowledged that nothing was happening.

At 3:00 p.m., I was again in the Alcala. A crowd had gathered, but no Prince. Then, the Royal Range Rover drew up to the Museum. Action. Burly Secret Service men scanned the crowd. Well dressed couples began to emerge from the Museum. The Prince strolled out, appearing relaxed and confident, and started his walk up the street.

The crowd followed, a hundred cameras focused on Charles' head. But the smooth wave of pedestrians started to ripple as each of us in turn lurched into the chain setting off the pedestrian zone. A second ripple as we crossed the road and encountered the second chain. The chains, so carefully removed at the south end to admit the Range Rover, had been left in place for Prince and people. "Oo did the recce on this for a walkabout, then?" hissed a Secret Service voice to a colleague on my right.

When the Prince finally visited the Conference at 3:15, the flowers were a little less fresh, but the women just as spruce. As I watched the Prince fulfil more of his commitments, I was surprised by his physical slightness, and impressed by his outgoing manner and personal charm. I was also impressed that, despite the hours of waiting, Oaxaca informality and goodwill carried the day.



The governor of Oaxaca, His wife and Prince Charles of England passed by the Institute of Communication and Culture, where our Spanish students had the opportunity to talk to them.

MUSEO DE ARTE  
CONTEMPORANEO  
DE OAXACA


**GRAPHIC ARTS  
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