

Y Nacía Un Bebé

El Nacimiento de Jesús
Navidad proviene de la palabra Natividad y significa el nacimiento de Jesús. Esta fecha es una de las más importantes celebradas en el ámbito religioso, con ella se renueva la esperanza de los hombres por alcanzar la salvación y resurrección prometida por el Mesías.

El 24 de diciembre día de Nochebuena, se preparan los más succulentos guisos y se reúnen familiares y amigos para esperar simbólicamente, el nacimiento de Jesucristo ó Navidad. Sin embargo el 25 de diciembre posiblemente no coincide con la fecha del verdadero nacimiento de Jesús.

Según los historiadores este acontecimiento data del año seis antes de nuestra era, tiempo que fue calculado en base a la muerte de Herodes el Grande, acaecida en el año cuatro antes de nuestra era. Recordemos que fue él quien mandó matar a todos los niños de Belén menores de dos años, luego entonces se deduce que Jesús nació dos años antes de estos hechos.

Parece increíble pensar que Jesús nació a.C. (antes de Cristo), pero los hechos están fundamentados en las cuentas realizadas por el monje escri-



ta Dionisio el Exiguo, quien para establecer una nueva numeración con respecto a la venida del Señor, hizo coincidir el 1° de enero del año 1, con el 1° de enero del año 754 fecha de la fundación de Roma, sin embargo el dato exacto de ésta corresponde al año 748.

Aumentando los años que le faltaron contemplar a Dionisio, el nacimiento de Jesús debió ubicarse en el año 6 a.C., esto quiere decir que estaríamos en el año 2003 y no en 1997.

Asimismo otros estudios realizados por el matemático y astrónomo Kepler, señalan que el día del natalicio de Cristo hubo una conjunción de Júpiter y Saturno en la constelación de Piscis, lo cual provocó una emisión de luz intensa, descrita en los evangelios de San Mateo y San Lucas como la "estrella de Belén".

Al respecto existe otra hipótesis en donde se manifiesta que la verdad, es que coincidieron en el signo de Piscis el Sol, la Luna, Venus, Júpiter y Saturno, formando lo que pareció una estrella de gran resplandor, tal acontecimiento astronómico ocurrió el 1° de marzo del año 7 a.C. De ser esto cierto Cristo no nació en diciembre,

ni en el año cero. A pesar de las diversas investigaciones efectuadas en torno al nacimiento del Mesías, no se ha determinado una fecha legítima, no obstante en los primeros siglos del cristianismo se conmemoraron los días 6 de enero, 25 o 28 de marzo, 19 de abril y 133 días más.

Fue el Papa Julio I (337-352) fue quien estableció el 25 de diciembre para la celebración litúrgica de la Navidad. Desde entonces el festejo se lleva a cabo con tres misas: la primera a media noche llamada "misa de gallo", la circuncisión llevada a cabo el 1 de enero y finalmente la purificación de María, el 2 de febrero.

En realidad lo importante no es precisar la fecha exacta de la natividad, más bien lo relevante es comprender el significado de la palabra de Dios y sentir el verdadero espíritu navideño, hoy y los 364 días restantes del año.

"Aunque Cristo naciera mil veces en Belén, si no nace en usted mismo, siempre dudará de su existencia".

Lic. Sandra Noemí Cuapio Campos.

¡Feliz Navidad y Noche Buena!

Llega Pancho Clos a Lubbock ¡Ajuuuaa!



The Lubbock Chapter of the American G.I. Forum followed a 25 year tradition this past weekend as they hosted Pancho Clos' yearly trip to Lubbock to visit and bring gifts to children.

Hundreds of kids lined up in front of Maggie Trejo Center to welcome Pancho who arrived in a big red firetruck "gritando A-juuuaa!"

Pancho Clos, originally conceived and introduced to Lubbock by Jessie Reyes, the late Agustin Medina and Bidal Aguero as they worked late into the night to publish La Voz de Texas Newspaper and hear a song by Cuco Sanchez telling about a black bearded man who wore a sombrero and used burritos instead of reindeer to delivery gifts to children.

Pancho Clos was later adopted by the American G.I. as a way of spreading cheer in Lubbock barrios.

Throughout the years the project has been sustained through fundraisers and donations. This year's main sponsor was Lubbock Power and Light.

The Pancho Clos concept has spread to other cities

including San Antonio when an ex-sargent from Reese Air Force Base. Raul Sanchez introduced the project.

Vol XXIII No. 13 Week of December 23 thru December 29, 1999 Lubbock, Tx



EL ORIGEN DE LAS POSADAS

"En el nombre del cielo, os pido posada pues no puede andar mi esposa amada..."

Las posadas se han llevado a cabo desde hace 398 años, justo nueve días antes de la navidad. El festejo se realiza del 16 al 24 de diciembre, tiempo durante el cual se representa simbólicamente el peregrinar de José y María a su salida de Nazaret, culminando en la Nochebuena con el nacimiento del niño Jesús.

Amenizadas con letanías que se vuelven cánticos, las posadas reaniman el espíritu religioso de los participantes, cómo olvidar esos momentos, los peregrinos, las oraciones, la procesión, las piñatas, el ponche, la fruta, pero sobre todo la emoción, alegría y amistad que se respira durante este tiempo.

Dichas fiestas de fin de año



tienen su origen más allá de la época colonial, cuando los indígenas festejaban durante el invierno ó Panquetzaliztli, el advenimiento de Huitzilopochtli, Dios de la Guerra. En un esfuerzo de evangelización los religiosos agustinos, sustituyeron la imagen de Huitzilopochtli por la de José y María.

En sus inicios estos festejos no fueron como los conocemos ahora, primeramente se les llamó "fiestas de aguinaldo" y consistían en la proclamación de la misa

incluían piñatas, luces de bengala, cohetes y cantos populares.

Uno de los elementos indispensables para la realización de las posadas son las piñatas multicolores, éstas tienen un origen bastante incierto, sin embargo, se cree que fue en Italia donde se les dio vida (Pignata significa olla), de ahí, pasaron a España, en donde durante el primer domingo de cuaresma se rompía la olla. Posteriormente los misioneros trajeron la costumbre a

la Nueva España, cambiando la fecha para las posadas, más tarde los mexicanos les añadieron adornos de papel.

No obstante algunos autores atribuyen el origen del adorno a los chinos, quienes durante la primavera confeccionaban una figura de vaca, buey o búfalo cubierta con papeles poli cromados y rellena de semillas, con el objeto de vaticinar buenas condiciones para el año agrícola que iniciaba. Una vez

vaciada la piñata, se quemaba el papel y la gente obtenía un poco de cenizas ya que la consideraban de buena suerte para todo el año.

El simbolismo de las piñatas, es también muy particular, representa al diablo quien atrae al hombre con placeres superfluos, la persona vendada es la fe que es ciega y se encarga de destruir al espíritu maligno y el palo encarna la virtud que vence la tentación. También se cree que la piñata representa las tres virtudes teologales: la fe, la esperanza y la caridad. Asimismo la forma clásica de

la piñata es la de estrella con siete picos y significa los siete pecados capitales: soberbia, lujuria, gula, ira, avaricia, pereza y envidia.

Por otro lado es obvio que la tradición se ha modificado y de aquellas piñatas confeccionadas en ollas de barro, sólo van quedando recuerdos. Y qué decir de las piñatas y sus tradicionales figuras de estrella, frutas o flores que por la inevitable influencia de los medios de comunicación, está siendo sustituidas por los héroes surgidos de películas, cómics.

Ciertamente se trata de conservar la tradición, por ello no permitamos se apague la luz de las velas que iluminan la procesión de los peregrinos, mucho menos dejemos se olviden los cantos que dan vida a las posadas, unamos nuestra voz y recuperemos nuestras costumbres.

Dale, dale, dale, no pierdas el tino, mide la distancia, que hay en el camino...



Despite Lack of Funding

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Moves Forward

By *Oswaldo Zavala*

After five years of working without a congressional subsidy, members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus say they have been able to successfully pursue the goals of the group. Their influence and participation in congressional debate have been more direct and effective, they claim.

House Republicans voted unanimously on Dec. 6, 1994, to stop funding all caucuses, arguing that they were special-interest groups consuming taxpayer money. At the time, the Hispanic caucus was receiving \$148,000 in annual support, according to Rick Lopez, then its executive director.

The measure outraged Hispanic caucus members, who accused GOP representatives of maneuvering to dismantle the influence of caucuses comprised of people of color. Among other defunded groups were the black caucus and the progressive caucus.

Former caucus chair Ed Pastor (D-Ariz.) recalls that up until 1994 the congressional budget provided members with funds to cover caucus activities. Of those funds, each caucus member contributed \$6,000 in annual dues. Office space was provided by the House.

Currently, members pay for caucus expenditures — including the salaries of an executive director and two employees — out of the \$632,355 given to all House members for staff salaries and expenses. The caucus staff work out of the office of the chair, currently Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Calif.). Roybal-Allard's office declined to an-

swer repeated requests to obtain information on the caucus budget.

Five years after the funding cut, the caucus remains standing and, by some accounts, in even better shape. If anything, says Rep. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), the cut has been beneficial to the organization. "The lack of funding has forced us to be more cohesive," he says. "We are engaged more directly, and the caucus, instead of closing down, has become more productive."

Another former chair, Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.) agrees with Menendez, highlighting some recent caucus victories, such as lobbying for additional funds to help process citizenship applications. The \$176 million in funds was obtained after heavy lobbying from caucus members.

"We are part of the decision-making process," he says. "We may not win a lot because we are too small compared to (the size) of the (435-member) House, but we are players in the process."

The caucus was founded in 1976 by five Hispanic members of Congress, when the nation's Hispanic population was a third the size of its current 33 million. Edward Roybal (D-Calif.), father of its present head, was the first chair.

But the caucus is not free from criticism. Some Hispanic organizations that lobby on the Hill say it still lacks an effective presence.

Others, like the National Association for Bilingual Education, point to the group's success in voicing Hispanic community concerns.

"Caucus members have become well established, and their commitment has never de-

clined," says NABE spokesman Jaime Zapata. "We will support them, but we will hold them accountable for the votes they cast as individuals, too."

Additionally, there is the criticism from some circles that the caucus is too partisan. The three House Hispanic GOPers were once members but quit in recent years.

Rep. Lincoln Daz-Balart (R-Fla.) says he and fellow Floridian Ileana Ros-Lehtinen left in 1997, after the past three chairpersons visited Castro's Cuba and refused to back a resolution to support democratic elections on the island.

Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-Texas) bowed out in 1994. Spokesperson Steve Ruhlen says the congressman decided to quit because the \$6,000 in annual dues were not "the best expenditure of tax dollars."

Particularly, adds Ruhlen, "in the light of the caucus's partisan viewpoints."

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), founded in 1978 as an independent organization, was not affected by the elimination of funding. The CHCI and the caucus work together on some projects, including the fall CHCI issues conference. This year's conference drew 300 people, quadrupling last year's turnout of 70.

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A PESAR DE LA FALTA DE FONDOS, EL GRUPO CONGRESIONAL HISPANO SIGUE ADELANTE

Por *Oswaldo Zavala*

Después de cinco años de trabajar sin subsidio congressional, los miembros del Grupo Congresional Hispano dicen que han podido proseguir con éxito sus objetivos. Su influencia y su participación en el debate congressional ha sido más directa y eficaz, dicen.

Los republicanos en la Cámara de Representantes votaron unánimemente el 6 de diciembre de 1994 para dejar de financiar a todos los grupos, argumentando que eran grupos de intereses especiales que gastaban fondos de los contribuyentes. En aquel entonces, el grupo de congresistas hispanos estaba recibiendo \$148,000 anualmente en fondos, según Rick López, el entonces director ejecutivo.

Esa medida indignó a los miembros hispanos, quienes acusaron a los republicanos de maniobrar para desmantelar la influencia de los grupos formados por personas de color. Entre otros grupos que dejaron de recibir fondos estaban el grupo congressional afroamericano y el grupo congressional progresista.

Un ex-presidente del grupo, el congresista Ed Pastor (demócrata por Arizona) recuerda que hasta 1994, el presupuesto congressional suministraba fondos a los miembros para cubrir las actividades de los grupos. De esos fondos, cada miembro del grupo contribuía \$6,000 en cuotas anuales. El Congreso donaba espacio para oficinas.

Actualmente, los miembros pagan los gastos del grupo — incluyendo los sueldos de una directora ejecutiva y dos empleados — de los \$632,355 dados a todos los miembros de la Cámara para sueldos y gastos del personal.

El personal del grupo hispano trabaja en las oficinas de la presidente, actualmente la representante Lucille Roybal-Allard (demócrata por California). La oficina de la representante no

contestó varias llamadas pidiendo información sobre el presupuesto del grupo.

Cinco años después de la eliminación de los fondos, el grupo permanece de pie y, según sus miembros, en mejor forma aún. Si ha ocurrido algo, dice el representante Robert Menéndez (demócrata por Nueva Jersey), la eliminación de los fondos ha sido beneficiosa para la organización. "La falta de fondos nos ha obligado a ser más unidos", dice él. "Estamos más enfocados, y el grupo, en vez de cerrar, ha llegado a ser más productivo".

Otro ex-presidente, el representante Xavier Becerra (demócrata por California) concuerda, destacando algunas recientes victorias del grupo, tales como el cabildeo en busca de fondos adicionales para ayudar a tramitar las solicitudes de ciudadanía. Los \$176 millones en fondos se obtuvieron después de un fuerte cabildeo por parte del grupo hispano.

"Somos parte del proceso de decisiones", dice él. "Puede que no ganemos muchas veces porque somos demasiado pequeños en comparación con el tamaño de la Cámara (son sus 435 miembros), pero somos una parte importante".

El grupo fue fundado en 1976 por cinco miembros hispanos del Congreso, cuando la población hispana del país era una tercera parte de lo que es ahora, 33 millones. Edward Roybal (demócrata por California), el padre de la presidente actual, fue el primer presidente del grupo.

Pero el grupo no está libre de críticas. Algunas organizaciones hispanas que cabildan en el Capitolio dicen que todavía carece de una presencia eficaz.

Otros, como la Asociación Nacional para la Educación Bilingüe (NABE en inglés), señalan al éxito del grupo para promover las necesidades de la comunidad hispana.

"Los miembros del grupo han llegado a estar bien establecidos y su compromiso no ha disminuido nunca," dice el portavoz de NABE, Jaime Zapata. "Los apoyaremos, pero los haremos responsables por los votos que ellos depositan como individuos también."

Además hay la crítica en algunos círculos que el grupo es demasiado partidista. Los tres hispanos republicanos de la Cámara fueron miembros una vez, pero recientemente renunciaron.

El representante Lincoln Díaz-Balart (republicano por la Florida) dice que él y su colega del estado, Ileana Ros Lehtinen, se fueron en 1997 después que los tres presidentes consecutivos del grupo visitaron a Cuba y se negaron a respaldar una resolución para apoyar elecciones democráticas en la isla.

El representante Henry Bonilla (republicano por Texas) se fué en 1994. Su portavoz, Steve Ruhlen, dijo que el congresista decidió renunciar porque los \$6,000 en cuotas anuales no era "el mejor uso de fondos federales."

Especialmente, agrega Ruhlen, "tomando en cuenta lo partidista que es el grupó."

El Instituto del Grupo Congresional Hispano (CHCI en inglés), fundado en 1978 como una organización independiente, no fué afectado por la eliminación de los fondos. El CHCI y el grupo de congresistas hispanos trabajan juntos en algunos proyectos, incluyendo la conferencia del CHCI cada otoño del CHCI sobre asuntos de importancia en la comunidad hispana. La de este año atrajo a 300 personas, cuadruplicando la asistencia de 70 el año pasado.

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NCLR, Hispanic Law Enforcement Organizations

Partnership Addresses Abuse and Harassment of Latinos

Washington, DC - At a news conference today, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA), and the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA) announced an historic partnership agreement to address the issues of Latino-related law enforcement abuse and harassment, racial profiling, and the underrepresentation of Latinos in law enforcement. HAPCOA and NLPOA are the two largest associations representing Hispanic law enforcement personnel in the country.

"Fundamental to stemming the dramatic increase in civil rights violations against Latinos is restoring trust between law enforcement and the Hispanic community. That is why we are so gratified and proud that Latinos in law enforcement are taking the lead in fostering much-needed dialogue. We pledge our full support and assistance in making this critically important process a success in all communities," stated Raul Yzaguirre, NCLR President.

A recent NCLR study, *The Mainstreaming of Hate: A Report on Latinos and Harassment, Hate Violence, and Law Enforcement Abuse* in the '90s, found that there had been a significant increase in the incidences of law enforcement harassment and abuse against Latinos as well as in the use of racial profiling. While statistically documenting such incidents continues to be problematic, NCLR has documented a tripling of cases reported to its offices over the past several years.

Clearly one reason this is occurring is that Latinos are underrepresented in law enforcement, especially at the highest levels. For example, in Houston, a city that is 26% Hispanic, Latinos hold fewer than 8% of supervisory positions within the police department. In Los Angeles, a city that is more than one-third Hispanic, Latinos constitute only 22% of officers and 14% of supervisors. In the Metro-Dade Police Department, in a county that is nearly one-half Hispanic, fewer than 14% of top supervisors are Latino. "Many police departments have made strong progress in diversifying their workforces, however, Latinos remain severely underrepresented in most major police departments across the country, and not just within the top ranks, but amongst the rank and file as well," stated Adrian Garcia, National President for NLPOA. "Equally important," he went on to note, "is the increasing number of lawsuits filed by Latino law enforcement officers against local police departments and federal agencies for employment discrimination, 'hostile work environments,' or for being 'disciplined more harshly than their White, non-Latino colleagues.'"

The agreement calls for the organizations to work cooperatively on improving the representation of Latinos in law enforcement agencies, to serve as a national coalition on resolving the problem of harassment and abuse against Latinos, as well as to put an end to racial profiling practices.

"We have every expectation that this partnership will yield great fruit for the Latino community and the organizations involved," said HAPCOA National President, Edwin Rios. "Congress and this Administration cannot continue to ignore these important issues for the Latino community. The safety and livelihood of all Americans is jeopardized when rights are reserved for a privileged few. As a coalition, we will work hard to assure that all Americans are free from violence and discrimination. This partnership is a step in that direction."

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Partnership is entered into this 14th day of December 1999 between The National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA), and the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA).

WHEREAS, we recognize the need to work proactively in addressing and establishing accountability measures with what appears to be a growing problem in law enforcement - harassment, abuse, and deadly use of force against Latinos.

WHEREAS, we recognize the strong connection between racial profiling and widespread abuse and civil rights violations, and the increasing negative effect such profiling has on all Americans.

WHEREAS, we recognize the growing need to improve the representation of Latinos at all levels of our nation's law enforcement bodies and to address the parallel problem of employment discrimination against Latino law enforcement officers.

RESOLVED, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA), and the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA) will join in a national partnership to address the issues of law enforcement abuse, racial profiling, and the low representation of Latinos at all levels of our nation's law enforcement structure.

FURTHER RESOLVED, we agree to serve as an early warning system and establish on-going communication with one another to keep abreast of issues and problems affecting the Latino community and Latino law enforcement community alike.

FURTHER RESOLVED, we agree to work together with other civil rights and community organizations, and federal, state, and local officials to establish or strengthen police/community relations, build or enhance trust, and improve community safety.

FURTHER RESOLVED, we agree to work in collaboration with one another and act as a national resource on the aforementioned subjects for other civil rights and community organizations and federal, state, and local officials.

Raul Yzaguirre, President, National Council of La Raza
Edwin Rios, National President, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association
Adrian Garcia, National President, National Latino Peace Officers Association

Vieques, Puerto Rico: Morality vs. Politics

By *Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo*

President Clinton's offer to the people of Puerto Rico about the Navy's operations on the island of Vieques was a good one, politically speaking. The worst excesses of the Navy were to be stopped. There would be no more live bombs dropped, or depleted uranium bullets fired, on the island where almost 10,000 people dwell.

In exchange, Puerto Ricans were to tolerate less frequent and milder military operations. The Navy would repair the ill will created by its arrogant behavior over the past 50 years by spending about \$40 million to develop roads and businesses on Vieques, about \$4,000 per capita. Finally, the Navy would plan a shutdown of the testing range over five years. Like all political offers, this one had something for everybody in a shuffle of give a little, take a little.

The reaction from the most important leaders in Puerto Rico, however, was a complete rejection of anything less than immediate and total cessation of the bombing. Gov. Pedro Rosell, a pro-U.S. advocate of statehood for Puerto Rico and chairman of the Gore campaign on the island, says the immediate end of the bombing is a non-negotiable demand. The Archbishop of San Juan and the Bishop of Caguas have issued a pastoral letter advising the island's Catholics that a peaceful solution may require civil disobedience. Jesse Jackson visited the Puerto Ricans illegally squatting on the Navy's test range, and the Puerto Rican Senate endorses the presence there of one of its members, Rubén Berros, calling his civil disobedience part of his legislative duties.

The leading Protestant churches collect food each week for the patri-

ots encamped on Vieques' beaches. In New York, 10 prominent Puerto Ricans — including lawyers, a Rhodes Scholar from Brooklyn College, an Episcopal priest and ex-boxing champion José Torres — were arrested for demonstrating in front of the United Nations for the cause of Vieques. It is the religious, environmentalist and civic groups, rather than political figures, who have led Puerto Rico's national movement to stop the Navy.

Why are the Puerto Ricans so unforgiving on the issue of Vieques when the White House and the Department of Defense are offering an olive branch?

The answer, I think, is found in the difference between a political matter and a moral issue. While Washington approaches Vieques as an affair for compromise and negotiations, virtually all Puerto Ricans see it as a stark moral choice between good and evil. The more the politicians try to haggle a settlement, the more morally incensed grow the Puerto Ricans.

Imagine if the abolition of slavery had been "negotiated" as a gradual process of emancipation by Abraham Lincoln, and that he promised the slaves that they would be beaten only by less dangerous whips! Lincoln is considered a great president precisely because he understood that the abolition of slavery was no longer a political matter, but a moral issue.

That has happened for Puerto Ricans in the case of Vieques. No compromise, no federal grants, no series of congressional hearings aimed at political maneuvering can quell the national conscience of Puerto Rico that now righteously demands justification. There are striking similarities of this cause

with that of civil rights. As Jesse Jackson stated: "If it is wrong to treat individual persons as property by slavery, it is wrong to treat a whole people as property by colonialism."

Outsiders not familiar with Puerto Rico's history and complicated political status may not understand such moral outrage over the type of issue that has been settled by political compromise in other places. But Vieques has become a symbol for 100 years of imperialism. Puerto Rico, which is larger and more technologically developed than almost 15 percent of the world's nations, has been frustrated by the inattentiveness of the United States to the anachronism of maintaining a colony when the rest of the world has freed former possessions. Whether seeking statehood, independence or something in between, Puerto Ricans agree the status quo is unacceptable. Vieques is the pot that has boiled over and made it too hot to stay in the kitchen any longer.

Can a tiny island nation, constitutionally defined as a "territory" with no vote in Congress and prohibited from voting for the president who rules their destiny, successfully challenge the world's last superpower? How can 3.8 million people in Puerto Rico — even when working with the 2 million Puerto Ricans living in the States — hope to force a huge country of 265 million to surrender on this issue?

While it is far from certain that Puerto Rico will prevail in this moral crusade, history does suggest that people united in common cause can overcome the indifference of the majority. Puerto Rico's moral cause may overwhelm the penchant for political wheeling and dealing in Washington.

Whatever the outcome, a process has been set in motion. Today, Puerto Ricans consider it immoral for the United States Navy to bomb Puerto Rico on occasion; tomorrow, the national conscience may move to considering it immoral for the United States Navy to be in Puerto Rico at all. A growing number of Puerto Ricans have already followed this logical progression.

The simplicity of the issue today should not obscure the profundity of its likely outcome. John Brown's raid was treated as the mad act of a fanatic, but it precipitated a bloody civil war. When Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of a bus in Alabama, she unleashed a moral movement that has reversed the legal legacy of a century of slavery. Might a dozen people sleeping in tents on Vieques' beaches undo a century of colonialism? Even if it is a long shot, don't bet against it.

(Dr. Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, formerly vice chairman of the New York State Committee for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, is a professor of Puerto Rican and Latino studies

Merry Christmas to All Our Readers from El Editor
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and also from our staff and friends: Bob
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Pastorelas, Posadas and Other Hispanic Christmas Customs

By: Luis Dumois

In those days a decree from Emperor Augustus was issued, ordering a census for the entire world. [...] Everybody had to be registered, each one in his city. Also Joseph, who came from the lineage of David, came up from the city of Nazareth, in Galilee, to the city of David, named Bethlehem, in Judea, to register himself and his wife Mary, who was pregnant. Being there, the time for birth arrived, and she gave birth to her first born son; she wrapped him in nappies and put him in a crib, because they did not find a place in the inn.

Luke, 2:2-7

Soon we will enjoy our first Posadas for this year in Mexico.

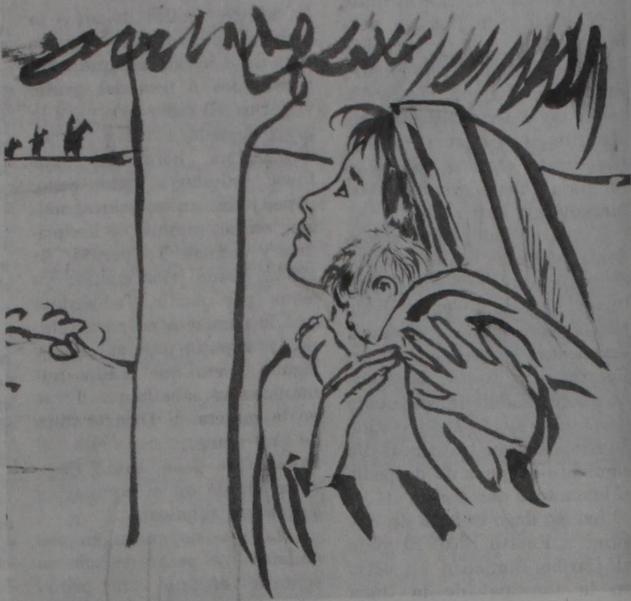
Las Posadas are fiestas that begin on the 16th and end on the 24th of December. In Mexico, during this period, there are many Posadas every evening.

Invited -and as usual, some non invited- guests arrive at the house where the Posada will take place, always in the evening. A group goes outside the house, with lighted candles and papers with the words of the verses to ask for Posada. They sing,

*En el nombre del Cielo
os pido posada,
pues no puede andar
mi esposa amada.
In the name of Heaven
I ask you for lodging,
because She cannot walk,
my beloved wife.
The group inside answers,
also singing,*

*Aquí no es mesón,
sigan adelante.
Yo no puedo abrir,
no sea algún tunante.
This is no inn,
keep on going.
I won't open the door,
in case you are a truant.*

Many verses are sung in this fashion, with those outside asking for a place to spend the night and the people inside the house saying, no way, until those inside "discover" who are the personalities freezing outside. Then they open the door and let the pilgrims enter. In the very traditional Posadas, a girl is dressed as the Virgin Mary, while a boy represents Saint Joseph. In some cases even a burro is present, for the Virgin to mount. Sometimes,



those outside carry images of the Holy persons with them.

When they open the door to let those outside enter, they sing,

*Entren, Santos Peregrinos,
reciban este rincón;
no de esta pobre morada,
si no de mi corazón.
Enter, Holy Pilgrims,
accept this dwelling,
not of this humble house,
but of my heart.*

During the rest of the party we break piñatas, there are villancicos -Christmas carols- in the air and we eat the traditional things: buñuelos (very thin fried pastries covered with sugar), colación (a mixture of different candies), tamales, and ponche, fruit punch.

This beautiful tradition of the Posadas comes from the times of the Colonial period, but it is interesting to note that before the Conquest the Aztecs celebrated every year the arrival of the god Huitzilopochtli, between the 7th and the 26th of December. Under the Spanish domination, Catholic priests incorporated some days of the ancient tradition to a new set of religious festivities.

One of those first Christian festivities in Mexico were

Aguinaldo -Christmas presents- masses. After Holy Mass, piñatas were broken, people sang villancicos and they watched the performing of pastorelas. There were nacimientos (depictions of the birth of Jesus Christ) on display for everybody to visit and admire.

The Náhuatl people used to represent plays enacting important historical events and stories taken from real life. Missionaries incorporated this custom to the Christian holidays, so during the nine days of the Posadas many pastorelas were performed on stage. These pastorelas are dramatic pieces that represent the trip of Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary to register themselves in the Roman census taking place in those days, or the hardships they suffered while looking in vain for lodging. The roles in these pastorelas included, besides Joseph and Mary, shepherds and shepherdesses (pastores, hence the name, pastorelas), sheep, burros, and perhaps a little devil or two.

These pastorelas played an important part in the evangelization of the colonies. Franciscans and Augustines,

among others, used these representations to accompany the religious activities of the day, making the festivities more attractive and colourful. As it was, this custom was preserved and is still cherished among the Mexican people, a people who love family traditions and vivid fiestas.

It is said that Marco Polo brought with him the idea of piñatas: vessels adorned with color paper, that in China, were broken by hitting them with sticks to commemorate Springtime. Italians adapted the action to symbolize the victory of Good over Evil. In Lent they made piñatas with seven colored paper points, each one representing a capital sin. The stick that broke these sins played the part of Christian faith.

In Mexico the piñata assumed this meaning and then some others. One of them: It is the devil that holds in his belly all that is good in this world, just as the olla inside the piñata is filled with fruit like mandarin, orange and sugar cane; candy and gifts. The stick (Christian faith), put to good use by the girl or boy who strikes at the piñata (the hard work of women and men in this world), breaks the treasure's chest for the benefit of all.

The piñata is firmly tied to a rope, and then hung from a pole or the branch of a tree. Someone holds the other end of the rope, pulling the piñata up and down to make it a more

elusive target. It is customary to let the youngest children start the hitting and then to give the opportunity to the grown-ups. The little ones will be able to see the moving piñata when they try to hit it, while the elders take their turn later, eyes covered with a handkerchief or shawl.

While the hitter is doing his or her best to break the piñata, people surrounding the action sing in a chorus,

*Dale, dale, dale,
no pierdas el tino;
porque si lo pierdes,
pierdes el camino.
Hit it, hit it,
don't lose aim,
because if you lose it,
you will lose your way.*

Eventually someone, able or lucky enough to accomplish the task, will break the olla inside the piñata. Fruit, candy and gifts fall to the floor, for everybody to rush to gather whatever they can from the scattered goodies.

After piñatas, dinner is served. Tamales with atole, and crunchy buñuelos for desserts. Hot ponche will help to warm the cold winter evening. For the children, ponche made from seasonal fruits, like tejocote, guava, plum, mandarin, orange, or prune, sweetened with piloncillo (a brown sugar), and perfumed with cinnamon sticks or vanilla. For the grown-ups, the same ponche, but with piquete (sting), which is a bit of rum or tequila added to the potion to make it happier. There

are as many ponche recipes as there are grannies in Mexico. In Colima, for instance, they prepare a delicious concoction made of milk, sugar, orange leaves and vanilla, grated coconut and a drop of rum.

When the Posada is about to end, every guest receives a small gift, or aguinaldo, usually a package containing cookies, dried and fresh fruit, and colación (assorted and colourful candies). Now is the time to sing villancicos, carols that talk about the good news given to the shepherds by the angels, that our Savior was born. A very old tradition calls for everybody to gather in front of the nacimiento (the nativity scene) to sing villancicos to the newborn child.

Traditional nacimientos picture the birth of Jesus. It seems that Saint Francis of Assisi was the first one to come out with the idea of representing with figures the scene in the stable of Bethlehem. That first nacimiento was placed inside a cave in Greccio, Italy, in 1223, to later become a well established tradition in that country.

The excellence of Mexican artisans helped in a significant way to the development of this custom in our country. A typical nacimiento shows Jesus in a crib, with the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph at His side. Inside the portal (porch), which can take the form of a cave, a stone house or a cabin, there are several animals surrounding the Holy persons: burros, oxen, sheep, cows, horses. Additional personalities who take part are shepherds, angels, pilgrims, and the Kings from the East who came to adore Him. The star they followed to Bethlehem always crowns the nacimiento, giving it light and color.

Soon we will enjoy our first Posadas down here.

These traditions are alive and well in Mexico, thank God, in spite of the noise and hurried pace of our so called modern life.

This is a time for joy. This is a time for children. And as I watch them play and sing and have fun, I know I will remember my own childhood. I will remember those who are now gone, and I will think about the future.



Pinatas can be found in all shapes and sizes. Modern ones often represent cartoon or other characters known to most children. Others are shaped like fruits, baskets, rockets etc. Sometimes people of political stature are satirized. At Christmas, star-shaped piñatas suggestive of the Star of Bethlehem are especially popular. One's imagination is the creative limit.

Traditionally, piñatas are filled with both candies and fruits. Around Christmas in México, wrapped candies, peanuts, guavas, oranges, jicamas, (sweet root vegetable), sugar cane and other goodies are used.

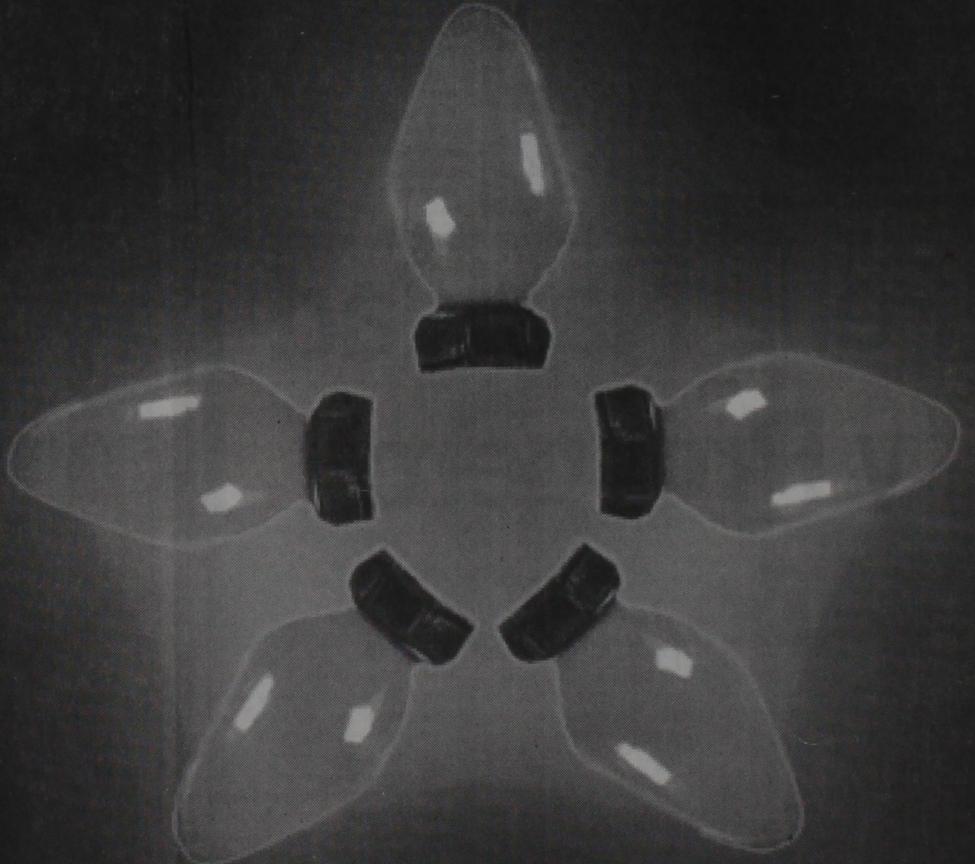
MAY ALL

YOUR LIGHTS

SHINE BRIGHTLY

THIS HOLIDAY

SEASON.



THE STRENGTH IS IN THE SYSTEM.

Covenant
Health System



A Merry Michoacan Christmas

By **ROCIO AGUIRRE**

The atmosphere is so "warm" during this time. It is definitely a time for fun, laughter and good food with family and friends. I was fortunate enough to live in Mexico for five years and I was able to celebrate Navidad one year with my mother's family in Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan -- an industrial port located about an hour from Ixtapa. The climate is warm since it is in a tropical zone.

I remember the following for the Christmas of 1986: At my grandfathers house, "La Casa Grande" was big enough to accommodate all of the relatives, from first cousins to great aunts and uncles. I remember that Christmas was just that: the celebration of the birth of Christ. We would have an enormous manger made to the side of "el patio," and it would have every imaginable animal figurine in clay form. There would be a variety of plants and poinsettias and lights.

In the evening after Mass, everyone would gather together in La Casa Grande. The youngest child in the family (who could walk) would carry a porcelain baby Jesus to the manger after a brief singing of the Las Posadas. Everyone held a candle and would join in the short procession to the manger. After that we would play "el estereo" all night long with every type of song imaginable from modern to traditional cumbias and mariachi music. It was a very festive atmosphere.

Then we would all find a seat somewhere, since there are never enough seats, and feast on pollo asado con verduras.



This was slow cooked all afternoon, with its scent tempting us until it came time to actually eat and taste it.

My other aunts would also bring their dishes of tamales de

elote, arroz, and frijoles con queso, and my uncles would be cooking up the carne asada on a huge grill. We had "ponche" and buñuelos and empanadas de coco with "Campurado de Chocolate" and of course, the typical aguas de jamaica y de arroz y de

tamarindo.

My aunts always invited the neighbors, who were needy, and treated them like family. I always liked that they could share with others less fortunate and not turn their heads as if these people didn't exist. In the United States, we are lucky if we even know the last name of neighbors.

Afterward, we would break the piñatas -- one for children and one for adults. The one for children had candy, peanuts, and money. The one for adults was always a riot. It would either be full of flour, rocks, or water. Of course, very few people would know what was in the piñata and whoever broke it would always be a good sport about it. We all would be rolling with laughter at these innocent antics.

Another thing was the "intercambio". This is just like the Grab Bag that is done in the U.S. We would have the regular intercambio and then we also all brought along a "prank" gift -- "de broma." We would place our names in a hat and whoever we picked would get our prank gift. Some of these gifts included; live frogs, laxatives, and enormous underwear among other things. Everyone would love this and I remember everyone would be a good sport about it.

The whole night would be about laughter, dancing, good food and "un buen ambiente" that could only be created by real love and genuine caring. It can't be bottled or purchased anywhere. Those magical happy times I will always remember as they enrich my Christmas every year.

A La Isla Con Santa Clos

Por: **Patricia Guadalupe**

Estoy convencida que se goza más en el Caribe durante la Navidad. Sólo hay que poner la radio aquí y escuchar "Noche de Paz" e iguales canciones. Compárelas con la radio en Puerto Rico, donde durante las fiestas navideñas, hasta algunas canciones religiosas tiene ese toque de merengue y salsa.

Y allá no hay porque esconderse debajo de tanta ropa por el frío o preocuparse que vaya una a resbalar en el hielo por ponerse tacones. Además, las fiestas no se acaban en Puerto Rico hasta mediados de enero. Eso definitivamente tiene que ser más divertido que regresar al trabajo al día siguiente después de despedir el año a todo dar.

Así es, llegó la hora de largarse a Puerto Rico. El viaje al Caribe comienza en serio en la terminal de la línea aérea American en la aeropuerto internacional Kennedy en, como dicen muchos, los Nuevos Yores. Mientras con creciente frecuencia otras líneas aéreas viajan a las islas, por mucho tiempo American ha controlado el 80% del mercado. Y aunque la población puertorriqueña aumenta en otras partes de Estados Unidos, la llamada Gran Manzana sigue siendo la capital estadounidense de Puerto Rico, y de la República Dominicana. Por ende, Kennedy es el punto principal de partida.

Hay tres grupos que viajan desde el aeropuerto Kennedy en las Navidades: los puertorriqueños, los dominicanos, y LOS DEMAS. Los llamados demás usualmente son pequeños grupos de anglosajones calladitos que mayormente viajan a lugares populares entre anglosajones durante esa época: Miami o Bermuda o Jamaica. No se veen ni se escuchan por el alboroto latino en el aeropuerto de los que van

a "la casa de mami" en San Juan o Santo Domingo.

Miles y miles llegan a la terminal por el viaje de poco más de 3 horas, aunque solamente dos o tres del gentío viajarán. El resto está para la gran despedida e instrucciones de última hora de, "por favor", saludar a juniol, paco, pepe, juan, anita, maria, nelson, willie, manuel, y los primos y vecinos. Y, "perate!" te gritan desde lejos cuando ya estas por partir, "acuérdate que la camiseta es para fulano, los zapatos para sutano," y siguen hasta que media humanidad ya sabe lo que llevas en la maleta. Y Dios te libre de no cargar con ella al avion. Que pasa, santo Dios, si se pierde en el equipaje y llegas sin regalos!

Lo que no quepa en esa maleta -- a pesar de que se sentara encima un primo gordo par ayudarte a cerrarla -- se pone en una caja de cartón y amarrada con un ROLLO ENTERO de cinta adhesiva, Dpáque no se abra. Y se amarra con sogá, por si acaso. Luego en los cuatro lados de la caja, con plumón negro y el letrás mayúsculas, se escribe la dirección del recibidor. Es para asegurarse que si se pierde la caja, el que la encuentre sepa donde mandarla, por supuesto. A lo mejor ya usted conoce estas famosas cajas navideñas: las Samsonite puertorriqueñas. Se acuerdan del comercial en la television donde un gorilla enjaulado tiraba una maleta al suelo tratando de romperla? Pues, se robaron la idea de los vuelos navideños en el aeropuerto Kennedy. Estoy segura de eso. Estoy dispuesta a apostar que se puede mandar una vajilla entera en la samsonite boricua y no le pasa nada. Claro que nadie piensa qué pasa si le piden en el aeropuerto que las abra. Se oye mucho de lo siguiente:

una noche entera cerrándola!"

Claro que SIEMPRE ha alguien llorando cuando es hora de irse. Pero siempre es alguien que se queda para bregar con el frío y "noche de paz." Pobrecita.

En la salida, el gentío espera, hablando duro, tocando salsa o merengue en esas radios enormes que seguramente son regalos de Navidad para algun familiar. Aunque probablemente hace bastante frío afuera, muchos llevan pantalones cortos y camisetas, preparados para el calor tropical.

Tan pronto anuncian el vuelo, TODOS -- sin importar el asiento asignado -- se levantan y casi atropellan a la pobre muchacha en la entrada. Es tanta la desesperación por llegar a la playa.

Y claro, al apagarse la señal del cinturón de seguridad, el vuelo parece un cabaret -- risa y carcajadas, gritería y a veces un juego de dominó mientras se camina por el pasillo. De vez en cuando enseñan una película, pero es mas bien para entretener a los chiquillos mientras sigue el chismorro.

Después de un rato, una mirada por la ventanilla y ya se puede ver debajo de las nubes el agua cristalina y azul y las montañas. Pronto serás parte de esa tradición boricua de aplaudir al aterrizar y verás las caras de los miles de familiares que te vinieron a buscar, emocionados al verte, y en ese lío estará mami. "Ay, mija. Qué pálida estás. Necesitas sol!"

Sí, en las Navidades se goza más en el Caribe. Y la fiesta comienza en el viaje.

Feliz Navidad
from
Bob Craig



¡Feliz Navidad!
Joe Shelby

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
Feliz Navidad Y Un Prospero Año Nuevo!

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¡Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año 2000!

We are proud of the members of the Hispanic community who make Lubbock a diverse, proud city with a rich heritage. Best wishes and thank you for your business.

To The Nth Degree*
Lubbock

--- A Christmas Story ---

By Wendy Devlin ©1999

One hour north of Manzanillo, Colima, the Primero Plus gave one final jolt in front of Melaque's bus station. From air-conditioned comfort, we stepped down into the afternoon warmth. By arriving mid-December at this small seaside resort, Josh, Rose and myself hoped to beat the vacation crowd due by Christmas. By that time, the small hotels would offer few *cuartos vacantes* (Vacant rooms). Hefting luggage over our shoulders, we headed down along Gómez Farias, Melaque's main beach drag and around the corner. Opening unto a quieter side street, our modest hotel is sandwiched between a low row of cream-colored casas rising directly from the sidewalk. Glancing up from the reservation book atop the huge mahogany desk, Lupita Fallones smiled.

"*¡Bienvenido, Señora Devlin!*" Her dark eyes sparkled as I exchanged Spanglish while booking our room. Rose, thirteen, pointed to the box for the key to room # 3. "Can we stay there again? That's our home in Mexico."

This was our fourth trip to Mexico and third visit to Melaque. Bring kids here when they're small and they want to come back. But the same room? Go figure!

"How's your father and step-mother?"

A fleeting frown creased Lupita's smooth forehead. "Buena. But my stepmother and children live with her family in Colima City. She separated from Nestor last August."

Surprised by this turn of events, I inquired, "So sorry. Is your father around?"

"He'll return ---*mañana*."

Several hours later a short sixty-year old man with a trim mustache knocked on our door. Nestor! He shook my hand formally then embraced me in a warm *abrazo*. At five feet and four inches, our heights match. We chatted happily, catching up on a year of news, then, he disappeared for..... three days!

When I asked twenty-three year old Lupita as to Nestor's whereabouts, her eyebrows arched over a sweet smile. "My father? *Mañanaaaaa*."

That famous *mañana*. *Mañana*, tomorrow, *en la Mañana*, some morning of some *Mañana* or *mañana*, *mañana*, the day after tomorrow. *Mañana*...later Anytime..... but now.

Requiring?..... boundless patience, practice and persistence.

When Nestor resurfaced I joked, "Amigo. Three days--- gone? In Canada, our RCMP search for someone missing after 24 hours."

Coughing quietly, he dropped his head as I translated his Spanish roughly. "Not missing. Sick three days. In bed.....sore throat, coughing. No move a muscle til today. Still, very bad. My wife, kids move away. Maybe I sell hotel. Very bad time for me."

"Lupita told me this when I first arrived. Did you say--- OWN this hotel?"

"Sí. This hotel..... fifteen years. Why so surprised, *amigo*?"

"I'm an idiot! When I met you last year and you said you managed the hotel, I didn't know you owned it. I even wrote about you managing this hotel on the Internet."

"What's Internet? No

understand. I AM the manager. Night and day... day and night... owner too but maybe not much longer. Too many problems."

Seeing his crest fallen face and hunched shoulders, I wanted to squeeze him. But I hesitated because although I consider Nestor a friend, his situation perplexed me. Could I stay a friend but avoid getting caught in domestic crossfire? At the moment he saw little light at the end of his troubles. An old joke popped into my mind: 'Cheer-up! Things could be worse.'

So I cheered up and sure enough things got worse!

Nestor chuckled and took me to dinner.

Over the following week I joked and gently teased him, hoping his gray cloud would lift. Nestor spent a lot of time talking urgently on the phone in the lobby. After my morning walk, I joined folks for a fresh cup of coffee at the Bananarama on Gómez Farias. Sipping slowly, I watched as Don and Marie dished out tasty plates of waffles and eggs or muffins. Enjoying breakfast, I listened to ex-pats, locals and visitors swapping news, gossip, philosophy and jokes. People jostled along the sidewalk, sometimes stopping to chat or slowly rumbling by in vehicles. With her bumpy streets scheduled for paving and a new military base constructed on the outskirts of town, Melaque is gradually changing.

My teens, Josh and Rose divided their time among the small *mercado*, the beach and the hotspots of Melaque's sister village, Barra de Navidad four miles away. For breakfast and lunch they perched on the *mercado* stools, ordering the simple specials. Relaxing on the beach by day, they partied and danced until the wee hours at night. Rarely did they join my daily outings, hiking or riding local buses to outlying villages and their exquisite beaches. Sometimes, they dropped their independence, to join me for *la cena* (supper) with other friends or Nestor at favorite restaurants around the village.

Christmas slowly approached. With little of the *hullabaloo* of North American gift giving, Christmas in Mexico is grounded in family intimacy. Families often spend a *velado* (reunion) together Christmas eve and through the night. Women prepare special foods like 'sweet tamales'; visit while men talk, drink beer and children play. Even the little ones go to Midnight Mass. Afterwards the family *fiesta* continues towards the dawn.

Early Christmas evening, Juanita, Nestor's wife stood in the lobby. As Nestor generally attends to guests, I knew her less well. She is younger than my age of forty-six with long, lustrous wavy hair framing an attractive face. Nestor comes from the distant state of Tamaulipas on Mexico's East Coast. Juanita comes from a family of thirteen children in nearby Colima. Today she met us with a frosty manner.

Reconciliation underway?

Later on I bumped into Nestor and asked what I hoped was a tactful question. "Do you have plans for Christmas Eve?"

His face dropped towards his shoes.

"I do nothing special. Juanita no want to go out. She prepares no special meal. I work like always."



He looked like he wanted to cry. It triggered thoughts of my own husband and oldest son back in Canada at Christmas. My tact dropped into a bucket and started leaking.

"I'm not doing anything either. Let's do nothing together! Last night I went dancing over in Barra. The kids are going back tonight. How about... a few beers? Sit together and talk."

Nestor's gold-capped teeth parted with comprehension. "Buena!"

Returning minutes later from a tiny *tienda*, I spotted Juanita standing in the lobby. Dwarfed behind the huge desk, a man's voice piped from somewhere. "My wife wish to have beer with us, too."

"Sure! There's enough for everyone."

Nestor jumped up and pulled over a heavy chair for Juanita.

Is this a 'delicate situation' in Mexico? Heck it's a situation anywhere! I could join gringos tonight. But I want to see how Mexicans spend Christmas. Gringos I know, *Mexicanos*, I'm learning!

Leaning forward, I reached into my small pack, for some photos of my kids and home. Since Nestor and Juanita speak only a smattering of English, the photos provided conversational help. I gave them copies taken last year in Melaque. A hint of a smile darted across Juanita's face. An hour later the couple's two teens appeared with hands wide open for *dinero*. While rapidly firing Spanish, Nestor dug in his slacks and forked over some paper pesos. A few minutes later, the teens returned, munching on snacks, handing back the change and exchanging another quick round of Spanish. Suddenly Nestor reached down, lifting a large painted sign and perched it on the desk against the wall.

"We go Kids say restaurant having special dinner."

The sign declared in big black letters on a white background.

NO HAY LOS CUARTOS VACANTES (There are no vacant rooms)

Grinning, Nestor pointed towards the wooden cubicles holding several hotel room keys. "Amiga. Six empty rooms! Now... they FULL!"

Nestor, Juanita and myself walked a block, seeking out the small restaurant. Tonight, the humble building and its outdoor patio metamorphosed under soft lighting. A candle glowed in a fish-shaped glass bowl gracing

each outdoor table. Centerpieces of fresh crimson carnations and sprigs of red roses adorned each snowy tablecloth. Tall bottles of rose Champagne and crystal glasses caught quick gleams of light. Strings of clear Christmas lights twinkled, draped along plaster walls and encircling whitewashed bases of palm trees. Beating bongos in the corner, a man crooned soothing Latino melodies. When he switched to a more up-beat tempo, several dining couples sprang to dancing feet.

Nestor waved the young waiter over to order *cervezas*. When the musician returned to ballads, Juanita began singing. Softly she sang the lyrics for every tune.

"Ahhhhhh. My wife. Such a romantic."

"Sí. But you...are Pancho Villa!" Juanita's dark mass of hair flounced without missing a beat.

Did jealousy plague this marriage?

My friends rose to dance a few slow songs. A little later, four other women left their partners, to weave a lively chorus line.

Without a partner I might not get a chance to dance. This looks like it.

I shimmied up to the line. The ladies hooted approvingly while the men clapped wildly for the *gringa* joining their party. The next song, the chorus line formed a chain, picking up most of the men as it wove through the tables and chairs. My jaw ached from smiling and laughing as I flopped back into my seat.

Juanita fixed a glittering

gaze on me.

Something said while I danced?

Nestor flourished his hand to order round three of *cervezas* as heaping plates of seafood steamed upon our table.

The musician stood up, announcing a short break. Loud taped music flirted with the night air. Abruptly the melody shifted to a galloping polka.

Never have I sat through a polka!

Throwing caution to the wind, I cocked my finger to our waiter who strode to the table.

"*¡Un baile, por favor!*"

His white teeth parted in a wide smile and he opened his first finger slightly away from his thumb.

"Momentito. Señora."

He dashed off to the kitchen counter, dropped his serving tray and hastened back.

Gonzalo was a live one! The

next two polkas deposited me breathless in my chair.

"*Gracias, mi amigo.*"

"*De nada. Señora.*"

At our table, her voice pitching higher, Juanita urged Nestor to open the bottle of Champagne.

"*Por Wendy!*"

"*¡No! Gracias. I protested. Estoy mucha borracha.*" (I am very drunk)

Not exactly the truth but if I drank any Champagne, I would be!

Did a glint in Juanita's eye suggest this was the general idea?"

Nestor's hands rocked his head slightly, muttering words like 'home' and 'bed'.

Saved by the bell.

Tonight I rolled as a third wheel. Unescorted women in Mexico walk a tightrope between fun and compromising situations. *Gringas* especially need to avoid getting pigeonholed as loose women. Also Mexicans think badly of a drunken woman at any time. I watched with relief as Nestor purchased the bottle of Champagne and handed it to his wife. Walking back in fine spirits, I teased Juanita.

"You carry that bottle like a baby."

She tossed her head back, laughing and wagged her finger at me.

By two a.m. Josh and Rose returned by taxi from Barra just as Nestor removed the sign upon the front desk. The hotel bell rang incessantly until six a.m. as people continued to arrive looking for *cuartos vacantes*. The inns were full.

A firecracker exploded outside my ground floor window and my second Christmas day in Mexico began. Someone ending their night or beginning their day? Will Mexico ever fail to surprise or delight me?

Feliz Navidad

ESTRADA'S Pawn Shop

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Les desea a todos sus clientes y amigo Vn Feliz Navidad y Vn Prospero Año Nuevo!

FELIZ NAVIDAD!

Merry Christmas!

El Sr. y Sra. Agustin Estrada

feliz navidad

We wish all of you and your loved ones the most wonderful Christmas ever, and in this coming year of 2000, it is our hope that you may have...

- ✦ Enough happiness to keep you sweet
- ✦ Enough trials to keep you strong
- ✦ Enough sorrow to keep you human
- ✦ Enough failure to keep you humble
- ✦ Enough hope to keep you happy
- ✦ Enough success to keep you eager
- ✦ Enough friends to give you comfort
- ✦ Enough wealth to meet your needs
- ✦ Enough enthusiasm to look forward
- ✦ Enough faith to banish depression
- ✦ Enough determination to make each day a better day than yesterday.

This message was a favorite of founder H.D. "Jack" Snell Jr., and sharing it with you has been a United Christmas tradition since 1976.

United Supermarkets

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**Feliz Navidad
Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year**

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Dia de Los Reyes: Three New York Latinos are Kings for a Day

By ROBERT WADDELL

One's a poet, one's an artist and one is a college professor. But once a year, they all become kings for a day.

Papoletto Melendez, Benny Ayala and Jose Olmo-Olmo don regal attire and regalia to become Magi for New York's El Museo del Barrio's annual Día de Los Reyes celebration, participating in what has become a barrio tradition.

The Three Kings march from 106th Street to 3rd Avenue, up

to 116th Street, down Lexington Avenue and back to 104th Street in Manhattan. The celebration, now in its 23rd year, has become a secular and religious intersection of medieval festivity and Latino culture.

"This is for all of us. We show our children a memorable time while returning to our roots, our traditions," said Ayala, who has portrayed King Melchor for the last 15 years.

Unlike the hectic

commercialism that surrounds the holidays, El Día de Los Reyes returns Latino celebrants to the true meaning of Christmas: honoring the birth of Jesus Christ. For the Jan. 5 tradition, children gather up grass and hay and leave it in a box under their beds. The next morning, children are told that the Three Kings' camels have eaten the grass after their long journey, and the kings leave presents as thanks.

"Grass is hard to come by where we live," said Milagros Morales, a librarian at Mott Haven Village School in the Bronx. "So my daughters and I leave cheerios; I think they're sick and tired of eating hay."

Throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, The Three Kings is the preferred holiday of the Christmas season. "When December 31 comes, the holidays are over, but for us the feast continues," said Antonia Anguita of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. Anguita spends months in preparation for the January 6 holiday. She takes used plastic bottles, cuts off the tops, sews miniature clothes and attaches pre-fabricated plastic heads to create miniature statues of Los Reyes for her family and friends.

With the influx of Mexicans and other Latin Americans to New York, the holiday has gained a resurgence in popularity in recent years, said Melendez, who portrays Gaspar

in the New York parade.

But the New York parade is not without controversy. Each year following the parade, The Kings have delivered presents to children in nearby hospitals, then they're invited to City Hall. Last year, Melendez's gift to the Mayor was a performance of "El Borinquen," the song of Puerto Rican liberation. He said that as far as he knows, he and his fellow Kings haven't been invited back to City Hall.

"In the original story," said Melendez, "The kings met for the first time when Herod wanted them to find and tell where the baby Jesus was. They found him, then went their separate ways without telling Herod a thing."

"It's curious that we always wound up at the mayor's house, like we were going to tell Guiliani where Jesus was hiding," he said.

With its general lack of commercialism and close ties to Latino culture, the Day of the Epiphany remains a richly unifying day for many Latinos, say the portrayers of the Kings. They're glad that, so far, the annual parade has not had any vigorous corporate sponsors.

"I'm always hearing about the billions of dollars that can be gained from millions of Latinos," said Jose Olmo-Olmo, who'll portray Baltazar for the first time this year. "It will get tapped as shamelessly as Santa Claus has been tapped."

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Y JACOB ENGENDRÓ A JOSE, EL ESPOSO DE MARTA, DE LA CUAL NACIÓ JESUS QUE ES LLAMADO CRISTO. MATEO 1: 16.

He aquí los versículos con los cuales empieza El Nuevo Testamento. Léamoslos siempre con respeto y reverencia. Cada página de este libro fué escrita por inspiración del Espíritu Santo.



Diariamente rindámos gracias a Dios por habernos dado las Santas Escrituras. Pues cualquiera por iliterato que sea, si comprende la Biblia, sabe más en materia de religión que los más sabios filósofos de la antigüedad pagana. Por lo mismo tengámos en nuestra mente nuestra grave responsabilidad. Porque en el último día todos seremos juzgados según los conocimientos y luces que hubieremos recibido de lo alto. Pues a quiénes mucho se les ha dado, mucho se les exigirá. Léamos la Biblia reverente y cuidadosamente, y con la firme resolución de creer y practicar lo que en ella hallamos. Pue no es materia de poca entidad el hacer buen o mal uso de este libro. Al leerlo imploremos humildemente las luces del Espíritu Santo. Pue El únicamente puede hacer que la verdad penetre en nuestros corazones, y que nos sea de provecho lo que leemos. El Nuevo Testamento principia con la vida, muerte y resurrección de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Por lo mismo ninguna parte de la Biblia es tan importante como esta, y ninguna es tan abundante en detalles y tan completa. Fijémonos que cuatro distintos Evangelios nos refieren la historia de lo hechos y de la muerte de Cristo. Pues cuatro veces leemos la preciosa narración de sus obras y palabras. ¡Cuán agradecidos deberíamos estar por ello! Porque comprender a Cristo es vida eterna. Y creer en Cristo es tener paz con Dios. Seguir a Cristo es ser cristiano verdadero. Y estar con Cristo será el mismo cielo. Jamás podemos saber saber de Cristo más de lo debido. El Evangelio de San Mateo empieza con una larga lista de nombres. diez y seis versículos delinear la genealogía desde Abraham hasta David, y desde David hasta la familia de la cual nació Jesús. Que nadie piense que estos versículos son inútiles. Pues nada es inútil en la creación. Pues lo más pequeño de lo creado sirve para algo. No hay nada inútil en la Biblia. Pues cada palabra en ella es inspirada. Aprended por esto que Dios siempre cumple su palabra. El había prometido que en la familia de Abraham todas las familias de la tierra serían benditas; y que un Salvador debía de salir de la familia de David. Gén. 12:3. Y Gál. 4:4. nos dice: "Mas venido el cumplimiento el tiempo, Dios envió su Hijo, hecho e mujer hecho súbdito a la ley, para que redimiese a los que estaban debajo de la ley, afin de que recibiésemos la adopción de hijos." Para que la bendición de Abraham fuera sobre los gentiles en Cristo Jesús. Y gracias a Dios por ello.

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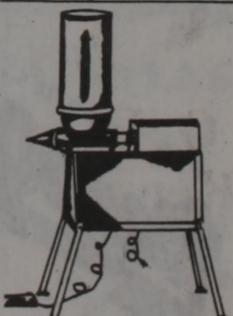
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Christmas In Mexico

The first thing to know about celebrating Christmas in Mexico is that most everybody takes off the last two weeks in December - to party, spend more time with the family, visit with old friends, even make new friends. One of the biggest fiestas of the year - in small towns, big cities, the beach resorts, everywhere - Christmas in Mexico is celebrated in a variety of ways. A common denominator is the *posada*, a recreation of Mary (on donkey) and Joseph searching for a "room at the inn." Accompanying them is a choir of small children who knock on doors asking for lodging for the weary couple. By previous arrangement, there are no takers.

The procession, which takes place during the 12 days before Christmas, moves along, growing in numbers until it reaches the church, where mass is held. After the service, the children get to enjoy a festive *piñata* party.

Even though variations of this *tableaux* are repeated throughout the country, you can expect to find some regional differences, which makes a Mexican Christmas not only a cross cultural mix, but a varied and interesting experience. Year after year. Region after region.

For example, in the *Ajijic* area, a "riviera resort community" suburb of Mexico City, in the little village of *San Antonio*, the *posada* is a most moving and spiritual experience. Same for Taxco and Querétaro. Catch the event in these areas if you can. Also in Querétaro, there's a huge parade on December 23.

In the town of *Cajitlán* (near Guadalajara), as in many other places in the Hispanic world, they celebrate the holidays on Three Kings Day (Epiphany), which falls on January 6th. In fact, this was the traditional time to celebrate the gift-giving aspect of Christmas throughout Mexico. But in most parts of the country, the holiday now coincides with the day of celebration north-of-the-border: December 25. Many children now expect gifts on both days.

The ritual often begins in the afternoon or at dinner time when the family shares a *rosca* or two (a *rosca* is a sweet, ring-shaped loaf with a ceramic *muñeca* (doll) representing the Christ child baked inside). Unlike a cracker-jack box where the winner takes all, whoever is *unlucky* enough to get the doll has to throw a party on February 2 (*Día de Candelaria*) for all the others present. In this case, the "winner", who has to foot the time and expense, is often the loser. (Note: on the afternoon of *Día de Candelaria*, dancers gather for a performance in the churchyard. Sometimes as many as six different dance groups perform at the same time. The dancers are divided among those portraying Christians and Moors, each competing for the most attention. Other groups are represented as well. In small towns where this festival is held, there's also a special market on that day.) The party itself usually includes some favorite dish spiced with a zesty regional *molé* sauce.

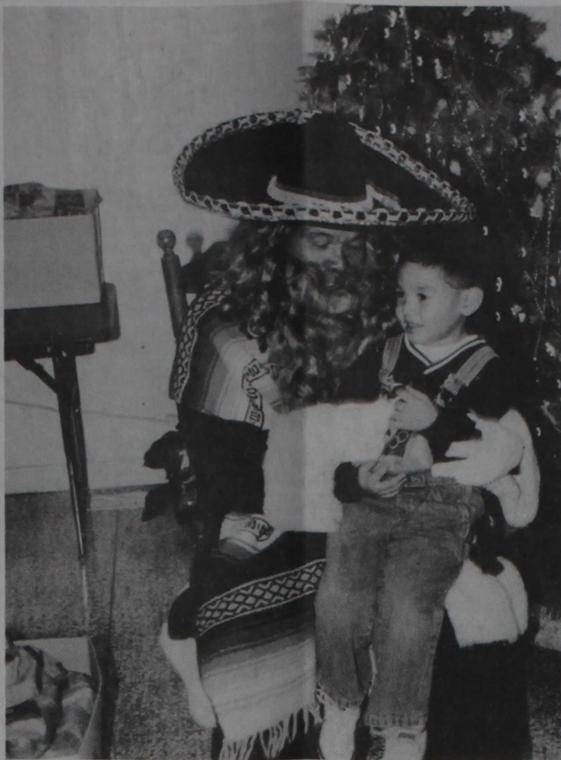
The fiesta for the *Virgin de la Soledad*, the patron saint of Oaxaca, December 16-18, signals the beginning of the *navidad* festivities. The highlight, again, is the *posada*, held at a different church each night from December 18-24. On December

23, the annual *Noche de los Rábanos* takes place. This is a very festive time when booths are set up along the length and breadth of the *zócalo*. The focal point of each booth is an exhibit of hand-carved, giant radishes. Most often, these sculptures carry a religious theme. But this is not necessarily so. The subject could be comical, a scene from a bullfight or anything that strikes the fancy of the sculptor. On *Nochebuena*, processions from various churches fan out to the *zócalo*. There are also colorfully-decorated floats, music, traditional dancing, and *piñata* prizes. The crowning glory of this fiesta is a mammoth fireworks display.

On Christmas Eve, in *Santiago Tuxtla* (Veracruz), everybody assembles in the *zócalo* for an evening of dancing the *huapango* to the accompaniment of a *jarocho* band.

In *Quiroga* (Michoacán), villagers present Nativity plays (*Pastorelas*) at churches on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day.

Even the capital *México City*, takes on a festive air with the famed *zócalo* (or sometimes called the *Plaza de la Constitución*) ablaze with a sea of colorful lights festooning this ancient square. The festival of lights goes on throughout the Christmas/New Year's period. In addition, there's a colorful flag-raising/lowering ceremony every morning and afternoon during the holidays. The rest of the city is similarly decorated. And, of course, traditional services are held in the city's many churches.



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'Twas The Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the CASA,
Not a creature was stirring. I wondered, "QUE PASA?"
I was hanging the stockings with MUCHO CUIDADO.
I hopes that old Santa would feel OBLIGADO,
To bring all the children, both BUENOS Y MALOS,
A nice batch of DULCES and other REGALOS.

My brothers and I went to sleep in our CAMAS,
Some in long underwear, some in PIYAMAS.
When out in the yard there arose such a GRITO,
That I jumped to my feet like a frightened CABRITO.
I ran to the window and looked AFUERA,
And who in the world do you think Quien Era?
St. Nick in a sleigh and a big SOMBRERO.
Came dashing along like a little BOMBERO.
And pulling his sleigh, instead of VENADOS,
Were eight little BURROS, approaching VOLADOS.
I watched as they came, and this fat little HOMBRE
Was shouting and whistling, and calling by NOMBRE:
'AY PANCHO, AY PEPE, AY CUCA, A BETO! 'AY CHA-
TO, AY CHOPO, MARUCA Y NIETO!'

Then standing erect, with his hands on his PECHO,
He flew to the top of our very own TECHO,
With his round little belly like a bowl of JALEA,
He struggled to squeeze down our own CHIMENEA.
Then huffing and puffing and a little CANSADO,
He picked up a bag that looked so PESADO.
He filled all th stocking with lovely REGALOS.
For none of the NIÑOS had been very MALOS.
The chuckling aloud, seeing very CONTENTO,
He turned like a flash and was gone like the VIENTO.
And I heard him exclaim, and this is VERDAD:
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