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THE NUMBER ONE MAGAZINE IN CABO
Sand's End

From The Editor



Welcome to our number nine edition,
another number that we have prepared for our
readers.



As always you will find interesting stories that we
have collect from authentic sources from Los Cabos,
real people that in many cases, have been directly
involved in the history of this place that is la Baja.

We truly believe that by doing this we are in the
right way of creating a long lasting bond between the
community and the magazine.



Hopefully we can reach as many stories as we can in
our publication, contributions are what have built us
strong and is our better quality, the real strength of
Land's End Magazine is out there, with the people
that want to be a part of it.



As always, we invite you to become a part of this fine
project, we invite you to share those great moments
that were the reason because you still around. I can
tell you that you will get a great feeling when you see
you story printed in one of our next publications.



Roger L.

IN THIS ISSUE

NUMBER NINE, SPRING 2014

WHOYUNO

WELCOME TO

THE NUMBER ONE MAGAZINE IN CABO Land's End



CABO SAN LUCAS-SAN JOSE DEL CABO-TODOS SANTOS-CABO PULMO

Land's End is a free magazine dedicated to all the people who loves to read timeless stories about Baja and Mexico.

This is not a real estate or classified publishing and will never be.

Consider yourself part of this adventure... Enjoy!

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The Cover

The old lighthouse of Cabo San Lucas.

As Alan represent this time in our new cover, we can imagine all the things that la Baja has to offer to people that comes for the first time to this land, that become strong reasons to stay here, to make of Los Cabos a second home where people can think of make a new future.

If you are already in Cabo, take a glance out of your window and I will bet you that there are many things out there that you weren't aware of, because with all the newcomers that arrive to this place, there also arrives new activities, cultures and experiences.

Roger L.

Land's End

INDEX

NUMBER NINE
SPRING 2014



COVER ART AND ILLUSTRATIONS
ALAN HERMOSILLO



THE BAJA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 6
BRUNO LOJERO



THE HUNKA HUNKA BURNIN JUNK 12
DEBRA KELLY

THE TORNADO OF CABO SAN LUCAS 18
MARIA FAUSTINA WILKES RITCHIE

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCIE CASTRO WHOYUNO 22
JANE LILLICO



TAXCO THE CITY OF THE SILVER BELLY 28
RODRIGO REMOLINA



RICK AND ROD 34
ROLOJERO

The Land's End Tribune

COMMUNITY - NEWS - UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING 2014

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THANKS SO MUCH FOR YOUR TWEETS AND GREAT SUPPORT SPREADING THE NEWS ABOUT THE MAGAZINE AND CABO, AND THANK YOU TO ALL THE FOLLOWERS FOR ALL THE GREAT COMMENTS AND MESSAGES.



NEWS

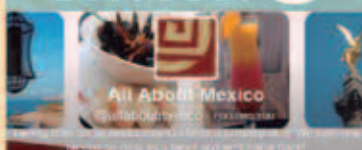
DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A

Land's End CONTRIBUTOR?



If you have an interesting story, pictures and rarities to share about Baja and Los Cabos area this place it's yours! There's thousand of people in this community and overseas awaiting for your article to read. Please contact us and we'll provide you information about how to deliver your writing and photos. Besides you'll have the incentive to appear in the credits (and a funny caricature of you of course) on the main index. Good luck and start writing!

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We invite all community to join or Facebook page, we're ready to receive your comments, questions and suggestions to make this magazine your home. Any news and upcoming events in Cabo are welcome.

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WRITE US

Be part of our community
Land's End magazine would love you to share all your stories, tellings, jokes and experiences about your life in Cabo, the Baja or wherever you are.

Also, we welcome all your feedback, critics and comments about our magazine and articles inside

Yes!, be part of the best 5 comments by email and they will appear on this section with you caricaturized or we'll make a funny sketch about your writing. GOOD LUCK!

editor@landsendmagazine.com



Peter O'Toole

BAJA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL LOS CABOS

By Bruno Lojero
bruno@landsendmagazine.com

Every November, Los Cabos, one of Mexico's most beautiful destinations, hosts a forum for dialogue and collaboration between Mexican cinema and its North American cultural commercial partners.

Baja International Film Festival, Los Cabos is an event dedicated to the shared vision of this multicultural and vibrant region that brings international audiences bold, reflective and inspiring films year after year.

From November 13th to 16th, 2013, strategic partners from Mexico, USA, Canada and friends from around the world will jointly build a platform for cultural and business exchange in the cinema field in this wonderful Baja California Sur location.

Gabriel Figueroa Film Fund honors one of the greatest filmmakers of Mexico. A cinematographer from the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema who, through his vision of landscapes, chiaroscuro and portraits, evoked an endearing Mexico whose faces marked forever the film screens of our country.

Baja International Film Festival, Los Cabos is pleased to announce the creation of this Film Fund to support projects in their early stages of development. Also, in collaboration with Labodigital, there will be a fund for films in post-production stage.

With hopes that this cooperation will be efficient and productive the Gabriel Figueroa Film Fund intends to carry out a joint effort. We enthusiastically join a collective endeavor that faces great challenges. We are confident that this support will open doors to film stories whose artistic vision will be unique and of great quality.



Scott and Sean Cross



Peter Greenaway



Daniel Gimenez Cacho

**Early flights?
Late arrivals?**



San José del Cabo

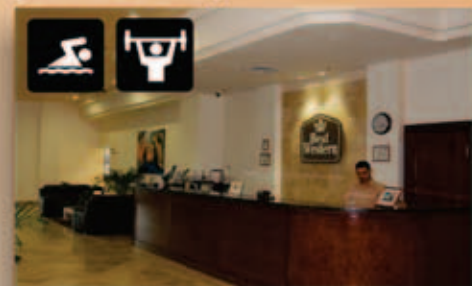
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Baja International Film Festival, Los Cabos, held in the state of Baja California Sur, announces the winner feature films and directors of its second edition, where films from Mexico, the U.S. and Canada, as well as from other countries, were screened.

During 4 days, 35 films were presented; with a total of 80 screenings, 6 world premieres, 14 premieres in Mexico and one Latin America premiere.

The audience enjoyed 8 films from the Los Cabos Competition, 6 films from the Mexico First Competition, 4 international premieres and 3 special screenings (Blackfish, Machete Kills and The Object Formerly Known as a Record), the latter with a concert with one of the emblematic Mexican rock bands, Café Tacvba, attended by 1,200 people.

Additionally, the audience was able to enjoy six galas attended by our guest artists and filmmakers. Nine films took part in the industry activities; three completed ones and six in the Work In Progress Mexico area.

The municipality of Los Cabos received more than 80 producers from the international film scene, representatives from countries such as Canada, the U.S., Chile, Colombia, Spain, France, Germany, Mexico, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Argentina and Brazil.

During these days, Gael Garcia Bernal, renowned and talented Mexican actor, was honored with a tribute to his career, including the screening of the film The Science of Sleep by Michel Gondry. Also, a celebration for the fifteenth anniversary of Mantarraya took place with the presence of Carlos Reygadas, Amat Escalante and Jaime Romandia, besides having the presence of British filmmaker, Peter Greenaway.

This second edition's closure included the screening of the film Dallas Buyers Club by Jean-Marc Vallée, and the awards ceremony in the following categories.

Los Cabos Competition section

- 1. Sarah Prefers to Run by Chloé Robichaud (Canada, 2013)
Prize: \$15,000 USD
- 2. Alphée of the Stars by Hugo Latulippe (Canada, 2012)
Special Mention

Mexico First section

- 1. The Amazing Catfish by Claudia Sainte-Luce (Mexico, 2013)
Prize: \$15,000 USD



“During 4 days, 35 films were presented; with a total of 80 screenings, 6 world premieres, 14 premieres in Mexico and one Latin America premiere.”





Ana de la Reguera

"Volando bajo" press conference



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Moviecity Mexico First section

- 1. The Life After by David Pablos (Mexico, 2013)
Prize: \$40,000 USD (Consisting in the acquisition of television rights of the film, for the Latin American and Caribbean package of channels, excluding Brazil)

Work In Progress Mexico

- 1. El Comienzo del Tiempo by Bernardo Arellano
Produced by April Shannon
Production company: Agrupacion Caramelo Cinematografica
Prize: \$10,000 USD
- 2. Los Bañistas by Max Zunino
Produced by Gloria Carrasco, Max Zunino and Sofia Espinosa
Production companies: Cornamusa and Peliculas Avestruz
Special Mention

Work In Progress Splendor Omnia Mantarraya

- 1. El Regreso del Muerto by Gustavo Gamou
Produced by Alejandro Duran and Elisa Miller
Production company: CCC
Prize: \$25,000 USD

Gabriel Figueroa Fund Award– Film in development stage

- 1. Epitafio by Yuleine Olaizola
Produced by Ruben Imaz
- 2. Operacion Baby by Jose Luis Valle
Produced by Jose Luis Valle
- 3. Irekani by Gabriel Mariño
Produced by Tania Zarak
- 4. Semana Santa by Alejandra Marquez
Produced by Nicolas Celis and Jim Stark
- 5. Lisboa by Pablo Delgado Sanchez
Produced by Guillermo Ortiz
- 6. La Raya by Yolanda Cruz
Produced by Carlos Garza
- 7. La Tempestad by Tatiana Huezo
Produced by Nicolas Celis and Jim Stark
Prize: \$5,000 USD

Gabriel Figueroa Fund Award – Film in post-production stage

- 1. El Comienzo del Tiempo by Bernardo Arellano
Produced by April Shannon
- 2. Eden de Elise Du Rant
Produced by Leandro Cordova
Prize: \$51,620 USD in post-production services for each film, in alliance with Labo Digital.

BajaFilmFest-DocsForum Award

- 1. La Plaza de la Soledad by Martha Sosa and Maya Goded

Casete Award

- 1. The Amazing Catfish by Claudia Sainte-Luce
- 2. LuTo by Katina Medina Mora
- 3. Bering. Balance and Resistance by Lourdes Grobet
Prize: \$6,500 USD in encoding and/or post-production to upload material in at least two platforms, Google Play and iTunes.

Bengala-UANL Award

- 1. Fernando Frías
Prize: \$3,850 USD

Baja International Film Festival, Los Cabos ends in one of the most beautiful places in our country: Los Cabos. We hope to make this an annual date, a friendly and useful meeting with the most important members of the national and international film industry.



La vida despues.

The magazine at the event with Jai Padilla



Cafe Tacuba at the BIFF 2013.

The desire to share with their fans the creative process of recording her latest album led to the Mexican band Cafe Tacuba filming his second documentary called “El Objeto antes llamado Disco”, the world premiere took place under the Baja International Film Festival .

The film, shot in the cities of Buenos Aires , Santiago de Chile , Los Angeles and Mexico City , under the direction of Gregory Allen, captures the musical material in the presence of friends and fans.

This is not a live album , but the invitation made by the group , after careful selection of fans, family and friends , with the intention of transmitting the same power generated at concerts.

In the film you can see how the band formed by Ruben Albarran , Emmanuel del Real (Meme), José Alfredo Rangel (Joselo) and Enrique Rangel (Quique) , composed themes and works in his arrangements beside her producer Gustavo Santaolalla .

The album “The object formerly disk “ is the seventh studio music training , which was released in October 2012 and includes 11 songs , among them “ On this side of the road “ , “ Vultures “ , “ Olita of seas “ ,” seeking “and” Volcano “ , among others. -BL.



Cafe Tacuba

The concert after the premiere





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THE HUNKA HUNKA BURNING JUNK

By Debra Kelly
cabokellymac@yahoo.com

The lonely brown station wagon was parked along the main street beside a small Zapateria. The car had a \$ sign neatly painted in white peeking out the back window. It had that 'freshly cleaned' look even with the sand blasted side panels. The store was overflowing with neatly aligned shoes, on narrow shelves lining all four walls reaching the ceiling. Remarkably, there was cellophane wrapped tightly around every single shoe, and only the left shoe was displayed. I did wonder why these shoes had coverings yet the local grocery store didn't bother to wrap their mounds of unrefrigerated meat?

The loud voices from a Spanish soap opera escaped the doors and a young man sat watching a portable TV with rabbit ears. He didn't offer assistance when I walked in. The miniature size of this store was impressive housing so many shoes. In my best Spanish I said, "Hola." He returned the gesture with a huge smile. I pointed to the car parked outside his window - a mere four feet from where we stood. I traced my finger in the air to outline a dollar sign and a question mark. He wrote the price, 2200, on a small scrap of paper. I quickly calculated the price divided by three (the exchange rate of that summer day in 1993) and came up with \$700.00 usd. Finally, a car I could afford and way less than my original budget.

Having just moved to town with three kids in tow, I soon discovered there were no used car lots. Cabo is a small fishing village without the need for

used car lots. Boats, however, were everywhere. In our search for a car, we did find a large boat yard with all different sizes of boats in various stages of repair. A boat cemetery, with faded hulls and bleached out names like 'El Dorado,' 'Gone Fishin' & 'Play Me.'

We quickly realized we had to chase down cars that had white '\$' signs painted in the back windows. This made it easy to decide what to chase and what not to chase by looking at the condition of the car. My budget was limited, and expectations of what \$2000 US dollars could buy, was soon in the gutter. In the meanwhile I had borrowed a friends Pinto (you remember ... the car that could explode for no reason) we affectionately called the Yellow Banana.

I only had to get the oil changed as a small token payment for being allowed to use it. There was one stoplight in town (when it worked) all dirt roads had potholes the size of craters, stop signs - that no one obeyed - and roaming packs of dogs everywhere. If we didn't find a car soon and bottomed out the Pinto, I'd own the Yellow Banana!



It took some difficulty finding the oil and lube place which conveniently doubled as a car wash. Looking around this little establishment you could see how enterprising they were - they sold sodas from a small cooler and a small stack of ham sandwiches roasting to salmonella in the hot sun. Full service. I couldn't speak a word of Spanish so I pointed to an oil spot on the dirt and hit the hood of the car several times and the guy seemed to know exactly what I wanted. While the kids and I waited, a car drove up with a large white \$ sign painted in the window. Slowly I picked my wilted body up from the only sliver of shade to see about this car for sale. Shade was precious and rare and the kids sat cooed up to share the relief. I couldn't believe the stamina these young Mexican men had to endure the sun's rays nonstop all day without much rest.

"NO Mom, not THAT car!" the kids yelled in unison. True, it did look like a wrecker's salvage. A large beast of steel, four door, 70's old and rusted through so badly you could not tell what color it had ever been. The tires looked new enough though. A Mexican blanket covered most of the foam spilling out of the front the back seat. Even so, I was desperate to be done with the Yellow Banana.

The young girl understood my 'caro venta,' while pointing to the painted \$ sign in the window. She wrote 3000 on a piece of paper. Quickly I figured out the exchange rate, three to one, and was excited at the price only being \$1000 usd - half my car budget. I decided to take it for a spin to check how the engine sounded - as if I'd really know whether it was running well. After settling in behind the wheel, trying hard to not breath in the foul musty smell, I pointed to the ignition area asking for the key by motioning twisting my wrist back and forth. The girl, not much older than my daughter Toni, aged 12, said, "Nada." It didn't have a key. She reached over my shoulder and turned the silver ignition piece and the car started. Amazing really.

Could this be a stolen car? Even without the key I figured they wouldn't have to worry about it ever being stolen again. I didn't bother with the test drive, thanked her and went back to our little piece of shade to wait while the Pinto finished its oil change. The shade barely gave relief from the extreme heat and we sat waiting for what seemed forever, in silence. The heat seems to take away your words.

Back to the brown wagon story ... Mr. Zapeteria dug the key out of his pant pocket and we walked out to the car. He was talking quickly in Spanish, likely giving me the reasons to buy his car. The wagon was only missing a few things ... a radio, rearview mirror, the speedometer and back door handles. Heck, it was clean and sported brand new diamond studded ceiling upholstery. At this point I was desperate to return the Yellow Banana before some chunk of money was needed to repair it.

He opened all four manual crank windows hoping some air would take the heat out. Sitting comfortably in the drivers seat I started the car on the first turn of the key - this was a good sign of a well-maintained engine. After driving around the block I could hardly contain my excitement to finally find a car. I wouldn't even try to bargain him down - not one peso. "Si," I said and dug around in my purse for some money to leave as a deposit. Borrowing his pen, I circled the 2200 on his scrap of paper. "Two thousand US dollars," He said in nearly perfect English, stressing the US dollar part. I tried to explain that I thought it was 2200 pesos and got nowhere fast. It had keys, a cloth interior, the engine started right away and we could live without a radio and speedometer. I did wish it had air conditioning! The car seats were fabric so we wouldn't get leg burns from the sun scalded vinyl seats like the Yellow Banana. I liked it. One odd thing stood out though - it had California plates and a Mexican registration. Somehow I knew this sticky little detail was to be a problem sooner or later. Absolute frustration was the deciding factor to buy this car right then and there from a nice smiling shoe salesman for a about \$1500.00 OVER asking price. His lucky day!

The police station turned out to be a full service institution - register your car, buy license plates and driver licenses, pay fines, stay over night, etc... Yes, just being inside a police station intimidated me. The movies do not even come close to imitating the real look and feel of a Mexican police station with the jail cells in plain sight. The walls have years of filth covering peeling plaster, a long counter of smooth cement with bullet hole chips (no kidding). An old-fashioned manual typewriter sat on the counter ready to seal your fate, and two real live cops holstering guns, standing behind the counter. People lined up to do their business including me.

When my turn finally came, handing the documents to the officer, I explained what I could about needing to register a car and get new license plates. The officer led me outside to check over the car and match the documents, which were a bunch of crumpled worn papers with official stamps all over them. He walked around the car twice studying it carefully. Finally, he read the documents over several times then cracked a smile pointing to the license plates saying, "Nada Placas en Cabo." He didn't comment at all about the California plates and Mexican papers which obviously didn't match each other. I kind of understood his Spanish saying there were no Cabo license plates available and to come back later. I wondered whose California plates I had but he didn't seem to care. I left the police station feeling like I really accomplished something - it only cost \$10.00 usd to transfer title into my name. I couldn't contain my excitement to get home and show the kids our new car. They instantly HATED it even after I pointed out the seats were fabric and in great shape!

I knew it was very important to get a mechanical inspection before we ventured north to La Paz, the little city a two hours drive, through the hellish desert heat along a narrow dangerous highway. My luck was getting better and the local mechanic was on the dirt bi-pass road. It was a little difficult to find the mechanic's but it soon gave itself away with the many junkyard car parts haphazardly displayed around the dirt yard. Oil cans and other types of trash piled atop each other with a small tin roof overhead for a brief reprieve from the sun. He did have a big hole dug into the ground, I guessed for oil changes, half filled with water from the last rain. His scrawny horse was tethered to the small cement abode with a narrow door and tiny window opening. We couldn't really communicate with each other but he understood I needed a full inspection of the car, checking all the gadgets and fluids. He wrote 70 in big numbers, I divided by three and calculated \$23 US dollars - fair for a full inspection.

Later that day I made my way back to his little repair shop and it looked like the car had not even moved from where I had originally parked it. He repeated, 'Manana' several times. I knew this meant the next day or something like 'just not today.' Something simple like having a car checked turned into the chore of a lifetime! Heck, he could have offered me his horse.

Three days of pestering, he was finally finished proudly saying, "Perfecto." What a relief to know that I could buy a decent car. The only problem was he made me pay \$70.00 usd - I knew as I was paying him that I was being royally taken, yet again.

The long list of school items could only be purchased in La Paz. "Do not drive at night," was the standard warning given when I asked around for directions. The plan was to drive up and spend one night there, shop for school clothes and maybe even take in some sights. We were excited to go to a city with a real shopping center and a movie theatre, even a Chinese restaurant. The car was packed light, a change of clothes and a small cooler with drinks and sandwiches. A picnic along one of the Pacific's endless beaches sounded like fun, even to me. The gas station attendant washed the windows, filled us up and off we went on our first Baja driving adventure.

It is interesting to note that September is, in fact, peak hurricane season and I was the only person in Cabo who did not know this. (This was the summer of 1993 – no google!) I was smart enough to think through a few details for driving through the desert in the extreme heat was worthy of some safety considerations, i.e. bring water.

The drive was slow and tedious, curving along a narrow two-lane highway and hilly with terrible blind spots. We didn't see anyone coming or going from either direction for many miles. The craggy mountainside peaks outlined the horizon, appearing like sleeping giants lying atop one another. Cactus forests dotted every square mile as far as we could see and the sandy coastline was thumping with gigantic waves. At times we could feel the car shake! All four windows were rolled down as far as possible and the hot air flowing throughout the wagon did nothing to cool us down.

A few skinny cows along with a few goats and donkeys added to the hazards of driving. Groups of them would graze what little vegetation sprouted through the tar and sand alongside the highway. The boys, aged 10 and 5, were obviously feeling the heat and had stopped their generally noisy wrestling matches. Seeing herds of bony cows inspired a conversation around good nutrition. The first dead animal we saw, and smelled, alongside the road grossed us all out. With every dead sighting we sang, "EWWW, Grosssss, Stinkyyy," louder and in harmony each time we'd drove by a carcass. To pass the time along, we made up a great new game of 'who can spot the dead animal first.' We quickly learned the first clue for spotting something dead on the highway ahead was the kettle of circling vultures! Big and black and fat, these amazing birds loved dinnertime in the desert with so many choices on the menu. Good family fun!

The ominous black clouds hovered the horizon and over the mountains not too far off in the distance. So dark and heavy, I had never seen such a sky before. These clouds were moving quickly towards us at the same time we were driving right into them. What should I be more afraid of - the narrow roads, highway grazing animals, banditos (Too much TV) or the hostile weather front now closing in fast?

"Mom, the car's on fire!" Toni and her brothers squealed in unison. Smoke spilled through the vents so quickly we were choking on it. Thank God I was on a flat piece of highway just at this moment and pulled over as far as possible without sinking our new car into the soft sand. "Everybody out of the car and grab what you can from the back," I commanded. Out I jumped while searching for the hood latch somewhere near the break pedal. The kids scurried out with the cooler and backpacks, making their way as far from the car as possible. I found the hood latch but was so scared to open the hood thinking the whole car might explode any second.

The smoke was squeezing through the outline of the hood and I could hear the flames licking the roof. I fumbled for the hood latch, finally opened the hood only to find it was missing the hinge to hold it upright so it fell backwards onto the window. I ran like hell to stand with the kids. One second later the sky opened up and the heavens gushed a glorious rainfall. The rain was quick and powerful lasting less than 5 minutes. We were soaked to the bone, a wonderful relief from the heat. We were in luck! The rain put the fire out.

The roads were abandoned in either direction. Toni whispered, "What now Mom?"

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A large 18-wheeler transport truck was approaching from the direction we just came from. I tentatively reached my arm out hoping he would stop. He inched his load slowly beside the car, stopped and rolled down his window. He spoke quickly in Spanish. Of course I couldn't make out one word. In loud English I yelled, "Can You Take Us To A Town?" He pointed at his cab, normally fit for two, and four heads popped up. I think he said he would send help and roared off towards La Paz. I had no intention of waiting around for banditos to drive by, with three kids, on a deserted highway.

"It'll be okay, another ride will soon come along." I kept repeating hoping the kids would get some comfort from this quiet declaration. A drizzle of rain started up which offered us a nice reprieve from the dead air. The steam rose up from the pavement giving the illusion ghost pirates were raising from the dead. (Yes, I watch too many movies)

"ound our eyes and any other place on our bodies that was damp. Our clothes were drying quickly in the intense heat, yet damned uncomfortable."

"Here comes a car!" Michael screamed and pointed. A taxi slowed down carefully stopping beside us. The driver leaned over his front seat passenger and spoke in rapid short spurts of Spanish which went nowhere in my brain. Getting out of his car, he quickly ushered us into his already full car. The other four passengers, an elderly couple with two young grandkids moved over, allowing us to squeeze in the back seat. The family welcomed us with warm bright smiles. A few miles later, the rain hit the windshield with a force so violent it shifted the overweight car to cross over the centerline. No need to worry about oncoming traffic because no one was driving in either direction.

Our nice driver didn't slow down a wink during this insane rain and drove at a speed that should have hydroplaned us right into the ditch. Rivers were quickly forming, moving swiftly across the highway. Surviving being stranded in the desert, a burning car, a speeding taxi parting the thunderous rain waters now tidal waves on the windshield, in a car made for four, now burdened with eight passengers, in a foreign country, seemed only natural to wonder if we would be killed. If not a death by car crash, maybe the driver would sell the kids and me to some underground sex-slave business. Did I already say I watch too many movies?

Unbelievably, there was no rain at all in the next town over. Todos Santos is an old village, housing a few cantinas and one lonely gas station. The hurricane of 1940 something wiped out their livelihood of sugar cane and the 60's brought some traveling flower children that still live here selling sandals made from old tires and beaded headbands. The taxi driver turned off the highway onto a sandy road and seemed to know where he was going. He stopped at an unpainted cinder block house with a large yard and a line of laundry flipping around in the small tornado dust balls kicked up from the gang of small children running around kicking a ball. A generously large woman in an apron appeared from the open doorway. Our driver spoke to her at length while pointing at us. We all crawled out from the taxi and found a large shade tree to stand under.

I handed our driver some money and whispered, "Gracias." Big Mama yelled at her oldest, maybe around twelve years old, in a babble of Spanish and he ran off as fast as he could down the dirt street. Toni stood motionless and had run out of words somewhere back at 'What now?' Robyn, my stocky little athlete who took to the ocean like he was born to its grandness, stood shell-shocked with his hair dried stuck to his head from the rainwater. Michael, my baby, missing his front teeth, looking so vulnerable and so in need of a familiar moment, curled himself around my leg.

Standing under the tree, millions of tiny fleas and flies swirled around our eyes and any other place on our bodies that was damp. Our clothes were drying quickly in the intense heat, yet damned uncomfortable. A rough looking character, unshaven with a mass of matted hair, stumbled towards us.



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He rattled off Spanish sentences, yelling at the circle of children in the dust filled yard. The skinny kid who ran for the Dad now carried a large chain over his shoulder to a severely dented old pick-up truck. Our new mechanic guided the kids and I over to a mini-van, wildly painted in brightly colored faces. He opened the door, handed me the keys and motioned for me to follow him. His son was sitting in the pick-up ready to go. This mini-van, a disguised hippie vehicle from another time, must have an amazing history. I had no way to ask him where this van came from or who it belonged to.

The flies followed us into the hippie van, which was missing all the passenger seats except the front one. Toni sat in front while the boys sat in the back on the floor without even so much as a minor fuss letting Toni sit up front. We followed the old pick-up, backtracking along the highway to our car.

Remarkably, the roads were now completely impassable. The rain was still pounding down just a few miles from the dry dusty town we just left. Rivers flowed naturally cutting arroyos from the mountains to the ocean crossing the only pathway back to our two thousand dollar new car. We sat behind the pick-up waiting for a sign of what to do next. There were several cars behind us now waiting for the rain and the river to calm down enough to pass through. I tried to make some light conversation with the kids but got nothing in return. The chorus of hand slapping sounds, to rid ourselves of the micro fly attacks, was the only noise coming from any of us.

The mechanic motioned for me to stay put and NOT to drive through the arroyo, now a raging river. What devotion this man has to his profession as he was taking a huge risk. We watched carefully to see if the pick-up would make it across. The rushing water rose over the top of his wheel wells (I held my breath) yet he easily made it across the other side of the 40-foot river. Other cars passed around our fancy-faced van and crept their way across the river in a game of 'follow the leader.'

Time passed painfully slow as I scanned the distant horizon hoping to see my new favorite mechanic return. How many other rivers had formed between here and our broken down car? Finally, I saw a truck pulling a car behind him. A rush of relief swept over me to see it still had tires.

Roughly translated, my car had no water in the radiator and gaskets & other such stuff were burned out. Furious, I couldn't wait to get back to the mechanic, whom I paid \$70 US dollars to check my car out, and get my money back. My new mechanic wrote a phone number and a date to call him back in two weeks. Two weeks could be two months for all I knew. He took no money for his efforts. The fact that he had a phone was remarkable since practically no one in Cabo had one. There are two phone centers in Cabo, each one the size of a bathroom, with little stalls for privacy. I hadn't even called anyone back home in Edmonton yet to tell how wonderful we all were. What fun paradise is!

The mechanic was nice enough to drive us to the bus station. The fish taco stand that doubled as the bus station was just closing for the day. At least the bus ticket lady was there to take our money for the ride back to Cabo. Only two other people waited for the bus. I wanted to ask them which way they were going and did anyone know what time the bus would arrive but didn't know any Spanish. We found a shady spot and waited it out. Our little Styrofoam cooler, we had lugged around this far, had drinks and sandwiches that came in handy. Without an appetite, we nibbled on a few sandwiches and drank our sodas & waters. Waiting, sitting and standing and changing body positions, moving every time the sun shifted the shade location, we swatted flies until darkness arrived. I wondered if we would have to sleep here.

The big bus looked and sounded like the Greyhounds back home. Jerking and squealing to a stop, I counted fifteen people getting off. I quickly herded my crew to the open doorway and pushed Toni to go up the steps first. The driver stood up and motioned that there was no room for us on the bus. My day was not going to end with us sleeping at a closed fish taco stand. I pretended I didn't understand him and pushed us through to the top of the steps, challenging him to do something about it. After all, fifteen people had just gotten off the bus – the driver took our tickets. Sure enough, I could see the bus was absolutely full to capacity, each face looking like the other, saying nothing. Bone weary, I did not care if we had to stand all the way back to Cabo.

Two young men stood up and motioned for the kids and I to take their two seats. Tears stung my eyes as I said, 'Gracias,' overwhelmed at their kindness. The four of us easily fit on the two seats, our cooler and backpacks on the floor in front of us. I wondered if the rain was still out there, pounding down in the darkness, making the roads into rivers. Sure enough, the rain was fearless and splashed through the permanently stuck open window, directly beside by my face.

We walked home from the bus station to our little condo only five blocks away. Amazingly, Cabo was dry as a bone. The stars shining, leaving me to wonder how on earth it could have stormed in the exact place our car just so happened to start on fire. I tucked and kissed Toni in the bed beside mine, Michael in the big bed in the boy's room, and Robyn on the sofa. Robyn had not slept in a bedroom since our Cabo adventure started one month earlier after the 'scorpion on the ceiling' episode.

The mechanic was true to his word and only a few weeks later the kids and I hitched a ride to Todos Santos to pick up the 'hunka hunka burnin junk!' -DK.

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The oldest residents of Los Cabos can remember that the only tornado ever seen here, happened nearly 42 years ago in 1972. The meteor showed up on October 6th, between 2:30-3:00 P.M.

I can remember the time because I used to work as a teacher at the elementary school Ildefonso Green, and back then the regular class schedule was from 8:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. and again from 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

It was a day like any other, maybe at some point the intensity of the sun would decrease because it was cloudy. There was this nice cold variation was not unusual. All of the teachers were gathered at the school patio and the kids were having fun on their games when suddenly we heard them yelling:

- Look! There's a dust devil at Byu'La Cuchilla!

-No, no, it's at Mesa Colorada!

It started around that direction, but we didn't really give it much importance then, I mean, a dust devil was something really common for us given the dry dusty land and the peculiar wind we have here at Cabo. However, we kept an eye on it, and when it was by the Juarez neighborhood, it gained strength on the muddy ground and its diameter expanded, but still nothing to panic.

However, within minutes, it wasn't just panic, it was real terror when we finally understood that it was a serious tornado that only kept growing. We had no doubt that now it was a serious thing, as it began to lift diverse objects from the ground that immediately revolved inside it, actually the buzz we could hear was growing stronger, very close, at the neighborhood 'La Cruz'.

With such risk near us and with so many kids under our responsibility that ignored what a real danger was that phenomenon they were watching, we rang the bell and ordered them to get inside as the now tornado was heading straight for the school.

We took the necessary precautions; we told the kids what they had to do, so when we said -Everybody face down! - they quickly obeyed and got under their desks while holding hands with each other. We could only hear the buzz of the wind outside. God, it was so scary! What a huge responsibility to protect all those kids!



From the book:
"El San Lucas que yo conocí" by
Maria Faustina Wilkes Ritchie

The tornado was getting louder and louder so I couldn't just stay there, I dared to sneak out and open the door to see if it was coming or not. As I walked out, other teachers did the same thing; thank God it had changed its direction. We lost sight of it when it was by Zaragoza and 20 de Noviembre streets. It finally hit the Chamber of commerce and the neighboring houses. It changed its course at just two blocks away from the school, what a relief!

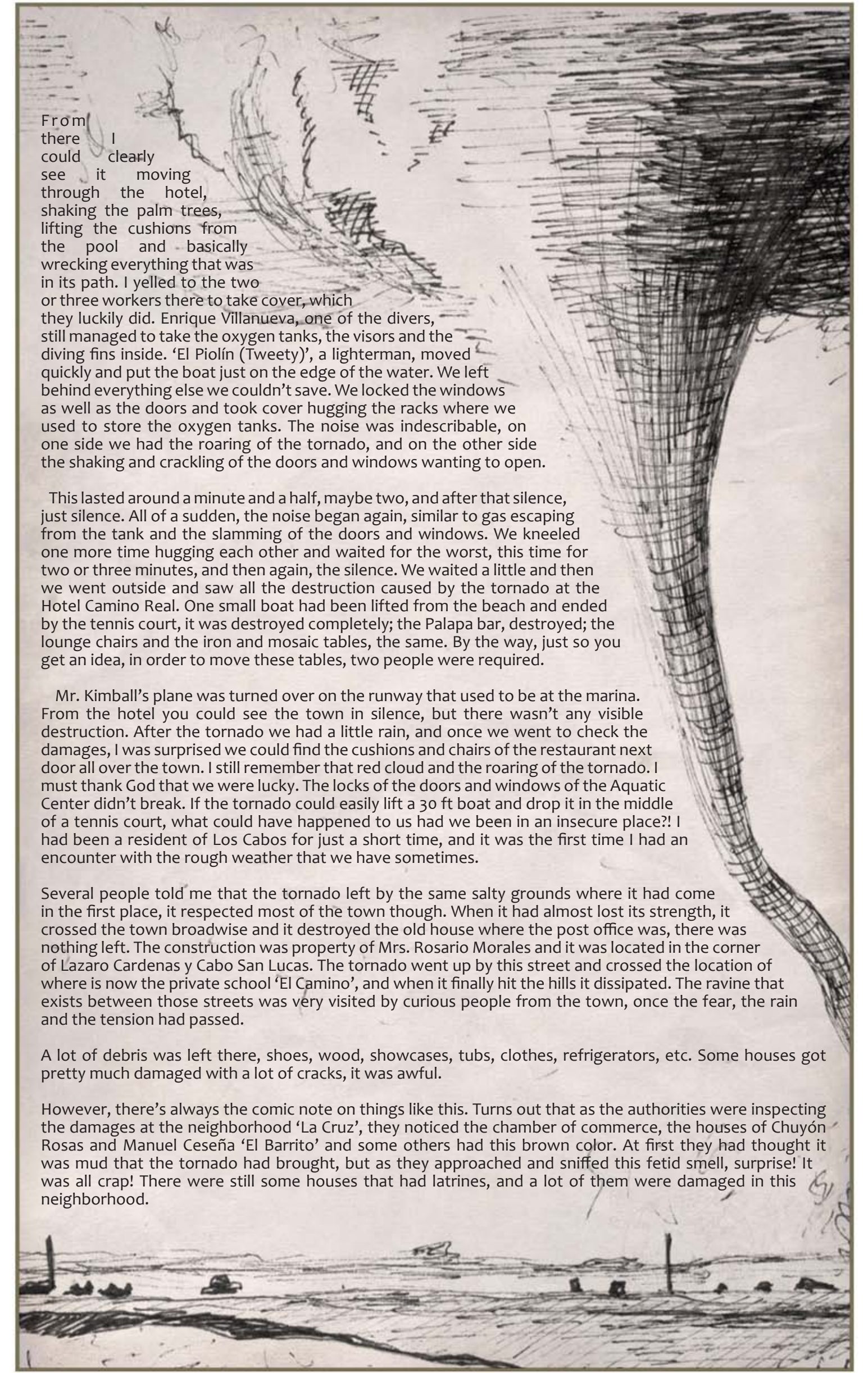
By then several cars and pickup trucks from the hotels Hacienda and Finisterra came in our help. The kids had behaved bravely. When we were in class again and the rumor had spread by the town, all of the moms came to check on their kids with horror in their faces for what could have happened. This is where the courage of the kids came to an end, because when they learned about the potential tragedy they had been through, all of them at

once started crying motivated by their mothers who were already crying as well.

The tornado continued its path across the salty grounds and reached the fish packing plant, by the beach. The old sailors said that in case the tornado had reached the water, it would have been a disaster as it could have turned into a waterspout and flooded the town. Luckily, that finally didn't happen.

I didn't see the very moment when it reached the beach but Mr. Ricardo Araoz who saw it all, told me:

It must have been around 3:00 P.M., I can't tell you the exact time, but it was around that time as we all were at the kitchen area of the Hotel Camino Real. It was on October 6th of 1972, and it's around the time of the year where the days on this paradise are the most beautiful because it's not as hot as in previous months and not as cold as in the months to come. All of a sudden we saw this cloud of red dust. The red cloud began to rise from the ground and in the middle of it a dust devil began to form. At that point it wasn't anything we hadn't seen before, although, instead of dissipating as usual, it began to grow both in height and width. We were just joking about it when we saw that a cardboard shack wasn't there anymore and the cardboard sheets and several objects were spinning inside the 'dust devil'. Mr. Beikovsky, the general manager of the nearby hotel, ran towards us and told us to take cover inside, which we did quickly and locked doors and windows because it was a higher risk to leave them open. Suddenly I remembered that the Aquatic Center (that I was in charge of) was still open, so I ran there and managed to get there first than the tornado.



From there I could clearly see it moving through the hotel, shaking the palm trees, lifting the cushions from the pool and basically wrecking everything that was in its path. I yelled to the two or three workers there to take cover, which they luckily did. Enrique Villanueva, one of the divers, still managed to take the oxygen tanks, the visors and the diving fins inside. 'El Piolín (Tweety)', a lighterman, moved quickly and put the boat just on the edge of the water. We left behind everything else we couldn't save. We locked the windows as well as the doors and took cover hugging the racks where we used to store the oxygen tanks. The noise was indescribable, on one side we had the roaring of the tornado, and on the other side the shaking and crackling of the doors and windows wanting to open.

This lasted around a minute and a half, maybe two, and after that silence, just silence. All of a sudden, the noise began again, similar to gas escaping from the tank and the slamming of the doors and windows. We kneeled one more time hugging each other and waited for the worst, this time for two or three minutes, and then again, the silence. We waited a little and then we went outside and saw all the destruction caused by the tornado at the Hotel Camino Real. One small boat had been lifted from the beach and ended by the tennis court, it was destroyed completely; the Palapa bar, destroyed; the lounge chairs and the iron and mosaic tables, the same. By the way, just so you get an idea, in order to move these tables, two people were required.

Mr. Kimball's plane was turned over on the runway that used to be at the marina. From the hotel you could see the town in silence, but there wasn't any visible destruction. After the tornado we had a little rain, and once we went to check the damages, I was surprised we could find the cushions and chairs of the restaurant next door all over the town. I still remember that red cloud and the roaring of the tornado. I must thank God that we were lucky. The locks of the doors and windows of the Aquatic Center didn't break. If the tornado could easily lift a 30 ft boat and drop it in the middle of a tennis court, what could have happened to us had we been in an insecure place?! I had been a resident of Los Cabos for just a short time, and it was the first time I had an encounter with the rough weather that we have sometimes.

Several people told me that the tornado left by the same salty grounds where it had come in the first place, it respected most of the town though. When it had almost lost its strength, it crossed the town broadwise and it destroyed the old house where the post office was, there was nothing left. The construction was property of Mrs. Rosario Morales and it was located in the corner of Lazaro Cardenas y Cabo San Lucas. The tornado went up by this street and crossed the location of where is now the private school 'El Camino', and when it finally hit the hills it dissipated. The ravine that exists between those streets was very visited by curious people from the town, once the fear, the rain and the tension had passed.

A lot of debris was left there, shoes, wood, showcases, tubs, clothes, refrigerators, etc. Some houses got pretty much damaged with a lot of cracks, it was awful.

However, there's always the comic note on things like this. Turns out that as the authorities were inspecting the damages at the neighborhood 'La Cruz', they noticed the chamber of commerce, the houses of Chuyón Rosas and Manuel Ceseña 'El Barrito' and some others had this brown color. At first they had thought it was mud that the tornado had brought, but as they approached and sniffed this fetid smell, surprise! It was all crap! There were still some houses that had latrines, and a lot of them were damaged in this neighborhood.

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At the end, there was this unexpected cold rain, which ended nearly as soon as it started. There was just broken stuff, fears and a lot of these anecdotes.

The Candilazo – Red Sunset

It’s a natural phenomenon that happens from time to time in the sky where the colors red, orange and pink are predominant during the afternoon. Some would think it’s a beautiful sunset, but no, it’s not, that’s a different spectacle.

“Oren Cota Collins, told me once about one of those ‘candilazos’ he saw during the 1939 flood. -The sky turned into a thousand different colors to later change to a deep black.”

When it happened – I haven’t seen it again- several friends and I remembered Miss Ciria Collins, a well known lady in our town. She was a tall well mannered lady who always dressed impeccably; she always had something to do or something to talk about. One day that such phenomenon happened, she ran out of her house and you could see the fear in her face, going from house to house telling everybody to come out to see the yellow ‘candilazo’, asking questions like how long will it last? How strong are the colors? What shade of colors are those? Will it bring rain? Storms? Diseases? That palette of colors could be either a gift from the sky during the afternoons or something to fear. They say they saw something like that during the waterspout of 1914 that hit San José del Cabo. Same thing happened with the hurricane that hit most of the south of Baja in 1918.

Oren Cota Collins, told me once about one of those ‘candilazos’ he saw during the 1939 flood. -The sky turned into a thousand different colors to later change to a deep black. We were herding the cows and goaths when this happened and we were really scared. We were just kids back then-.

Some others can assure that when a terrible hurricane affected Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo in 1958, the same phenomenon could be observed, and that during the hurricane, another natural phenomenon known as the ‘St. Elmo’s Fire’ could be observed as well, Yolanda Robinson says she saw this fire during the hurricane Juliette in San José del Cabo.

Mother Nature has an excellent memory, she always recovers everything we have taken from her, and we just refuse to understand this. -FW.



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Marcie Castro

Photo by: PaulVanVleckPhotography.com

A diverse and international collection of personalities has been attracted to Los Cabos over the past few decades. Some have escaped an unsavoury or uncomfortable past; while others have simply been drawn to Baja by its magic and rugged beauty. However, one thing they all share, is an open spirit of being here and participating in the growth and development of our “frontier” community. Added to a streak of rebellion, bending and even breaking conventional rules, and a true spirit of adventure, it all adds up to some very interesting characters.

And one of Los Cabos’ most interesting and vibrant characters is unquestionably Marcie Castro... You may not have met her yet, but if you’ve ever attended LigaMAC’s Christmas party at Palmilla, venues including Hyatt Ziva, One & Only Palmilla, Cynthia Fresh, Sunday brunch at Flora Farms, San Jose’s Saturday Organic Market, Cabo Humane Society events, along with a multitude of wedding celebrations in Cabo; you most certainly have heard Marcie Castro’s beautiful voice and music, and caught a glimpse of her animated performances.

The most recent “Dressed to the K-9’s” 2013 Brazilian theme was right up Castro’s alley, reuniting her with her maternal roots. The only child of a Brazilian au pair heading home after an assignment in California, and a Puerto Rican seaman with the merchant marines, (who met on a passenger ship headed to Brazil) Marcie grew up in New York City, and Long Island, NY. With English as her first language at home, Marcie learned Portuguese travelling back and forth to Brazil as a child. Then, French at age 9, Italian at 17, and she continues to hone her Espanol as she goes!

From an early age, dance classes and piano lessons were weekly activities for Marcie. Thanks to her father’s position as an airline employee, school vacations were spent either in Brazil, or traveling with her parents all over the world. In Brazil as a novice piano student, Marcie became infatuated with the smooth sounds and rhythm of the Bossa Nova. Her godmother’s house in Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, where Marcie stayed, was just a few doors away from Brazil’s most famous composer, Antonio Carlos Jobim. While sitting outdoors at a local bar, Jobim wrote a song about a beautiful young girl in the neighborhood who would pass by frequently on her way to the beach. Now, as a professional musician and entertainer, Marcie claims she never tires of playing that song, known throughout the world as “The Girl from Ipanema.”

By the age of 12, Carole King’s ‘Tapestry’ inspired Castro to become even more serious about piano and song writing. At the tender age of 18, she moved to Phoenix, to study Music and Romance Languages at Arizona State University. During her first year there, Marcie answered an ad for a work study position as a pianist for dance classes. There, she became an accomplished piano dance accompanist for many visiting artists and dance companies in residence, including the Martha Graham Dance Company, and the Joffrey Ballet. After graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Theory and Composition, Castro joined the faculty at Michigan’s Interlochen Arts Academy (a boarding school instructing some of the most talented students of the time) as a piano accompanist for their dance department. After a year, she returned to New York where her skills as a dance pianist and composer of electronic scores were in great demand.



Photo by: PaulVanVleckPhotography.com



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She was recruited in this capacity by various educational institutions, including Hofstra University, Barnard College and Suny Purchase; as well as the High School for the Performing Arts, best known as the school depicted in the movie and TV series, "FAME".

In the early 90's, Marcie met and married a fellow songwriter, and stumbled onto the art of writing songs for children. While her marriage lasted only two and a half years, and didn't produce offspring, it did not dampen Marcie's love for children, and imparting her love of music to them. For the past decade, here in Los Cabos, it has been a great joy to Marcie to direct and accompany the children & teen's choir of LigaMAC, and to work with the boys at Casa Hogar. Cabo and its people have given so much to Marcie, that she hopes to reciprocate by sharing her experience and talents with Baja's youth. At the opposite end of the spectrum, she also adores playing for the elderly in hospitals and nursing homes, during her summers back in NYC. Marcie is gratified when people emerge from their shells after experiencing the healing power of music, transmitted through her warm and vibrant personality.

"In addition, Marcie was able to share her love for Baja with her father, who visited for extended periods during the four winters before his death, creating some of her happiest memories with her Dad."

Marcie played in restaurants and dance schools till the early 90's when she founded "Perfect Parties Entertainment". She frontiered the art of female deejay-dom, as well as composing and performing live music for Fashion Shows, Private and Corporate events, and weddings. In 2000, finding herself single again with no commitments; on a whim, Marcie went to an audition in New York, hoping to find a job which would help her escape the cold winter. That audition would change the course of her life and eventually bring her to Cabo. She was recruited by Crystal Cruises (rated by Conde Nast as the the World's Number one Luxury Cruise Line) where she has met thousands of people, and sailed on two prestigious world cruises. While working for Crystal, she met Edward T. Steiner, a top hotelier and developer in Latin America, who managed Las Ventanas al Paraíso in Los Cabos. Steiner would become a huge fan and supporter of Marcie's career.

"Marcie went to an audition in New York, hoping to find a job which would help her escape the cold winter. That audition would change the course of her life and eventually bring her to Cabo."

Meeting Mr. Steiner was literally when Marcie's ship came in, although she didn't realize it till a few years later, after she had landed what she thought was her dream job, performing at the Rainbow Room at the top of Rockefeller Center in New York. In the winter of 2004, during one of New York's most blustery Februaries on record, Castro was invited by Steiner to travel to Baja to perform at the opening of the One and Only Palmilla Hotel, And the rest is Cabo history... For three seasons, 2004 thru 2006, Marcie lived in residence at Palmilla, entertaining their well-heeled audiences. While there, she wrote her popular song, originally titled "In Palmilla" now known as "In Los Cabos". In addition, Marcie was able to share her love for Baja with her father, who visited for extended periods during the four winters before his death, creating some of her happiest memories with her Dad.

Marcie says Los Cabos really chose her, rather than the other way around... She had visited other parts of Mexico, including Acapulco in the 70's, and Puerto Vallarta, but her first experiences in Cabo San Lucas, were off the cruise ships at the Marina and beach restaurants like the Mango Deck. While pleasant, it was Mr. Steiner's persistence in persuading her to come to Palmilla, and her subsequent discoveries of San Jose del Cabo, which have made her want to stay. With her Brazilian and Puerto Rican roots, Marcie feels that living in Mexico is a natural progression of her life, and simply where she feels at home.


"Cuba is also very high on her list, thanks to having enjoyed and befriended our local Cuban musicians with their vibrant sounds and rhythms."

Her mastery of five languages, makes Marcie even more versatile and engaging for her diverse audiences worldwide. It's easier to ask Marcie where she hasn't been (Antarctica, Israel, Cuba and the Mayan Riviera) than where she has been! From Nordcap in the Arctic circle north of Norway, to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, the southernmost tip of South America, up to the Amazon, over to Africa... Marcie has visited 73 countries. She intends to return to Brazil to see her cousins, Vietnam for its bargains, the Maldives and Moorea, for their pristine white sand beaches, Africa for its safaris, New Zealand for its scenery, Australia for its people, Italy for the food, St Petersburg, Russia for the art and culture, and of course as much of mainland Mexico as possible. Being a big fan of Ranchero and Mariachi Music, visiting Guadalajara to hear the best of the best Mariachis, was one of her highlights of living in Mexico so far. Cuba is also very high on her list, thanks to having enjoyed and befriended our local Cuban musicians with their vibrant sounds and rhythms.



Kenny Kramer and Marcie Castro.

Jane Lillico



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Marcie’s public artistic life, composing and playing music, and thinking on her feet (attributed to the 10 years she spent by Ballet Barres of hundreds of classes she accompanied) formed the spontaneity and ease she now exudes when performing in front of live audiences. Her music is a contagious and captivating blend of French Bistro, jazz, country, Mexican Boleros, Brazilian, 50’s through current top 40 music. Just wait till you hear her belt out “Red-necked Woman” and then switch to Mozart!!

To sum Marcie up in one word (an impossible feat) I would have to choose passionate! Her passion for music, languages, travel, and sharing her considerable talents with people she meets. She is presently working on a one-woman variety show to be performed on cruise ships, as well as her 4th CD. Marcie is truly the life of the party!! San Jose’s local music scene enjoys jamming at her famous house parties which have become noteworthy events. Friends, and friends of friends look forward to attending these intimate music soirees. In 2012, one of Marcie’s dreams was fulfilled when she participated in the world’s biggest celebration, The Carnaval of Rio de Janeiro! Of late a good part of Marcie’s professional life has been supplying live music and DJ entertainment for destination weddings, and her regular performances at the Hyatt Ziva in San Jose.

Because her professional life is so social, Marcie enjoys solitude and more private activities during her downtime. With the guidance of Sergio Velasco (junior) Marcie became a late blooming surfer, at the surf break in Costa Azul, San Jose since 2006. Spending time in the water just paddling on her long board, is Marcie’s favourite way of enjoying what she considers Baja’s greatest treasure, the Sea of Cortez.

Marcie has shared a quirky and amazing relationship for the past 12 years with New Yorker, Kenny Kramer, a character in his own right, the famed inspiration for Seinfeld’s popular character, Cosmo Kramer.

Kenny, The “Real” Kramer is the creator and host of “Kramer’s Reality Tour” in Manhattan, a multi-media theatrical event for Seinfeld fans. Kenny would require an entire other column to cover his unique life and accomplishments! Attention Seinfeld fans -- check out KennyKramer.com

For information visit Castro’s website CaboWeddingMusic.com -JL.



Marcie at Rio de Janeiro

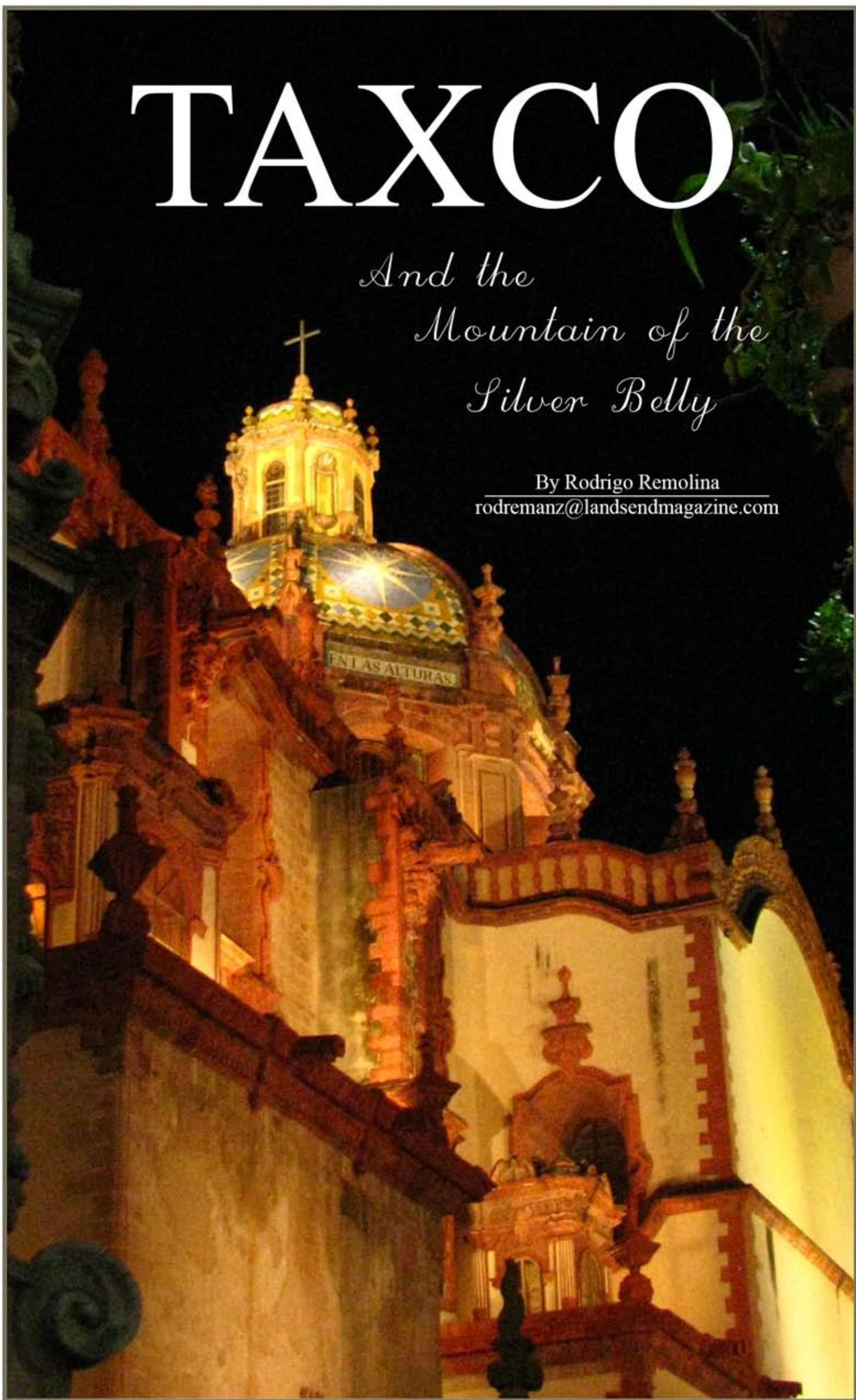


Photo by: SabrinaLear.com Marcie with the Liga MAC Kids.

TAXCO

*And the
Mountain of the
Silver Belly*

By Rodrigo Remolina
rodremanz@landsendmagazine.com



To most of US travelers to Mexico, the name Acapulco is fairly familiar. The city's fame and glamour of the 40's, 50's and 60's brought the eyes of the world to the Mexican Pacific, full of rough mountainous bays in which the jungle and the surf meet among golden sands and granite boulders. But apart from Acapulco and Cuernavaca, most of the region between these cities and the country's capital seems to be an empty territory, now crossed by the super costly and badly built "Autopista del Sol" (Sunn's Highway), that brings and takes back tourists, as fast as they can, as to ignore deliberately the mountainous territories in between.

But the "empty" territory you may cross at 100 mph (or more) is far from void. Behind the series of infinite mountains that appear along the way lay many small towns, old ones, full of history, indigenous traditions and spectacular fiestas, gorgeous caves and waterfalls, charming arts and crafts, and lush flora and fauna full of endemic species. The "empty" territory we are speaking about is the state of Guerrero, and just as a trivia, Guerrero has more pine tree species than the US and Canada combined!

"Long after the Olmecs vanished, the Chontal people around Taxco were conquered by the almighty Aztecs, in the times of Moctezuma."

Guerrero, meaning "warrior" in English, is the last name of one of the most important sons of this land, Vicente Guerrero Saldaña, who fought for the independence of Mexico from the Spaniards 200 years ago; a great guerrilla-style fighter, connoisseur of his mountains who exhausted the most brilliant Spanish generals who chased him for years. Not far away from this anecdote, which tells a lot about the roughness of these lands, Guerrero remains largely unexplored for most of Mexicans, not only for foreign tourists. The jewel I want to share with you in this occasion lies in the middle of a high sierra, full of pine and oak forests, in the high north of the state, some two and a half hours southwest from Mexico City. Its name, Taxco, comes from old Nahuatl tongue, Tlachco, and means "in the ball court" in reference to an ancient ritual-sport of our ancestors.

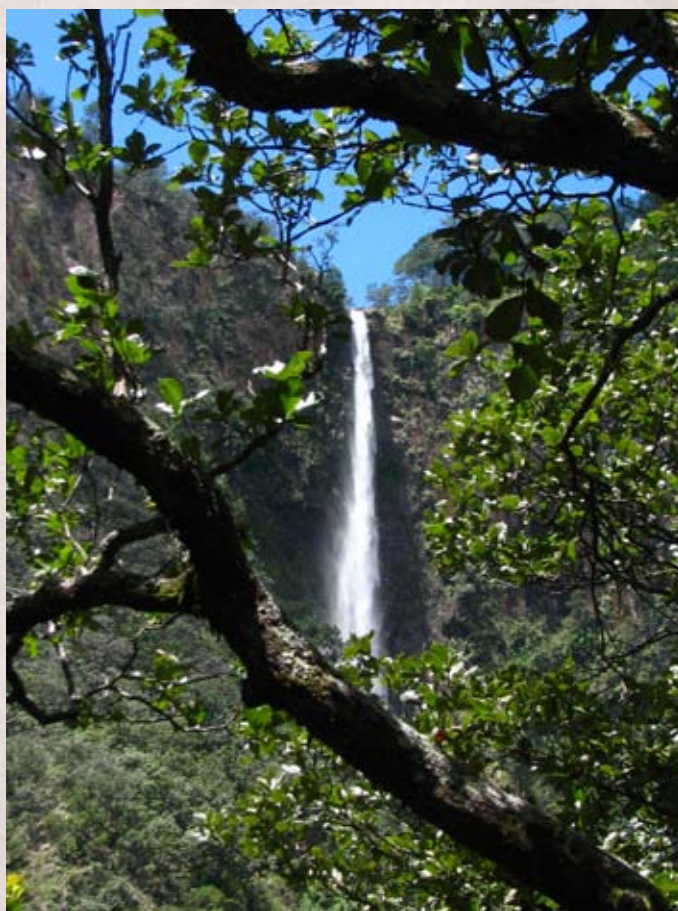
The region of Taxco was famous even before the Spanish conquest for its rich mineral resources. As far away as Olmec times, some 1,000 years before our era, jade and serpentine, sacred green metamorphic stones, were mined from Guerrero's mountains and taken more than 700 kilometers, by foot of course, to the Olmec capitals in southern Veracruz and Tabasco. In exchange for Mother Earth's generosity, the Olmecs left behind beautiful cave paintings and ritual centers, of which we will talk on another LEM's issue.

Long after the Olmecs vanished, the Chontal people around Taxco were conquered by the almighty Aztecs, in the times of Moctezuma I, around 1450, and loads of incense, honey, finely woven cloth, warrior suits, corn and beans arrived in Tenochtitlan periodically as the necessary tribute to the Emperor. Nearby regions of Guerrero tributed also gold, in the forms of fine dust packed in wooden bowls, and long thin plaques. This was maybe one of the reasons why the Spaniards went early after the conquest of Tenochtitlan into Guerrero.

They were much fonder of gold than the Aztecs, which loved much more the green hard stones, just as Olmecs did 2500 years before. With such a good eye when looking for gold, the Spanish expeditionaries found a handful of huge mineral deposits in many areas of Mexico, largely unexploited but available to them, now lords of the New World, armed not only with firearms but also with iron tools, dynamite and burden beasts, which could dig, expose, and transport tons of minerals through the rugged mountain paths to the recently founded "reales de minas".

Mining in Taxco began very early, some say it was the first place in continental America to be mined by the Conquistadores, and long before many other, more celebrated, mineral meccas such as Guanajuato and Zacatecas were even imagined. As soon as 1524 Cortes ordered the extraction of tin, and gold was washed in the sands of surrounding creeks and rivers, but as a mineral area, it was soon controlled directly by the Spanish Crown. Silver mining started around 1530, and its huge potential started attracting population from close and far-away lands: Spanish, Indian, African, and mixed "castas", turning the steep forested slopes of the mountains into impossible boom-towns, half carved into the rock, half hanging in the air.

Its mining activity gave Taxco an unlikely –not to say hostile- topography to grow upon. So difficult was the building of a city in the original foundation that most of the population had to move some kilometers to the north, to the present location. Few remains of this first settlement, but a romantic array of ruined walls, terraces and mine shafts, most of them shut, but a few of them still in domestic production.



Beautiful natural environment.

The new location, in the slopes of the Ataché and El Huixteco cerros, gave Taxco a naturally baroque settlement, surrealistic some may say, with sloping and curving streets, huge four story buildings to one street that become a one floor house on the opposite, and giving the stroller the chance to walk in a street under the sacristy of the main church because there was no other place to build it. The Taxco we know today comes from the silver bonanza of mid 18th Century, which gave the once unpretentious boom town a glamorous charm that still wonders locals and foreigners.

“But returning to history, Taxco lived, as most mining towns in the world, a rhythm of growth and contraction, that continues on to our days, depending on the mountain belly’s generosity.”

The views, as you may now be imagining, are incredible, making Taxco one of the most photogenic cities in Mexico, and at the same time one of the most physically demanding for both the tourist and the inhabitant, who may need to “climb” from 1,600 to almost 2000 meters above sea level to cross the city from one end to another (don’t worry if you are not an athlete, you may hire a mototaxi, travel by VW Combi collective or –for the best fit– rent a bicycle).

But returning to history, Taxco lived, as most mining towns in the world, a rhythm of growth and contraction, that continues on to our days, depending on the mountain belly’s generosity. In one of its shiny ages, in late 16th Century, there were born the Ruiz de Alarcón brothers, unknown Hernando and celebrated Juan. The first, a priest and spontaneous anthropologist, studied the remainders of pre-hispanic civilization in the mountains of Guerrero, a century after the Conquest, most of its precious work remains unpublished

Juan, became one of the main comedy writers of the Spanish “Siglo de Oro” though most of his life and work happened in Spain, his style and humor are, according to some scholars, clearly Mexican. To their glory, the city’s official name today is Taxco de Alarcón, and each year, in May, the Jornadas Alarconianas bring theater, music, and many more cultural activities to the city, be aware.

“His creation, which was built amazingly in 9 years, starting in 1751, is one of the best preserved baroque jewels of Mexico, and as the building and decorating time was so short, is also one of the most aesthetically coherent.”

On another, the best of Taxco’s bonanzas, about 1750 Don José de la Borda, together with his brother Francisco, discovered a huge silver vein, called San Ignacio, which made them two of the richest men of their time in New Spain. As a thank-you gift to the city and holy presences that interceded for them, Don José started the reconstruction of the modest Santa Prisca and San Sebastián parish, in the center of Taxco, right from the ground. His creation, which was built amazingly in 9 years, starting in 1751, is one of the best preserved baroque jewels of Mexico, and as the building and decorating time was so short, is also one of the most aesthetically coherent.



Its exterior, dominating vertically the small central plaza of the city, rises with its two bell towers more than 30 meters, which made it the tallest building of the New Spain outside Mexico City for many years.

“Having visited Santa Prisca, no other monuments in the city will impress you in such a way, but you may visit many more places in the city to complete an stimulating travel experience.”

The pink stone exterior, beautifully carved and in very good shape still, produces a magical puzzle of light and shadow, to which your eyes will slowly get used to, under the unbelievable bright sun of Taxco. The interior, in dramatic contrast, glows in mid-light, its nine golden altar pieces, distributed uniformly in the church nave vibrate together with the stone pilasters and cornices that look as if an origami master had folded them from a huge piece of paper. The sculptural work in stone and wood of Santa Prisca, as the parish is simply called, is accompanied by painted masterpieces, some of the really huge, by Mexican great maestros such as Miguel Cabrera.

Having visited Santa Prisca, no other monuments in the city will impress you in such a way, but you may visit many more places in the city to complete an stimulating travel experience. There is an archaeological museum in the so called Casa de Humboldt, a house that Baron Alexander Von Humboldt occupied when visiting Mexico studying all what he and his colleagues found from volcanoes to orchids and from insects to weather. The countless silver shops that line the main streets of Taxco offer a wide selection of pieces from plain rings to sculptures and silverware, though most of the material is now brought from other mining districts, the mastership of taxqueños in the manipulation of metals is still the best in the country.

Maybe the best plan to visit Taxco is to let you go, to wander through its black and white cobblestoned streets and stairs, find a way through narrow alleys that may widen into a small plaza, with a bench and a tree, or led you to a small fountain shaded by a colorful bougainvillea.

Spontaneous markets and vendors dot the city, showing a nice sample of Guerrero’s crafts, such as wooden masks, huge baskets, painted clay pots, Olinalá jewel boxes (made of perfumed linaloe wood), woven and embroidered blouses and skirts and of course, one of the best kept secrets of Guerrero, paintings made on amate tree bark paper, much in the way prehispanic codexes were done

Not only in Taxco was Nature generous with us. Around the city, a handful of natural wonders await both the casual tourist and the intrepid adventurer. If you belong in the first category, the waterfall of Cacalotenango, (“In the crow’s fortress”) more than 100 meters high, is a great choice. Located some 20 minutes to the north of the city, by paved secondary road, and then a 20 minute walk up a gentle slope,

it may be admired all year long, but the best time is in late September, October and November, when the weather is cool and there is still a lot of water falling from the cliff, but you can get to the pond below it.

The scenery there is almost magical, as trees are permanently dripping water condensed from the dense mist that the force of water generates, covering the place. Sun rays increase the dramatic effect, drawing straight diagonals through the spaces that trees leave open.




Another place not to be missed is Cacahuamilpa (“In the cocoa plantings”), not more than half an hour from Taxco, next to the old (toll free) road to Cuernavaca.

Inside a small natural park, in the bottom of a small canyon, lays one of the most spectacular caves in Mexico, luckily (some may say unluckily) adapted for tourists with artificial lighting, stairs and basic services. The size of the natural halls is breathtaking, as is the height and beauty of its calcium carbonate formations: one of the most spectacular resembles a huge bottle of champagne more than 30 meters tall, still spilling after being opened by an unknown giant.



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Water that carved these great holes into the mountain still flows through it, but many meters below Cacahuamilpa, forming two spectacular underground rivers: the Chontalcoatlán and the San Jerónimo, which just emerging to light, join and form the Amacuzac, that will eventually get to the Pacific Ocean, between Michoacán and Guerrero.

It is possible to cross the mountain through any of these two underground rivers, swimming, climbing, hiking and of course, having lots of fun.

“For another visit, and another LEM issue, there are lots of places around Taxco: caves, forests, churches and towns, one of them, Ixcateopan, where tradition says, lay the remains of Cuauhtémoc, last Aztec Emperor.”

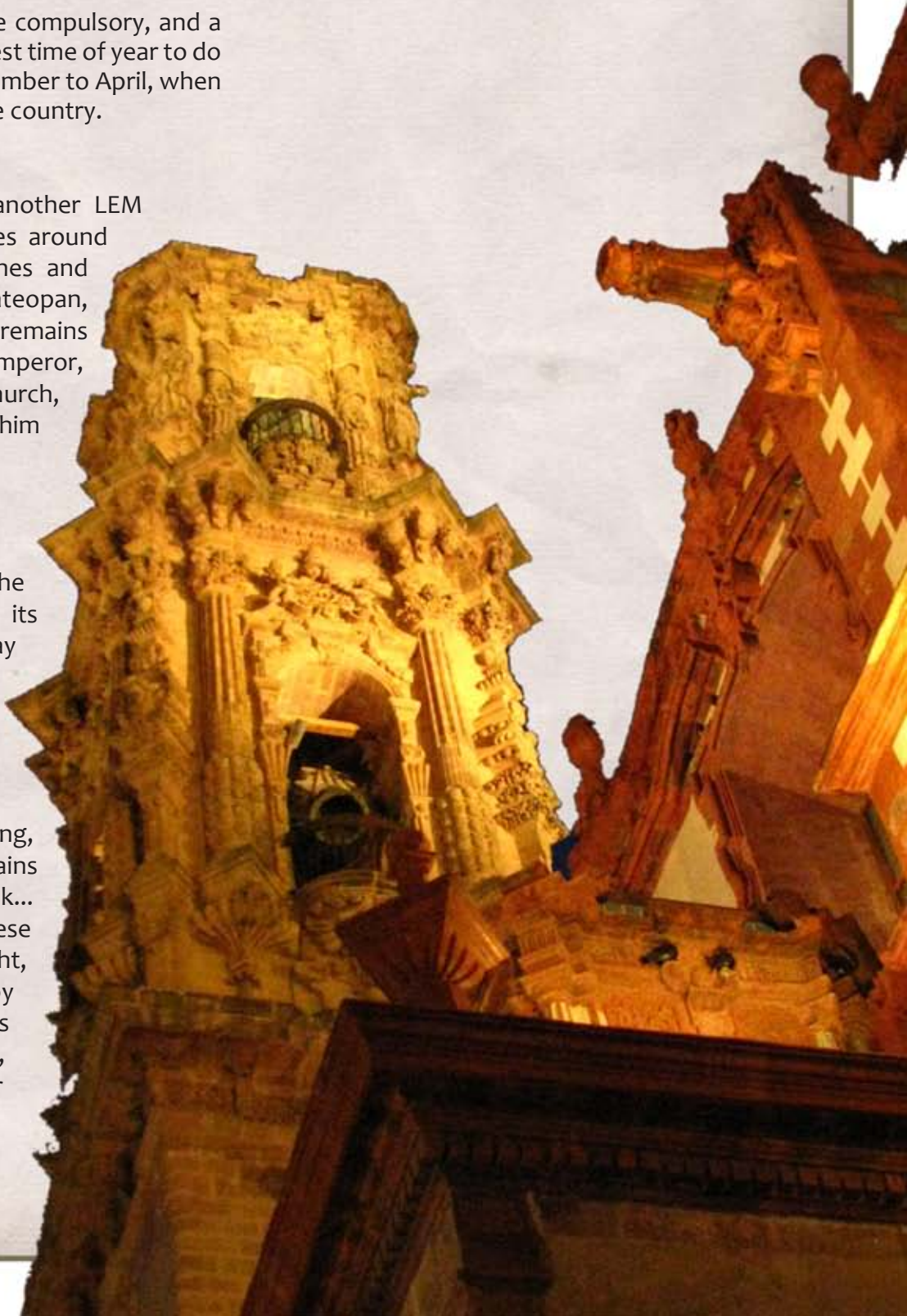


Full equipment is of course compulsory, and a local guide is advisable. The best time of year to do these excursions is from November to April, when rain is scarce in this part of the country.

For another visit, and another LEM issue, there are lots of places around Taxco: caves, forests, churches and towns, one of them, Ixcateopan, where tradition says, lay the remains of Cuauhtémoc, last Aztec Emperor, buried under the altar of the church, as if the real cult there is for him and not for the Christian God.

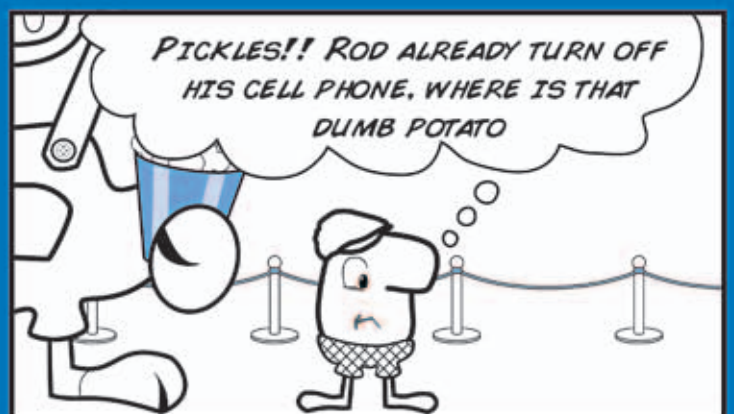
Up and down, left and right, the road leaves back Taxco and its beauties, very much in the way its streets took us to reveal part of its hidden places and secrets.

From the road, the sun setting, the sight of so many mountains in the horizon makes me think... what is behind, what are these sierras hiding from my sight, will I ever be there to see it by myself? This is Guerrero, this is Mexico, land of mountains, secret mountains with silver bellies. -RR.



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