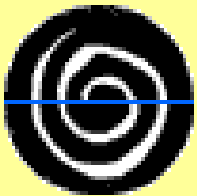
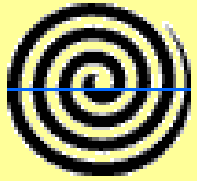


Los Dos Alejandro's Adventures In Mexico





Los Dos Alejandro Adventures In Mexico

**By
Alexander Kerekes**

**Published
Carmel, California**

Los Dos Alejandros Adventures In Mexico

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Preface: What is Mexico and who are its people?

Each time my father and I visited Mexico we had no plan or idea where our journey would take us. And each time that we left we never made plans to return. We simply followed a path in our lives that revealed itself with each step we took forward. In 2008, I published **Finding Lost Civilizations** and thought that was the end of our journey. But in 2009 my father and I returned to Mexico and found ourselves on a road to discovery that we had never experienced before. We met many wonderful local people and we were often taken to locations where no one other than the original inhabitants of that region had set foot.

Many people have said, "Write another book." And so in these pages I will take you on the journey that my father and I took.



Thank You Dad

Chapters

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On The Road



Old Gringo and son of Old Gringo with good friends Jose (L) and Gabo (R) in La Penita Market, State of Nayarit, Mexico

FREE SPIRITS, SWIFT WATERS, **AND CROCODILES**

Friday, 11 March: Today, my father and I went to the fishing village of Platanitos. We had been here several times before and wanted to explore a stretch of beach called Las Tortouguas, which means turtle in Spanish. It was a beautiful area and also

designated nature preserve. To get to this stretch of beach we had to cross a lagoon situated on the south side of the village. That whole area was actually miles of mangroves and streams that flowed like a small river into the ocean at a narrow point. Our hope was to cross over at low tide. When we arrived at the lagoon we took off our shoes and headed into the



crystal-clear shallows. We saw several children playing along the shore and playfully called out to their mothers, “No crocodiles?” They laughed and said, “No problema.” Acquiescing to local knowledge, we walked into the water and were able to walk across three-quarters of its width. But at that point it looked like the lagoon formed a small, swift-moving channel flowing into the ocean, and the water looked like it would be over our shoulders. I was ready to try to swim across to the far bank, but my camera was in my knapsack and I was worried that the water would damage it. We then looked down the lagoon and decided to follow the shore until it reached its narrowest point near the ocean. From that vantage point, we thought we could walk across. But when we actually got to the narrow spot, the lagoon water was rushing into the ocean at the

same time as the ocean waves were breaking on the shore and flowing into the lagoon. The gnashing waters, small whirlpools, and waves looked somewhat treacherous. As we got closer to the narrow point we met two women who were looking for shells. They told us that although the water looked treacherous, if we went into the water we should simply flow with the current, which would initially pull us out toward the ocean, but would then loop us back onto the opposite shore of the lagoon. They told us it would be a safe crossing—if we didn’t panic. A local fellow then appeared and told us that several weeks ago he had found a dead ten-foot crocodile washed up on the shore! My father and I decided that the next time we heard someone say, “No problema,” we would run the other way.

The fellow decided to show us how to cross over and jumped into the swift-moving waters. Down and away he went into the current, ending up on the opposite shore. So, my father and I decided to give it a try. Into the water we dove, tumbling toward the ocean. Trying not to panic, we let the current sweep us out and around, and then back onto a sandbar on the opposite beach. When we stood up the water was still about knee deep and rushing very forcefully out to sea. We had to hold on to each other to steady ourselves. We finally walked to dry sand and then started laughing—we both felt a sense of exhilaration. This often happens when people successfully overcome some sort of challenge that might have an element of danger. My father is eighty years old and I hope I have his sense of spirit and adventure when I am his age.



As we walked along the beach I heard a distant roaring sound that initially seemed to be coming from the sky. I looked around several times, but saw nothing. The sound grew louder and louder and seemed to be coming from inland. All of a sudden, I spotted a prop-driven airplane resembling a World War II Spitfire flying at full throttle and just barley skimming the top of the palm trees. It bore down on us and then as it cleared the last line of coconut trees along the

shore, it looped over and dropped down to about two feet above the water and continued along the coastline. That was quite a sight! This is an example of what I like about Mexico: Sometimes things happen here that are like a form of controlled anarchy. No one was calling the police, reporting aircraft tail numbers to the Federal Aviation Administration. There would be no investigation; no fines or suspensions; the pilot would not lose his license. If the plane had crashed into the ocean, people would have shrugged and left the wreckage there until time and the elements carted it away. This event reminded me of a time in Vietnam when my patrol was attacked by one of our own helicopter gunships.

We were in the Central Highlands patrolling a valley called the An Loa. It was a free-fire zone,

which meant that anything moving in that area was fair game and a target. Essentially, the people in that valley were considered to be either Viet Cong or North Vietnamese. Many local villages had once dotted the valley, but since the government could not control the terrain, the “solution” was to empty the valley and relocate all its inhabitants. This must have been a tragedy for the poor farmers and locals, who had been living in and farming that valley for generations, just like their ancestors hundreds of years before. Anyway, if friendly forces were in the area there was supposed to be coordination with other friendly units to make sure we would not mistakenly fire on each other. Apparently, in our case one combat assault helicopter unit had not been informed that we would be patrolling in the area. At the time of the incident there were about

six of us walking in single file on top of a rice paddy dike. All of a sudden I heard explosions and looked to my left. Flying at tree-top level and bearing down on us at full speed and firing away with aerial rockets was a helicopter gunship. It was so close that I could see the exhaust trail of rockets whizzing toward us, and the outline of the pilot and co-pilot looking down at us. I took a step to my right and rolled off the rice paddy dike, which provided me a two-foot earthen wall that shielded me from the exploding rockets. Several rockets flew overhead and hit the ground to my right, exploding and throwing their shrapnel forward. Shrapnel and explosions from rockets to my left were absorbed by the rice paddy dike, which saved our lives. Machine gun fire, shrapnel, explosions, and the smell of cordite engulfed us. And as I lay there I wondered if I

would have to try to shoot down the helicopter gunship to save our lives. Instead, I threw several smoke grenades hoping that the pilot would figure out that we were American friendly forces. Luckily, he did and as quickly as the helicopter had appeared, it left us there in the mud. We were stunned, and silent in both our disbelief and in our prayers to God. Everything had happened in a matter of seconds, but it felt like a lifetime. So, that is how friendly fire casualties occur. There were several other similar incidents that occurred during my time in Vietnam; in one case, one of my comrades died in my arms.

Despite getting “buzzed” by the Spitfire look-alike, we thoroughly enjoyed exploring Tortuguas beach. It was pristine, isolated, and stretched for several miles under swaying palm tree forests

that ran along the entire beach. During our exploration my father and I met two sisters living in a beautifully constructed home on the beach. They offered us cold drinks and together we sat under the palm trees and talked for several hours. They confirmed that there were crocodiles in the mangroves, and that there was also a crocodile sanctuary and breeding station along the estuary.

As we made our way back, the tide was low and we were able to walk across the estuary as its waters flowed into the ocean. I looked around to make sure there was nothing suspicious floating in the water—just in case. My father and I agreed that we'd had a good day. We explored, overcame some challenges, met interesting people, and shared an adventure together.



Crocodile Sanctuary



My father and I enjoying a cool beer after our Platanitos adventure

LITTLE KA KA

My father and I decided to go for a swim by a secluded cove locally referred to as Playa del Beso, the Kissing Beach, which is situated near the town of Los Ayala. To reach this cove you had to follow a jungle path at the south end of Los Ayala beach. It was a ten-minute walk and the path paralleled a high, rocky coastline. As we came upon the secluded cove a little dog greeted us. It was so ugly it was cute. To me it looked like some sort of *Star Wars* character, like a cross between a dog and an armadillo. It had long, pointy ears and no hair except for a few strands on the top of its head. It was friendly, but I didn't want to touch it for fear of possibly contracting a disease. Later, as we were leaving the beach I waved a stick at the dog. He came over to play

and then began to follow us. That's when I heard the dog's owner call out his pet's name.

"Ka Ka, Ka Ka!"- come home - he yelled.



Little Ka Ka

The **Mexican Hairless Dog** is a rare, hairless breed of dog whose size varies greatly. It is also known as **Xoloitzcuintli**, **Xoloitzcuintle** (in English pronounced *show-low-eats-quint-lee*), or Xolo for short, or Mexican Hairless. Xolos were considered sacred dogs by the Aztecs because they believed the dogs were needed by their masters' souls to help them safely through the underworld.



Little Ka Ka - One Year Later

The Street Musicians of Mexico

"What I have in my heart and soul - must find a way out. That is the reason for music..."

Everywhere my father and I went we found music and every time it was a moment of joy. One wise man once said that as long as people are playing music and people are listening – they are not fighting.



Street Musicians Of Mexico



Street Musicians Of Mexico



Street Musicians Of Mexico



Street Musicians Of Mexico



La Bufadora, Ensenada, Baja California Norte

Street Musicians Of Mexico



Huicho Indians, San Pancho, Nayarit

Street Musicians Of Mexico



Guanajuato, Mexico

Street Musicians Of Mexico



Central Mercado, Tepic, Nayarit

IN SEARCH OF OPALS

From the town of Tequila my father and I decided to return to Magdalena to explore an opal mine. Some locals had told us that the mine was several kilometers west of Magdalena and that it was no problem to visit. One person said the mine was 5 kilometers outside of town; another said it was 15. In the end, our preconception of visiting an opal mine and what actually occurred were two completely different experiences. We thought we would visit a mine open to tourists, all prim and proper with a purchased ticket, guided tours, and signs all over the place, just like in the United States. However, as we drove through Magdalena and continued for five and then fifteen kilometers we saw nothing but agave fields and farmlands. No

mines to be seen anywhere. Eventually, I pulled over to grocery store and asked the shopkeeper if she knew where the mine was. At first she said no, then yes and began to speak very quickly leaving me to guess what she was saying. A young man approached and indicated he knew where the mines were and that it would be no problem to visit them. My Spanish is very limited and many times I interpret a few words and gestures to mean a certain thing, which is often a guess based on intuition. But this is the way to learn a language. My observation is that trying to communicate, no matter how limited your knowledge of the language, is greatly appreciated by the local people. And understanding that local people accept and appreciate one's efforts is the key to overcoming our initial fear to communicate in a foreign

language. Half the fun is finding out you interpreted something wrong and then understanding where you went wrong in your interpretation. Another challenge is realizing that because you might know only a few words, the other person will assume you know more than you really do. This is why I often ended up receiving long explanations in Spanish and actually understanding just one or two words and guessing the rest. The key is to forge ahead, keep trying, and learning.

Anyway, after several minutes of communication attempts Manuel said he would take us to a mine. So, Manuel, my father, and I drove off in our camper toward an opal mine. About 10 kilometers down the road Manuel pointed to a nondescript farm road and told me to follow it. I would never have found that turn-off in

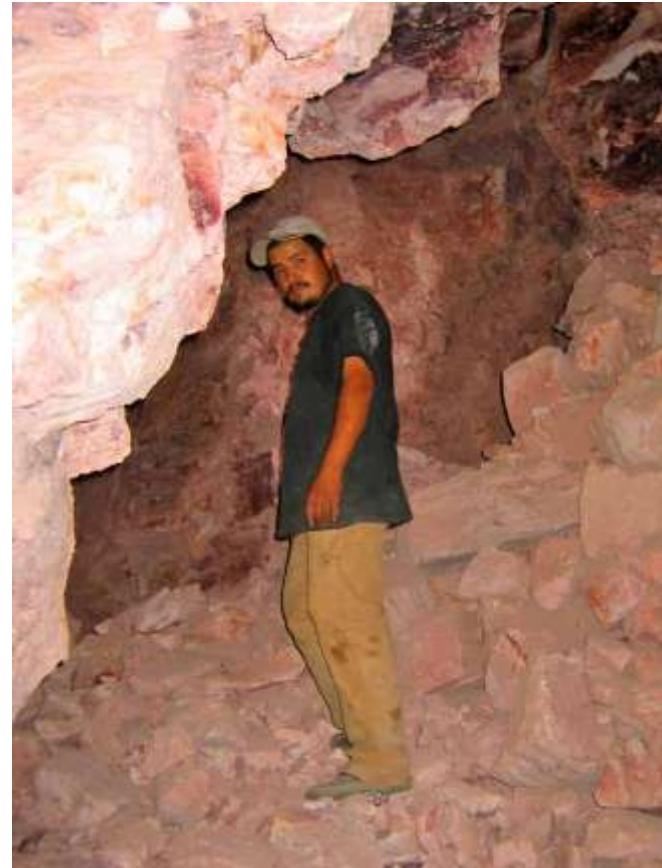
a million years. There were no signs or anything whatsoever indicating that this was an entrance to a mine. As I looked up the road I saw a large cut into the mountainside indicating some sort of evacuation. “La mina, la mina,” Manuel said. The road started winding up the mountain and I was concerned that our old motor home might not make it up the hill. With sign language and broken Spanish I asked Manuel several times if the motor home could make it up the hill. “No problema, no problema,” he replied each time. Although slightly worried I continued to drive since the motor home was doing well and the road remained passable. Eventually, we crested a hill and entered an excavated plateau overlooking the valley below. It was a beautiful site; the rock in Magdalena and particularly opals in this region has a light reddish, rust color.

The combination of red mountains, blue skies, and green fields painted a canvas for us to forever appreciate.



My expectation was that we would find a mineshaft that would take us deep into the ground. Instead, we were standing in an open excavation site. But as Manuel started showing me around the area I started to notice many small caves along the sheer walls. We climbed to the caves and went into several of these mountainside shafts. They were not deep and I could see that hammer, pick, and shovel were the primary tools being used here. As I looked at the littered scene of broken rocks and discarded mining equipment I began to realize the time consuming, back breaking, dangerous, and difficult effort it takes to extract opals from the earth. In this mine the process was no different than the one used hundreds of years ago. Manuel explained that the land was federally

owned and open to anyone who wanted to mine for opals.



Manuel

We continued our exploration with Manuel leading me to a precipitous ledge that had an overhanging rope from a ledge above us. He grabbed the rope, tugged at it, and then hand-over-hand, scurried up to the next ledge. I followed, somewhat apprehensive. One slip and it would be over. As we continued our climb we explored several other shafts and remained on alert for opals among the broken rocks. Manuel called out to several miners at the top of the mountain who seemed to be cooking their afternoon meal. He explained that he had also mined this area and that the miners above were his friends. He said that the mine was mostly played out and that now only small opals could be found. We continued to climb and finally reached the top of the mountain. I felt transported in time as I looked at the scene—the

valley below, the mine around us, and the miners. They looked just like men from the pictures we see of early California miners. They were friendly, seemed happy, and had been aged by hard work and the soil around them. They were men of the earth who were digging for their dreams.



Top of Mine

Thinking about the formal “tour” of the mines I had previously imagined and somewhat expected, what I was actually seeing offered an abrupt contrast. This was real, this was raw, this was life in the moment and as it is.

Before leaving Manuel took me to a small mineshaft that had been converted into a religious altar. On a small ledge were several burning candles, a cross, a picture of the Virgin Mary, and prayers to the departed—offerings for the dreams of hope, for love, family, freedom, and the idea of fulfilling a dream among the elusive opals of Magdalena.

I’ve been told that men have been killed in these hills and that friends, lured by the lust of wealth, have betrayed each other. I left this mine with a small bag in my hand, but will keep the rest of the story a secret.



BE CAREFUL IN PARADISE

Wednesday, 19 January: I was sitting in a comfortable chair overlooking the beauty of Chacala Beach when I felt a rush of wind next to my head and then a loud thud to my right. A large, five-pound coconut had just fallen thirty feet from the top of a swaying palm tree. If I had been sitting four more inches to the right, it would have hit my head. And then it would have been sweet dreams for me, perhaps forever. Later, as I was swimming in the ocean and feeling very content and happy, a jellyfish stung me!

Danger can lurk in many forms—even in paradise.



Chacala Beach

IF YOU DON'T MIND, IT DOESN'T MATTER

Saturday, 5 February: It had been raining on and off since Monday, but it finally looked like the weather might clear up. I decided to take a walk to the money exchange place in La Penita along the Avenue Sol Nuevo from Guayabitos. Looking around I was amazed at the planned development for this area. Initially, roads, a sewer system, street lighting, and underground electrical systems were installed—and everything was first class. However, after the initial development, which was about ten or fifteen years ago, it does not appear that there's been any maintenance or upkeep of all that the infrastructure. There are “hot” electrical wires sticking out of ground junction boxes and most metal manhole covers over the electrical junction

pits have rusted through—or are simply missing. Many of these electrical junction pits are several feet deep and situated along the sidewalks. Most of the lampposts have rusted and rotted away, so there is very little lighting of the streets and sidewalks. An unwary person out during the evening could very easily fall into one of these uncovered pits. And without a doubt falling into one of these pits would cause serious or fatal injuries. In spite of decaying streets, missing manhole covers, and hot electrical leads laying around, new homes are being built here and land prices have skyrocketed. Passing one home I saw that the owner had spliced a wire from a working street lamp and into his house. I guess that was his electrical system. This reminded me of an old saying: “If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.”



Avenida Del Sol, Guayabitos



Sidewalk in La Penita

Watch your step in Mexico



Street in La Penita

THE BULLDOZER

Alone in my thoughts along Mexico Highway 15, I was on a stretch of road where it seemed I was a solitary traveler. After a while I saw that I was gaining on some sort of exceedingly wide vehicle in the right-hand lane. To the right of this vehicle there seemed to be large puffs of white smoke or what looked like exploding bags of flour every ten seconds along its path. I started to slow down because I was still not sure what I was seeing. Finally, I could make out that it was a large flatbed trailer with a very large bulldozer on the flatbed. The bulldozer was the type used in mining operations and was so large that the front of the plow stuck out about five feet on either side of the flatbed trailer. Along this portion of the highway there was no road shoulder and

as a caution or warning to motorists, concrete pillars painted white were imbedded along the right margin of the road at twenty- or thirty-foot intervals. The white puffs or mini-explosions were caused by the bulldozer's front plow. Because the plow exceeded the width of the trailer and the roadway was narrow, the plow was shearing off the head of each stone marker along the shoulder of the highway. The steel plow weighed hundreds of tons and every time it hit a concrete road marker it smashed it with explosive force. I was amazed — this had been going on for miles and miles. I could only imagine the damage this tractor-trailer was causing. I passed the truck with great difficulty; the overhanging plow was also protruding into the left lane. I could almost feel the bottom of the plow scraping the roof of my car as I passed it.

Trucks pulled over to the side of the road and truck driver motioning for me to slow down. Mexico Highway 15 is definitely not a place for the tired or weary.



THE SPITTER

I was returning from San Pancho to Guayabitos along Mexico Highway 200 when I passed a man squatting alongside the roadway. His back was to me and his hands were wrapped around his legs. His clothes, arms, and head were dirty and as black as soot. He looked emaciated, abandoned, and without a prayer or hope in this world. I wanted to stop, but the road had no shoulder, so I kept going. I sensed he was one of our forgotten souls wandering in the land of the living — a person whose mind traveled in another dimension.

Several days later I was returning from Puerto Vallarta and traveling the same route. Highway 200 is a narrow, two-lane highway, and a major connector from Puerto Vallarta to Guadalajara.

Along this section of the road there are many hills and sharp curves that create dangerous — deadly — driving terrain. The area is peppered with crosses and memorials to those who were killed in violent, sudden car accidents. Large trucks continually travel this route bringing life and commerce to the region. But the heavy volume of commercial trucks often results in a slow procession of cars behind these lumbering vehicles as they struggle to negotiate the uphill climb. The drivers of many small trucks, high-powered busses, and cars are often impatient in these situations; it is not unusual to see a bus or car pull out from behind a slow truck and cross a double yellow line in order to overtake the truck as it negotiates an uphill blind curve. On this journey I had the misfortune of being about eight car lengths behind a slow truck. Meandering

slowly up the hill I was lost in my thoughts when all of a sudden I saw that the cars ahead of me started swerving sharply out of traffic lanes. At that same instant I saw the deranged squatting fellow from several days before. But this time he was standing tall — with his arms outstretched like Jesus at his crucifixion. He had a wild-eyed stare, and his clothes were torn, ragged, and dirty. And as each car passed him he flung himself with all his strength and fury into the oncoming path of the vehicle. While in mid-air and hurtling toward oncoming cars he lifted and twisted his head in an arch and forcefully spit on each vehicle as it passed.

Misery is terrible to see. Many people believe that perhaps a better life is waiting for them in the hereafter. However, this poor, wretched, hungry soul was living hell on earth.

Unfortunately, I have seen that same soul wandering in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, and in most corners of the world where I have traveled.



MEXICAN SNAKE STORIES



At sunset my father, Raphael, and I went to the beach at Guayabitos for a cool beer. We started talking to the owner of a restaurant there and found out that he made belts from snakeskin. Apparently, he captured and bred a

variety of snakes. Raphael said that throughout his world travels he had learned that the rattlesnake was the purest meat known to man; it also had medicinal powers. The restaurant owner said he had a boa constrictor he was going to make into a belt and offered to sell Raphael the reptile's meat. Raphael agreed and so we discussed how to cook it and decided that Hungarian style would be the way to go: pan cooked in oil and mixed with onions, red peppers, garlic, and a liberal sprinkling of paprika. We later started walking back to town along the beach, with Raphael taking off his shoes. As a wave swept onto the beach I saw Raphael jump high, then again. I looked around and saw a water snake twisting around Raphael's jumping feet. As our friend leaped out of harm's way we all bent down to look at the

snake. It was yellow with brown spots. All of a sudden a large wave crashed onto the beach and threw a bundle of snakes at us. I don't know who was more frightened, the snakes or us. In a flash Raphael, my father, and I were all yelling and jumping around as if we were doing some sort of Indian fire dance. The snakes were all trying to slither back into the ocean. Several seconds later, we breathed a collective sign of relief as the snakes returned to their nocturnal waters. Was this an omen from the snake God? Stay away from snake belts and snake meat! As we continued our walk along the beach I remembered that an old sailor had once told me to never turn my back on the ocean. I kept a wary eye toward the sea wondering what Neptune could throw at my feet next.

The following afternoon the Mexican restaurant owner showed up at my doorstep and handed me a plastic bag weighing about ten pounds. " Fresca boa," he said as blood poured through a hole in the bag. I gingerly placed the item into another bag and into the refrigerator until I could pass it along to Raphael. I had no desire to see what a twelve-foot, skinned boa constrictor looked like.

In 1970 I was on a small mountaintop in a village called River Cess, in Liberia, Africa. At the time I was working with an oil exploration company made up of former Congolese mercenaries. But that's another story. Anyway, there were three of us on a mountaintop, myself, a British fellow named Jim Kinglesides, and an African handyman named John who worked around our camp. One day John showed us a

large boa constrictor snakeskin. I recall I could hold it with both hands over my head with the animal's tail touching the ground at my left foot and its head at my right. The thing must have been about eighteen feet long. I saw that the snout was square edged and blunt. About six inches up from the tail end there seemed to be two spikes, like fingers that ran out about four inches on either side of the body. John explained that the boa would slither up next to a tree, its tail perpendicular to the ground and the two fingers burrowed into the earth to give the snake stability as it leaned against the tree. The boa would then send out a call similar to the mating call of the small female African deer. The mating call sounded something like "Weeee, weeee, weeee!" When a male deer heard this sound he would be lured to the tree the boa was leaning

against. As soon as the deer would come within range the boa would launch itself at the deer, striking it with its blunt nose. The blow would either break the neck of the deer or stun it, thereby allowing the boa to wrap itself around the animal.



River Cess, Liberia, Africa, April 1970

The following morning Jim left our tent with a shotgun in hand to perform nature's call in the jungle. About five minutes later I heard a loud scream and yelling. Running out of the tent and looking toward the jungle, I saw Jim sprinting up the hill in a stooped position with his underpants at his ankles. With one hand he was trying to pull up his underpants and in the other hand he was dragging the shotgun. When he got back to the tent he looked like he had seen a ghost. After a cup of tea to steady his frazzled nerves, Jim explained that when he entered the jungle he squatted adjacent to a tree to relieve himself. While he was squatting there in blissful peace, over his right shoulder he heard, "Weee, weee, weee!" With a loud, fearful, and primordial yell he launched himself from a squatting position and ran for his life!



Boa Territory, River Cess Station, Liberia

Wednesday, 23 February: Today I ate boa! At noontime, Raphael called us to his apartment for lunch. "Boa, Slovenian style," he proclaimed. "But, I must admit it is a little tough," he said. I looked in his cooking pot and I saw a floating jambalaya of vegetables, soup, rice, and four chunks of boa.

The boa looked like a king-sized turkey neck split open down the middle. I fixed a small plate and sat down to study the situation. The boa is essentially one large muscle tightly intertwined into one long skeletal structure best described as a tubular rib cage. These ribs were like large fish bones running the full length of the snake. There are no large meat pieces; it is all intertwined with the skeletal system. I pulled and snapped a piece of meat off the boa and bit into it. It tasted like rubbery turkey neck meat. I only

had a small piece, which I ate reluctantly.

Needles to say, I have no future plans to eat boa, Slovenian style, any time soon.



Boa Constrictor Meal!!!

THE LIZARDS OF NUEVO VALLARTA

Sunday, 6 February: The sun is out and I feel alive and happy! Today we decided to travel to Nuevo Vallarta and visit Paradise Village. When we arrived we first visited the public marina because I wanted to show my father the type of boat I had dry-docked in Key West in preparation for my sail through the Caribbean. As we walked onto the dock my father almost fell through the planking. What the heck?! I stopped and looked around. It was another broken dream. Built beautifully twenty years ago, but not a thing done to maintain the pier since then. So much for that.

As we walked along the dock I noticed an iguana lizard sunning itself among the rocks. These animals have the amazing ability to change color according to their surroundings.

The lizard I was looking at was gray with flakes of black and rust. These colors matched the rocks and boulders, which formed the jetties. I gently pulled out my camera and eased myself onto the rocks. I came closer and closer; the lizard eyed me. I finally settled down into a squatting position and poised myself to take the perfect shot. As I was bracketing the lizard in the viewfinder, I felt something slide across my left foot. Then I felt something gently slap my right buttock. I slowly looked around and saw that I was surrounded by hundreds of iguana lizards. They were slithering back and forth across the rocks to my front, to my left, and rear. One seemed to have a three-foot tail. I looked to my right and saw an open path. My stomach rumbled, my hand trembled, and with one

one grand explosion of lightning speed and gas I flew over the boulders like Superman leaping tall buildings and made it safely back to the staid walkways along the jetties of Nuevo Vallarta.



THE HAND

Saturday, 26 February: I was in the town of La Penita and had decided to explore the beach. As I strolled to the north end of the bay I saw a graveyard under several palm trees. On closer inspection the graveyard area began to resemble a war-torn scene. Gravestones, markers, crosses, plastic flowers, trash, and tombs seemed to be strewn about and tumbled end over end. I could see that a powerful Pacific storm had once surged onto the graveyard. Walking along a path I discovered a human thighbone. A little further up the path was another human bone. Though aghast, I felt a morbid compulsion to explore further. I was amazed that there were sections of the graveyard that

seemed to be well-tended and other parts that were in total disarray, like some sort of mixed-up puzzle. It seemed that no effort had been made to repair any storm-damaged graves or to clean up any of the unearthed bones. I saw one large overturned brick sarcophagus at the beach line. Several bricks had broken loose from the tomb. Walking up to the sarcophagus, I could tell that the sunlight was reflecting a small pinpoint ray from something within. I peered in, and lying before me was a complete skeletal hand. The left index finger bore a ring. Even in the semi-darkness I could see a slight glint of the diamond setting (and thought how easy it would be for someone to reach in and take that ring). Who was she? I wondered. What had her life been like? And why had she been finally abandoned?

The graveyard ended in a hilly rock cove; nestled among these rocks were opulent American homes. I could imagine the occupants of those expensive homes, looking out to the sky-blue Pacific Ocean, and enjoying their good lot in life to have been able to afford a mansion with such a view. And not seeing or caring about the lost souls at their feet.



Oceanside Cemetery, La Penita, Mexico

PRAYERS TO THE GUARDIAN

We left Guayabitos and drove along Highway 200, which slowly winds from sea level to about 3,000 feet at the town of Tepic. Approaching an area called La Noriega, we saw what appeared to be a small shrine or altar built among some towering boulders and trees.



We pulled over to explore the site; there were hundreds of candles burning inside small enclosures built within the altar shrine. As I walked closer to the altar, the sunlight glared off the ground in a way that resembled slippery ice. I saw that many years and thousands of candles had spilled over from these little altars onto the ground creating a wax floor. Among these candles were many religious statues, pictures, rosaries, crucifixes, medallions, plastic flowers, and offerings. The structure was painted yellow and seemed to be a place where people asked for blessings for those traveling and those who never reached their destination. Written on a cardboard box there was the phrase: "from the padre of the Mexican Judicial Federal Police." It contained about ten candles. I lit one and placed it on the altar. As I started to pull back my hand I

saw a movement. I froze, and then looked deeper inside this altar. Two small eyes were staring at me. I withdrew my hand slowly and said my blessing to the unknown guardian as a tail slithered into a hole.



Roadside Shrine

SACRED HEARTS

We came upon the outskirts of Ixtlan Del Rio and noticed a small sign indicating an archeological site called Los Toriles, which was near the town. We decided to visit and when we entered the area we saw a level, deserted 8-hectare field dotted with excavated buildings that once housed the original ancient inhabitants of Mexico, the Nahuatl. I closed my eyes and tried to transport myself back in time to envision what life was like thousands of years before.

When I opened my eyes I saw an old man standing by the central altar. He looked like he was dressed in feathers and held a large staff. As I walked toward the altar the old man walked away. I slowly walked up to the altar and was

shocked to see a bloody, fist-sized heart lying there. I quickly turned, but the old man had disappeared. I called to my father and waved him over to the altar. We could not tell if the heart was human or animal; all we knew was that a heart was before us. No one else was at the site. Are ancient religious rites still practiced? After all, the Christian ritual of the drinking of the symbolic blood of Jesus Christ is two thousand years old. The Aztec religion is much older. Should I have been surprised at what I had seen?

I remember patrolling the Bong Son coastal plains in Vietnam in 1969: we were sweeping through a village at around dusk. Many huts had Buddhist shrines and the air hung heavy with the smell of incense and earthen stoves cooking the evening meal. Mid-way through the village a loud

gong sounded. Then again and again. Everything was still except for the rhythmic, repeated sound. There was an eerie feeling; we all moved cautiously. Suddenly, after the last beat of the gong, we heard a frightening scream, cry, and then a sadistic laugh. We stopped in our tracks. I sensed we were in for a rough night. Just before dark our patrol separated and two overnight campsites were set up. Later, in the dark night the gong started beating again and we started to hear explosions and the sound of gunfire from the other campsite. Throughout the night that patrol was surrounded by movement, sniping, a beating gong, and the sound of screams and cries.

I thought about how man has always used religious symbols and signs in the name of glory, God, war, and self-righteousness. With that

perspective, what I had seen on that altar in Los Toriles was not really so unusual.

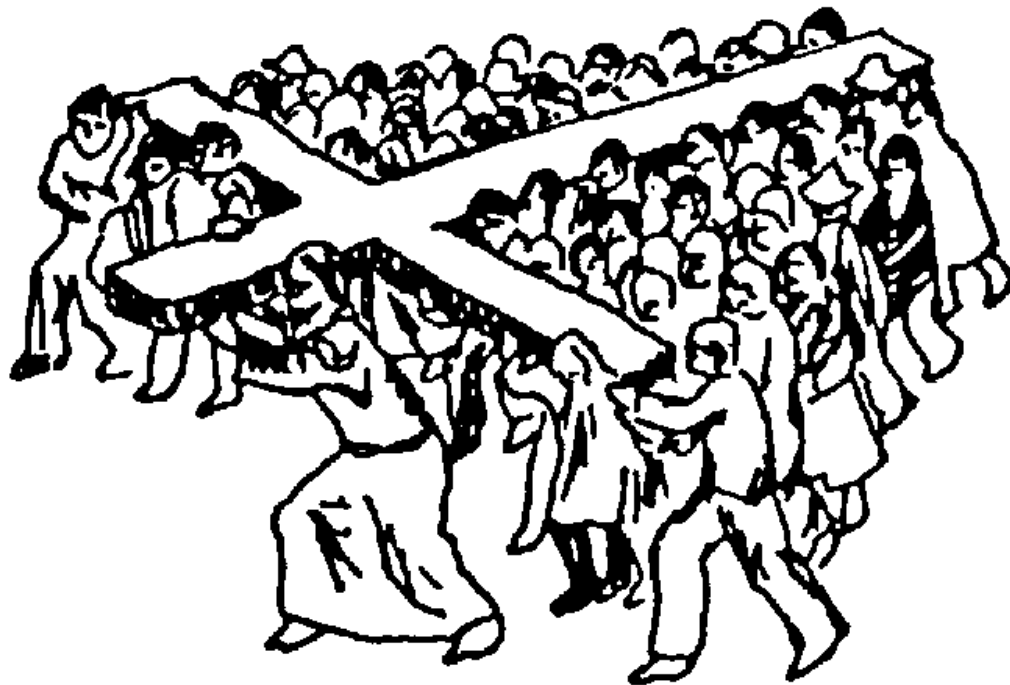
Back in our motor home heading toward Guayabitos we felt a sense of relief. But from then on I was always wary of old men dressed in feathers.



**Los Toriles - Altar situated in the main hall of the temple for the wind god, Ehecatl / Quetzalcoatl.
It is known as the Round Pyramid**

Worship In Mexico

No sooner had the Spanish *conquistadores* vanquished the Aztec Empire militarily, than the spiritual conquest of Indian Mexico began. The Spaniards were devoutly Roman Catholic and colonization brought Roman Catholicism to the country, which became the main religion of Mexico. Today, 92% of the population are baptized Catholics, making the country the second largest Catholic nation in the world.

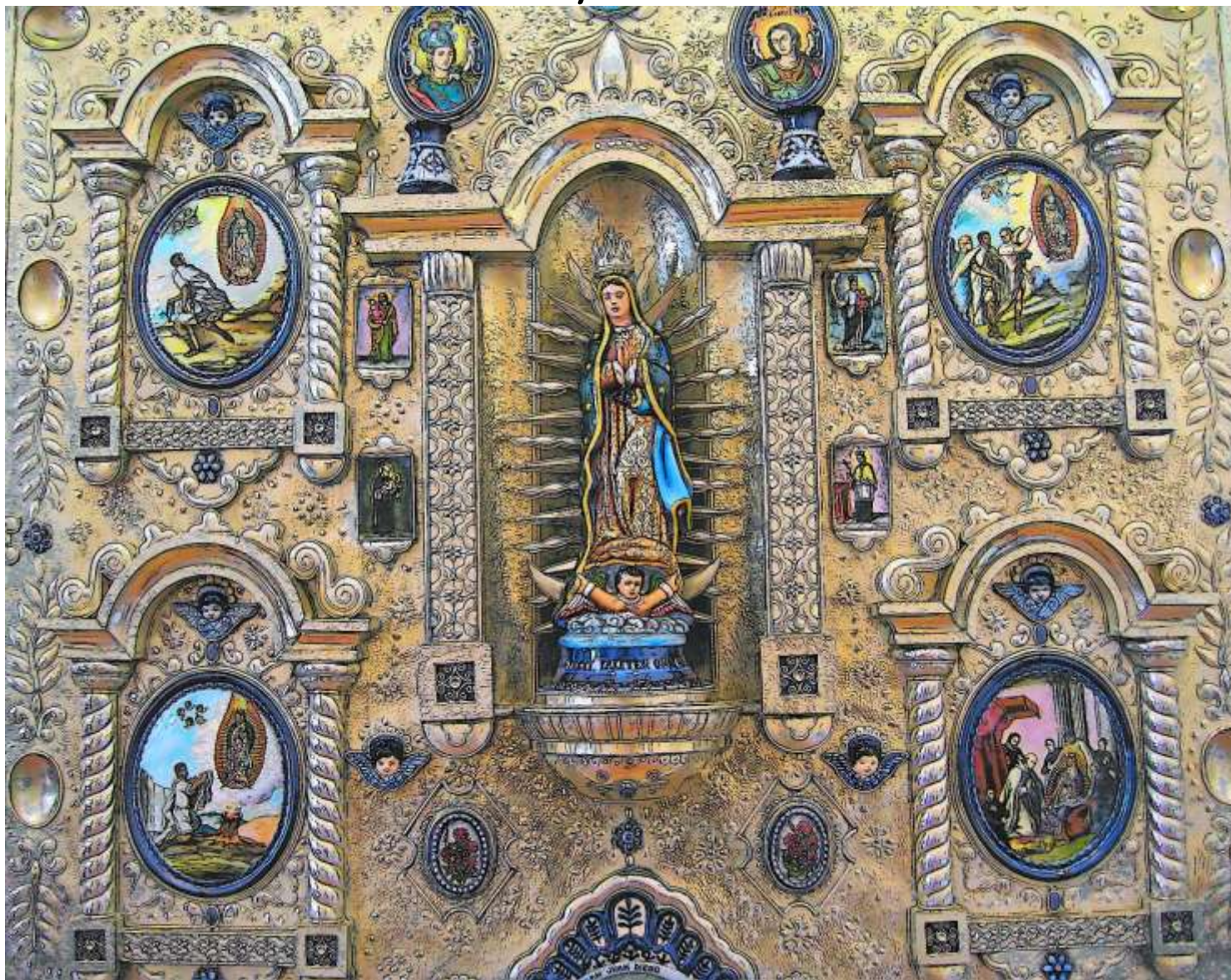


Worship In Mexico



Atotonilco, State of Guanajuato, Mexico

Worship In Mexico



Virgin of Guadalupe, Town of Tequila, State of Jalisco, Mexico

Worship In Mexico



Crucifixion Figure in the Jose Cuervo Chapel, Tequila, Jalisco

Worship In Mexico



Pedro's Cross, Town of Guayabitos, State of Nayarit, Mexico

Worship In Mexico



Guanajuato, Mexico

Worship In Mexico



Town of San Miguel Allende, State of Guanajuato

Worship In Mexico



Religious Store, Town of Guadalajara, State of Jalisco

Worship In Mexico



Native Altar used by, Huichol, Cora, and other Indigenous Indians, Alta Vista Sacred Site, State of Nayarit, Mexico

DRIVING TO GUAYABITOS

Mexico Highway 15

Sometimes as we voyage along the path less traveled, it is simply luck or divine intervention that delivers us to our destination. This journey is not for the faint of heart.

Driving on Mexico Highway 15, about twenty miles past Hemisillo, I got caught behind a large, lumbering truck. The struggling truck was filled beyond capacity with pieces of junked automobiles. Old car parts were layered over each other in a happenstance manner with nothing but rickety sideboards holding everything together. It felt dangerous being behind the slow-moving truck; I was concerned that an unsecured metal object could fall off at any second. The opposite lane was clear, so I started to speed up

in order to pass. These moments are always tense; I gripped the steering wheel, my mind fully alert to all the potential problems of the situation. Getting closer, I could see that the very top piece of the truck's junk pile was a complete car axle system. And at that same instant, this piece fell off the truck — on the driver's side. I figured I was doomed, a dead man. As the left wheel of the axle system, which still had an inflated tire, hit the road it bounced ten feet into the air. And at that exact moment my car hurtled forward and under the airborne axle. My car had completely passed beneath it by the time it hit the ground and then continued to tumble down the highway. Everything happened in about two seconds flat. At first I was dumbstruck, but when I realized I had just missed getting killed I cheered — loudly.

“Elation” barely describes how it feels to survive a near-fatal event.



**Road shrine for travelers along Mexico Highway 15
Virgin of Guadalupe**

I remember the sense of euphoria I felt as a young paratrooper after participating in a mass parachute drop with the 82nd Airborne Division. As hundreds of us hung in the air with our parachutes deployed, I could hear countless cheers, yells, and shouts of joy while we slowly drifted toward the ground. In times like those, you can either enter into a state of paralyzed shock or simply look at the Grim Reaper and tell him to go to hell! Dag Hammarskjöld once said, "Do not seek death; death will find you. But seek the road which makes death a fulfillment."

Although driving long distances can be tense and tiring, something I enjoy about that is that it gives me the chance to journey within myself. Many people don't appreciate or have not taken the time to understand that our minds also offer a self-contained world of exploration and wonder.

Through our senses the mind records every aspect of our lives. Everything we experience remains within us, but for the most part we live within the near present influenced by our past experience. I learned that through meditation, we have the ability to travel within. We can become like spectators, watching, learning, listening, reflecting, and discussing within ourselves the events of our lives that we travel back to. For me, this occurs as if in the third person — I am aware of the conscious moment, but at the same time there is a second entity within, like an observer. I mention this because shortly after my experience with the flying axle and my feeling of euphoria at having survived it, I recalled an incident I'll refer to as the Primal Scream!

In 1970 I was on the west coast of Africa on a small hilltop adjacent to a small village on the

river Cess in Liberia. As nighttime fell I could hear drums, chanting, and singing from the village below. I'm not sure why, but as I sat atop that hill drinking tea and gazing at the stars, my thoughts meandered to various theories about the psychology of mankind. For some reason I remembered the concept of primal scream therapy: that a person could yell or scream with everything in their body to attain a sense of internal relief. I laughed at the vision of groups of people yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs. But I was curious about the validity of the theory. It seemed that this type of behavior did not occur in everyday life; we were discouraged from screaming except in "fight or flight" situations. However, having recently returned from Vietnam and completing three years of military service I knew that the "war whoop" (and,

I assumed, its peacetime equivalent) could stir up good feelings.

So, alone under the African stars and without the constraints of modern society, I stood up and with everything I had in me I let out the loudest primal scream possible. When it was over I felt elated. Something inside me had been released and I felt a sense of euphoria, contentment, and well-being. The African drums fell silent as my body let that bloodcurdling sound. Feeling mischievous that evening, I waited until the drums and singing resumed. The crescendo of the drum continued to a heightened frenzy — and I let out another primal scream. It felt so good! And again the drums and voices stopped. I wonder what those people thought. I was treated with reverence, kindness, and respect during my stay.



River Cess Station, Liberia, Africa

Nightfall approached as I neared the town of Los Mochis, Mexico. Slowing down as I came upon a pedestrian zone with speed bumps, I started to hear what I thought were screams. Ahead of me was a very large, two-tiered truck — the source of the screams. Both levels of the truck were crammed beyond capacity with pigs. Some of the pigs had already been trampled. Whenever the truck hit a speed bump there was a collective, ghastly squeal as more pigs fell down and were trampled. Pandemonium, fear, terror, and death reigned. How many pigs will survive the trip? I wondered. It brought to mind accounts of how humans have treated each other in similar fashion throughout our history: wars, death camps, ethnic cleansing — the whole host of horrors we have inflicted on each other. I was amazed at the utter depths of cruelty

that we are capable of and at the same time our tremendous capacity for kindness. I saw this while serving as an infantry paratrooper in Vietnam. Some men simply became cruel savages while others gave candy to children.

Dusk turned to nightfall, and I decided to stay overnight in Los Mochis. The following morning a mist was slowly ascending from the fertile fields as the sun rose to warm the cool earth. The town was stirring just as I was leaving; I was happy to be back on the road and eager to reach Guayabitos. It was hard to see through the rising mist in some places and I started to slow down when I entered an area with several intersections. I was in the left lane and as I approached a large intersection, it looked like there was some sort of large plastic bag fluttering in the wind in the right lane. But coming closer I

could see that it was actually a large white dog sitting up on its two front feet, rocking from side to side and howling with excruciating grief. Sadly, in that mist a truck or car had run over the dog's backside. After passing the dog, I looked into my rearview mirror and saw a large truck run over the dog again.

I continued to drive slowly even though the morning mist was interspersed with some clear patches and good visibility along the roadway. Entering a factory zone, I noticed that the four-lane road was divided by concrete, fence-topped barriers. Again, I was in the left lane in a very misty spot when all of a sudden I saw a quick-moving blur ahead in the right lane. I hit my car horn. The object immediately stopped and came into view. It was a man — separated by less than an inch from my bumper. Passing him, I breathed

a sigh of relief. There was a pedestrian overpass directly ahead. I also noticed that there were sections of the fence atop the concrete road barriers that had been torn aside for people to crawl through. Rather than walk another hundred feet to the pedestrian overpass, people were risking their lives every day by running across the freeway. It is perplexing to see what people will sacrifice for convenience. When I was the Chief of Police at the Presidio of Monterey I received countless phone calls complaining about insufficient parking at the teaching institute. Students, professors, workers, or visitors — everyone seemed to want special parking dispensation. I always found a place to park. It was not a matter of insufficient parking spaces. The problem was that everyone wanted to park next to the entrance. This same phenomena

happens all the time at shopping center parking lots. People circle the lot for thirty minutes so they can park near the entrance although there are plenty of spots farther away.



Road Shrine to the departed along Mexico Highway 15

It took me three days to drive to the Hotel Robles in Guayabitos, Mexico, from Monterey, California. On the first day I traveled from Monterey to Phoenix. On the second day from Phoenix to Los Mochis, where I stayed at the Cessna Motel. And on the third day I arrived at the Robles at five in the evening.

My father had arrived three days before and was checked into the Hotel Robles in the same room that we had the year previous. As I entered Room 31 I found my father sitting at the dining table where we greeted each other warmly. We reminisced and we were both amazed that a year had gone by since we had last stood in that room.

My old room was just as I had left it and we laughed when we saw that the night stand still bore the coffee stains from our previous residency there and those of countless other guests over the past year. Both our bed sheets had large holes and in the bathroom a towel hook was missing from its base, replaced with a twisted and rusted coat hanger. But we were not deterred and reminded ourselves of an old saying that said something to the effect that when you travel, remember that a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable.



Hotel Robles – My Bed Sheet – Viva Mexico!

Faces Of Mexico

The face is the index of the mind.

A man finds room in the few square inches of his face for the traits of all his ancestors, for the expression of all his history, and his wants. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson,



Faces of Mexico



My Father and I with good friend Don Phillipe the Stone Carver, Messillas, Mexico

Faces Of Mexico



La Bufadora, Ensenada, Baja California

Faces of Mexico



Huichol Indian, Las Varas, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



San Pancho, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



The Old Communist, Tepic, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Gabo, La Penita, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Fisherman, Los Ayala, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Mercado, Tepic, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Sister & Brother, San Pedro de Lagunillas, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Yalapa, Jalisco

Faces of Mexico



Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco

Faces of Mexico



La Penita, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Ice Cream, Las Varas, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Street Vendor, Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico

Faces of Mexico



Don Phillipe, Stone Carver, Messillas, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Ensenada, Baja California Norte

Faces of Mexico



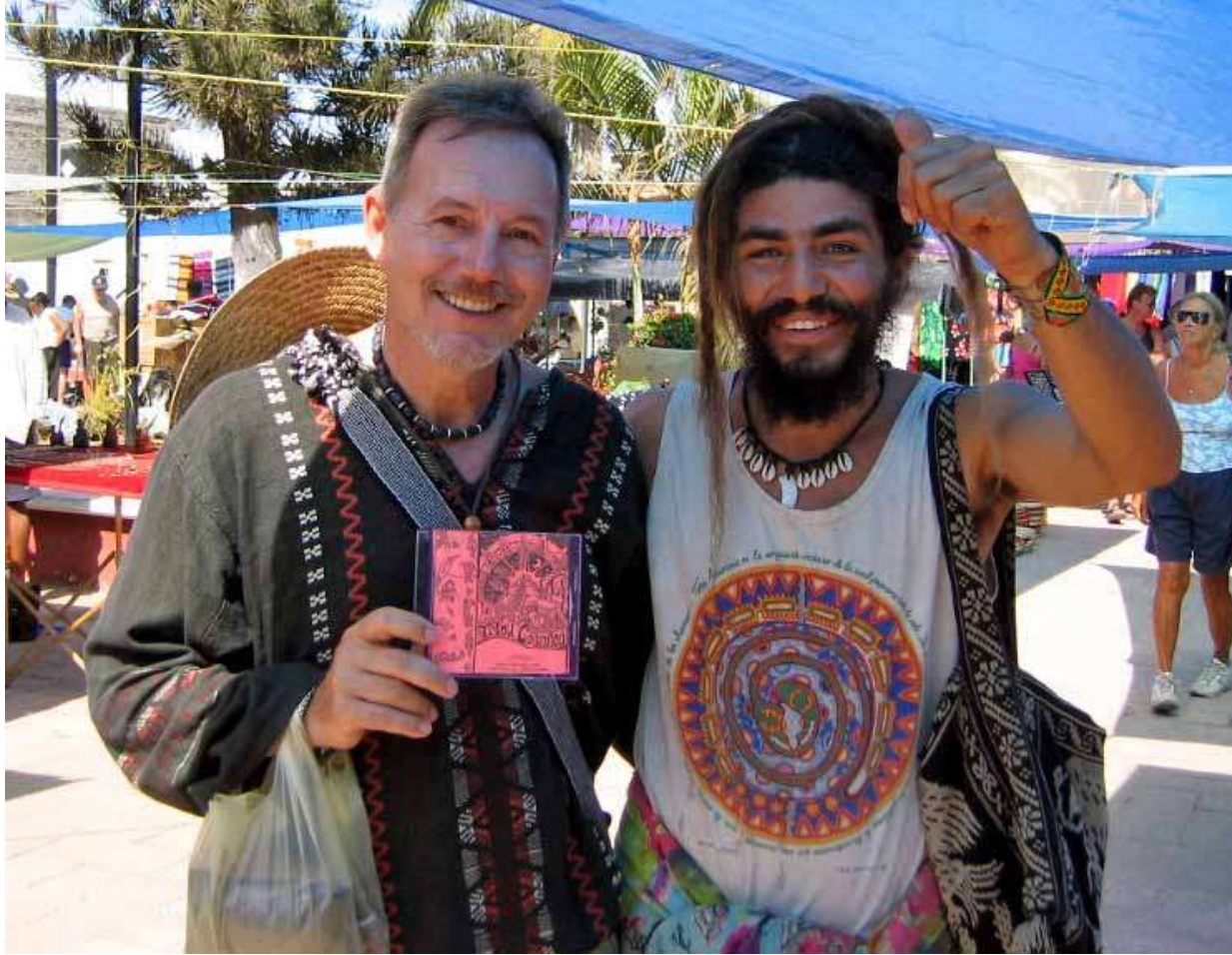
Guadalajara, Mexico

Faces of Mexico



Old Gringo & Fisherman, Guayabitos, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Alejandro and the Rasta Man, La Penita, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Alex At "La Cantina" - San Pedro De Lagunillas

Faces of Mexico



Carnceria, Las Varas, Nayarit

Faces of Mexico



Zapateria, Compostella, Nayarit



It was a difficult moment and I looked at Manuel and said, "Sometimes life is hard." With a big smile, he said, "But it's beautiful." I was struck by the power and inspiration of what Manuel had said. Life truly is beautiful. Viva Mexico!

UNEXPLAINED FLYING OBJECTS

On the way home from Ixtlan Del Rio we saw a beautiful lake surrounded by farmlands, so we took the turn-off to San Pedro De Lagunillas. I was convinced we would be able to find a nice spot near the lake where we could spend a restful night in our motor home. Following the road that circled the lake, we saw a sign for a lakeside restaurant. We followed the road until it ended in a gravel parking lot, which had a small boat launch area. It was secluded, remote, and looked peaceful. After parking the motor home I walked to the lake's edge and saw thousands of small birds flying amongst the reeds growing along the banks. I also heard the croaking of thousands of frogs. So much for a quiet night.

Later that night my father and I stepped out to gaze at the countless stars above us. As we looked south we saw the outline of the mountains that ringed the valley. We noticed what we thought was a very bright star above a southern mountain; the star suddenly dropped very low and then at a right angle quickly moved to the left. What?! Were we seeing a plane, a satellite, a helicopter, or a balloon? We watched closely as the object continued to drop, go left, up again, and then remain stationary for a while. It always seemed to return to its original place. We could not find any rational answer for what we were seeing. The swift maneuvers and perpendicular turns the object made could not be accomplished by any aircraft that we knew of.

In June 1989 I was in the Sea of Cortez and had dropped anchor in a small, shallow cove on

an island called Calita Partida. Something woke me up that night, and I went out to the cockpit to gaze at the stars. I noticed a bright glow around the boat, and leaned over to look beneath the boat. The complete underside of the boat was emanating an aquamarine translucence. It was slowly moving and eventually disappeared out toward the sea. It looked like some sort of large saucer.

As I dozed off that night in the motor home I thought I noticed a green glow settle over our vehicle. Nevertheless, it was the most peaceful night I'd had since arriving in Mexico. Was it a UFO? Was it some type of alien? That night was no different from the experience in the Sea of Cortez years earlier. There was no rational explanation for what I had seen either time.

My father and I shrugged our shoulders and went to sleep. And luckily, so did the frogs.



Lake Birds - San Pedro De Lagunillas



Cerro Grande (UFO Mountain) and Lake, San Pedro De Lagunillas



CHICKEN

While driving from San Pancho to Guayabitos I noticed that several cars in the distance were braking and swerving. I soon saw a donkey standing in the middle of the road. I slowed, breathing a sigh of relief as the donkey started walking left, heading toward the edge the road. At the same time I noticed a bus barreling down the highway from the opposite lane. The bus never slowed down. And just as it was about to hit the donkey, the animal leaped like a high jumper and cleared the bus within a hair's breath of being churned into a burrito.

Donkeys shouldn't play chicken with Mexican bus drivers.



This Mule Did Not Jump Fast Enough!

IN SEARCH OF PARADISE

My father, our friend Rafael Augustine, and I left Guayabitos for a sojourn to San Miguel De Allende. Rafael is a Slovenian who as a young man was jailed numerous times by the communist regime for trying to escape from the former Yugoslavia. He eventually did escape and migrated to Canada, which has been his base of operations for the last forty years. Raphael claims he has been semi-retired since his early twenties. What Rafael had done throughout his career was to work only long enough to finance his next adventure. He therefore never held a long-term job, but instead worked as a contract draftsman for several hundred engineering companies. He has traveled around the world three times and has been visiting Mexico since

the early 1960s. He has native fluency in Spanish and decided that he wanted to find his Shangri-La in Mexico. After months of research Rafael believed his paradise was possibly situated near a lake close to the town of Santa Maria Del Oro.

He said his goal was to buy a small home or plot of land to settle on. However, by this point we had visited over a dozen locations and I was not convinced that Raphael would buy anything.

Anyway, Rafael wanted to go to Santa Maria Del Oro because of the “climate.” Del Oro is situated at an elevation of approximately 4,500 feet, which Rafael believed provides a good all year-round temperature range. Raphael is fair skinned and worshipped the sun in his youth. His skin is now aged, spotted, and hypersensitive to the sun and heat. Consequently, mild and

pleasant weather is Rafael's criteria. He is an old tiger whose day has come and gone. Once a great dreamer and traveler, he now spends most of his days indoors, watching Mexican soap operas.

I was a little concerned about the uphill route to Santa Maria Del Oro because our motor home was thirty years old and had had overheating problems on the drive into Mexico. Once we arrived in Guayabitos I installed a radiator overflow in hopes of solving the problem. Luckily, the long and winding climb from Guayabitos toward Del Oro went smoothly. It was a clear, but slightly hazy day and the scenery along the route reminded me of California's central coast. When we arrived in Santa Maria Del Oro we followed a sign that read "Laguna." The highway led us to a large bend in the road, which opened up an

incredible view. We stopped to survey the scene and then decided to eat lunch. It was very beautiful and I was very surprised; the view reminded me of a Swiss alpine lake. The lake was several kilometers below us and was ringed by a mountain range. It reminded me of a type of lake that would be described as volcanic in origin. The mountain edges were well worn and probably several million years old.



After lunch we decided to follow the downward, spiraling road to the lake. We arrived at the lakeshore area, which had numerous palapa-type restaurants. They were all empty. We learned that the weekend crowd from Tepic or Guadalajara was the sole source of business. Part of the area surrounding the lake appeared to be farmland; I could see large agave fields. Was this Shangri-La? The area was beautiful, but it was like many lakeside retreats—away from town. How comfortable is life in semi-isolation? For some people, it's Heaven; for others, Hell.

We explored the lake, and then retraced our steps back to Santa Maria Del Oro. We saw a smoky pallor rising by the roadway as we left town. Driving nearer, we saw that it was from the town's smoldering trash—including thousands of plastic bags—all of which was littered across a

field that was being scavenged by children without shoes.

So much for Shangri-La.

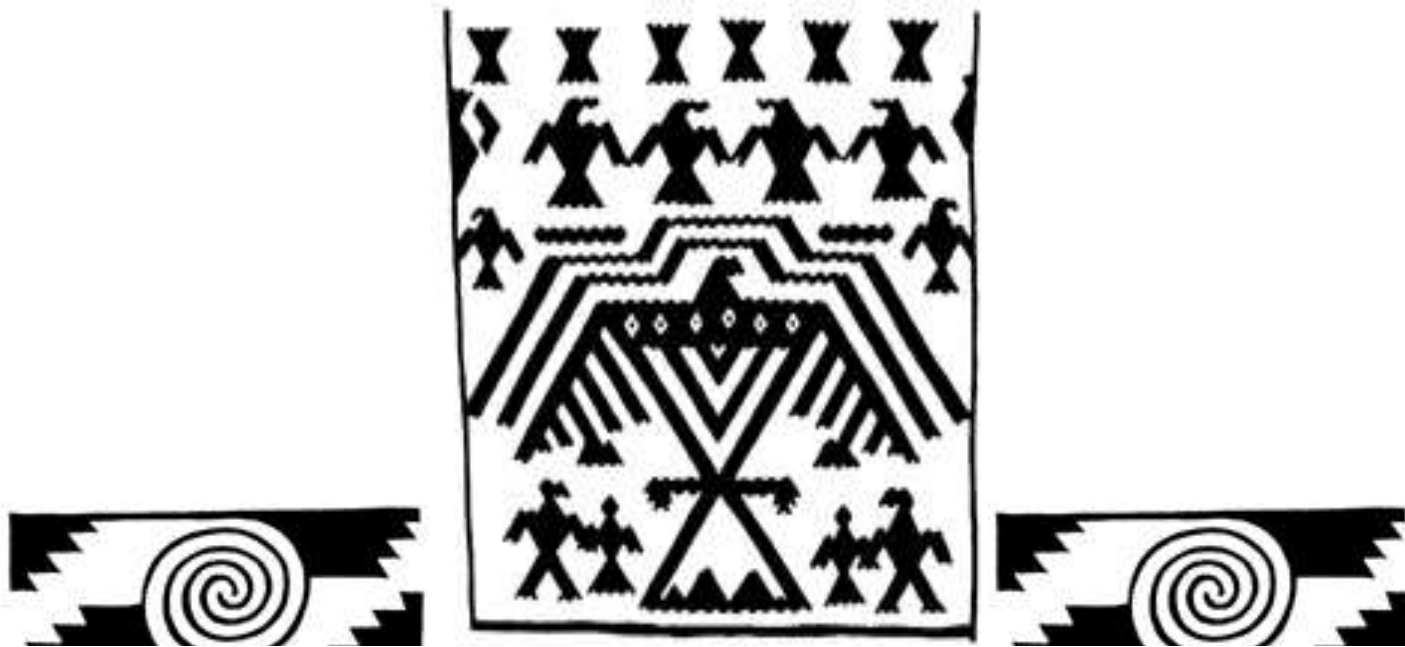


Rafael (left), Me and My Dad, Santa Maria Del Oro

In the end, Rafael found his paradise in the small village of San Pedro De Lagunillas, Nayarit, Mexico. His motto is "Simplicity."

Petroglyph Photo Log

Follow Us As We Visit Ancient Sites And Follow The Pull Of Lost Civilization



Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Petroglyph of a Face (Upside Down). The Spiral Sunburst Is The Eye, Above And To The Right Is The Nose, The Chin Is At the Connecting Spirals

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Spiral symbol, Luz Del Mundo Site, Guayabitos, Nayarit

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Spiral & Cross Symbols, Alta Vista, Nayarit

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Spiral Symbol, Luz Del Mundo Site, Guayabitos, Nayarit

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



*Large Boulder Containing 14 smooth And Hollow Areas Used for Grinding Corn,
Ancient Village Site, Zacualpan, Nayarit*

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



*Large Boulder Containing Peyote Symbol (Top) and A Spiral Symbol
Located Below The Peyote Symbol, Zacualpan, Nayarit*

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



*Ancient Manos And Metates Lying On Ground At A Site Of an Ancient Indian Village,
El Monteon, Nayarit*

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Guachimontones Pyramid, Teuchitlan, Jalisco

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



*Spiral Symbol Along Stream At Alta Vista Sacred Site,
Nayarit*

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



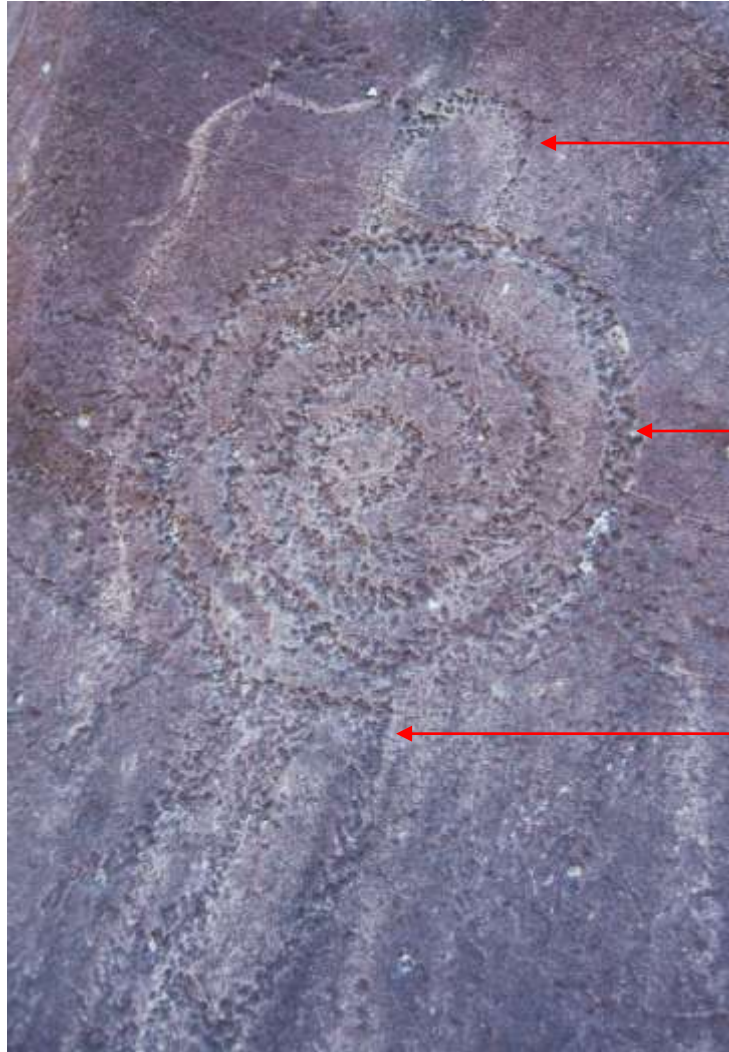
Ancient Boulder with Petroglyph Symbols Of An Alligator (Red), Spiral (Blue). Warrior (Green), Deer (Yellow), Arrow (Orange)

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Shaft Tomb, Tepic, Nayarit

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



*Petroglyph Of A Standing Warrior With A Shield, Pecked Style,
(Top - Down, Head, Shield, Legs), Alta Vista, Nayarit*

Ancient Sites & Petroglyphs of Mexico



Dad And I Visiting The Ancient Sacred Site Of Alta Vista, Nayarit

SAYING GOOD-BYE AND LIFE'S LOST

LOVES

Thursday, 17 March: My father was returning to Montreal, so we decided to spend our last day together at San Pancho. From there we planned to visit Puerto Vallarta for a cold beer and a nice dinner along the malicon, to watch the sunset over the Pacific. We would then drive to the airport where my father would check in for his late-evening flight home.

The day at San Pancho was wonderful—clear sky, bright sun, pleasant temperature, and sparkling seas. We arrived early and walked the lovely beach admiring the view and agreeing that we were lucky to be there. We then had a late breakfast at a quaint bistro. Life was felt very good at that moment.

Afterward we did some souvenir shopping: Dad bought several Mexican shawls featuring the image of Frieda Kalo. I bought one too, and a Guatemalan shirt. I don't know why I bought the shirt—I already had three. And I had a dozen shirts that I didn't wear. But I loved the colors and unique style! I guess that's called "impulse buying."

We often buy things because we want them, not because we need them. It's amazing to think how many of us buy frivolously, when in some parts of the world people are walking around in rags and starving. Overall, my countrymen should consider themselves fortunate for the opportunities that America has provided. But my observation from my time in the workforce and from watching the TV news is that today's themes are: the government owes us something,

don't take responsibility for your actions, and be quick to blame others for your problems. A doctor once told me he preferred treating patients who had endured the World War II era. He said those patients were stoic, grateful, and self-reliant. Many people today are quick to complain and to blame. The American personality had once been a force that forged ahead westward, endured hardship without much complaint, and was self-reliant and independent.

But I digress.

After buying the shirt I went to an Internet café to check my e-mail. One of the messages was from Katie, who had been my girlfriend before I started the journey. We had known each other for eighteen months. She loved me and wanted a permanent relationship. Prior to my journey I believed that if I met a lady whom I loved I would

gladly follow that path. However, with Katie I made a conscious decision to pursue my travel plans. Katie had said several times that she loved me more than I loved her. And although we ended our relationship before I left, I somehow felt she would still be there for me. As my journey in Mexico evolved, I decided to return to California in April to visit some good friends, and had asked Katie if I could spend the week with her. In her e-mail, she told me she would love for me to visit, but that she had become involved with someone else. Katie was perfectly right in her pursuit—she wanted to have a loving partner at her side and I had no right whatsoever to deny her that. But, yet I still felt a loss. Did I make a mistake leaving her? Or should we have tried to reach some sort of arrangement where I could pursue my journey and at the same time

continue our relationship? Could we have done something different? Hindsight is perfect vision and I can now see several different paths we could have taken together. Or was the truth simply that I cared deeply for Katie, but not to a point where I could offer her a lifelong commitment? I'm not sure what the answer is. Either way I felt a loss and a sense of sadness.

I remembered when I was in Vietnam some of the married men or those with girlfriends at home carried a great burden in their hearts. I recall one young infantryman blowing himself up in a bunker at Landing Zone English after receiving a letter from his girlfriend telling him that she was leaving him. When I heard the explosion I ran over to the bunker and crawled over to the machine gun port to see what had happened. As I cautiously peered in I saw a perfectly formed

kidney on the ledge and human remains plastered against the walls. I am glad that during that period I did not have a loved one to think about. In some ways I feel that being emotionally free while embarking upon an adventure keeps the mind clear. Unfortunately, that is only good for the short term as we mostly seek, want, and desire the comfort of a loving relationship with someone special with whom we can share our lives.

In addition to feeling sad about Katie I also felt sad that my father would be returning home that evening. We had traveled together and shared many experiences since January. I left home when I was seventeen and this had been the most time I had spent with my father during the previous thirty-eight years. The dream of this journey had highlighted my preparations for

retirement. And now the journey was coming to an end. I stared out at the ocean, dazed at the realization that he would be gone in a few hours and that everything would soon become a memory. If only time could stand still.

As we started to leave San Pancho to see the sunset at Puerto Vallarta the alternator gauge on the motor home showed a discharge. I thought that the problem had been repaired several days earlier, but obviously not. Because of this problem I would not be able to drive at night—the headlights would drain the battery and stall the motor home along the road. We decided to drive straight to the airport so my father could catch his plane, then I would quickly return to Guayabitos before nightfall. “No problem,” my father said. “That’s life and these are the cards we were dealt.” I, however, was angry at the motor home

and cursed the continuing old-age problems that accompany a motor home that’s been around for three decades. I wanted to spend the last few hours of the trip with my father reminiscing and telling him how much I enjoyed our time together. But that was not to be—we said our good-byes quickly in front of the airport with the engine running. I cursed my bad luck; there was much I wanted to say to my father. I wanted to tell him how much I loved him and I wanted to apologize for those foolish moments when we argued. I felt that I could have, and should have done better during those moments. And so our journey ended with an embrace along the highway in front of the airport.

I struggled for many months afterward trying to understand how I could love my father, but yet engage in painful, confusing arguments. Later, I

told my father that I believed we argued because we miscommunicated. My father agreed; English was his second language and he had a thick Hungarian accent that was hard to understand. But, it was more than that—it was more than the spoken word. I realized that our communication had a lot to do with our perceptions, experiences in life, and the way we actually processed the spoken word into a meaning or thought. We tend to think others see the world through the same prism that we do. But, often we are surprised that the interpretation of events, or even something as basic as two people speaking to each other, can result in very a different experience or meaning for each person. This realization led me to conclude that instead of recognizing and working with this dynamic, I had actually been intolerant. I thought of the events during my

lifetime and those of the world around me and wondered if much of our suffering was rooted in our inability to communicate, our intolerance, and the false assumptions we often create about each other.

I made it back to Guayabitos just before nightfall and felt very sad. That evening in our apartment, I felt very lonely. Lonely for my father, lonely for Katie, and lonely for being alone.

I knew my adventure in Mexico was ending and that it was time to go home.



Our motor home, bought on the Internet for \$1,600. It is a 1974 Dodge, Melmar model and is parked in front of our two-bedroom apartment in Guayabitos, Mexico (the apartment was rented to us by old Ramon for \$225 a month).

THE MUSIC BOX

Friday, 18 March: I woke up thinking about my father, Katie, and the troubles with the motor home. However, my first order of business was to repair the motor home. I decided to visit Allan, a Canadian living in Guayabitos who was familiar with mechanical and electrical issues. After I explained the problem Allan said he would drive over with me to an electrical mechanic named Bedo who lived in La Penita. I didn't realize it at the time, but Allan was fluent in Spanish. Bedo listened as Allan explained my problem with the motor home and agreed to take a look. After ten minutes of circuit testing Bedo identified the source of the problem as a bad battery isolator. These items are not common in the smaller towns, but Bedo thought he had a used one lying

around his shop. After two hours the motor home was running like new again. For the diagnosis, parts, and repair, Bedo charged me a total of just thirty-two dollars. He handed me the defective isolator and showed me how a charging test revealed that the isolator would not allow a charge to pass through it. I told Bedo he could keep the isolator if he promised to give it to a teenager who needed one for his boom box car stereo system. No sooner had I said that than a young teenager in a pickup truck blaring excruciating loud music pulled up to Bedo's shop. By the divine heavens, the boy asked if Bedo had an isolator for his car stereo system. Bedo, smiling broadly, handed the kid my defective isolator. I laughed all the way home.

COLLISON ON THE HIGH SEAS

Saturday, 19 March: I decided to return to San Pancho to reflect upon my journey, the departure of my father, and my relationship with Katie.

While sitting on the beach and looking out at the Pacific I watched pelican and frigate birds swooping down on a run of fish. It's an amazing sight to see a frigate bird roll into a dive from several hundred feet above as it swoops down on its prey in the water. Their wings fold back and their beaks and neck are extended as they begin to dive. They remind me of World War II news clips showing German Stuka dive-bombers going into their targets.

Watching one frigate dive into the water, I saw a small hump rise from the water at that same instant. I then noticed a whale tail. Wow, I

thought, somehow the bird had miscalculated and collided—with a whale. I never saw the frigate surface.

Later that day I found a frigate bird washed up on shore. Its broken neck hung from its shoulder like a rag doll.

I did not want to return to Guayabitos that evening because the town was rapidly filling with tourists for a three-day weekend celebrating Emilio Zapata's birthday. So, that night I slept in the camper on the beach at San Pancho. I was the only person there that night and although I felt great personal turmoil, the sound of breaking waves and the ocean lulled me to sleep.

Collision On The High Seas



San Pancho, Nayarit



FOR THE ONES WE LOVE

Several years after my mother passed away I was visiting Montreal and stayed with my sister, Helen. One of the things Helen had kept from our mother's old apartment was a small picture frame that held a photo of our mother, which our mother had kept on a nightstand by her bed. This picture frame was now on a nightstand in Helen's guest bedroom. One evening I picked up this small picture frame. Holding it in my hand and looking at the photograph of our mother, I felt the back cover of the picture frame move. Out of curiosity I turned it over and took off the backing. Hidden there was a small strip of paper with a poem titled "The Time Is Now."

To all of us who have regretted our actions toward the ones we love, and for my father and mother—to whom I dedicate these writings—I will always love you.



My Father & Mother - Circa 1947

The Time Is Now

*If you are ever going to love me,
Love me now, while I can know
The sweet and tender feelings
Which from true affection flow.*

*Love me now
While I am living
Do not wait until I am gone
And then have it chiseled in marble
Sweet words on ice cold stone.*

*If you have tender thoughts of me
Please tell me now
If you wait until I'm sleeping
Never to awaken
There will be death between us
And I won't hear you then*

*So, if you love me even a little
Let me know it while I'm living
So I can treasure it.*

My Favorite Photo



They say it is the journey and not the destination that is memorable. We thank the wonderful people of Mexico and to Mexico for opening its wonders to us. But, most of all we thank the Gods that we were granted the time to take this voyage together.

Don Alejandro (The Old Gringo) on Right & Son Of Don Alejandro on Left, Alta Vista, Nayarit

This Is Not The End





A Beginning Without An End
The Journey Continues

