



Oaxaca Times

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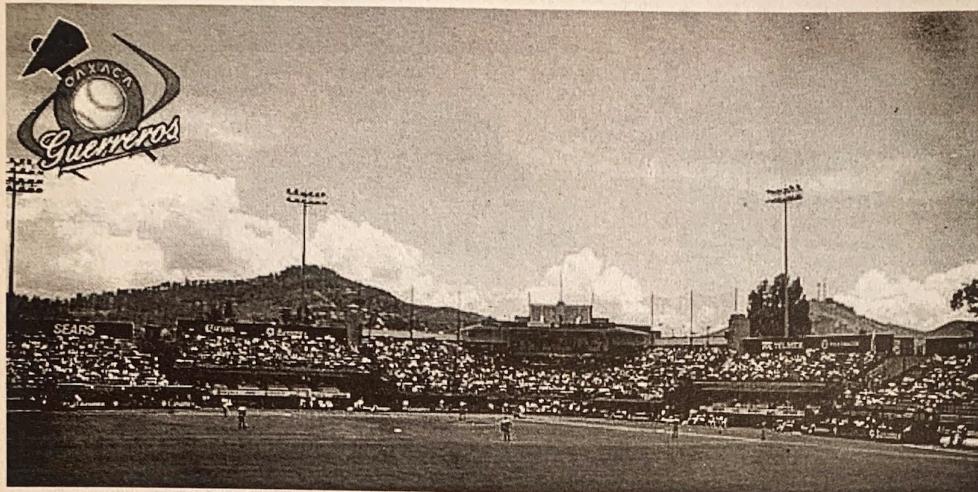
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LEARN SPANISH AT THE ICC: OAXACA'S BEST LANGUAGE SCHOOL

The Oaxaca Warriors

Baseball Season has begun!



By Javier Penin

The Oaxaca *Guerreros* (Warriors) slammed Veracruz 8-2 on March 19th, playing at home to a packed stadium and batting off to a great start for the coming season. Though professional baseball has a smaller following than football in Mexico, thousands of fanatic fans storm "Eduardo Vasconcelos" (Oaxaca's stadium) every home game. Large families often go the matches together as a night out, routing for their team and gorging on the requisite stadium snacks of pizza, beer, coke and popcorn (with chili sauce of course).

The *Guerreros de Oaxaca*, (nicknamed *Los Belicos* - the war-like ones) formed in 1996 when the national league expanded. Since then, they have won the title once (in 1998) and usually make it at least to the playoffs. Guillermo Rodríguez Velasquez, director of the team, wants their 10th season to be a memorable one. Nicknamed *El Tiburón* (the shark), Velasquez says that this year, nothing less than the title will do.

"The *Guerreros* is a team with all of the elements needed to obtain our second championship" says Velasquez. "We are still young and over the last four or five years we have shown that we are able to compete at the highest level and fight for the title!"

The *Guerreros* also have a new trainer this year, former *Bélico* Homar Rojas Villareal, who, after a 20-year-long career (which included a spell with the most popular and successful team in Mexico, *Los Diablos Rojos de México*), has put his bat away in favor of taking charge of the Oaxacan team. He is still getting used to being off the field. "The *Guerreros* are one of the big teams in the Mexican league so it is vital we have a great season, for the fans and for ourselves. The pre-season games and training went very well and showed me enough to believe that this could be our year. We started the new season without any major injuries and all of the players are in very good shape. If this is maintained during the season, we can do it!"

The *Guerreros* have some substantial reinforcements for the new season. One of the new major signings is the Puerto Rican Jesus "Motorita" Feliciano. Feliciano, 24, was one of the major players in his country's league last year. The "Motorita" claims to have turned down a number of clubs in the United States, such as San Diego, Colorado and Baltimore because "the offers weren't good enough". He believes that here in Oaxaca he can improve his game. "The Mexican league is a competitive circuit, which combines the experiences of both young and veteran players - which is why the league is rapidly improving."

Felix Domingo José, 39, from the Dominican Republic is another promising signing. Jose, who has played in Arizona and California as well as for *los Diablos* of Mexico City, is in the twilight of his career and his experience will prove invaluable to the team. During his career in Mexico he achieved one of the highest honors in the league. In 2002 he was rated as the most valuable player, was leader of slugging at .710 and had a batting percentage of .383. He also played a major part in the 2003 title win.

Jose hasn't come for an easy ride, however. "I'm here to play at my very best, 100

percent," he says. "Our aim is to meet our full potential and I want to be a part of that. I'm very happy to play for the *Guerreros* and promise the fans I will fight all over the field!"

Tickets cost between 20 and 40 pesos and matches are usually played every second week over a few days. Tickets are available on the day or for very important games a few days before at the stadium which is two minutes from the first class bus station. For more information on the team or upcoming games, check their website at: www.guerrerosdeoaxaca.com.

Some Mexican baseball terms:

Ampáyer: Umpire

Cábala: A good-luck charm

Embalsarse: To get to base

Eslump/mala racha: Slump/A bad period of play for the player

Jir: Hit

Jovrón: Home Run!

Lanzadores: Pitchers

P.C.L.A (porcentaje de carreras limpias admitidas): E.R.A.



Save the Toys!

Local non-profit group uses creative means to preserve traditions

By Elizabeth Wu

Remember the good 'ol days when wholesome entertainment meant doing a jigsaw puzzle, flying a kite or sitting around the radio with the family? I sure don't. My generation was bred on Coke, MTV and Nintendo. My great ambition as a 10-year-old was to become a ninja, and to someday join the four teenage mutant ninja turtles. Now, at age 25, I'm an old-timer. I eat a healthy, balanced diet, never watch TV and only catch glimpses of the original Nintendo in antique shops next to the moth-ridden Atari systems.

It may be too late for me, whose only experience of a kite was the plastic two-dollar job my dad bought at a gas station. It was shaped like the Great American Bald Eagle and programmed to nose-dive at an altitude of eight feet. There may be no saving the traditional American toy. (Indeed, what would that be? Tiddlywinks? Horse shoes?) However, there is hope for Mexican children everywhere, as well as toy-deprived adults; *Juguetearte* (Toy art), a project dedicated to preserving toy traditions (while cleverly disguising them as art - or is it the other way round?) is on the scene.

Founded by Lucero Serrano Mojica, 27, *Juguetearte* combines the art of painting with the magic of toy-making to produce pieces meant to educate, delight and inspire people of all ages. The project celebrates its first anniversary April 25th, a year after its premiere exhibition opened in Santo Domingo Museum. The idea for the project came about when Mojica asked an artist friend why paintings were always square or rectangular in shape. The friend replied, "Well, that's what they teach us in school." Mojica had been looking to launch an art project centered around painting, but wanted to do it "outside the box." It occurred to her that they could combine the artwork with Mexican toys, both as a medium for painting and as a way to promote and preserve traditions.

Though Mojica is not herself a painter, she feels strongly about the value of art and tradition. "Art is a form of pure communication, an expression of our humanity. It is a way to express the real essence of a person," she says. "And these traditional toys represent our roots. They speak of how we were, how we are, how we will be. Like the pyramids, they are a reflection of ourselves. Most of our toys are a product of the mixing of cultures, like the yo-yo, which came from China, but has been incorporated into Mexican culture. In our work, the two things aren't disconnected, art and toy aren't isolated, but brought together so that one doesn't just look at an unusual work of art without being able to enjoy the toy itself."

At present *Juguetearte* consists of four core members. Mojica serves as coordinator, her husband Rafael Soto Vasconcelos does graphic design and photography, Adriana

Bautista, a professional who has done installations for Santo Domingo, mounts the art work and Natalia Fresán Barquet, herself an artist, assists in the office and does translations. There are currently 30 artists who contribute work to the program, all of whom are native *Oaxaqueños* or local residents.

For April, the entire team is gearing up for a large exhibition in Puebla, in an interactive children's museum called *Imagina*. Along with the exhibition, which opens April 30th, classes in painting, mask-making and kite-making will be offered. "Toy-making isn't just fun", explains Mojica, "It's educational, too. When we played with our first toys, we learned a lot from them. We learned how to get along with other kids, about following

rules, about winning and losing. In the future,

we will be looking into how to incorporate education into the artwork, such as making a jigsaw puzzle of the human body, or creating theatrical stories where the toys themselves are the characters."

Juguetearte also plans to begin hosting

classes in April in Oaxaca. Some of the courses that will be offered include: basic painting techniques, souvenir-making workshops and the opportunity to learn about and play with traditional Mexican toys. There will also be an eight-hour intensive week-end course

(max. six people) wherein one can make one's own toys from scratch. Their gallery space, which doubles as a *jugueteria* (toy shop) and a *dulceria* (sweet shop) is also an interesting place to visit or browse for an unusual gift.

Among the many items on display and for sale are: tops, jigsaw puzzles, Jacob's ladders, masks, bingo and memory games, wooden horses, dice, dolls, trains, bags, flutes, sling shots, puppets and fighter dolls. Each item, is, of course, one-of-a-kind, constructed and painted by a local artist. They also have a section dedicated to hand-made old-fashioned candy. The idea behind this shop and the money generated by the classes is to recuperate some of the funds spent on materials and other expenses. At present, *Juguetearte* is not sponsored by any business or government agency, and is a purely out-of-pocket endeavor. In future, they hope to expand enough to be able to exhibit throughout Mexico as well as in other countries, to further develop more interactive projects and to generate recognition and support for traditional toy artisans.

Mojica feels they have found an ideal and practical medium for painting, one that people can touch, share and play with. She also hopes their efforts will help keep traditional Mexican toys from sliding into oblivion. She says, "We aren't interested in replacing modern toys, such as video games - that would be impossible. What we want is to offer an alternative, a toy that can be adapted to modern times. Of course, these works of art aren't just for kids, but for everyone."

For information on *Juguetearte*, please contact: lucerojojica@yahoo.com, 5186309, Rufino Tamayo 820

Juguetearte also welcomes donations of: wood, *hoja de totemaztle* (corn husks), paint (oil, watercolor and acrylic), paintbrushes and paper.



Sounds Against Silence

Piano concert to raise funds for hearing impaired children

By Elizabeth Wu

Imagine being born into a world of complete silence. You would never hear your mother's voice, nor your own. You would be a child deprived of bird song, the bell of the ice-cream man, the sounds of a carnival. You would grow into adulthood never having heard a note of music. Part of you would always live in a vacuum, unrecognized by the outside world, and unable to express itself. For many children born each year in the state of Oaxaca, this is reality.

CORAL, A.C. (Oaxacan Center for Language and Hearing Rehabilitation) is a non-profit organization that works to provide opportunities and support for hearing-impaired children. For low-income families in the state of Oaxaca, options for special deaf education are virtually non-existent. Founded in 1995, **CORAL**, based in Colonia Volcanes, provides auditory and speech therapy to over 30 children daily. So far, they have helped approximately 100 hearing-impaired children integrate themselves into primary school.

In addition to group classes, **CORAL** equips each child with two hearing aids and offers specialized individual therapy. Their clinic and social outreach programs also provide free or low-cost services to more than 750 patients. To meet demand, **CORAL** recently purchased land near Xo Xo for the construction of a larger hearing center. In order to raise money and awareness for these projects, **CORAL** is staging a piano concert, "Sonidos Contra Silencio," at 8 p.m. April 16th in the Centro Cultural Ex-convento de Santo Domingo. The concert will feature pianists Cicely Winter and Blandine Tricot.



St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music, and Winter has lived up to this name. Since her arrival in Oaxaca in 1972, she has presented numerous concerts on piano, harpsichord and organ, both as a soloist and as a member of chamber ensembles. In 2000, she co-founded the *Instituto de Organos Historicos de Oaxaca, A.C.* (IOHIO), which works to promote and protect 67 historic pipe organs scattered throughout churches in the state of Oaxaca. Last year she also founded *La Academia*, a music school that offers courses in music theory and technique from its premises on Xochimilco.

Tricot is originally from Orleans, France and studied at the Orleans Conservatory, eventually receiving a gold medal in piano and solfeggio from the Paris Music

School. As well as teaching piano and solfeggio classes, she offers specialized language therapy in a Oaxacan center for children with Downs Syndrome.

General admission to the concert is a \$100 donation, or \$40 for seniors, students, teachers and those who can't afford the full price. Tickets are available in advance at the ICC Spanish School (Alcala 307), Amate Books (Alcala 307-2) and Estudio Bocarriba (Callejon Boca del Monte 108). They can also be purchased at the door from 2-8 p.m. on the day of the concert.

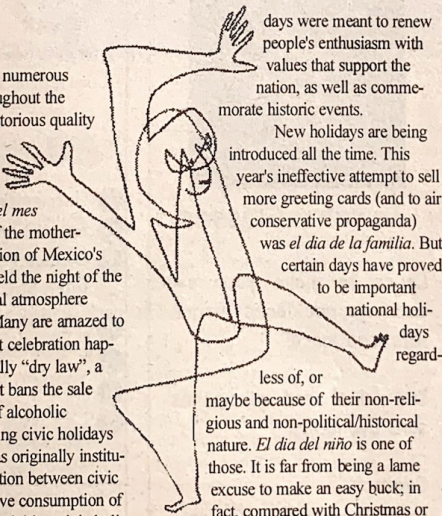
For more information, call **CORAL** at 5186658, email info@coraloxaca.org, or visit their website at www.coraloxaca.org

Children's day

Día del niño... y de la niña también

By Rafael Bucio

Among the very numerous holidays that abound throughout the year, some have such a notorious quality that they lend their spirit to the whole month. For example, in Mexico, September is considered *el mes de la patria*—the month of the motherland—because the celebration of Mexico's Independence, officially held the night of the 15th, takes over the general atmosphere during the entire month. Many are amazed to find that such an important celebration happens under *ley seca*—literally "dry law", a government regulation that bans the sale and public consumption of alcoholic beverages and applies during civic holidays and election days. This was originally instituted to make a clear distinction between civic celebrations and the massive consumption of alcohol during religious festivities; civic holi-



days were meant to renew people's enthusiasm with values that support the nation, as well as commemorate historic events.

New holidays are being introduced all the time. This year's ineffective attempt to sell more greeting cards (and to air conservative propaganda) was *el día de la familia*. But certain days have proved to be important national holidays regardless of, or

maybe because of their non-religious and non-political/historical nature. *El día del niño* is one of those. It is far from being a lame excuse to make an easy buck; in fact, compared with Christmas or

Saint Valentine's Day, it is not even that profitable.

Generally, Children's Day celebrations take place at school. Parties and parades are organized where kids dress up in all sorts of costumes, from traditional clothing to Bart Simpson disguises, and share a school day with their parents or tutors. Sometimes, it spills out of school and onto the streets. The importance of the day is not to be found in the festivities themselves, but in the frame of mind in which they are celebrated.

Children's Day honors all that is pure, innocent, playful and hopeful in the world. As children are those who best embody such values, we celebrate them and through them remember our inner child. The spirit of Children's Day ought to be observed throughout the entire month of April, (and throughout the year), so why not treat yourself to an ice cream, a baseball game, a new toy or anything that inspires in oneself the wonder and joy of a child.