

# Oaxaca Times

Oaxaca's Original English Tourist Newspaper

No. 53

September 1994

Free

## Viva México!

Our history books tell us that in the early dawn hours of the 16th of September in 1810, when Mexico was still under Spanish rule, the people of Oaxaca (now Dolores Hidalgo, in the state of Guanajuato) were jolted up from their sleep by the insistent clanging of the church bell, a sound that a few hours later could only spell emer-

Their parish priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was involved in a conspiracy against the Spaniards and, when the colonists were on to it, he decided not a moment could be lost. And there, he decided to call the people to take arms. The parishioners scrambled into the first garment within reach that complied with the dictates of decency or the cold of the hour and mustered before Father Hidalgo. His impassioned words urged them to join the movement for independence which, at the end of an eleven-year-long struggle, was to free Mexico from the Spanish Crown.

That harangue, now referred to as the "grito" (cry) of Dolores, began to be commemorated halfway through the 19th century, after a decree that it be



*Celebrating Independence Day*

repeated at every Mexican Independence celebration. The ritual is led by the Oaxacan Governor who makes his entry on the central balcony at the State palace at eleven o'clock at night on the 15th of September (a wisely chosen time as close as possible to the early hours of the 16th without turning the fiesta into a facsimile of New Year's Eve or an all night bash). He shouts a few "vivas!" in tribute to the different "heroes who gave us our fatherland," waves the national flag and intones, along with the patiently-waiting crowds in the Zócalo square before the palace, the Mexican national anthem.

From the first day of September, vendors our out on the streets selling flags, tricolored tissue-paper steamers and effigies of national heroes. Patri-

otic homeowners dangle their intrepid faces from every window ledge, for the whole neighborhood to see.

**“** *The parishioners scrambled into the first garment within reach that complied with the dictates of decency.* **”**

On Independence day there is always a pungent, tempting aroma of freshly cooked food in the air. It comes from street stalls full of irresistible munchies.

The Mexican cuisine is enormously varied; every region has some elaborate dishes of its own, whose preparation only happens for special events like this. Visitors to Mexico in September have a unique opportunity to see and try the best of our rich gastronomy has to offer. ♦

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# "The game of the gods"



The game is played every Sunday at the playgrounds of the Tecnológico.

The athletic fields of the Tecnológico lie to the west of the PanAmerican Highway as one enters town from the north. One sees soccer fields, a baseball field, some basketball courts and one puzzling long, narrow playing area with a high fence.

Whenever I drove past I tried to figure what type of game was played there. On a few occasions, as we passed, we would see many cars and players inside the fenced playing area. I would rack my brain for what "long and narrow" might mean and my lexicon kept coming up with some type of shuffleboard game. Finally, a couple weeks ago when I saw the cars and the players, I stopped to find out what the game was.

The game we saw, "pelota mixteca" is played on a court that is perhaps 50 yards long and 20 yards wide.

A knowledgeable spectator explained the game to us. The two teams of 5 players use hard molded leather "mitts" strapped on their hands, to bat the bouncy, crude rubber ball into the other team's half of the court. He explained that it is a little like team tennis and the scoring is similar -3 games to a set, 5 sets to a match.

The "mitt" which each player wears resembles in size and weight a typical 10 pound bolder one might find in a river bed. Our spectator fiend, who crafts these mitts, said that it takes about 2 weeks to make one. The face of the club is studded with round headed nails which gives the batting surface some grab. The ball weighs 800 grams ! We didn't see any spectators trying to catch the ball when it bounced into the shady areas where they gathered. He explained that the game we were watching was part of the Guelaguetza celebration and was between teams of the second level. One team we where watching, our expert informed us, was from Fresno, California. I grew up watching fastpitch softball in Northern California, and occasionally a team from Fresno would come to a tournament in town. I'm not sure that pelota Mixteca has supplanted softball as the game of choice for California summers, but that one Sunday afternoon lesson certainly changed my perspective on the long, narrow, unidentified playing area.

-Written by Tom Kinnier

-Tom Kinnier is a native of Redding, California, and though he grew up watching fastpitch softball, dreams of becoming a professional soccer player when he grows up. ♦



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# What is a Tourist Yú'ú?

The name Tourist Yú'ú is given to small houses in the Valley of Oaxaca. They are situated in the following eight Indian Villages: Abasolo, Papalutla, Teotitlán, Benito Juarez, Tlacolula, Quialana, Tlapazola and Santa Elena del Valle. Benito Juarez, a community high in the mountains, can be reached from Teotitlán. Each location has its own charm. You will be able to meet the Zapotec people and interact with them during your stay at a Tourist Yú'ú. The name Yú'ú was chosen because it means house in the Zapotec language.

The houses are painted in a bright turquoise and are equipped with all the necessary facilities. One bedroom with two bunk beds (room for four), a kitchen with running water, cooker and fridge. Then there are two lavatories, a shower and washbasins. If all the beds are occupied, there is a possibility to sleep in the attic. Another option is to pitch your tent on a campsite. For a modest sum you can make use of the facilities. A stay in a Tourist Yú'ú will be within the means of all.

A manager is present from sunrise till sunset. He will be able to help you with your questions. He takes care of booking a bed and he also runs a little shop, where you can buy folk art made by the villagers themselves. The houses are operated with the assistance of SEDETUR in Oaxaca-city. If unfortunately all the beds are booked up, the next Tourist Yú'ú is only a small distance away. You are on an adventure trip, so let your hair down and enjoy the Indian way of life.

Respect for nature is very important to the Indian people and you are expected to feel the same. We have a responsibility to preserve the environment. An essential part of the



*The Tourist Yú'ú at Tlapazola*

scenery is formed by the Indian villages, which have been there since a long time before the Spanish Conquest. Exploiting the Tourist Yú'ú means that the Indian villagers can make a living and in this way the traditions and habits of this ancient people can be preserved. The tourist houses are designed by architect Tonny Zwollo, who tries to contrib-

ute to the development of the Oaxaca Valley. She has built them on an ecological basis, in the service of nature. Be an eco-tourist and take care of the beautiful earth we live on.

For more information contact the SEDETUR offices located at the corner of Independencia Ave. and García Vigil St. Phone: 6-09-84 Fax: 6-15-00 ♦

## Good news for vegetarians!

The "Sol de Oro" Association invites you to visit our new Vegetarian & Natural Foods Kitchen !! Meals to go or eat in. We guarantee delicious and nutritious cuisine: for only N\$ 9 pesos !! We also offer natural peanut butter, vinegar, honey, tofu, and quality brown rice! And try our vegetarian cooking classes! (20 New pesos including lunch) We're unique! Come see for yourself! We're at 114 Lazaro Cardenas Ave. (The old Camino Nacional in front of the Church "Santas Perpetua y Felicitas").

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