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GUEST EDITORIAL:

Outside Looking In

By Lloyd Penney

As I write, it's about eight months since the horrors of September 11, 2001. As it will, science fiction became science fact, but in the most terrible way imaginable. Citizens from dozens of countries died in the World Trade Centre collapse...or did they? The way I hear it from American media sources, only Americans died. In those succeeding months, only America (with a little help from Britain) is fighting against terror. There are more countries on the earth than just America; the fight is being fought by many countries that are somehow lost in the media frenzy being presented to the American public in an effort to be more patriotic than their competitors. I am not an American, but I can see both Canadian and American media sources, and the differences are striking. Canadian sources reveal that Americans, Britons, Canadians, Danes, and others are fighting together in Afghanistan. American sources say there's Americans...only. It's as if truth is being edited for content to engender the feeling that it's America against the world.

For those eight months, I've felt subjected to a suffocating flood of red, white and blue ultra-patriotism, plus events that should alarm everyone. Freedom and liberty (not exclusively American words or ideas) are being willingly sacrificed by citizens to show off that patriotism and their desire for ever more militant security. This shows us non-Americans that America has a more and more fearful view of the world, one that is tinged with willing and even eager ignorance of that world, which increased those levels of fear...a destructive circle. Fortress American lives more than ever now. So fearful is America at its heart, it must not only threaten its enemies with retaliation, but also its allies, often with unfair trade sanctions and extreme punitive measures, to keep them on board and in line.

Canada has been a friend of America for a long time, and yet is always leery of what that most powerful neighbor will do. When the WTC was destroyed, hundreds of airplanes were still in the air, and Canadian air space was opened to all planes in need of some place to land. Aid and aid workers flowed from Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and other cities to New York to assist with disaster relief. I know for a fact that one high-tech firm from Toronto immediately sent radar-imaging equipment and staff to create a three-dimensional map of the rubble pile. This allowed rescue teams to see below the surface to find air pockets, and allowed crews to safely bring in heavy equipment to take away the hundreds of thousands of tons of debris. Canadian troops were among the first to join US troops in Afghanistan to fight and destroy the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and we are still there, even with the deaths of four Canadian soldiers from friendly fire. Many other countries sent aid, workers, money, and sympathy.

This horrible event was a blow not only to New York City and the United States of America, but to civilization itself.

What has America's reaction been to this aid? A couple of the 19 terrorists who hijacked the four planes that day had connections to Toronto, so suddenly our borders are too porous for the new levels of security America demands. No matter that the rest of the hijackers had made it to American soil with no problems... Not only now does America attempt to direct our foreign and immigration policies, but is now trying to control our military. The Bush administration has set up a Northern Command, which will control the waters and skies all over the continent, with little if any input from Canada and Mexico. Neither country had any input into the Command's creation, why should America listen to us in its administration? Little by little, America gnaws away at our sovereignty and independence, financially, socially, culturally, and politically, and I honestly fear for my own country's future.

How does the rest of the world see America? As the last superpower in the world and one that can do as it pleases, it is seen as an interfering bully. This bully is rich, relatively stupid, and ten times the size of any other kid in the schoolyard. And now that someone has managed to give this huge bully a black eye, he is striking out in rage at all around him, friend and foe alike, without thought as to what he's doing. The bully also flaunts his wealth, and while his accomplishments are admirable, the glory and benefits are kept for himself, and not for those who may have helped. And most recently, with its withdrawal from the International Court of Justice, saying that such international cooperation would impinge on the sovereignty of the United States, one could say that the bully does not play well with others, and treats all others as if they are completely inferior to themselves. Does being an American somehow make you homo superioris?

I would urge Americans, as human as anyone else on this globe, to arise and take back the freedoms the Bush administration is slowly seizing, and restore the good will Bush has lost on behalf of all of you. This tampering of your rights, and trampling of good will and faith from the rest of the world, is being done in the name of patriotism, perhaps the most potent form of moral suasion available to the government. Remember that not just America, but the whole of the civilized world cherishes freedom as much as you do. New government agencies like the Department of Homeland Security smack of controls of public free speech and assembly; it smacks of the Ministry of Truth. Being a patriot should not mean that you are less free as a result. Do not let Bush become even a hint of the kind of dictator America has worked to get rid of in other countries. The dangers are there; don't let your patriotism blind you to it. Believe me, I am not anti-American. I have relatives in the Cape Cod area, and elsewhere in the US. But, I am anti-stupidity, anti-rapaciousness, anti-greed, anti-bully. I am anti-interference from outside sources. I am pro-Canadian, pro-world, pro-independence, and pro-cooperation. (I am also not so near-sighted as to ignore the shortcomings of my own country. I recognize them, and live with them, and they are being dealt with.) If only America would treat other countries the way they demand other countries treat them, the world wouldn't hate America the way it does. And with that, there is a hint as to why the disaster of September 11 happened. American interference with the affairs of the Middle East is just one reason why Muslim groups have brought terror to America.

America is great, and has the capacity to be even greater. But, greatness does not necessarily come from strength against others, but from strength inside. Instead of all those billions to defense, perhaps one of those billions could go to education, to give the next generations of Americans the knowledge of the world to make informed decisions and opinions. America's strength also comes from its faith, which should recognize that an eye for an eye is more destructive than just. All that faith should recall the Golden Rule, to do onto others as you would have them do onto you, even if they don't. Setting the moral example will justify America's much-vaunted moral imperative.

Have I offended with these words? Probably, but that wasn't my intent, which was to make you think

and reflect. Remember the words of Robbie Burns...O was some Power the giftie gie us, To see oursels as ithers see us. And then, do something about how others do see you. Doing that would make America truly great, restored in all the eyes of the world.

#

I am not a (expletive deleted) crook....
--Richard Milhouse Nixon

THIS ISSUE of *eI* is dedicated to my friend Forrest James Ackerman in hopes that it will hurry his recuperation from surgery. And, at the same time I want to acknowledge the passing this quarter of a fabulous fanzine friend, Bruce Pelz, who has been of help to me many times, including with this very issue of *eI*. I will miss him very much.

Besides the guest editorial, written by my Canadian friend and Memory Hole fellow inmate, Lloyd Penney, two other pieces in this issue were written by others as well. They are Jerry Murray and Gary Sohler, and a bit more about them follows below.

As always, I need to thank my partner in crime, Bill Burns, of <http://efanzines.com>, for his continuing encouragement and cooperation in the publication and distribution of *eI*. Also, this issue, I have special thanks for Bruce Pelz and Robert Speray, and Elaine Harris and Dianne Murray who furnished some wonderful period piece Ajijic photos, and Jerry Murray for his wonderfully nostalgic video. These are the people who helped make this issue possible.

It goes without saying that the balance of the issue, all written by me, is all part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs and, as always, I am looking for any corrections, extensions, illustrations, photos, drawings, jpegs, or anything else you would care to pass along to me at earlkemp@citlink.net any time. Thanks and please keep the letters of comment coming.

I did not have sex with that woman....
--William Jefferson Clinton

Living *La Vida Mota*

There is a theme to the balance of this issue of *eI*, and that is the celebration of ordinary routine daily life in Mexico, and how it differs from the same thing Stateside. All of the articles, either imaginary or real, adhere to that theme alone.

The first two pieces were written by a couple of my alleged friends in an attempt at embarrassing me. This type effort frequently turns out to be the best type for most situations.

Jerry Murray is an old-time best friend of mine. He was also one of the better paperback porn writers of the late 1960s and early '70s. Besides that, he was my camping, woods-running, four-wheeling, boon-docking, off-roading, dope-smoking, howling, brother buddy. We cover a good many years and revolting situations together, and have survived them mostly intact.

Gary, on the other hand, is more of a latecomer. I sort of inherited him from his dad, Stan Sohler, who was one of the early-days naked freaks. Stan was something like a roving ambassador for the American Sunbathing Association and a leftover from the era of sunshine and health nudist magazines. He packaged nudie magazines for Milton Luros at American Arts Enterprises in Los Angeles, then moved on to work for the Porno Factory out of San Diego for a while, also packaging nudie magazines.

Stan had skin like rare Corinthian leather, whatever that is, brown and rather weatherworn, and he wore garlands of love beads made out of strung rabbit pellets. And he did everything he could at all times to get everyone around him to get naked. With a heritage like that, what can you expect of his son...?

Gary came along a bit later, bragging about the things he could do with a camera, especially if he had a model to go with it, or at least a sheep.

Naturally, it was up to me and Fate to bring the two of them together. Gary and Jerry were an explosive combo that blew away all the stops as far as fun and fantasizing are concerned.

Ironically, it was Gary's father who first touted me on many locations in Mexico for nude living. One of those locations was Portecitos, the Sea of Cortez beach colony with the hot-water springs just at the surf line, and another location was Canon de Guadalupe, Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. It was to Canon de Guadalupe, in September 1968 [exactly one month after the two-handed fishing photograph on the Colorado River], that I ventured with Gary and Jerry and a bunch of naked models to produce a book for Greenleaf Classics eventually known as *Hang-Up Canyon* (GP506).

Gary and Jerry, together, were something like a cross between the Katzenjammer Kids and the Hardy Boys. You never knew



Gary Sohler (yellow shirt), Earl Kemp (no shirt), and Jerry Murray (black shirt) with models filming *Hang-Up Canyon* at Canon Guadalupe. Dated September 1968.

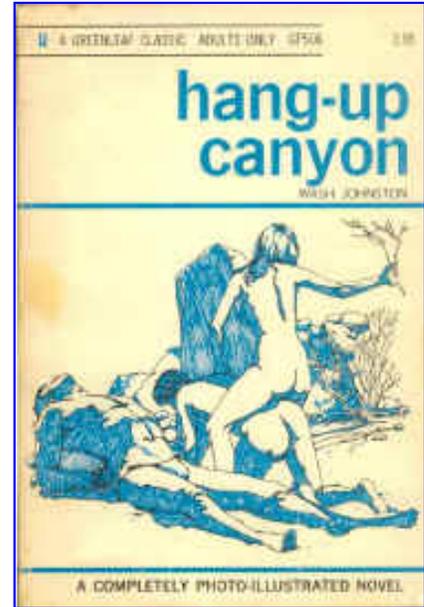
if they were serious or just running on with the gag of the day.

They had worked together before, on a book named Winner Takes All (GP503) when Jerry was Thurlow Mortensen and Gary was F.P. "Jack" Pril, or vice versa.

I couldn't even recognize the combined pseudonym of Wash Johnston that wound up on the Hang-Up Canyon manuscript.

I tried to get them to write an article about that notorious trip, with all of us together there in the remote, idyllic, palm-tree filled Mexican desert oasis of Canon de Guadalupe. They pretended to have forgotten all about the trip and the book.

As a second choice, I finally think I got them to agree to work on separate articles covering at least parts of the same event. This would be a test to see how far two people can screw up without really trying. I leave the results up to the reading public, as always.



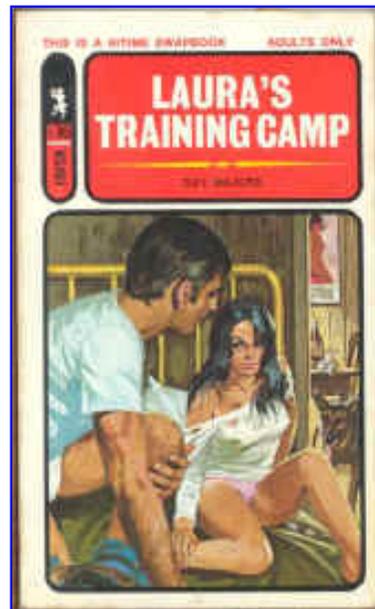
Stay away from needle drugs. Richard Nixon is the only dope worth shooting....
--Abbie Hoffman

The Devil's Weed, Orgasmic Days, y Laguna Lust

By Jerry Murray, a.k.a. Sonny Barker, Ralph Basura, Lance Boyle, Drs. of Sexology Lance and Jill Boyle, Sam Diego, Wash Johnston, Ray Majors, Murray Montague, Joyce Morrissery, Thurlow Mortensen, et al.

I felt Earl Kemp treated me as a favored writer because we became personal friends. For good reasons. We were of the same age, as were our kids, we each had four-wheel-drive vehicles for camping and fooling around in the desert, and both of us enjoyed smoking marijuana. Earl liked to call it the Devil's Weed, and we certainly had some devilish good times with it and the acid that logically followed pot in those libertine times, from San Diego to Baja to dear old crazy old Ajijic.

While we were living and playing in Ajijic, a few miles outside of Guadalajara, I realized Earl treated all the writers in his stable as if they were specially favored, thus drawing out their best efforts and encouraging any special quality he saw in them. My special quality was reliability, an ability to deliver a manuscript on time every time, on any erotic theme he suggested. Reliability was a rarity among carefree pornographers like Johnny Poling, who wrote porn at the urging of his mother Linda Dubriel, the porno grandma, and the only writer in Earl's stable more prolific than me.



Anyway, Earl and I were indeed good personal friends when he suggested that my wife Dianne and I go with him on a trip to Guadalajara, where several Greenleaf writers lived, and proceed on to the picturesque village of Ajijic, where he leased a house. The trip would be made in the luxury of the '69 Lincoln Continental that was part of his salary, and with us would be Earl's daughter Edie, his assistant editor Petie Dixon, and Gary Sohler, the young photographer whom I had very enjoyable working relationships with on several illustrated paperbacks, plus Dianne and I. She, Gary, and Petie spoke pretty good Spanish, I had very little and Earl even less, and heavily tainted with his southern drawl.

We took off at a high rate of speed with Earl, an excellent driver, at the wheel all the way, and stopped in the middle of the night at the border checkpoint at Sonoyta, Sonora to show our travel permits. This was a time when people young and old, but mostly young, were traveling anywhere their fancy took them, by thumb or by car, so there was a long line of gringos ahead of us, and as we inched toward the Mexican authorities, we noticed large tufts of hair strewn the desert around us. As we drew closer, we realized the authorities were admitting no one to their country who looked like a hippie, so gringos were stopping at the side of the road and shearing their own hair off in order to get into Mexico.

The authorities were also inspecting cars for contraband, such as televisions, kitchen appliances, booze, marijuana, anything not manufactured in Mexico, all of which was in Earl's trunk in abundance. But on top of it all, Earl had wisely laid contraband in the form of naked girlie magazines produced by Gary and published by Greenleaf Classics, which deferred further inspection and served as our passports through the border and into mainland Mexico.

We traveled south through Hermosillo, Ciudad Obregon, and Cuilican in the Sonora desert, and stopped at a motel in Guaymas, where Earl insisted on renting unit No. 8 for our party, his reason being that he knew that a gecko was a permanent resident of that unit's bathroom, and ate all the

insects that dared to enter the room. He also knew the way to a Chinese restaurant, where the food was good but the main attraction was a menu written in Chinese, translated to Spanish, and then translated to describe the dishes in hilarious English.

We had showers in No. 8 as we watched our gecko at work, a stroll around town, and started to relax, but still eager to get to Earl's Mexican haven of Ajijic. Over some beers and some gabbing, we agree that nobody was sleepy and checked out after dark and headed south past the Tropic of Capricorn, and up through the jungly mountains to Tepic, the old cowboy town I had seen on my first deep trip into Mexico almost twenty years earlier, where Earl says he was getting very sleepy and needed a fresh driver.

With Petie at the wheel, we are well out of town and into the mountains before he looks at the gauges and sees we're badly in need of gasoline, and he says we'll stop at the next Pemex. That's fine, except that the next Pemex is closed for the night, as is the one forty kilometers later, and as we crest a mountain ridge, the Lincoln quietly runs out of gas.

It is very dark. The only lights we can see as we coast down this long curving grade on the two lane road are apparently from a town somewhere off in the distance, on the floor of this vast, shallow valley we seem to be dropping into. We can't tell if it's a town or a factory, if it's two or ten miles away, but on foot or by Lincoln Continental, we've got to get to it for gasoline. A couple of times Petie is able to start the engine and give us a downhill boost, but it always quits again and there's always a sharp enough curve so he has to tap the brakes again. Deceleration is slow and steady when we reach the bottom of the grade, and off to the left, the lights are appreciably closer, but they could still be ten miles away. So we coast, and we sigh, and we gaze at the distant lights, and when the big car silently moves along from a walker's pace to a dead stop, we see a dozen cars lined up facing us on the shoulder of the highway to our left.

Their drivers are standing in little groups, bent at their waists to peer back at us in hopes the wallets and luggage of the Lincoln's occupants matched the value of their car. It is very quiet, and it is a warm night, so the car's windows are open, and now we catch a whiff of marijuana floating across the road, and Earl opens the back door and softly says, "Hi? Hola?" They hola back at him and make a move to cross the road, we all get out of the car to meet them, hands are shaken, courteous words are spoken, cigarettes are offered, the mention of gasolina is made, and the drivers point at the lights and start talking too fast for any of us but Gary and Dianne to understand.

"Yeah, that's their town, about a mile away but everything's closed. These guys are all the town's cab drivers and those are their taxis-see how they're painted? One of their fellow cab drivers died a few days ago. He was from Tijuana, and his pals are waiting for the hearse to get here to lead the funeral procession back to his home town."

Earl opened the Lincoln's trunk and we entered into the spirit of the occasion by joining the cabbies in an impromptu wake in the middle of the road. It was a pot luck wake, we supplying American whiskey, beer, cigarettes, and girlie magazines, them supplying Mexican reefers, beer, tamales, and gasoline until dawn, when the hearse appeared to head the parade and we retired to the Lincoln for a nap.

I'm not sure what happened that next day, but I know we got to Guadalajara late at night, too hungry to go on to nearby Ajijic without sustenance. And lo and behold, there was a Denny's 24-hour diner. In we went and found ourselves in a charmingly raucous gay bar, which made us realize Mexico wasn't the puritanical bastion of Catholicism of its past. Leaving there laughing, Earl drove 40 kilometers more to Ajijic and gave us a midnight tour on the cobblestoned streets of the village where some 5,000 gringos and Mexicans lived in colonial comfort.

As we passed by the plaza, Earl stopped and asked a Mexican kid, "Hay mota?"

The kid said, "I sure do. Five bucks for a bag of really good stuff," and whipping out a fat bag of marijuana, told Earl to ask around town for Pepe whenever he needed more. Laughing again but too tired to do anything but crash, nothing about Earl's Ajijic house registered on us except its beds.

When a late morning sun awakened us to a clear blue sky, we started appreciating Earl's captivation with his little corner of Mexico.

Comfortably seated on the shaded patio, Earl greeted us with a serenely wide grin and glasses of fresh-squeezed orange juice, and invited us to join him for coffee and pan dulce, freshly baked early that morning by the family of his maid when they heard-incredible grapevine-that Earl's Lincoln had been seen in town. She greeted us shyly as she arranged a platter of mangos, oranges, and melon slices in the open-air kitchen, and Earl said she'd start cooking our breakfasts whenever we were ready.

His back yard held a manageably small expanse of thick green grass, nicely tonsured, surrounded on three sides by wide beds of tropical plants, banana trees, and a huge mango tree, all heavy with fruit, and beyond it a high whitewashed adobe wall. The house was laid out in an L-shape around the patio, with a large sleeping room at the short end of the L and the kitchen between it and the master bedroom in the corner of the L, next to a living room/den with a fireplace, and the double-doored entryway was next abutted that.

A black wrought-iron spiral stairway led up to another sleeping room and a tiled sunroof that looked down on the cobblestoned streets and over the adobe walls that contained the privacies of Ajijic's other inhabitants. It was a typical vacation house for a well-off Mexican family, leased for a pittance in US dollars from a landlord who pre-approved any changes his tenants wanted to make, and Earl's changes included a lot of psychedelic and erotic posters and murals on the walls.

He took us on a stroll around the town, past houses and little stores from which their owners sold groceries, booze, haircuts and shaves, shoes, coffins, underwear, meals, nostrums, shirts and pants, medical services, legal advice, dresses and stockings, baby clothes, anything a person needed to stay alive in a small town. None of the storeowners seemed to be doing much competing with the others, and most of them smiled at the newest gringos in town.

We kept bumping into other gringos as Earl showed us his town, and they were always ready to tarry as long as we wanted to hear them tell anything from the way to the public library to the story of what brought them to live in Ajijic. Pete Peterson, Trudy Campbell, Peggy Neal, Mercedes Boone, Wendell Phillips, Stogie, that couple that lived by the highway and she used to play chess with me and try to get me in bed, the various artists, big blonde gringa Jan and big Mex Manuel that had the boutique, Margo whose son ran the Coca-Cola concession in Bogata, Colombia and could make original formula Cocaine-Cola with real coke, Neil James that had parrots throughout her magnificent gardens, the retired B-24 pilot, the old woman who wrote cook books and later got mugged and raped, Susie the wealthy divorcee who slept with her Mexican gardener, the ancient Russian ballerina Madame Zara with the colorful clothes that rode her horse around town, ultimate loser Hogan, the judge from Chi that got murdered, the bride of the blind man who murdered him shortly after they came to Ajijic, Susie Nissen, Red Raymond's mother Marge Bernardi (Official Supplier To The Grateful Dead!), so many others to remember.

Plus the porn writers. Vivien Kern, with daughters Vickie and Nonnie and halfway husband Norm, Jim Brown, whose heroes all had "hairy dicks," S&M writer Vern Lundgren and Susie, his young blonde wife, Johnny Poling and Chonacki, the Gilmores, Les Gladson, that old cowboy writer Lee Florin who

got his heroines orifices reversed, and on and on.

Di and I met all these widely diverse characters in the course of three or four trips to Ajijic that preceded our decision to move there for a year or two. A factor in our decision was we were sick unto death of the Vietnam War and all the social turmoil that went with it, and another was that we were not getting along very well. Ajijic seemed like a splendid place to hide while we healed our marriage.

I guess it was 1970 when we packed our new VW van with stuff and headed for Ajijic, where we rented a partially furnished two-bedroom house on Calle Juarez, with a patio and a deep back yard, a gardener and a maid for \$85/month. As with most houses in Mexico, the front wall of the house was right at the sidewalk, and it had a deep back yard ending with a high adobe wall that was common with the property behind it. That property was one of the shops that faced on the plaza, where much of the village's daily activities were centered. The shops around the plaza included a small but complete corner grocery, where either Di or I shopped just about every day.

I usually circled the plaza once or twice on the way to the store, chatting with people, finding out where the next party might be, or when one of our gringo friends would be back from a shopping trip to the States. Most of the stores were open-air, including the barbershop, where I always checked to see if Earl was back from one of his global trips for Greenleaf. While Di and I were full-time residents, Earl probably spent half his time in Ajijic and the other half was split between San Diego and on his book-buying trips for Greenleaf.

On his return he usually strolled a few blocks to the barbershop and relaxed in the chair, greeting passersby and watching the lazy action in the plaza while he got the deluxe treatment for a few pesos and a generous tip. Seeing him there in the barber chair, I'd buy some cold drinks and relate the town gossip while he'd tell me the high points of his stops in Tokyo, Saigon, Hong Kong, New Delhi, Tangier, his favorite city, Paris, London, around the world in first class all the way, quietly searching the bookstores and private collections for erotic classics that had entered the public domain and thus represented big, quick profits for Greenleaf Classics and its competitors in the porn section of America's sexual revolution.

On the corner next door to the barbershop was the town's jail, two adobe cells separated by a tiny office, with barred windows facing the street, so a guest of the sheriff could chat with his friends and explain things to his wife when she brought him lunch. The grocery store was catty-corner across the cobblestone street from the jail, and next to that was the town's most popular tortilleria and panaderia, which featured a pay telephone for making long distance calls in addition to freshly made tortillas and bread.

Private telephones were extremely rare. Only telephone company stockholders could have phones to begin with. It cost Don Gilmore \$3,000 USA in stock to get a telephone line installed in his house. Calls to or from there worked normally anywhere in the world.

Since all long distance telephone calls were routed through Mexico City, making a phone call to the states could be an all-day affair, and usually a pleasant one. You strolled to the tortilleria in the late morning and wrote down the phone number and gave it to the baker.

After helping you get comfortable on a folding chair on the sidewalk, you were on your own until the phone call went through Mexico City twice before hopefully getting you connected with your important conversation. The hours were occupied with reading, chatting, drinking beer, and eating snacks obtained at the grocery store, sometimes just dozing. But when the sheriff and his two deputies were drinking beer by his beat-up official pickup truck parked on the plaza, you just smiled and kept walking without trying to place your call.

This was basically because of a practice traditionally followed in America's Wild West, which may have been imported from Mexico, and consisted of recruiting the cops for small towns from prisons. For example, Ajijic's sheriff was a murderer who, after five years of good behavior, was told that he, being very knowledgeable and unafraid of criminal behavior, could be released to be a small town sheriff until he misbehaved to the point of being returned to prison. His deputies were in for lesser crimes, and released to be kept in control by their murderous boss. I think our own Bat Masterson had his initial fame under this arrangement, but anyway, it worked with our sheriff, except when he and his boys spent the day drinking beer by the plaza.

Sometime after midnight in one of those days, residents of Ajijic were awakened by a series of gunshots that sporadically roared here and there around the town. Next morning when we ventured forth from our casas, the bloody carcasses of dead dogs littered the streets. The sheriff just shrugged. "You gringos complained so much about the stray dogs that we drove around in the truck and took care of them. And now you complain about it?"

Every now and then a frightening rumor would sweep through the gringo community. Having spotted every dope-smoking gringo in town, in a day or two their houses would be invaded and tossed for mota, and anyone in its possession would pay a big fine or go to jail. We all came to know it was just a rumor, but since the raiding party would be led by the unpredictable sheriff, everyone buried their dope in their backyards, and often in Earl's, and refrained from getting obviously high for the next few days.

When I was closing my house in Ajijic, I asked every special person who had lived there to provide me with a map of any hidden or buried treasure on my property. I received a dozen nicely detailed maps and spent the final two days, with my friends, digging up and consuming the treasure trove while I packed the few things I found necessary to keep from the house, starting with the artwork.

Then, reluctantly, I drove away without looking back as my friends began my Grand Moving Sale. Camelot no more.

--Earl Kemp

Some of the dope was extremely powerful, and this was long before the days of carefully mutated marijuana. One day Gary Sohler came to our house with a pair of vacationing American Airline stewards from New York City who didn't believe his tales of the potency of the locally grown weed.

Di and I always had three varieties in our refrigerator, everyday, weekend, and holiday mota, and after explaining this to the young sophisticates, they insisted on smoking, not sharing, a joint of our best stuff. Half an hour later they didn't know where they were, couldn't understand who we were or why we were laughing at them, and wept in their need for someone to get them to the posada, two blocks away.

Why did we smoke so much dope and drink too much booze and have so many parties? Because we were rich enough to be worse than the young men escaping the draft by going to Canada, and therefore escaping the ridiculous Vietnam War and the coincident turmoil around the world by getting high on the best absolute best pot and drunk on excellent dollar-a-liter Mexican rum and either host or go to any available party.

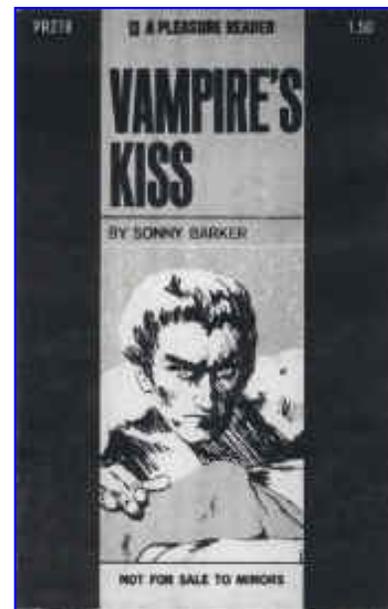
But there wasn't any complete escape from the rest of the world. Earl often brought it home from his

trips abroad. On one return he talked about having scheduled a few days in Frankfurt to shop for some books while he wandered the peaceful and interesting streets. And rounding a corner, BAM!, he found himself in the middle of a violently loud protest, in which the polizi, on horseback, used tear gas and truncheons on the rebellious kids-being led by "Red Rudy"-who had, for global publicity reasons, forewarned the press of their intent to disrupt the city as long and loud as possible from behind barricades.

I could forget all that global nonsense by writing doity books until two o'clock every afternoon, napping, showering, and getting pleasantly high with the evening's guests before another excellent dinner, and ambling a few blocks to a party where everyone got loaded and danced and talked the night away.

Peggy Neal's parties were the best. She was a blonde, fortyish mother of two teenage girls, grandly but tenuously living on the government dole for widows of Air Force pilots shot down in the Korean War. Just meters away from the Posada, her rented hacienda was beautifully weary and filled with character, including wagon wheel chandeliers for cheap Mexican candles, whose dripping wax made some of the dancing steps exceptionally lively.

At one of her parties the chattering guests were suddenly silent, captivated by the appearance of a young man in tight black trousers and a turtleneck, holding a matched pair of black police dogs on short silver choke chains as he posed dramatically in Peggy's front entry. As the silence turned into a buzz, it was whispered about that the stranger was named Hogan, who had been in so many scrapes in the States that his wealthy father was paying him \$700/month to keep the hell out of the States.



Since it was a different sort of story, we didn't care if it was a rumor or not. Di and I saw him around town now and then and met him at parties a few times, but hadn't much cared for him because of his rather braggadocio bearings. A few months later our interest was piqued by the news that Hogan was leaving for the state of Guerrero with \$20,000 in cash to invest in enough Acapulco Gold to make him rich for the rest of his life. Next it was said that Hogan's cash had been exchanged for machine gun bullets that ended his life in the jungle, and this we believed when he came back to town in a coffin. Since his father still didn't want him back in the States, he was buried under a big black granite cross in a little cemetery along the highway to Jocotepec from Lake Chapala.

A few months later, when the owner of some lakeside property wanted to build a hotel on it, the bulldozer on its way to clear the land took a shortcut through the cemetery, which resulted in only one coffin being unearthed, and of course, it spilled out its contents, Hogan, the ultimate loser, even unto death.

Then there's The Clem Story. Clem was also a remittance man because he was such an enthusiastic and persistent alcoholic. None of his family could handle the thought of watching him so they paid him to stay out of the States. Clem was walking home from one particularly noteworthy Ajijic party-noteworthy because of The Clem Story-in the pre-dawn hours. When he reached his house he went into the kitchen and accidentally stumbled against his drinking water stand. This is a tall, metal stand holding an upended 5-gallon bottle of drinking water...a top-heavy fixture in every local kitchen.

When Clem stumbled against his water bottle stand and knocked it over, it went crashing heavily

against the hard tiled floor. The bottle broke open like a slow-motion flower lifting its bright red petals upward in offering. An offering Clem couldn't resist, in his stupor, as he fell onto that flower, guaranteeing its redness. They found him there the next day, just like that, shredded and all parted out. They buried him real close to Hogan.

Earl may not have been in Ajijic at the time of the Hogan disinterment, but whether or not he was in or out of town, his house was the social hub of activity for his expatriate writers. And on his return he was always pleasant, always courteous, always ready to entertain at his house or anyone else's, or spend an evening of dancing and gabbing at the Posada.

To illustrate his implacably pleasant nature, after having been entrusted to look after Earl's near new Lincoln company car while he was on one of his Asian trips, I all but totaled the big beauty one drunken night on the road to a night club party at La Pantera Rosa in Chapala. On Earl's return, he shrugged at the repairs we'd had made and said he was sorry he'd missed that particular party.

Why did we expatriates party so much, why did we drink booze and smoke pot every day, and why did we constantly compete with each other in juvenile adventures like shooting off hundreds of skyrocketes as big as sticks of dynamite at the fiestas, and making globos-hot air balloons-that soared up and out of sight, and having affairs with anyone handy? The universal reason was escaping from the Vietnam War, and all the lies and stupidities and prejudices and politics that went with it. Contributing to this excuse on a personal basis was the fact that my time in Ajijic was the peak of the decade of freedom from responsibilities I had earned as a fiction writer after entering kindergarten at four and working, getting my first job when I was ten years old.

Di loved life in Ajijic for a different reason. She often said she'd been born a hundred years too late, and should have crossed the prairie on a wagon train. After that year in Ajijic, I often found myself saying how I increasingly missed the reality of living in the States, regardless of all its faults. When I said I was going back, Dianne said good-bye.

#

Lively little Ajijic has undergone a change or two in the last thirty-five years. Luxury homes now look down from the mountains on the village whose gringos are primarily sedate retirees, paying over \$1,000 a month for places like the one we rented for \$85. The streets are still cobblestoned, but a great many new SUVs are parked on them now, and there's a supermarket on the highway, and though the Posada's bar and restaurant are still functional, the dance floor is gone and the hotel rooms are now condos. When I visit Di and walk around town, I try to ignore these changes and look for stores and houses that haven't changed much in the passing years.

When I look in through the gates of the houses' high whitewashed walls at the gardens and see tuberous begonias three feet tall and blossoming with a brilliance you see nowhere else, I recall that the plant is indigenous to that one area in all the world. I think about lying in the shade of a stand of giant bamboo on a hot, humid day and hearing the bamboo grow-crack! Cr-crack-Crack. I remember



Jerry Murray was No. 1 Gringo Globo maker in Ajijic. He was also the hand's-down most popular gringo kid magnet. This gaggle includes platinum-haired Erik Kemp.

Photo by Dianne Murray dated September 1971.

ducking at the rustling sounds of overripe fruit falling down through the leaves of the huge mango trees.

Passing the plaza I vividly remember a day when Earl and I and our visiting kids followed Pepe across the highway and hiked up the mountain, where our guide showed us the entrance to the secret cave leading down and back under the highway to the cavern under the plaza where Pancho Villa stashed a horde of gold during the Mexican Revolution. As we skidded down the steep and narrow tunnel into the cave, hordes of bats flew out countercurrent to us and our shrieking kids. On we went, guided by flashlights, the twisting, narrowing cave getting warmer and warmer until we got to The Treasure Room, where the treasure we found was a pool of warm and amazingly clear water, populated with a school of tiny blind fish.

Fireflies entertained us every night when they were in season, and there was always a season in Ajijic, because Laguna Chapala was big enough to create its own weather system, so streaky neon lightning storms frequently lit up the night to entertain the whole town. There was also a dry season so interminably long that every leaf and twig of the lovely mountainous jungle around us turned a dreary brown. And when the long anticipated rainy season began, the streets were awash with tin cans and cigarette butts and dog turds and dust, which didn't stop the people from dancing on the cobblestones and watching the foliage turn sparkling green and their houses become white-walled and red-roofed once again.

Sure, I appreciated all that meteorological and scenery stuff, as well as our little archaeological expeditions, but that was thirty years ago, when Ajijic's people were its really absorbing interest. Not until it was pointed out to me years later did I realize that Mexico had been quite a fashionable place in which to live. Towns like Ajijic and San Miguel de Allende were particularly fashionable because they were colonies of expatriate artists, writers, and other creative types...second-rate versions of Paris in the turbulent 1920s.

Memories of the marvelously colorful and rebelliously talented people we knew in Ajijic remain so vivid that I could greet many by name if I met them on the street. Extremely unlikely, and I remain in touch with very few. Earl is retired and writing in Arizona, Gary manages commercial construction projects in Hawaii, and Dianne deals in Ajijic real estate. I'm a technical writer in San Diego, happily married to wife No. 3, and my "kids" who visited us in dear old crazy old Ajijic are older than I was then.

As Kurt Vonnegut Jr., a favorite writer of the era, said in ending his novels, "So it goes."

#

Philosophy is to the real world as masturbation is to sex....
--Karl Marx

Disgracias Con Diablo El Mismo (Misadventures with The Devil Himself)

By Gary Sohler, a.k.a. Ralph Basura, Wash Johnston, F.P. "Jack" Pril, et al.

Earl Kemp? Yeah, I know him. He almost killed me once. Actually, he almost killed me several times, all in one day.

It was the late 60's, or maybe the early 70's. The sexual revolution had fully matured, and if you were in the porno business, which a few of us were, life was good. Earl was the editor at Greenleaf Classics, a San Diego publisher of mainstream print media smut that was good enough to make everyone at the company, including the contributors, very comfortable. If you have read Jerry Murray's (aka Lance Boyle) excellent article in this edition of Earl's ezine, you know that Jerry and I were Greenleaf contributors; Jerry as a prolific paperback writer and me as a semi-prolific magazine packager. In the course of business, Earl, Jerry, and I became, and still are, good friends.

The year Earl tried to kill me must have been a banner year for Greenleaf because Bill Hamling, the Greenleaf publisher, in a fit of magnanimity, gave all of his top executives-including Earl-a brand new gold-colored Lincoln Continental as a bonus. It was in this very same Continental that I almost lost my life. In his story, Jerry Murray refers to a drive from San Diego in the Continental to Earl's wonderful hacienda in Ajijic as taking place, "at a high rate of speed." There was a little more to the story than that.

After reading a copy of The Whole Earth Catalog shortly before Earl got his Lincoln, I had given up the porn business, the fast lane, and L.A., and with my wife and two cats had bought a funky sheep farm in Oregon, grown a pony tail and had, to quote Dr. Tim Leary, "Dropped out." Jerry Murray and his wife and kids stopped by to see us on a trip to Washington, and his visit was very timely. After a year of rain, mud, sheep shit, endless backbreaking work, and vicious redneck neighbors, I was ready for any kind of relief. Jerry provided it by inviting me to accompany him, Earl, Earl's managing editor Pete Dixon, and "maybe some other people" on a trip to Earl's sunny villa in Old Mexico. The only word I heard in our whole conversation was "sunny." I signed up on the spot. Jerry picked me up on the return trip from Washington and I left my poor blubbing wife Gloria there on the farm with a list of chores and hopped into Jerry's car with my backpack. I felt like Tom Joad, Jack Kerouac, and Martin Luther King all rolled into one. "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last!"



Gary Sohler and Jerry Murray with models on location with Hang Up Canyon at Canon de Guadalupe, Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Dated September 1968.

Greenleaf Classics had two peters and one noticeable prick in the editorial department. Both the peters were called "Pete." Peter V. Cooper was Editor in Chief and Patrick A. Dixon was Managing Editor. To differentiate, we started calling Pete Dixon "Petey" because Pete Cooper was much bigger than him.

--Earl Kemp

A couple of days later we assembled at Earl's house in El Cajon, California and in much haste roared off toward the border in Earl's shiny new Lincoln. Besides Earl, Jerry and his wife Dianne, Petey and myself, the "other people" turned out to be Earl's (then married) daughter Edie.

We weren't over the border into Mexico 30 seconds before launching the hunt for mota. Weed. Grass. MariJUANA, cabron! We didn't dare cross the border through Mexican customs dirty, especially in a car that literally shrieked, "RICH GRINGOS, AQUI!" It's hard to believe now, but in those days you could actually-and we did-cruise the streets of Mexicali or Tecate, pull up next to any nefarious-looking Mexican gutter bum and blurt out, "Hey amigo; hay mota?" On the second try we got a "Si." We actually gave the guy some cash; I think it was \$10 or \$15, on the front, and waited in the car, somehow KNOWING that the fucker would come back, and with a bag of weed. Sure enough, not ten minutes went by before the guy resurfaced, slunk over to the car, furtively looked both ways, and quickly shoved a paper shopping bag into the car. This was a supermarket paper shopping bag, mind you, and the damned thing was three-quarters full. We were on our way.

Pissing on prudence and better judgment, Earl immediately ordered Petey to start rolling joints, which he did, even before we got out of town and hit the highway. Sort of like just another day at the office while on vacation for him. We weren't ten miles into the Sonoran Desert before the passenger compartment looked like Cheech and Chong's Chevy in Up In Smoke. It was late afternoon and the air over the infinite desert landscape was preternaturally clear.

The distant Sierra Madre Mountains were knife-edge purple in the fading light. Earl was driving. It occurred to me, in a wonderful somnambulistic fog, to look at the speedometer. It read 140 mph. Steady. I laughed. We were bulletproof. We were FREE! We were flying. We were rich motherfucking gringos with a Holy Mandate From God Himself to get to Ajijic, with all due speed, in His Golden Chariot of Fire.

For most Americans a 24-hour non-stop drive through the vastness of a Western desert is a stupefying experience. The stoned and specious conversation in our car quickly ebbed with the onset of darkness. Finally, in the ominous silence of Carlos Casteneda's and Don Juan's mystical Yaqui desert, Earl blurts out the non sequitur, "Man, am I ripped!"

Two grunts of acknowledgment from the back seat.

Eons later, Earl figures out that he's in Mexico and amends his statement to use the Mexican pronunciation of "ripped" by changing it to "reeped." Somewhere between Hermosillo and Ciudad Obregon, exhaustion sets in and he abbreviates his exclamation all the way down to "Reeped." It is this, and only this, that we heard for the next thousand fucking miles. That and his frequent cackling laugh.

If you've never heard Earl laugh, it sounds like the cackle of a Salem witch with an Arkansas accent, being burned at the stake and liking it. Unique. Inimitable. Irritating as hell.

Despite utter darkness, we are still hurtling ahead at 140 mph with Earl at the wheel. This on a narrow, two-lane, blacktopped Mexican highway notorious for obstructions such as cows, chickens, drunk campesinos, rocks, bicyclists, dogs (dead and alive), vados (dips), unannounced construction, broken down vehicles in the lane, purposeless smudgepots, towns, shit- WHOLE FUCKING TOWNS FULL OF PEOPLE! But nothing stops us. We are a gold-plated \$15,000 American Gringo Capitalist Pig Juggernaut with leather upholstery and probably insurance, though I didn't see Earl take any out in Tecate. Fuck it. We're rolling. "Reeped." Cackle.

Thank You Merciful God; Earl finally gets tired and agrees to trade off to the next driver, who is Jerry Murray. For eleven hours we have all endured seemingly endless stretches of eventless light-speed travel punctuated by sudden horrific slamming brakes and vicious swerving to avoid sudden death of either ourselves or other mammals. Forget counting the desert rodents, birds, or coyotes. Devil take the hindmost. We continue trading drivers. And every fifteen minutes, like A Clockwork Orange, or Chinese water torture, we hear, "Reeped." Cackle.

I begin counting my blessings as we pass through the towns of Culiacan and Hermosillo and realize we haven't encountered the ultimate Mexican nightmare; two semi trucks, one passing the other on a narrow, two-lane mountain road on a hairpin turn, coming our way. How have we avoided this penultimate disaster? I don't know. "Reeped." (Cackle.) Maybe we really are on a mission from Dios.

Jerry Murray is prudence itself. He never exceeds 120 mph. Petey Dixon is a fucking maniac. Worse than Earl. He has a death wish, and I don't even look at the speedometer while he's at the wheel. In vain I petition to empty my bladder between towns in the slim hope that by making the car stop while Petey is driving I'll somehow make him drive slower on the next stretch. What a fucking fool I am. I piss onto the roadside and look up at the stars, thinking to myself that this will be the last time I'll ever see them until I ascend out of my horribly twisted and burned body to join God in Heaven. Next to me I hear Earl, (cackle) "Reeeeeeeeped."

We don't even let Edie or Dianne drive. Killing six people in Mexico would look really bad on their driving records. They'd never get insurance.

I take over the wheel somewhere in the early morning and, not wanting to appear the frightened young wimp with-everything-to-live-for that I am, I ram the Continental Titanic up to 110. Fuck it; that's my limit and I'm sticking to it. I'm 23 years old. It's pitch black out, we're in Mexico, I've got my whole life ahead of me, and besides, I've already started to bust some moves on Edie in the back seat. She and I have agreed that we'll very likely end up as charred corpses on the side of a Mexican highway, so we might as well fall in lust right now, but my fantasy hardon shrinks as I hear...Cackle, "Reeped."

Long toward noon of the next day we finally rolled into Guadalajara and the jarring cacophony of roadside vendors, choking smog, thunderous traffic, and the urban nightmare of Big City Mexico. I think we stopped for some coffee and pasteles, just to keep body and soul together, then headed out on the south road from Guadalajara to Lake Chapala.

The road from Chapala through Ajijic to Jocotepec is a two-lane blacktop "highway" with nobody on it. I begin to think that we have actually made it alive. Edie and I have been holding hands in our sleep in the back seat. I awake to see several hundred feet of one entire lane of the road crudely blocked off with simple whitewashed rocks and what turns out to be millions of inch-long silver fish spread out on the roadway to dry in the sun...charales. The local Lake Chapala fishermen catch this protein from the lake with unbelievably intricate nets, then haul them to the highway in wheelbarrows where they dump them out on the tarmac. Fat Mexican fisherwives in woven straw hats and colorful print dresses with stick brooms continuously rake and sweep these inch-long fish back and forth on the hot highway to dry them in the unrelenting Ajijic sun. Traffic in the "fish" lane patiently waits while our Sherman Tank of a Continental barrels down the highway toward the cool sanctity of Earl's hacienda.

Earl's house is secluded, comfortable, and modern by Mexican standards, and his maid does our laundry every day, including ironing our underwear, which blows my mind. My wife doesn't even do that. Our stay in Ajijic was idyllic, pastoral, mind-blowing, restful, fulfilling, and everything we hoped it would be. More so because we all tacitly knew that we had survived a deadly road trip of Hunter Thompson proportions to a village already made notorious by Ken Keasey with his Kool-Aid Acid Bus

tour. As I walked into the house and unpacked in my room, I thought of the stranded dead dried fish on the highway just a mile away, and thought to myself, "That could have been us."

Miraculously, Earl stopped saying "Reeped" as soon as we got to the hacienda. I'm glad. I guess it was a road trip thing. Had he continued we might have killed him. No, not really. He made this, and Jerry's story possible. We had a misadventure with The Devil Himself.

#

Yes, over the next couple of weeks in Ajijic, Edie and I had a torrid affair right there in Earl's house, much to his dismay. Edie eventually left her husband in San Diego and I eventually left my wife in Oregon.

Like Jerry Murray and maybe some other 60's and 70's porno carpetbaggers, we're out of the porno biz now. In fact I don't know anyone from those days who is still in the biz, but I do know that we all enjoy our memories and are very grateful to Earl for helping make some of them happen.

I'm a construction manager now, 58 years old, happy as hell, still working full-time, and living in very comfortable circumstances on the beach in Kailua, Hawaii. I cherish every memory from that era and wouldn't change a thing in my life. Thanks, Earl. But mostly for not saying "Reeped" any more.

#

It is not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal; that is why superiority has been accorded to humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills....

--Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1950)

"Marijuana Por Fumar"*

Most gringos think the original sound-track recording for Mexico features a lot of choruses of "La Cucaracha." And, they don't realize the song is about marijuana, marijuana por fumar...to smoke; the gringo version of the song was politically correctly sanitized to be drug free.

One would even think that pot...mota as they call it...was a Mexican creation, only that certainly wasn't the truth. Nonetheless, if you really looked for it, you could encounter it in one form or another wherever you roamed around Mexico...in abundance. That was true of Ajijic...like anywhere in Guadalajara...where you had no difficulty at all getting any amount of weed you might ever dream of wanting to have for any reason. It was cheap, too, going for around \$10. USA a kilo then. It was commonplace, when being a guest, to bring a hostess gift; more often than not that consisted of a kilo of grass. It would be tossed among the other hostess gifts for the evening; the variety and flavors would be sorted out later.

If it wasn't in brick form, it was fresh growing green. If your dealer happened to be out of kilos whenever you ordered, he'd simply substitute one six-foot-tall marijuana plant chopped into sections with a machete and stuffed into a grocery bag. An entire \$10 worth of fresh green weed. If necessary, you microwaved it in a hurry. Or, you kept the stems and sticks and brewed tea with them later. Sprays of fresh green marijuana turned up in floral arrangements, centerpieces, and as hostess gifts.

Total strangers would knock on your door and present you with sprays of pot. "Welcome to Ajijic," they'd say, and what a welcome it was once you got over the shock of the cultural differences and tried to think for yourself.

The social scene was something really running out of control. Everyone was always having parties and as an occasional guest you were expected to occasionally entertain so you got to the point, if you didn't work at it, where every afternoon contained a cocktail party and every evening contained a dinner party. The booze flowed endlessly as did the pot from machine-rolled joints to frosted brownies.

In one form or another, you were smashed out of your gourd most of the time. At least between hangovers.

There was never any downtime between parties. If you committed to the scene you were locked in to endless running, endless drunks, endless hangovers, and endless highs.

Some of these parties were quite elaborate and featured open bars with hired bartenders, catered food, extra servants, hired musical entertainment for mini-concerts...everyone trying to outdo everyone else.

There was cocaine, too, at some of these parties, and various hallucinogenics, but most of us, by then, were die-hard potheads. One of the local natives who turned up as an invited guest at numbers of these parties was an engaging young man named Pepe.

I have this thing about people's last names. In fact, these days I find I have quite a thing just remembering people's names in general. Perhaps I should be glad that I remember their first names at all; I know who they are and they know who they are and that's how it all happens.

There was Hermalinda, who fed me wonderful tacos just off the town square for years before, accidentally, allowing me to know she welcomed me as a "local" person myself. There was Lupe, the

hard-partying mechanic. There was Jesus, the barber, also just off the town square (and adjacent to the old church, naturally), who cut my hair once every week regardless of how badly I needed it. There were Maria and Lourdes, my two favorite maids, and Carmen who filled in at third place. Carmen's only problem was she tried so hard to get me into bed and I wasn't the least bit interested. There was Trevi, my very special house guardian and gardener. And there was Pepe....

I never knew Pepe's father, though I recognized him on sight. He was someone important, I knew that from the location and condition of his house, surrounded by greedy filthy rich gringos trying to gobble up everything in sight. I knew that from the respect he and his family were routinely shown around town whenever you would encounter them going about their affairs.

When Pepe's father died, there was one hell of a funeral. It was so big, in fact, it inspired local Impressionist painter John K. Peterson to immortalize the event on canvas. His picture shows a street scene looking right down the middle of the street to where, three blocks away, the Cathedral stands. From every doorway the townspeople are pouring, as if on cue, and forming a funeral procession down the center of the street to the church where the ceremony in honor of the passing of Pepe's father would take place. My house sits just on the right-hand edge of the painting and one street over. Having this painting by John Peterson hanging among my collection is an object of considerable pride to me. Besides that, it constantly reminds me where...for however brief a period...home was.

#

It didn't take very long for Pepe to make sure I knew him. He was an aggressively upward mobile native Ajijic resident possessed of much street savvy and general knowledge about how most people worked and where to get whatever it was they thought they needed from time to time. It was almost as if he was omnipresent behind the scenes of most happenings of any significance in the area.

He was still a young man when I first met him, in his early twenties, and bubbling over with talent and enthusiasm and sure-fire ways of just somehow naturally skimming the best off the top of everything for Pepe. In his spare time he entertained in local bars and restaurants, playing his guitar and singing from a large repertoire of gringo-approved songs.

I think I am making him sound like quite a pusher and a user, but he was certainly none of those things for me, ever. He was, in fact, my very first local native friend after I took the house in Ajijic on Lake Chapala, some 25 miles outside quaint, picturesque colonial Guadalajara (and my how times do change and always for the worse). Pepe enriched my life in many different ways and gave me much, much more than he ever received from me.

He was a musician, in some respects an artist, and an accomplished ladies man. Pepe seemed to specialize in the young, frustrated, just prepubescent daughters of the affluent passersby. He seemed to know exactly what they wanted and how to give it to them. Once I asked him, foolishly, about the legalities of his messing around with what I thought of as being underage children. He assured me that, in Mexico, if you could get it in, she was old enough to do it and was completely legal.



Ajijic Funeral Procession,
by John K. Peterson

Pepe was also one of the best damned dope dealers in town. He was, however, never my dealer, though I sampled great stores of his produce as time went by. Pepe did deal to some of my gringo friends; it was through them that I met Pepe in the first place.

Once, when I thought I knew Pepe well enough to ask a personal question, I asked him about his dope dealing. He told me it was more or less just something to do; he had grown up in the role. Everyone in town knew... most of all the police.

Pepe told me that the best way to explain it was to tell me it was like a game they were playing...they being Pepe and the local cops. Twice a year they would bust Pepe. They would take him into the carcel, strip him, humiliate him, put a cattle prod on his gonads and zap him there. Obviously they didn't zap him there too hard; that's the part I think of as being the game, because he always kept coming back for more. Then the police would tell him to stop selling drugs to the gringos, fine him \$50 USA and let him go.



It was sort of like a kick-back; in the course of six months, Pepe sold those same policemen much more than \$50 worth of weed for their personal use.

Now and then I would encounter Pepe at various houses of my friends or at parties of mutual acquaintances. While Pepe loved to party, and who didn't in those days, he had a quiet, introspective side as well that occasionally needed exercising.

Pepe lived with his family about two blocks down the street from my house and around the corner. It was a typical Mexican family of brothers and sisters and animals underfoot, of someone always shouting...and someone always singing. Music being softly played somewhere in the background... hand-made music...not a radio. I seem to recall a couple of brothers, one quite close in age to Pepe who was quickly following in his footsteps.



The King of Pornography seated at his patio table in Ajijic, Jalisco, Mexico doing one of his many favorite things with third-generation roaches. Photo by Steve Harris. Dated 197?.

The best times went something like this:

It is a quiet time and I might even be alone in the house when I hear a knocking on my front door. When I open it I see Pepe standing there, a big grin on his face, a guitar under his arm, and a very nicely rolled joint being held forward as if in offering.

Pepe was still working on his English in those days. He knew how important it was for him to be able to communicate clearly with the gringos who were daily occupying more and more of his hometown; only in that fashion could he be sure they paid the going rates. And my Spanish was something really gross then as well, but we had no difficulty communicating at all.

Pepe would sit down at the ecopali table in my patio bar and dump whatever he was holding that time onto the tabletop. And it all had a pedigree and

a history and was all just a bit better than first quality. Sometimes it was some Indica he had grown himself on a family plot just down the highway toward Jocotopec a bit. Acapulco gold. Fresh, moist Oahacan mushrooms. Peyote buttons from his buddy the Ouichole. Red-hair Sensemia from Michoacan across the lake. Flake-off Afghani gold hashish. Opium-laced Thai sticks. Blotter-paper acid or occasional windowpane. Pepe was sort of like a living,, walking Amsterdam drug store. Whatever suited your fancy would come around eventually, if you waited long enough, and every bit of it would be significantly better than advertised.

Pepe, after lighting that joint and passing it over, would pick up his guitar and just start playing and singing. He could go on for hours that way, it seemed, without once repeating a song, without missing a toke on the joint or the pipe or the....

So easy to understand how those were the best times of all. They even got better, too, now and then. Occasionally, after singing and playing and smoking nonstop for all that time, Pepe would take a break, and those were the best times of all.

Pepe almost always had some kind of old car that was questionably legal and just barely usable. We would jump into that rattletrap and, between backfires, Pepe would take off down Constitution rumbling and rolling over the cobblestones, his bald tires (no spare) screaming in loud protests. At those times I always felt like I was in the presence of the King of the Hill. Wherever we went everyone knew Pepe and seemed to respect him and because I was simply with him some of that specialness rubbed off onto me. Pepe was important here, not me; most of them had never even heard of the King of Pornography.

Tired from his smoking and his exertions, Pepe and I would rush off to visit Gorda. Of course she was fat, Mexicans don't waste much time with nicknames, and possessed of all the proverbial jolliness one expects.

Professionally Gorda was a forger. She made fake authentic pre-Columbian pottery. As I would visit Gorda in this fashion, with Pepe, I was accepted as a warm friend and even shown the scrapbook of photos of Gorda's handwork in various museums and collections all over the world. She was so proud of her babies, as she called them. The ones in the Boston Museum, the ones in private celebrity collections like those of Kirk Douglas, etc.

Gorda made these counterfeits out of authentic pre-Columbian pottery garbage. They looked authentic, they smelled authentic, and most of all they carbon-dated authentic...and Gorda was one happy, well-provided-for lady. With her accomplished potter's hands she could also whip out some mean joints, and fire them up and get them passing around....

Seated around one of her creations, a stand-alone, hand-formed fireplace complete with glowing, gently crackling fire, idly sipping at some Sauza Verde, smoking endless joints of incomparable weed and listing to two guitars playing and two voices blending into spontaneous song for hours and hours.



Portrait of Boris ("Frenchy"),
needlepoint by Earl Kemp.
Dated December 1974.

And all the while I sat there being caressed by wave after wave of pleasure as my body pulsated and moved in rhythm with the music and my voice howled and ululated and somehow blended into the

whole mosaic. My feet tapping one, two, three, four; one.... Mindlessly banging claves together in my hands. I was not only the King of Pornography, I was at the top of my form, performing at the very peak of my professional career... I was all of the Pips to their Gladys Knight. I was Naomi sensuously vibrating to their Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks.

And I knew all that bliss within the hands of God, while benevolently being watched over and protected by the God of the Lake, of Laguna Chapala, los manos de Irapahane himself.

Sort of like another lousy day in paradise and ho-hum, so what else is new?

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Pepe never ever left my house, or me, without passing over an ounce of private-stash weed, or mushrooms, or.... He seemed to need to make sure I never ran out.

Pepe did not sell me those drugs; he gave them to me. In all the years that I had a house in Ajijic and pretended to live there, I never once bought drugs from Pepe; I never once had to. The necessity never was allowed to arise.

Years later, even after I had given up La Casa de mi Corizon, Pepe moved to southern California. A time or two, at special parties, we would get together again and remember old times and do at least another doobie just for the hell of it.



Portrait of Earl Kemp
by Steve Harris. Dated 1977.

Years later still, during a vacation trip back into time to revisit Ajijic, I discovered that Pepe was also back in town. I was with my son Erik at the time; Erik had spent five of his most formative years growing up around Pepe. We rushed right over to Pepe's house and banged furiously on the front door like TV cops, loudly calling his name and demanding his "bad boy" presence immediately....

...twenty five years later.

Pepe hurried to the front door and threw it open. He took one look and said, "I might have known it was you...come on in. Boy, Erik, have you grown...."

We were only going to be in Ajijic for two days, just long enough to touch it and smell it and feel it again. Naturally we wanted some weed...assuming Pepe was still dealing.

For the first time in all the years we had known each other, I insisted that Pepe take money for the weed he was giving us, and he did, at his price, \$1.98 for the ounce, with a pack of Zig-Zag cut-corners thrown in for grins.

It's awfully nice being back home again, even if you can't ever go there any more.

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*In memory of Pepe and Gorda; may your songs resonate forever.

I wouldn't recommend sex, drugs or insanity for everyone, but they've always worked for me....
--Hunter S. Thompson

Sima in Paradise*

Sima was playing "Simba, bitch queen of the jungle" again. The dumb cat never learned to speak anything but Siamese; to do so would undoubtedly have interfered with her divine task of ruling the world. She was a bitch queen, though, as any misguided roof cat could testify who strayed into her sovereign territory, the perimeter of the villa itself. The large rambling structure was marked on one side by the highway to Chapala, on a second side by the spectacular hacienda del Senor Robles, the architect, and the rest by Laguna Chapala itself, Jalisco's pride, Mexico's largest inland lake.

Sima played the game almost daily with Cantinflas, Dr. Espejuel's scraggly looking and peculiar parrot, and had for over two years, except when Cantinflas had a bad fever and the time Sima was accidentally locked inside the tool shed for three days.

Sima and Cantinflas were the best of friends.

The jungle foliage, heavy laden with moisture, the air ozone fresh from the eight o'clock rain, the ginger and agave-even the coveted peyote patch-was easy to negotiate, if Sima moved cautiously enough and appeared to be sufficiently unconcerned.

Her chocolate points had never fully matured, as Sima's growth had been stunted. A broken pelvis as a teenager had resulted in Sima's having been spayed before puberty, stunting her both physically and mentally. She was a capricious, talkative, permanently teenaged bitch. She was past forty, by people time, which carried some permission for bitchiness and arrogance. Her urinary infection didn't help any either, nor the necessity of frequent drinks and more frequent eliminations.

She breathed the heavy intermingling fragrance of many blossoms and reached the start of the Abyssinian bananas and knew the lawn was just ahead, through the final plumes of exotic tropical foliage. She looked out carefully between the giant purple and green variegated leaves, searching the landscape.

From side to side, she could see the wide expanse of green grass, each separate blade manicured to perfection by Trevi, the jardinero, and dotted here and there with large yellow and white umbrellas and white-enameled wrought iron lawn furniture with plenty of room leftover for the naked Tai Kwan Do lessons. There were isolated flowerbeds of erupting color and, just beyond the tree roses, the lily pond. Water was flowing hypnotically over the edge of the blue and white tiled pond. The sound of the trickling water reminded Sima of how thirsty she was. Nevertheless, her game had to go on.

She spotted the parrot at last, down by the pier, flaunting his vibrant colors from atop the boathouse. Noiselessly, Sima slipped clear of the banana stalks then made a fast dash for cover under the dwarf lemons.

From high atop his perch the parrot squawked "_Chinga!" and dived down toward Sima, blue and yellow and green and red flashing before her face.

Dr. Espejuel hated los gringo turistas for what they had done to Cantinflas. Dr. Espejuel had the only parrot in Ajijic who said "fuck" all the time.

A hummingbird, startled by Sima's sudden appearance, clicked audibly and zoomed away from a red-sugar-water feeder, leaving a trace of fragrant roses behind.

Cantinflas saw the movement and looked down at Sima, trying to hide. He squawked and danced a

hornpipe in obvious delight, laughing at the stupid cat.

Sima, thinking the game was finished for the day, ignored the parrot with all her strength of resolve, walking out onto the pier and looking down into the mud-streaked lake water. It smelled fishy to her, as always. A fish jumped out of the water and looked her straight in the bulging eyeball, teasingly, before vanishing from sight. Far out in the water, some half-naked fishermen slowly passed a joint and a tequila bottle and lazily lowered a net over the side of their boat.

Canfinflas flew down over Sima, one wingtip slapping fur behind her ear, then swooped away, laughing and calling, "_Chinga! _Chinga!" through the morning stillness.



Sima trotted back toward the house, stopping in the new begonia bed to urinate, then moving on to the lily pond. Treading cautiously through the mud, she drank from the overflowing lip of the pool.

Now what? Sima mumbled audibly, almost all the time. The dumb parrot won't be back today.

Only who can figure out what a parrot will do?

Less than half an hour later Sima was sleeping, curled up on the cool tile of the patio and snuggled up against a well-used leather ecopali chair. She was dreaming of food, her favorite subject and her favorite dish, sizzling broiled fresh salmon steaks, right out of the microwave-the first in all of Jalisco. The aroma was tantalizing her nostrils and her mouth, salivating, was moving down upon the passionately pink delight.

Cantinflas, watching Sima from well within the fronds of the huge old ragged-leaf fish-tail palm, wondered what the stupid cross-eyed cat was up to, playing dead most likely, trying to lure the parrot to within her fiendishly feline grasp.

Well, Cantinflas would have none of that. The parrot eased itself free of the palm and spread its colorful wings, flapping up into the air. Cantinflas made a spiraling schondell down to the left and zoomed right under the red-tiled patio roof and, swooping down toward Sima, dive shat the cantankerous cat like a vintage Messerschmitt. The explosive glob of mingled whiteblack missed target and splattered on the brick red tile fractions of an inch from Sima's salmon-filled nose.

Sima didn't flinch. No muscle of her dream-seduced body moved.

Cantinflas, annoyed, swooped back out of the patio and into el jardin, climbing over the rooftop and, squawking "_Chinga!" he flew out of sight.

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*In memory of Don and Betty Gilmore who opened the doors to Camelot, my beloved Siamese cat Sima, and my special private garden in Ajijic. Dated 1977.

When we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves....
--Confucius

La Crema*

Trevi, the jardinero, sat on the hard cement bench in la plaza, the center of town. He was just opposite Cine Ajijic; a double bill was playing, The Bridges at Toko Ri and Rio Bravo; it was Thursday, gringo night at the movies. They always got the best movies, los gringos. Personally, Trevi preferred Santos.

He missed the trees. If they were still there, he would be in the shade. The enormous old eucalyptus trees that had been on the square for as long as he could remember, finally falling to a fiesta promoter who wanted to erect a concession tent to sell cerveza where the regal trees once ruled.

Still, it was nice without the barbed wire that used to be up around the rose gardens, the formal arrangement radiating outward from the ornate bandstand that formed the center of la plaza. That formed the center of most plazas in Mexico.

The roses were especially nice, their virginal blossoms just opening and flooding the square with their fragrance. Hummingbirds darted here and there, whipping up the scents and sampling the nectar of the variously red flowers.

Along with the trees, Trevi remembered La Crema that used to occupy the raised platform next to the cine, like some battle post, dominating the entire town square. It was a soda fountain dispensing ice cream, mostly to the pretty little gringa putas who would trip around, braless, their tits shamelessly bobbing about, their nipples clearly visible, evoking every old man's favorite dream.

Aye, those were the good old days with the trees and the ice cream and the firm little breasts with the pointy nipples that you could hold in your hand, or lick or something....

#

*In memory of Trevi's love and respect for his garden that he allowed me to think of as being mine.
Dated 1977.

A conservative government is an organized hypocrisy....
--Benjamin Disraeli

La Casa Sexo; Noches de Amorissimo*

It was one of those things...Kismet.... The first time I saw the house I knew I belonged there. Don Gilmore, who located the house in the first place, had been holding it off the market just for me, waiting until I could fly into Guadalajara to inspect it, though he should have known that was completely unnecessary. All the way out from Guadalajara [25 miles], Don bragged endlessly about what a coup it was getting that house in suburban Ajijic, and at such a reasonable rate as well.

The house was to be mine for five years for \$45 USA a month. [I felt really ripped off, too; most of my neighbors had 20-year leases at \$15 a month. Some bragged of 100-year leases at \$10.] In that time I could do anything I felt like doing to the structure and there would never be an occasion, as long as I met my contractual obligations, when the duena [landlady] would expect entry into the premises. It had been empty and falling into dust and debris for a number of months. It was a house as desperately in need of me as a tenant as I was to be in it as one.



The straw that broke the camel's back, so to cliché, was the three-foot-tall Mexican commercial pot plant thriving in the midst of the dead and dying landscaping. "Hey, man," it said to me, "this is the place; I been waitin'."

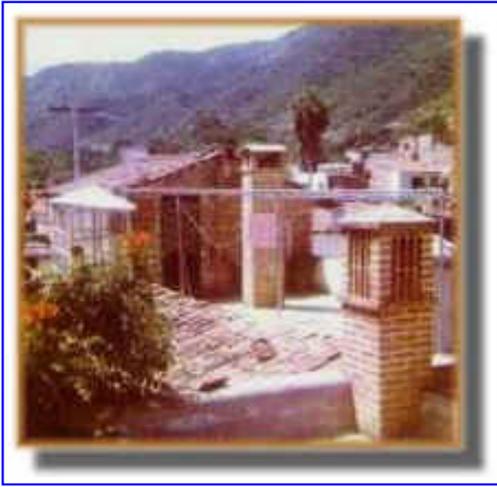
#

Naturally I had to do the routine gringo thing...make the house over in my own image. The tenant just before me had done a wonderful thing. He closed off the original main entrance to the house with a solid wall of glass brick fronting directly against the sidewalk outside [It was somewhat of a perverse thrill, standing there naked taking a shower with normal foot traffic only inches away]. Here he built a large, tile-lined shower big enough for four to maneuver in what had been the original entry hallway dividing the master bedroom from the living room. In fact, the entire hallway was now a master bedroom closet/bathroom.

Upstairs, someone had once begun construction of a second-floor bedroom then stopped just as quickly. I latched onto that immediately and hired a construction crew to complete that bedroom and install a spiral wrought-iron staircase from my patio floor up to the second floor. The balance of the second floor was given over to a tiled sunbathing deck. There were no houses anywhere close enough from which nude sunbathers could be visible. That rapidly changed, unfortunately.

As I was expecting a large amount of visitors to come calling, I had as much sleeping space built into

the house as I could. Three walls of the living room, facing the fireplace, all converted into sleeping space. Besides the master bedroom and the under-construction upstairs "guest" room, there was a huge dormitory [about 20'X30'] room for my children containing two double beds and two twins. There was a second bathroom for this room and, beyond that, a furnished maid's room.



I joked with the construction foreman, who was also installing new wiring, wall switches, outdoor lighting, etc., about hanging a large, red glass lamp outside over the garage entrance that was now the only entrance to the house. He protested that he could not possibly do that because it would give me a bad reputation. I kept insisting, but he hanged that red lamp in the middle of my patio instead, where it couldn't be seen from the outside.

After all the construction was done to my satisfaction, I began decorating the interior of the house. All the walls were painted flat Navajo white to begin with, disguising a bit of abuse from the past and a persistent amount of mildew that always won out.

For the master bedroom I constructed a huge wooden pedestal framework that contained Ajijic's very first one and only king sized waterbed. [It was my first experience buying Mexican cut lumber; you order 2"X8"X10' and that's exactly what you get. A real surprise.] That bed dominated that room like the throne of a true king. On the bedroom wall, my daughter Edith painted a huge mural of a Roman orgy. The painting was done entirely in fluorescing Day-Glo paints because the bedroom was illuminated only by black lighting...again the first ever seen in that tiny little fishing village.

Besides the black lighting, there were strobe lights suitably arranged around the huge bed. Acoustics inside that house were unbelievable. It was totally a masonry house, constructed almost a century before I leased it, and filled with lots of beautiful tilework. All that solidness just grabbed sound and bounced it around and around you in minute, separate fragments without ever ending. Even a modest stereo system playing quietly anywhere in the house sounded a bit like the inside of a grand symphony hall.

A sultry, Chinese-style hanging bead curtain hung in place of the only door separating the master bedroom from the closet/bathroom.

The overall affect of the bed, the lighting, the curtain of beads, and the mural was rather formidable. Fire up some patchouli just for grins and...



Roman Nights, by Edith Kemp Buckner. This is the only known photograph of the mural. Dated 1965.

Next the garden was ripped out completely and new topsoil brought in...and fresh landscaping began. [The only thing remaining of the past was a 30-foot-tall mango tree that dominated the yard itself. In season it produced an impossible amount of fruit.] My son-in-law Michael Buckner was a landscape designer and he took my garden on as a personal challenge. He spent two weeks touring all around the Guadalajara area checking what grew where and in what amounts and why. In no time at all he had my

whole yard stacked full of "borrowed" cuttings and extra plants growing from the landscapes that most impressed him. I was well on my way to a world-class garden. When everything was in place, and the lawn seeded with grass cuttings, I hired a permanent gardener and a full-time maid.

The gardener's name was Trevi, and he rapidly became a friend. I told him to treat the garden exactly as if it was his own, that all I wanted to do was to enjoy it whenever I was there and I always wanted it looking its very best. He did that and a great deal more for me. I never saw that garden when each separate blade of grass didn't look hand manicured. Trevi always beamed with genuine pride of workmanship.

My first maid's name was Lourdes. She was with me for a number of years. I suspect it was perhaps boredom that eventually forced her to seek employment elsewhere.

I know for a fact that Lourdes really enjoyed living there. She lived there all by herself for months at a time, some times, and at others one or more of my family would be in residence for six months straight, depending upon her for almost everything.

But, she enjoyed the times most where none of us were there.

Those were the times she gave guided tours to "La Casa Sexo."



She would lead her relatives, random townspeople, or apparently anyone who asked, through the house when none of us was in residence. She would show the converted glass-brick shower and describe how four people could use it at the same time. She would demonstrate the use of the black lights, the strobes, and the waterbed. I was told that she said the bed routinely held as many as six people at a time. That bed astonished everyone who saw it, and some of them became brave enough to actually get onto it and feel it shaking and rocking beneath them.

Lourdes would also turn on the luz rojo that branded La Casa Sexo with its notoriety, even if it was only in the middle of the garden.

#

It was La Casa Sexo...there was no denying that...el hogar de La Chinga Rey. At times it seemed there was an endless stream of visiting worthies rushing from my house to the nude bathing pools in nearby Jocotepec, then back to that fabled waterbed. Lots of writers and writers' friends and artists and artists' friends and even some agents (no friends) now and then partied there.

For me, it was much more than that. Before I knew it, that Ajijic house had become la casa de mi corizon, the home of my heart. The house filled my body and my spirit and my emotions completely and became all consuming. I lived in that house regardless of where I might be physically located in the world. My dreams all lived in that house despite me as well.

For years after I gave the house back to the duena, my dreams still tortured me because every dream would take place inside that house, even if it contained people who had never been inside it. I thought I would never be completely free of its hold upon me. Only time, and the actions of a lot of other people,

allowed its power to slowly dissipate and release me from its grasp.



Looking out over Ajijic from the mountainside.
Photo by Dianne Murray dated September 1971.

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Outside the house Paradise reigned. My friends the Gilmores in Guadalajara insisted that it was really Camelot, but I think they were wrong. It was much better than Camelot. The soundtrack was better also.

At that time, Betty Gilmore was coming into her own. She had two large, colorful coffee table books on needlepoint on the market and was working on a third. She gave me copies of her books as well as lessons in needlepoint. Betty assured me that it was really a manly thing to do. I knew that Rosie Greer, the retired jock, was into needlepoint and promoting it as a relaxing agent. In no time at all I was hooked. That's almost a pun, because at the same time I also began hooking rugs.

I made many large needlepoint canvases through the years and they hang here and there all over the world in private collections. While I lived in Ajijic, I did several there in the house, in Mexican motifs.

My Ajijic fantasy house was Constitution 14 (Catorce) and it looked like any other run-down fisherman's house in town. My next-door neighbors, the Lemons, had a huge lemon tree, heavy with fruit, painted across the front of their house. He kept after me all the time to refacade the front of my house like a respectable gringo. I told him I wanted it to remain anonymous and it did...I did nothing to improve the face of the house fronting onto Constitution. Eventually Edith painted a generic Aztec motif on the garage door, only it definitely wasn't gringo.



Quetzalcoatl, needlepoint in Aztec motif
by Earl Kemp. Dated 1976.

The street, like most of the streets in town, was narrow and made of inlaid cobblestones. Walking in the street was hell for about two weeks, then you never noticed how difficult it was any more, your ankles had accepted the challenge and accommodated it automatically. It was my first ever experience with cobblestones,

and with hundred-year-old hand-made adobe brick structures, and I loved every second of it.

My house was two streets away from the lakefront of Laguna Chapala, Mexico's largest inland lake, somewhat like Lake Michigan. The lake separated Michoacan from Jalisco, but not the best products of both states. My house was one street over and two blocks up from the central town square, the heart of any Mexican town. The supermarket was two blocks away...the barber...the cine...everything was only two blocks away. Surely that is Paradise? Pizza Talio across the street and La Posada for elegant dining.

Along the beachfront, at certain locations, the nets of fishermen would stretch out in wide-screen and surround sound as they flopped idly, drying in the afternoon breezes. Their boats upturned near the water's edge, ready for manana and the big one.



Irapahene, the god who lives inside Laguna Chapala and protects the local citizens. Needlepoint by Earl Kemp from an Ouicholi [peyote drug enhanced ritualistic] yarn-art original. Dated 1976.

The highway through town was noteworthy because the shoulders of both sides of it all the way through town were lined with carefully raked beds of tiny fish...Charales. They were always there, drying in the sun, making fish soup base for the masses.

The weather was always perfect in Ajijic, and rain always came on schedule to the minute and exactly when needed. The clouds overhead formed and reformed endless pictures for the edification of Jalisco's residents who had nothing better to do all day long except lie there, watching, idly sipping an aged-rum and Coke and toking on a one-hit joint of new-crop-fresh Acapulco gold bud. Paradisio si, Camelot no.

orange juice to die for, in endless quantities. Carrot juice running a close second. The flavors of everything were somehow accentuated to just a little bit beyond the scope of human acceptance. Paradise.

Everything was fresh. It all came from the market just that morning. Lourdes did the shopping, the veggie prep, the cooking, and the cleaning. And a great deal more. The best \$10 a week I ever spent. Paradise. Nothing came out of a can or a carryout container. You could taste the difference. You could feel it and see it as well. Fresh hand-squeezed

There were flowers everywhere and the soil was so fertile you could stick a piece of anything alive into it and it would root and flourish there. Blossoms of all colors assaulted the eyes and their aromas, mingling, teased at the nostrils continuously.

Music filled the air...real hand-made music being joyfully made by real musicians almost always on real hand-made instruments. The harp and the marimba were the trademarks of Jalisco music and their sounds resounded endlessly and delightfully everywhere you went.

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Everything I could possibly need was within very easy walking distance. What wasn't was delivered right to my front door. Every possible commercial vendor came to the door. The Coca-Cola truck would stop regularly, delivering 25-bottle cases [one free with a case purchase]. And the beer truck [my favorite, Sol], the propane truck, the drinking water truck, the greengrocer and the iceman.

Mail, much to my surprise, was delivered twice daily six days a week. If the postmaster had nothing better to do, he would open and operate the post office on Sundays or holidays. The garbage truck made daily pickups. In season that meant one full garbage can of ripe mangos per house per day, in addition to all the other household junk. The streets were exceptionally clean, and maintained that way by the townspeople with pride. In Guadalajara, for instance, it was commonplace to see whole troupes of street sweepers progressing down a street on foot sweeping it with hand-made straw brooms.



Ajijic nestles against Laguna Chapala as viewed from the mountainside.

Photo by Dianne Murray dated November 1971.

You can't imagine what a contrast all of that was, with what I had grown to expect in California. And the best part was, all of these things were provided as public services. I didn't have to pay for a one of them and, in California, I had been paying \$25 a month for four garbage pickups alone. Across the board, services and rates were costing me around a quarter (25c) on the USA dollar and were decidedly superior in all respects.

#



There were sleazy cantinas that gringa putas never dared to enter and upscale lounges where they were more than welcome. There were discos like La Pantera Rosa where thirty-year-old local men hit on fourteen-year-old gringas; they were remarkably well matched. There were restaurants of all quality levels from "I wouldn't eat that if I were you" to "Mmmmmhmm!" The regulation post office, larga distancia [long distance telephone office], and police station you would expect to find anywhere were also there, along with auto mechanics, pushcart ice-cream vendors, and pool hall hustlers. Just like any other ordinary paradise.

The best thing of all, though, was the people. Not just the rampaging tourists eager to consume everything in sight but the original townspeople as well. They adopted us and tolerated us and allowed us to run freely among them like some zooed beasts to watch and be amused by. They furnished all of our needs, kilo by kilo, and nurtured us along like demented bastard progeny only rarely allowing any of us to see how thrilled and proud of us they really were. Otherwise they would never have gone to such length just protecting us from legal hassles and polishing our names

and our images.

I knew many of those people. I was responsible for some of them moving there in the first place, once I turned them onto the area and its abundant riches. We were a motley crew of sleaze book writers...pornography really...and editors and publishers. We were producing 50 paperbacks and 20 skin magazines every month. We decorated the 1960s and 70s with exotic paperback covers, water pipes, and endless kilos...when we weren't writing or editing those torrid tomes. We amused each other as well as the townspeople at times. There were almost non-stop parties going on somewhere. It was a bit like a convention hotel where you could always find a room party going on. If you didn't watch yourself you could go overboard very easy on cheap booze and even cheaper recreational drugs [delivered right to your door as well]. Paradise.

#

Constitution Catorce was ideally situated near the center of town. For that reason, tour busses began stopping directly in front of my house to unload their charges. At those times I would sit on my sundeck, astride the railing toward the street, watching those tourists get out of those busses. It was very difficult to think that I could ever have been one of them, anywhere in the world.

Here I was at home, seated atop my castle, smoking a kick-ass joint of purple-hair Michoacan sensimilla, and looking down upon the street rabble with undeserved contempt. They would look all around them, gawking like they had never been right in the middle of an expatriate USA colony before, furtively snapping photos of the quaint "villagers" who look almost as white as the tourists themselves. I have even had some of them open the door to my garage and walk through it and into my patio before asking, "What kind of store is this anyway?"

#



You could take water taxis or rent boats and just drift around the laguna without object or design. Visit with a boatful of local fishermen and inspect their catch while sharing one of their wheat straw joints and sips from a half-pint bottle of tequila with them. You could visit one of the island beer joints where every bottle smelled exactly like fresh-caught fish and that aroma had a unique affect on the taste of the cerveza.

When all else failed, there were always the horses. Dozens and dozens of horses from one to twenty ready to go on little or no notice, complete with pack boss and guide, if needed, for a half- or full-day excursion up into the mountains that form the

perfect backdrop as they silhouette Ajijic as a tiny jewel against an endless shoreline.

Up in those lush green mountains, greater thrills await. The trees are huge and ancient and loaded with talanzias and orchid type plants with large, brilliant blossoms. They are also filled with birds of many different types that produce continuous chatterings and choruses of songs. Caves of depth and darkness sufficient to chill the bravest of hearts...when the noises start reaching your ears coming from way, way beneath you in the impenetrable darkness. Mastodons...saber-toothed tigers...?

Double-strength frosted Toklas brownies provided as a treat by the trail guide, adding an almost mystical etherealness to the ride through merging colors and altering shapes and achieved goals. Pre-rolled Indica numbers in abundance to accompany those orgasmic rushes of lust as the sunlight, muted, filtered through the trees to where the horses are tethered and the blanket spread wide in welcome....

...just one more time please...like the last one....

Days without end...times without strife...ecstasy without guilt...la vida al gusto....

At the very end of my season in the sun, when I gave Trevi notice and told him that I was closing up the house and turning it back to the Duena, he was genuinely sad to see me leave, and his lovely garden as well. Completely unknown to me, and as a final surprise, Trevi had his wife make a special present for me. She, like most everyone else it seems, had toured La Casa Sexo, and knew parts of it well.

She hand-embroidered portions of the mural on the back of a chambray shirt for me. With justifiable pride, they presented it to me on the day of my departure, suitably gift wrapped. It was, perhaps, the only real piece of the house, or the memory of it, that I could take away with me. To this day I cherish and protect it and, whenever I really need to, I pull it out and admire it all over again....



Horseback riding in the mountains above Ajijic.
Photos by Dianne Murray dated September 1971.

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*For Dianne Murray, who lived it while the rest of us only dreamed it; with envy and love.

Of the delights of this world man cares most for sexual intercourse, yet he has left it out of his heaven....

--Mark Twain

Aunt Jane and MaryJane, 69 and Me*

The Mixtecs are a proud and noble nation of central Mexican Indians. They have been known to migrate thousands of miles in their endless search for a better place to live. By the 1850s, they had reached a fertile river valley in the far north where life seemed to be just right for them.

Along the gently meandering route of a tranquil riverbed, the Mixtecs found many things to their liking. The very air itself seemed to be perfumed with the fragrance of fennel, which grew in abundance and was used to season many tasty dishes. There was wild celery, mustard, and onions here and there in lush little clumps. Fish of various fresh water types, plus salt-water fish and seafood...lobster, shrimp, and abalone within easy reach...promised abundant rewards for everyone. Dozens of different types of birds roamed up and down the length of the river and across the vast expanse of sand beaches that reached far out, as if caressing the gently rolling, always babbling Pacific Ocean.

By the mid-1800s, the Mixtecs began calling their little community, there where the river kissed the ocean, "Colonia Obrera."

Progress has a way of interfering with paradise. Just 29 years later, in 1889, "Colonia Obrera" disappeared when the city of Tijuana was founded. It was known far and wide as "the last town in Southern California." The name, for Rancho Tia Juana (Aunt Jane's ranch, the sprawling Allegro family spread) alongside Rio Tia Juana (Aunt Jane River), was contracted into Tijuana, and the fledgling town flexed its wings and started out immediately to become a world-class city.

When the USA finally got around to surveying and establishing their claim on the Mexico/USA border by placing pylons at every mile, they were almost sad to discover that the bulk of the city wasn't even in the USA. All the best property, including the downtown commercial district, was just across the border in Mexico. All that was left for the USA of "the last town in Southern California" were a few cardboard-carton residences of the quickly dispersed and a staggering amount of pungent sewage flowing in from the rest of the city.

The USA and San Diego County still hold Mexico's continuing gift of mutual affection in great regard to this date.

By 1919, just ahead of Prohibition, when the railroad was completed linking Los Angeles, San Diego, Tijuana, Caliente, and Tecate, the good times really started to roll. Things were crumbling like mad in the good old USofA, and those in charge were doing everything they could to regulate and control how the people were supposed to think. And act and feel...especially in such areas as their private bedrooms, their personal tastes and dislikes, their foibles and habits, their choices and addictions. Chocolate, cocaine, booze, or pot. What books to read; what words to speak, what letters to send and receive.... You know, all the usual bullshit most contemporary politicians seem to feel we should relegate to their superior discretion.... Random echoes of the Roaring Twenties....

That's when they decided we couldn't drink and, in 1920, began the era of Prohibition when alcohol was forbidden for one and all.

South of the border, down Mexico way...everyone laughed, ordered more bar glasses, and started stocking up the wine cellars, beer coolers, and liquor shelves, and looked forward to a bright and prosperous future accommodating all those thousands and thousands of horny, rich, fun-loving, partying Hollywood types. The movie stars of the day flocked to the region in droves, bringing their thirsty entourages, ingenues, and bedwarmers along to make sure they didn't need for anything.

Large, lavish resorts began appearing all over the place with huge ballrooms with marble dance floors and casinos filled with recognizable, formally dressed people that rolled on all night long. Live music blaring out everywhere from big bands and small groups, singers and dancers and chorus lines and opulent floorshows.



The Caliente, one of the premiere casino resorts, where the passenger trains from all over emptied out the Hollywood elite and California Dons, all to watch pretty little Margarita Cansino, just turning 16 years old, dance traditional flamenco with her partner, her father. This was years and years before she blossomed into the cultural icon Rita Hayworth who became Princess Yasmin and put-the-blame-on Mame, the love of my life.

The string of magnificent gambling and debauchery palaces stretched down the coastline from San Diego. Besides the really big, lavish Tijuana Casino, the next in line was the Rosarito Beach Hotel, followed by Riviera del Pacifico in Ensenada. The Tijuana Casino burned down and was never rebuilt. The other two still exist to this day and you can see much of their previous glory still intact. Trademarks of the three sister structures were huge, vaulting archway ceilings

overhead and much intricate, inlaid tile work.

The Caliente Resort, which wasn't related to that trio of beachfront casinos, quickly metamorphosed into the world-famous Caliente racetrack complex of computer betting and off-track outlets.

The Prohibition experiment in the USA ended in 1933 when the powers to be decided it was okay for adults to take a drink now and then after all. The businesses in Tijuana that had grown grand and fabulously rich from the thirsty gringos began slowly, noticeably, to wind down.

By 1940, Tijuana began to take on yet a different reason for existence. The United States military desperately needed a de facto legal whorehouse. The San Diego area was awash with horny young men in dire need of relief wearing many different uniforms. The Port of San Diego itself was home for many US Navy ships of all types, including aircraft carriers and super transporters. The US Marine Corps training facilities were located there, as were the Top Gun's Miramar Naval Air Station, Del Mar, El Toro Marine Base...the list was endless and the urge undeniable and puritanical dictates forbid those horny guys finding release at home.

Tijuana, ever so close within 25 miles, was glad to oblige, and started working on a red-light district that all but completely obliterated the pathetic, seedy, downtown San Diego prostitute-and-bordello area now known quaintly as the "Gaslight" district.

By the time they had been doing it regularly, thoroughly, and delightfully for two decades, 1960 found Tijuana, by reputation if not reality, truly a world-class sin city. It was fabled in myth and truth in movies and books and terror tales of what could happen to you once you were there and fell into their evil clutches....

People poured into the city from all over the world, hoping to rush into those evil clutches just once in their lifetime....

#

I was first introduced to Aunt Jane in 1964 by Bill Hamling. It was part of his campaign to persuade me to move to San Diego where he had just taken up residence himself, in nearby Palm Springs. It was all part of his overall plan to close up his publishing company in Evanston, Illinois and move everything to California. As chief editor of Hamling's paperback pornography division in Evanston, it was much easier to move me to California than to replace me. Hamling and some of his local executives were giving me the full-throttle VIP treatment. They took me to every first class venue they could find anywhere in Tijuana, trying to impress me, promising me that "all this can be yours if only you...."

They led me through an upscale, uptown, value-added tour. I saw all the best floor shows in all the best Tijuana venues from an unimpeded front row seat. I went to all the best restaurants and ate all the most expensive food anyone could locate. I saw the jai alai Fronton Palacio and the downtown bullring. I saw the high-rise luxury hotels and the broad, nicely landscaped boulevards...the proud statuary decorating the civic best.

I toured museums and galleries and artisan factories by the dozens and decided that I really liked the place. The only thing wrong with my tours was, I wasn't getting to see the things I thought I wanted to see, only the things Hamling and his cohorts felt I should see.

While I had never bothered to confess it to any of them, I knew I had a thing for Tijuana for many, many years. It was one of my fantasy unreality cities where you could never quite attain the perfection you sought and rightfully deserved but everything was indeed available for a price if you only knew where to go to get it and how to leave with it once it was in your possession and you thought it was yours again.

I knew that beneath that façade of white linen tablecloths and napkins, of crystal goblets and heavy silverplate, there lurked a soul as dark, devious, and as depraved as I often thought mine should be but unfortunately never could be. And it was all mine, just for the taking, at last, almost exactly as I had always wanted to imagine that it would be only bigger somehow, and a bit tattered and used, flying flags of faded yesterdays and tomorrow's fiestas.

It also became quickly clear to me that I'd never get close to any of that kind of kinky stuff in Tijuana while being guided by Hamling and Company. If I really wanted it, I would have to strike out on my own to find it, assuming it was actually there somewhere just waiting to be found exactly like it happened the last time.

Making my move from Chicago to El Cajon, the second-out eastbound suburb from San Diego, was heavily influenced by the prospect of being able to spend lots of time in Tijuana. One of the saddest mistakes I have ever made was in not acquiring a house in Tijuana immediately, instead of fooling around with California. It never even occurred to me to do anything so radical, but it would have been the right thing to do for many reasons.

The least of which would have been the huge amount of money I would have saved all the way down the line. In those days, you could have bought a house in Tijuana four times the size, quality, and value of one in California for 25 cents on the dollar. You could have maintained it, staffed it, powered it, and enjoyed it for an additional 10 cents. And you could be living where the action was.

#

In 1965, I made the big move, and rented a temporary apartment in San Diego while house shopping. I bought the first house I could afford that matched the requirements of my ever-growing, always-consuming family and moved directly into it within less than a month. As it turned out, the house and its location were almost ideal for me, just there at the jumping-off edge of San Diego the City, looking out into undeveloped farmland.

And I had my first visitors and my first indications of how much influence Tijuana would eventually have on me. Martha Beck and her neighbor Elaine Whitten drove my car from Chicago to California for me. Along the way, they stuffed it completely with all the motel linen, towels, wastepaper baskets, or ashtrays, anyone could ever need as house-warming gifts for me.

The first words out of their mouths after they arrived, in chorus, were, "I want to go to Tijuana."

Like everyone else, they had heard tales about the tempting city all their lives, and wanted to experience some of its alleged thrills first hand.

"And," they said, "we want to get really high on pot...."

Since I had already been a resident of the area for at least a week and a half, I felt it necessary to pretend that I knew what I was doing and where I was going to do it, only I didn't and couldn't. Nevertheless, without pausing to ask directions, the three of us piled into my Midwest-winter rusted-out old Dodge and headed out for downtown Tijuana. We did this with no fear of any sort, no thoughts of harm or danger...only of growing excitement and illicit adventure.

I knew enough to find a good downtown restaurant and we started from there, eating an enjoyable meal. Then, once that was finished, I set off alone on my task of making my first ever buy of pot in a foreign country in a strange city where I didn't know anyone and couldn't even speak the language.

I approached a taxi driver and slipped into the back seat. When he asked me where I wanted to go, I said, "I don't want to go anywhere, I want to buy some marijuana." I remember I used the formal term.

The taxi driver laughed at me and said, without speaking, "You dumb Gringo," but I heard him loud and clear, "don't you know anything?" Instead, he said, "You can't ask me that question."

"I can't?" I asked.

"No," the taxi driver said. "You have to ask that question of a man with a beard."

"A man with a beard?" I repeated, incredulously.

"Si," the taxi driver said.

I got out of the cab and began looking around where I was standing there on a major downtown Tijuana street. Much to my surprise, I did spot a man with a beard, which was actually rare in those days, especially on a Mexican.

Without hesitation I walked right up to him and said, "I'd like to buy some marijuana, please."

He said, "How many kilos do you want?"

"No," I said, "no kilos. All I want is...say three rolled joints."

"Three joints," the bearded man said, breaking out into loud laughter. "You putting me on...?"

The two of us got into the same taxi I had entered before and drove once around the block, during which, from his inside coat pocket, he neatly fingered three superbly rolled joints though, being the first I had ever seen close up, I couldn't swear to that at the time.

I paid him and the taxi driver a total of \$5 for the three joints and brief ride, went back for the ladies, and drove around the downtown area while we smoked them in the car, one for each of us, none of that latter-day ritualistic passing one doobie around at a time. So much to learn and so little to know. After that, nothing would satisfy the ladies but a visit to a genuine bordello and to see the "live donkey on stage" show.

We missed the show, but a good time was had by all. Keep in mind that none of us had ever smoked pot before and not only didn't know how to do it, we didn't know how to recognize that we had either.

#

As I settled into my new office and new house, and began hiring an all-new editorial and production staff from scratch, my thoughts kept returning again and again to Tijuana. Every chance I had, I went there for some reason. When I didn't have a reason, I fabricated one. And every time I went there, I looked harder and harder for the secret clues that would lead me finally to the very center of Tijuana's seedy underbelly.

Of all the people in the immediate area of my new residence, one stood out as being unique from all the others. His name was Harold Butler, and he was slowly in route to the US Marine Corps. He was the 18-year-old son of my neighbor who lived two houses to the left. He would come over to my house often, especially during the moving-in days, offering to help when none of the other neighbors would.

He turned out to be a snake freak and nature fanatic, but it took me a little while to learn that about him. What sealed my fate, maybe that should have been our fates, happened like this:

I idly mentioned one day, in his presence, that I needed to find someone who could really show me Tijuana from the inside out.

Without hesitation, he volunteered, and the starting gun went off and the race began at that very moment....

#

The legal age in Mexico was 18, and most gringo children look bigger and older than Mexican children. In reality, wise-ass gringo children who had money enough to pay their way could do just about anything they wanted to do in Mexico, with or without a fake ID.

Harold Butler seemed to know, personally, a great many bartenders, street hustlers, whores, and pimps. By name. And they knew him as well. He knew routes through almost secret and hidden alleyways that could save blocks of walking when you knew where you were going.

At work, I was the boss of the Porno Factory, better known as a dirty old man to most people who didn't know me, and becoming quite a national nuisance to the corps of federal agents closely watching

me. Working there, becoming the person I was and the person others overwhelmingly needed me to be, was definitely doing things to my head, changing it, opening it, ramming it full of never-before-asked questions that were starting to balk and demand answers.

In 1968, in California alone, fellow San Diegoan and superb host Vincent Miranda had 47 Pussycat Theatres but, within two more years, they would seem insignificant among the 700 similar mainstream pornography theaters nationwide.

The whole world around me was opening up wide in an unprecedented erotic gasp and moan like a long, loud cry of satisfaction. I was doubting my own existence, much less the reality I routinely displayed for public consumption or the arrogant, get-the-fuck-out-of-my-face-Fed authority defier that more often than not sat in the driver's seat.

Many eyes dissected my every move and probable thought, and many others translated my every spoken, imagined, or written word.

And here was this neighborhood kid leading me around to bars and whorehouses and all manner of disrespectful establishments and getting me drunk and groped and mauled like never before. It wasn't easy, either, trying to keep up with him running rampant and bareass-half my age--and pretending to match him step for step.

Then, slowly, as if he knew what he was doing, he introduced me to pot. He taught me how to get it, clean it, roll it, smoke it, and get off on it. He taught me how to inhale it, press it, and bogart it. The kid did.

And most people thought I was leading him astray, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and possibly even molesting a child.

It's true what they say, you really can't tell a cliché from its cover....

#

In a short amount of time, Harold Butler had taught me everything he wanted me to know about Tijuana, life, and growing up free and wild. We roamed certain colonias (neighborhoods) until they became as familiar to us as the backs of our hands. We went to certain establishments so often we began getting offered discounts and free handjobs.

Every B-girl working the downtown area had, at one time or another, measured us together thoroughly beneath the shadowed tables where their hands never even for a second stopped their relentless whomping and encouraging caressing. The Long Bar. The Kentucky Club. Bambi. Etc.

And the notorious one-of-a-kind Blue Fox, where the girls of the chorus line were the blue-plate special buffet of "All You Can Eat For Free."

#

Then, after Harold Butler went into the Marine Corps, I found myself on my own in Tijuana with nothing to do except explore the rest of the city. Harold had pretty much led me through the second and third class establishments that catered to most tourists. It was up to me to explore, all by myself, the dignified, executive-level, expensive, deluxe sin-and-sex available for those who knew what they wanted and could pay for it.

It was wonderful...all the way up into Chapultepec Highlands overlooking Tijuana in the high-rent district. An exclusive Le Cordon Bleu chef's private little hidden dining room that could accommodate at best 20 people for any meal, and every taste of every dish was superb. The hidden place, La Escondida, off the main drag in La Mesa de Tijuana just a few blocks from the notorious prison.

The Hotel Nelson house special and the Hotel Caesar house ensalada.

#

My job at the Porno Factory began increasingly requiring that I do more and more traveling on business. Really exciting traveling on really exciting business. I began systematically touring the sin capitals of the world, buying classic pornography novels and interviewing pimps, hookers, and johns about sex in general. Every place I went I unconsciously compared with Tijuana, and found every place I went somehow lacking in true understanding of the divine purpose of eroticism in the first place.

Every place I went, they went, the unidentified agents of the unidentified agencies. It became sort of a game, spotting them, identifying them, and watching them watching me.

Personally, all this traveling and acquired knowledge was playing hell with my psyche, my ego, my id, and my inherent morals. Mr. Moral the Wussy Man was getting worked over six ways from Sunday every moment of his every day. All the variations of the same thing viewed from different countries, from different moral perspectives, began homogenizing me into something dangerous and uncomfortable, a world citizen. Apparently a dangerous one in need of much surveillance.

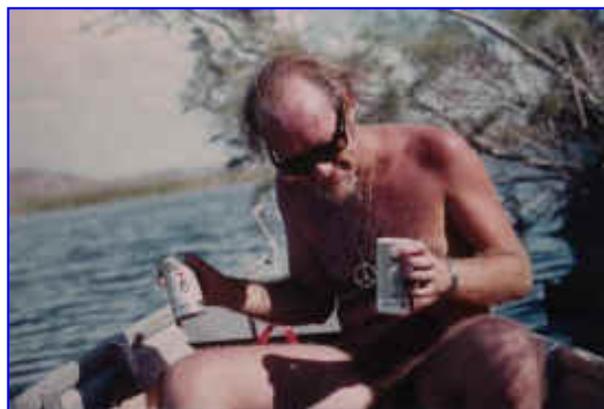
You cannot be a world citizen and a citizen of the United States of America at the same time. It is not allowed. It can never be. It does not suit their purposes. Once you have acquired that world consciousness, you can never play any game their way again, therefore there is no way you can ever possibly win.

#

On the science fiction side, I was starving to death. I wasn't getting any of the good stuff in my diet at all. I couldn't read any; it was all I could do to scan ten to twelve book-length manuscripts a day, much less read for personal enjoyment. I had no contacts with any science fiction fans, which only made matters worse.

The science fiction fans of the San Diego area were very different from any science fiction fans I had ever known before. I couldn't even define the difference for myself. I couldn't identify with them to any degree. I couldn't communicate with them on the most basic, rudimentary level.

Then, again, it could have been me. I was undergoing such rapid changes throughout my entire system. My mind and my thoughts were all heading in new, different directions. I couldn't even begin to keep



Two handed fishing on the Colorado River; escaping from everything except the Vietnam War protest peace symbol. Photo by Harold Butler. Dated August 1968.

up with myself, much less understand me. Little wonder why they never could either.

For a while I tried commuting to Los Angeles and attending a few of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society (LASFS) meetings where I knew many of their club members anyway. At least I could relate to them and talk about science fiction, fandom, and fanzines with them.

From those fan contacts, slowly, a devious personal-enjoyment plot began taking place. I had been so accustomed to expending huge amounts of energy on science fiction fan projects that I needed to keep at it to a certain extent to maintain my balance, or so I thought at the time.

What I did was to put the city of Tijuana into contention to be the site for the next year's Westercon.

I did all the routine footwork and checked in with the Tijuana Visitors and Convention Bureau where I met parts of one of the four families who "own" Tijuana, the Bustamantes. They were very helpful and generous to me, offering much sound advice on how to secure the convention for Tijuana, and giving me large amounts of throw-away four-color "visit Tijuana" literature. After all, it wasn't like I had never done it before.

On the fannish side, I began touting the Tijuana Westercon-to-be as something uniquely salacious and depraved. I doublethink called it "The Think-Clean Westercon" while using a large, era-paisley "Tijuana For 69" logo done in the style of William Rotsler for the convention itself. There was no apostrophe there in that 69 either.

I promised that the program would include at least one "live donkey on stage" and that the ladies of The Blue Fox would personally cater the Westercon banquet. There were glowing allusions to the quality and quantity of pot that would be at the convention and that an open bar would be available for all convention members around the clock.

I planted stories about Tijuana in various fanzines and placed advertisements touting the convention-to-be for 1969. Only one of those fanzine ads has turned up so far. It was designed by Harry Bremner, the Design Director of Greenleaf Classics, Inc., who did numerous personal art favors for me over the years.

Here is that ad, as it appeared in the 1968 Baycon Program Book:

Then, at the Baycon in 1968, when it was actually time to vote on selecting the Westercon site for 1969, I started getting cold feet. Up until that moment, it had been all in fun, only it had a slight possibility of turning deadly serious. If that happened, I would get stuck with doing all that work all by myself, mostly. Admittedly I had checked out all the facilities and vendors, all the meeting rooms and spot-checked the guestrooms. I had actually eaten food prepared by the caterers of my choice. From everyone I had tentative agreements for performance depending upon winning the election or not. It was a well-greased, well-used plan working through a major hotel chain and it would have been simple, but I was still just one person without a back-up staff and without a coterie of dedicated fans helping me turn fanzine fantasies into science fiction realities.



Tijuana for 69, by Harry Bremner, from the Baycon Program Book. Courtesy Bruce Pelz Collection. Dated 1968.

Discretion being the better part of clichés, I quickly convinced my wife that the two of us should not

vote for Tijuana and, in doing so, another fan legend was born.

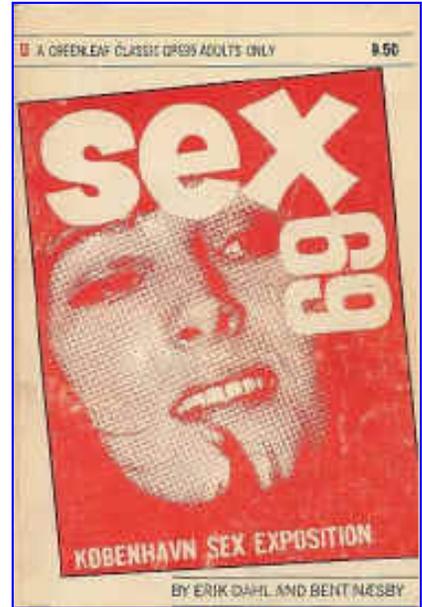
I have heard the story numbers of times from different directions that "Tijuana lost the bid to host the 1969 Westercon by two votes."

There are times when one really has to give thanks for small favors received.....

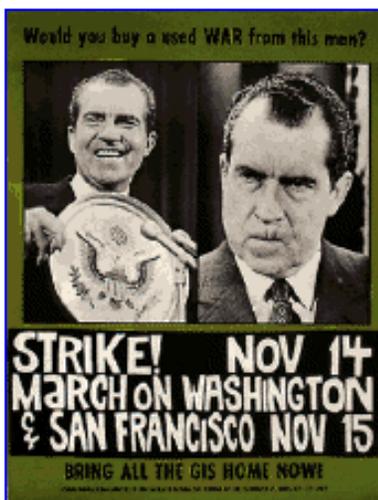
#

As it turned out, there would not have been any time to devote to producing the convention in Tijuana in 1969 after all. There were three major book-industry international trade exhibitions going on in 1969, and I was expected to man and operate exhibition booths at all of them for Greenleaf Classics, Inc. There was a month-long exhibition in Nice, the traditional two-week Frankfurt Book Fair, and for 1969, the most audacious world exhibition of them all, the World's Fair of Sex, in the KB Hallen in Copenhagen, Denmark...Sex 69. Not only did I attend and operate our exhibition booth at all three of them, I turned the last one into a book that was eventually sold to Greenleaf Classics, Inc.

It was one of the "Authentic Scandinavian" books produced for Greenleaf Classics by A/S Bookman of Copenhagen, Denmark. Ib Lauritzen was my literary agent for most of Europe. He and I conceived a series of "Authentic Scandinavian" books in my house in California. I wrote the books (Sex 69 was written by "Erik Dahl") in my house in Mexico and Lauritzen sold them from Denmark. The thickened plot worked out rather well for everyone concerned.



Sex 69, by Erik Dahl [pseudonym for Earl Kemp] and Bent Naesby (photographer), Greenleaf Classics, Inc. GP535, 1970.



1969 was remarkable for many other reasons besides the huge, nationwide anti-war and anti-Nixon demonstrations. It was the year an X-rated sex picture about a naïve Manhattan studhustler, *Midnight Cowboy*, won the Oscar for best movie of the year. It was also a big red-letter day (July 10) for me, being the year I first saw the word "fuck" in print in a major city newspaper. Doing so excited me greatly. The word appeared on the front page of the *London Times*...the *Literary Supplement*, admittedly, but it was the *Times*. I eagerly awaited such a brave act from some newspaper in the USA. I am still waiting.

Midnight Cowboy had a different, special significance for me that year. On several trips to New York City for various reasons, I had been wine and dined by Scott Meredith everywhere he felt he would look good being seen with me.

Jay Garon was the literary agent who sold *Midnight Cowboy*, by James Leo Herlihy, to Hollywood in the first place, and was proud of it. He was also one of the several New York agents who sold an occasional manuscripts to us. Garon wanted to wine and dine me also, but what a difference an agent makes.

While Meredith was only concerned with his appearance and what he was doing, Garon researched me.

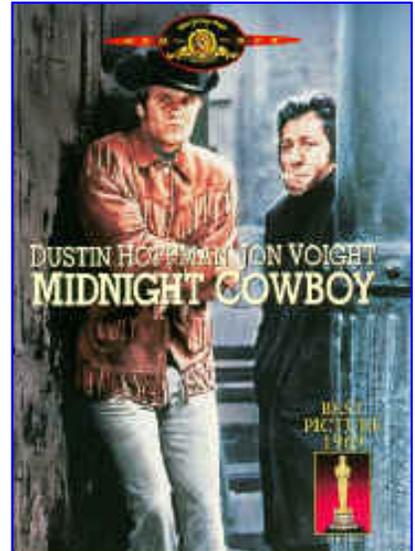
I didn't know it, but he found out lots of things about me and my past, and took me where he thought I would like to go, like to down-home southern restaurants for ham hocks and black-eyed peas, for collard greens, oven-baked 'possum, and sweet-potato pie. Garon took me all over Manhattan in limos from location after location, detailing how *Midnight Cowboy* was photographed and put together. Then, for the rest of the night, we toured private clubs and underground after-hour joints and pick-up places of genders I had never heard of or contemplated before.

For lunch, Garon took me to the Overseas Press Club, having discovered my own devious secret obsession to become a foreign correspondent. I had finally succeeded in September 1967 when I toured Viet Nam in the middle of the "police action" for the Los Angeles Free Press, and me a radical anti-war blabbermouth. Little wonder they had so many reasons to not like me.

It was my first ever time to use my foreign press credentials that way.

It was a pretty exhausting year, handling those three exhibitions plus my normal book-buying trips to Asia and the Netherlands (for resupplies). Alone but never traveling alone, never allowed to be lonely or make a private phone call. Not one.

Not putting on that Westercon in Tijuana for 69 might have turned out to be one of the best things I never did for myself. And, just think of all the work not doing it saved them from having to do as well.



--

*For my wonderful European agents, Ib Lauritzen, Henk Prinz, and the ever popular Koenig; Cheers!

There is hardly anyone whose sexual life, if it were broadcast, would not fill the world at large with surprise and horror....

--W. Somerset Maugham

Eat At The Blue Fox*

Like everyone else, I suspect, I had heard numerous sinful stories about Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico long before I ever made her acquaintance. Aunt Jane...Tia Juana...(not to be confused with her cousin Mary Jane) contracted into that world-class enigma Tijuana.

In the mid-1960s when the Porno Factory was diligently pursuing me with titles like King of Pornography and trying to convince me to move to San Diego from Chicago, Tijuana was thrown in as an extra incentive.

The Tijuana I was shown in those VIP quickie tours was not the Tijuana I wanted to know and love. What I got was the first class tour: the poshest restaurants, most lavish showrooms, most prestigious venues, etc. This was impressive enough all by itself, but the shady city still held the promise of erotic adventures beyond my imagination...a place I would have to discover and learn on my own, it seemed.



#

One of my best guides to Tijuana turned out to be a neighbor's 18-year-old son. It did not matter what your real age was in Tijuana in the 1960s. If you could crawl into a bar and still had money left, you were of legal drinking age. As time passed some attempts were made at observing a minimum age of 18, but even that was only for show and not for real.

His name was Harold Butler and he seemed to know every raunchy spot in town and some of the people there by name, and they knew him.

In those days, Tijuana was a wide-open sin city. I had heard of such places, as had most people, but never saw one or realized that they really did exist. When I lived in Chicago there were persistent rumors of depravity to be found in distant Calumet City, but I never got to visit there. The most routinely sinful places I could find in Chicago (Yes, I know that there were establishments where anything could be purchased and any sort of sordidness could be participated in for the very wealthy and politically connected) were tit bars and stage burlesque.

My buddy James O'Meara and I would now and then go to a strip bar under the El at Wilson Avenue and sit through the two-drink minimum while watching Sugar Cane move through her sensual choreography and cringing every time a train passed overhead. In some areas of town the sidewalks grew many hookers who were available for almost anything you could describe or endure.

I developed quite a fondness for burlesque...the genuine old-fashioned top banana and talking lady stage skits that routinely worked the Minsky's circuit. They possessed a great deal of class and polish that they exhibited at every performance. When I did eventually move to San Diego I was delighted to find they too had a smattering of the real thing intermixed with the sailor rip-off bars and sleazy walk-up hourly rentals that seemed to characterize the downtown area.

#

There were billboards around Tijuana encouraging you to "Eat at the Blue Fox." Routine, ordinary billboards that looked like advertisements for any restaurant anywhere in the world: "Try the blue plate special." They featured a stylized blue fox armed with a leer and a wink as the restaurant's logo. "All You Can Eat For Free!"

Harold pointed out the billboards and laughed. "It's not a restaurant," he said, "it's a sleazy sex joint."

"Okay," I said, "let's go."

And we did.

#

The Blue Fox was two blocks off the main drag of tit bars and beat-off booths. You had to know where you were going in order to get there. The façade was routine Tijuana, nothing special, and could have fronted establishments of many different types.

Inside, it opened out into a big showroom with a rather large stage to one side. Booths lined the walls and there was a large curving staircase leading upward to the second floor. Rows of small little crib-like rooms lined the upstairs. They were equipped with a bed, a sink and a hanging douche-hose, and were used only for very brief periods of time.

There were tables and chairs filling the rest of the main showroom except for the bar and a small bandstand where some tired old musicians seemed to endlessly repeat three songs then move into a chorus of "Jungle Drums." This, allegedly, was a signal from the lookout that the coast was clear and the police who were repressing their actions were now out of sight and it was okay to get on with the show.

In reality it was just clever showmanship. The thrill of the illicit. The danger of discovery. The establishment preyed upon its clientele's morals and desires and hit them with this little subterfuge to heighten their anticipation. Everyone there knew it was only a sham, and that nothing could interfere with The Blue Fox when it was showtime.

At the time Tijuana was off-limits to most active military personnel, only they didn't seem to know anything about that. The streets, bars, and bordellos were crowded with them all over the downtown section. They flocked to the Blue Fox in droves; it was their kind of place.

One of the games the regulars played there was just to watch the servicemen get taken by the hookers working the crowd. Part of the game was betting which serviceman would go upstairs with which hooker. It was sort of axiomatic in the Blue Fox; if the hooker was a real good looker, she was a he. The place was overrun with transvestite hustlers from San Diego. A nonstop stream of sailors and marines, at tow, like Radio Flyers with erections, paraded up the stairway to ejaculation, and fully half of them had no idea the girl they were with wasn't.

You were no sooner seated at a table or a booth that lined the outside walls when an attractive young lady appeared from nowhere, sat down beside you, and started stroking your genitals through your pants. It cost \$5 for her to take it out and play with it naked. \$10 for a blowjob. \$20 for missionary-position intercourse. You had to go upstairs and look for an empty room for those last two exercises. If you only bought her a beer, she'd stay there and feel you up for half an hour but no flesh contact.

The floorshow at the Blue Fox was a bit different from the routine tit-shaking, totally nude bump-and-grind routines going on at many nearby establishments. The girls came out on the stage and wiggled through a tired preliminary routine mostly dressed in teddies and peignoirs. Then they started stripping and, as they did, members of the audience got up on the stage and began participation routines with the dancers.

Usually there were three girls dancing on the stage, four at the most. This gave plenty of stage room for three guys from the audience to join the three girls and have a little maneuvering room left over in which to party righteously.

The most common form of entertainment in the Blue Fox was their "blue plate special that you could eat all you want for free" literally. The customers would lie down on the stage and the girls, nude, would sit on their faces and grind away.

They did other things, too, as long as the girls were willing, and they had courage enough to whip it out and put it into play.

Once, on a dare, my buddies got me up on that stage. By then I knew the routine well and had been to the Blue Fox on many occasions. Besides that, I was a little drunk. "Come on, Mr. Fucker, show us!" They teased. "Porno stud, whip it out." "King cock!" Everything a King of Pornography could ever hope for, and being forced to put up or shut up by the only ones who counted, his buddies who would love nothing better than to see him humiliated.

I crawled up there flat on my back, like a turned-over snake, and watched her move into position and lock on. She knew I was being forced into doing what I was doing in order not to lose face with my friends, everyone in the place could hear them goading me on, so she went along with the act and pretended she was having one ecstatic orgasm right after the other. I have always depended upon the kindness of friends to enhance my reputation.



After she was definitely in place, she leaned forward quickly and fell prone atop me, ending up in a classic 69 position. She blew hot breath through my pants into my crotch and mouthed me furiously at the same time.

She turned me on so much that, right there on that stage in front of God, the tired old musicians, and my buddies...and all those strangers, I dropped my pants and moved behind her dog-style and bottomed out once just for show. I straightened right up, pulled my pants back up, left the stage and rushed into the john. I scrubbed my flesh until it was raw. I kept

scrubbing it, I remember, for days, and looking for signs that fortunately never appeared.

It was one of those classic cases of mind over matter. The reputation being, sort of like the office of the Presidency, much bigger than the man holding the position. Or, to be clichéish about it, "if you get the name, you play the game." In politics it comes out as "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Back over to Revolucion, the main drag, where every other establishment along the street deals in some manner with sex, there were many delights to discover as well. There were doormen at each, hawking out their spiels, trying to entice passersby inside their doors.

"Fucking, sucking on stage! Live donkey show!"

There was the Bambi, a basement establishment with a playground slide entrance from street level. Mike's Bar when you burned out having your groin pummeled and only wanted a quiet hideaway and a little rock and roll.

There were transvestite shows with elaborate costumes and scenery available if that was your thing. They had them in San Diego, too...most every other place I've ever been to around the world, as well.

The Hotel Nelson with not only an excellent barbershop but also a fantastic cocktail lounge and kick-ass house special: a .50-cent rum, Coke, and 7-Up cocktail that you could nurse for a long time. Good Johns.

There was Hotel Caesar; reputed to be the original home of the salad of the same name. It had one hell of a good restaurant.

The Adobe Club around the corner for quiet retreats.

Two doors away from the Adobe was the baths. This was a traditional, non-gay, male-only Turkish bath. It was large, elaborate, and almost always busy. There was a resident masseuse who could make you feel like a million bucks with one of his superb marijuana laced oil of wintergreen rubdowns. Once, completely by accident, a couple of my friends and I went to the baths while they were having their annual Christmas party. We were recognized and welcomed into the celebration warmly. They had tons of special fruit-filled Christmas tamales and all the cerveza and tequila you could drink.

Near the Fronton and across the street was Roma Madrid, a mixed bag Italian Mexican restaurant with the fastest swishing waiter in town and kickass after dinner cocktails (Kirshwasser and whipping cream whirled in a blender and served in a champagne saucer) on the house.

Famous traditional saloons like The Long Bar and The Kentucky Club had already turned touristy.

Upstairs over some of the storefronts lurked porno movies with free feelies, and peepholes through which you could watch people actually having sex. Straight. Perverted. Underage. Men with men. Women with women. Groups. You think it up and it's there, waiting for you.

It was like that all night long, in the '60s, in Tijuana.

Just before dawn a silence descended and clean-up crews could be seen and heard and almost all that raunch disappeared and the stores unfolded into routine souvenir sellers, each more or less a replica of the other.

And behind it all and under it all and wrapped around it all was that all-pervading, always present pulse-beat of sin and sensuality. A siren's call to hedonism unlimited and unrestrained.

Perhaps it is still there today, waiting for me...and for you.

#

*For Harold Butler who showed me his Tijuana and all the cerveza one night can contain.

When you don't have any money, the problem is food. When you have money, it's sex. When you have both, it's health. If everything is simply jake, then you're frightened of death.

--J.P. Donleavy

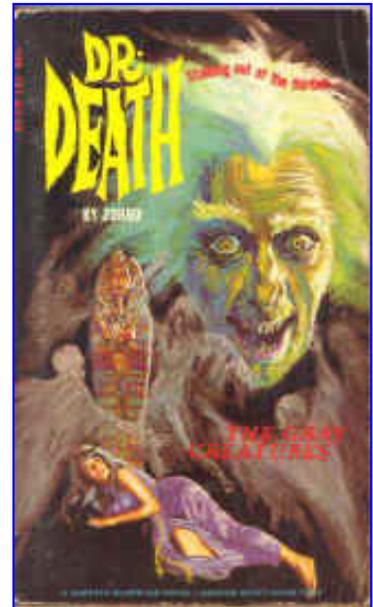
Cuando Caliente el Sol de 2010*

[Jon Hanlon was a pseudonym I created for myself in 1965. It is a combination of parts of the names of two dear friends, Jon Stopa and James Hanlon O'Meara. The name was created to host a new line of books we were producing called Corinth Regency. They were reprints of favorite old pulp magazine heroes from my past. Not only did I get to edit those books, I also got to pose for the cover paintings of some of them, most notably the Dr. Deaths. I did not use the name Jon Hanlon at any other time. Jon Hanlon was my alter-ego; he could do things easily that I couldn't contemplate at all. --Earl Kemp]

There were times when Jon Hanlon absolutely, positively had to be alone; gafiating, getting away from it all, introspectively looking inside himself and sorting out the routine clutter that accumulated around the edges of his mind and started bogging down the living processes.

There were lots of places where Jon gafiated, but his most favored place of all, and one he felt he used to the point of abusement, was a secluded beachfront villa not quite 200 miles southeast of San Diego on the Baja California, Mexico peninsula on the incredible Sea of Cortez.

The compound housed a modest 3-bedroom stone house on a well maintained and landscaped hectare enclosed within a high-security fence. It sat on a cliff-edge some 150 feet above the beach and almost in the middle of a long, gracefully sweeping bay. The complex was self-contained with generators and back-up generators and photovoltaic and solar collectors and a satellite dish and around six months supply of everything any reasonable man could ever reasonably expect to need, including food, drinking water, propane, diesel, and gasoline for fuel.



There was a separate boathouse-garage with a ramp leading down into the water and the damnedest inboard Crisscraft Jon had ever tried to control. There was a Jeep also stored in the boathouse in case anyone wanted to roam around the endless stretches of desert, cruising for cactus and coyotes, leading backward from the beach.

Jon felt very fortunate that he had access to the compound, known as "Crosswinds South" because of the ornate metal-sculpture sign over the massive main entrance just at the end of the private road leading in from the highway. It was the property of an old buddy of his.

Being alone at Crosswinds South never failed to bring out the very best in Jon. It was therapeutic; cleansing his mind and leaving him a much better man for having been there...done it. Being there with someone was good, too, as Jon discovered on the few occasions when he was there with his host, the two of them trying to drink up all the Corona in the world and smoke kilos of specially processed Michoacan sensemilla, telling lies and fantastic boasts to each other of exploits and sexual conquests that never happened at all.

There was practically no work to do of any sort at Crosswinds South. Caesar, the caretaker and groundskeeper, was in charge of keeping it all running and Maria, the part-time maid, came in a couple of hours a day and did all the touch-up, the dishes, the veggie prep, whatever the jefe felt was wanted.

And when Jon was there alone, and Maria or Caesar had already departed for the day, Valhalla

descended and Jon became one with the gods again.

It always started the same, depending on the weather conditions, very early in the morning. Time was meaningless anyway, at Crosswinds South, and it was commonplace to wake up before the sun and, Orpheuslike, await it high above Rio singing its praises aloud in broken-voice tones that, anywhere else and if ever overheard would be extremely embarrassing indeed. But come up the sun did, like thunder out of Sonora across the bay where the flying fishes play.

And with the rising of the sun, it brought with it an ethereal mysticism that settled over everything like a gentle cloud and, even though there were other houses lining the cliff all along the beachfront, the owners of those houses, rarely in residence, didn't want to see Jon there any more than Jon didn't want to see any of them. It was like an implied conspiracy, or like living in Palm Springs; absolutely everyone there was there only because they liked the seclusion and the aloneness and went out of their way, Japanese-fashion, just pretending they were absolutely alone in all the world.

With the descension of that mystical cloud, every fiber of maleness inside Jon came vibrantly alive. He was helpless to keep his clothes on at all, until the sun got so far up in the sky and the temperature had climbed so high that sunburns were a definite possibility. Then he would seek shade that could be found beneath any of the tall, gently fluttering palm trees, catching and caressing every fragment of breeze coming in off the ocean, or inside the gazebo or beneath the trellis supporting the giant San Diego red bougainvillea, or crawling, lizardlike, inside the giant-leafed monstera.

Jon, like everyone else every privileged enough to even see Crosswinds South, knew that there were much better beaches, much bluer oceans, much more isolated locations, but put them all together and they still spelled spontaneous ejaculation.

He would go down to the beach and run for hours, it seemed, though that was really impossible, as naked as the day he was born, falling down exhausted and rolling around in the sand, feeling it clinging to his pores, filtering through his pubic hairs, grinding in and around his genitalia...and loving every minute of it and every single grain of that precious sand.

Running again, only this time directly into the ocean where the gentle waves pummeled him and the baby sand sharks and timid young manta rays scurried hurriedly for safety. Rolling and jumping and thrashing around in the water, attracting the attention of a passing school of dolphins who, always ready to play, joined in the fray, chattering with Jon and nudging against him, feeling his body with theirs and sharing the things Godnature gave them in common, almost but not quite letting Jon ride them, laying right on top of them and hugging them close, his legs tight around their muscle-rippling body and his flesh melded into their slick, warm flesh almost like having sex with nature herself.

Overhead the seagulls-gaviotas-swirled and called, watching them at play while scouting for schools of tender, succulent anchovies. Long lines of pelicans, sometimes more than a dozen in each line, would come overhead as well, slowly gliding, their wings seldom flopping to maintain their precise position in line, their fat beaks opening now and then like U.S.A. cargo planes dispelling death in Vietnam. All around Jon and the dolphins the surface of the water would erupt time and again by flying fish, jumpers really, who would emerge from the water without warning and go as high as three feet up into the air before flopping back down under the water and disappearing.

The smell of the ocean itself, not too salty, was pleasant, like early morning fog settling in October or November. It was tangy in Jon's mouth and stinging in his eyes, but he loved every torturous instant of it. Especially later, after a long, lingering almost too-hot shower, and a sit-down two-joint Panama Red break from almost too much goodness.

Jon finished his lunch-avocado, alfalfa sprouts, and turkey breast on sourdough; glass of OJ-and left the dishes where they were, on the coffee table in front of the couch where he had mindlessly not been watching CNN Headline News while eating. Carefully he rubbed some coconut-scented No. 30 sunscreen onto the too-burned-to-touch skin covering his privates and, taking a deep drag off his carefully hoarded joint, holding it tightly and pressing it into his lungs, went back out, maddog and Englishmanlike, into the noonday sun.

Oh frabjous day...he chortled in the wabe.

#

*In memory of Alan Niebrugge and those special times at the Whalebone Bar in Tecate when no one else was allowed to be there. Dated 1994.

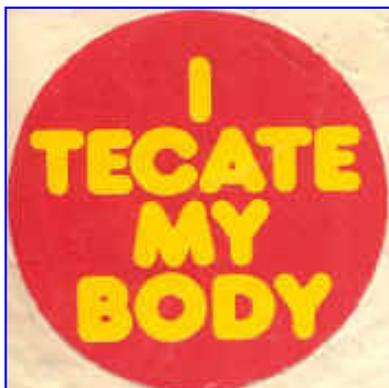
Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed there are many rewards, if you disgrace yourself you can always write a book....

--Ronald Reagan

I Tecate My Body*

The tiny two-town-even the most ambitious Chamber of Commerce worker would be reluctant to accidentally refer to either of the Tecates as being a "city"--cross-border complex known to the locals as Los Tecates is the closest international border-crossing to inland San Diego County.

Tecate, California is more of a myth than a reality, the evaporating remnants of a once-thriving cattle town where Mexican-raised beef was routinely sent to more prosperous and rewarding United States markets...a bank, a post office, couple of supermarkets, and a gas station....



The contiguous streeted town of Tecate, Baja California, Mexico, on the other hand, is thriving and running out-of-sight up and over the sides of the ring of Sierra San Martine Mountains completely surrounding what was once one of the lushest grassland valleys in the entire area. Then it was all cattle range and thoroughbred horse breeding, before civilization and the incalculable rewards of selective hybridizing struck the locals involved with the cannabis market and my, how the money rolled in....

There was no significant border way back when a rich Peruvian came looking for his perfect place to live. He found it right there, beneath the watchful gaze and eternal protection of Cuchuma, the mountain peak that towers over everything. He was the founding father of both the cross-border towns. He brought with him an elegant civilization fronted in grandeur, and some of the finest milk cows, Holsteins, and quarterhorses ever to grace the continent, turning the entire valley into his private paradise.

In the 1980s, though, Tecate-the Mexican one; the locals call the California one Tecatito; "the little one"-had already burgeoned into a major manufacturing center. Initially the largest industry in town was the giant Cerveceria Cuauhtemoc, S.A. de C.V. brewery where, no thanks to Schlitz, the beer made the town famous by naming its most popular product Tecate. For export, the factory brews Carta Blanca, Bohemia, XX-the last remnant of another former great brewery-and a direct rip-off of Corona called Chihuahua. The brewery is huge and sprawling and right downtown. It is equipped with the very latest state-of-the-art machinery and is almost totally automated, employing very few townspeople and maintaining, by decree, absolute control of all groundwater for miles and miles.

And almost a hundred in-bond factories-maquiladoras-where products are made for sale in other countries, the most obvious one being the United States.

All that business and enough drugs to have one great kick-ass party. Scattered randomly throughout Tecate are the huge, pretentious, multi-million-U.S.-dollar single-family private residences belonging to the "Rich and Notorious" who, with no visible means of support, are never seen driving the same BMW or Mercedes two days in a row for a whole week.

Colombians live side-by-side with Peruvians, Bolivians with Panamanians, Cubans with Chileans...and the product just kept flowing for a long time back then. The locals are all pretty much aware of what's going on as much as are the droves and droves of undercover policemen and narcs from Interpol to the CIA and down to the local Humane Society who keep stumbling over each other around town. That's because there's so many of them running into each other all the time.

Whenever the locals are bored, they regale each other with the latest gossip about which one of the local Federales-who also live in massively impressive houses and sport large arrays of luxury cars-was spotted at 2 a.m. the previous morning hand delivering what type of bundles to a waiting crew of U.S. Border Patrol officers. My, how the money rolls in....

Unfortunately, as in all cases, demand dictates the supply, and for much too long a time, the demand had been for cocaine, keeping the Cali crew and the Medellin mob shaking their little brown asses. And the grass wasn't getting any greener...in fact, it was really dwindling on the market. The big bucks, coming in response for much smaller, lighter loads, all but bypassed the marijuana market, putting thousands of Mexican Federales and peons alike out of work and the fall-out trickling down through Thailand, Laos, Afghanistan, and....

The California homegrown market tried to cover for the absence and hybridized Indica began coming out of Humboldt County that would just make you drool in anticipation, it was that goooooooodddd.

#

Way up in the mountains, Los Tecates experiences weather conditions unlike any neighbor within a hundred miles. Sometimes it is very, very hot with the sun just hanging over the valley and pumping all its juices down onto the already-baked populace. At other times, in the winter, it is so cold that most highways leading to Tecate are closed by mountain snowdrifts or mini avalanches.

Tiny whiffs of pretend snowflakes whirl around in the air trying to find a place to land. Stray dogs huddle in doorways for warmth. The breath seems to chill your entire insides as it slices through your body.

#

*In memory of Rosendo Rodriguez, all the great times at the brewery, and the incredible tap of unpasteurized and unequaled Tecate.

To be one's self, and unafraid whether right or wrong, is more admirable than the easy cowardice of surrender to conformity....

--Irving Wallace

El Pedo Viejo Del Refugio*

William Hamling gave me Mexico as a bennie for moving to California with him and the Porno Factory in 1965. He gave me a cleaned-up, deluxe Mexico; I had to seek out the sordid underbelly of sleaze and exaltation for myself. What Bill didn't know at the time was that I had been intrigued by Mexico for years, and had even planned one vacation there that fell through at the last minute. I was ready for Mexico and just about everything it represented or evoked in my thoughts or my dreams.

The Mexico I was given was Tijuana...who could ask for anything more?

Because I grew up in a very small town, all my life I dreamed of leaving there and going to the biggest city I could reach and staying there forever where I knew for sure I really belonged in the first place only someone screwed up unbelievably. And eventually I did just that, first to Chicago and then to lots of the major cities of the world.

Amid all the urbanity, the sophistication, the Metropolisness of it all, something nagged at me persistently and I spent some time trying to figure out what it was. It surprised me to discover that, deep inside of me, I secretly longed to live in a very small town.

That's how I found Tecate, Baja California, Mexico in the first place.

Tecate is directly inland from Tijuana some 25 miles from the Pacific coast. It is also, 35 miles away, connected by an inland highway to El Cajon, California the San Diego suburb where I lived when I first moved to California. When I had nothing better to do in those early-on California years, I would take long drives through the countryside enjoying the trees and the absence of people.

One lucky day I drove into Tecate. The Mexican one; Tecate, California isn't much more than a Border Patrol pimple on the festering ass of civilization as we know it and as dictated by our Administration.

It was 1965 and Tecate was just about as small a town as you could find anywhere without missing it while blinking. There were a couple of streets paralleling the border and one of them was the main highway from Tijuana to Mexicali, the state capital where all the business records were kept. There was one industry in town, a great big brewery that pumped out Tecate beer, among other brands.



There were a couple of pretty nice restaurants and a whole bunch of yummy taco stands, and a beautiful town square only two blocks from the border entry point populated by lush, well-maintained trees. It was very pleasant and inviting. I parked my car nearby and walked through the park, and through most of the rest of the town except for a few outlying colonias [neighborhoods].

I decided then that Tecate was my kind of town, if not my personal toy. I would watch it grow and encourage it and love it...and I did.

I would return to Tecate again and again, alone if necessary, and walk the streets and approve of whatever was new and disdain whatever was unworthy. I was proud of what I saw unfolding before me. Someone had made a grand scheme and a city plan for Tecate that was hard to follow but if you looked closely it all made sense. Slowly, over the years, parkways and boulevards leading to and from nowhere

came together in a wonderful accomplishment, and it was all mine.

I found a favorite restaurant in Tecate, run by Nono Perrera and his wife [Italian immigrants]. At the time it was adjacent to the El Dorado Motel and served as their restaurant, but in reality it produced the best damned Italian food anywhere around. Perrera's became my favorite spot and I would dine there again and again, every chance I had to do so. They would prepare special dishes for me and luscious desserts to tempt me with. They planned a couple of catered wedding party dinners, complete with elaborate cakes, for me also, whenever someone from the Porno Factory would take a big step and I would feel fatherly toward them.

Just outside of town they had some huge vineyards and there were also large orchards of olive trees. The entire area was so European you just couldn't believe any of it. The Perrera family owned some of those vineyards and they had a winery hidden inside an old factory in Tecate. Their house label wines were the best available in the entire state.

One of the important features of Perrera's was that with any dinner order, they would serve you unlimited free margaritas. All by itself that gratis gift made going to Perrera's worthwhile. If there were two to three couples eating that meal, and challenging each other to just one more round of margaritas, and then another, and....

#

Many years down the line, of admiring and possessively watching over my Tecate, I was driving around town one day checking out what was happening and I noticed what I thought of as being an unusual number of For Rent signs. Just out of curiosity, I began checking into some of those rentals. What I discovered blew me away. I had been coming and going from that beautiful little town for over a decade, and never ever considered living there.

I was about to change my mind in a hurry.

What I discovered was that I could rent a house that was twice as good as any house I had ever lived in before in California in terms of construction, design, size, etc., for one quarter of the amount of an inferior house in California. At the time I had a storage unit filled with extra, cast-off, and unused furniture that was all too good to dispose of, and I was paying almost twice the amount in monthly rental for that storage unit as a secure, fenced private residence in Tecate. I rented one that day and started moving all my stored stuff into it. In no time at all I had a secret hideaway of my very own.

I thought of it just that way for the longest time, as being my secret hideaway. I was very reluctant to let anyone know it was there or especially how very much I was enjoying it. The fact that there was no electricity or telephone seemed to add to the thrill of the whole experience...something like the danger of being caught in an inappropriate place doing it....

#

For New Year's Eve that first year, I decided to have a small house-warming party, and invited just a very few close personal friends to come party and stay overnight with no drunk or impaired driving involved. Unknown to me, my son Erik passed along an invitation to some of his friends, some of the neighborhood kids from where we lived in El Cajon. When it became time for the party, people began showing up. First my friends arrived and then Erik's, but without Erik, who never showed up that night.

Three of his friends came to party with me on that inaugural holiday evening. I guessed them to be

around 17 years old and only knew one of them casually from seeing him around the neighborhood. They came bearing huge gifts of extra special quality pot, some hashish, and half a dozen assorted types of paraphernalia. I was shocked when I saw it all...especially all that good weed...and asked him how he expected to get that back across the border with him into the States, and the paraphernalia as well.

He just laughed, and said something obscure like, "...not a one of them would dare touch me for anything."

Later, from Erik, I learned that he was the son of the Tecate, CA U.S. Border Patrol Station Chief, who lived just around the corner of the block from our house in El Cajon. That worked out quite nicely because he would bring me valuable gifts in Tecate for no reason at all whenever he felt like passing by and partying.

And it rained that New Year's Eve night. It really rained, hard and heavy and unrelenting and continuous and forever. And the roof leaked everywhere. Every pot, pan, bowl, or container of any sort inside the house was dedicated to capturing a leak. Navigating across the room, down the hallway, or into other rooms, was difficult because you just couldn't do it and stay dry.

It was one hell of a party. I promised to get the roof fixed and they all promised to come back and do it all over again. And I did and they did.

#

I outfitted that first house in Tecate totally in Mickey Mouse stuff. I called it Mickey's place...a secret playground for secret playing...luxury for a pittance.... There were some antique Disney toys inside that house as old as I was. The house had everything I wanted, situated there just exactly at the edge of town, directly beyond any services except water. The electricity, the telephone lines, and the television cable all ended just one block before my house. Perfect...no one could find me without help.

This house was in Colonia El Refugio [The Refuge] and it was certainly that for me. It had been years since I had felt so protected and so sheltered as while living there. I lived there for almost a year before moving into another house. In all, I lived in four different houses in Tecate over a fifteen-year span, and every one of them was in the same colonia, right against the USA border itself. And one of those houses I lived in twice. It was my favorite of all the houses I occupied in Tecate...Carmen's place...on Cerro de las Abejas...the house on honeybee hill.....

#

For over a dozen of those fifteen years, my constant companions were a cat and a dog.

The cat, Jack, was a white Persian with one green eye and one blue one. He was particularly beautiful and he was one feisty little guy. He was always ready to fight anything for any reason.



Cock-Cola, needlepoint by Earl Kemp.
Dated 1976.

The dog, Bambam [named for "The Flintstones" and blissfully shortened to Bam or the Bamer], was a mostly brownish half German shepherd and half malamute mix. He was a hopeless idiot, retarded beyond recovery of any sort. Literally. Erik rescued him in some mercy move from a family who encouraged their small children to be unrelentingly cruel to the dog from the moment they acquired it as a focus for their children's handed-down hostilities. The dog was brutalized day and night all of its life until Erik somehow got it away from them and delivered him to me.

He never grew up. He never knew what it was to have sex, doggy style or any other way. He hated children with an unreasonable vengeance. He was the biggest, loudest, worst acting dog in the whole town. People would routinely cross the street and pass my house on the other side rather than get even that close to the well-fenced-in dog. His reputation was very far reaching.

They moved with me as I moved from house to house. They were content just being with me. Over the years, Bam became quite attached to me, and properly possessive and protective, literally a true old friend.

Then, sadly, after a dozen years of closeness, within two weeks time it was necessary to have my veterinarian put both of them down. Time had taken really ugly tolls on both their lives and they spent months declining into much pain and suffering. They hated to go almost as much as I hated to lose them. I swore no other animals would ever claim pieces of me again but, as usual, I was wrong again.

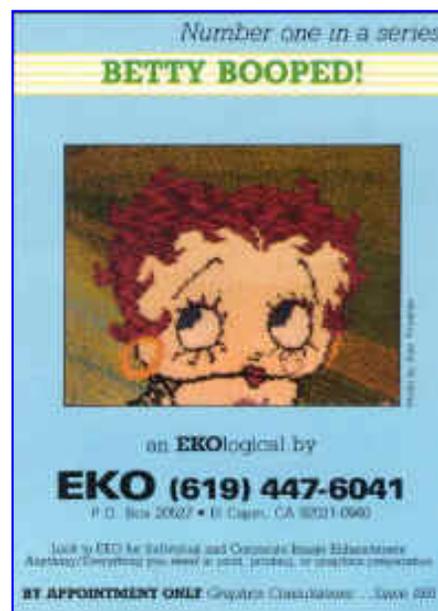
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From my house in Tecate, for many years, I operated a graphics consulting business servicing a number of major clients in the San Diego area, including the San Diego Police Department, San Diego Fire Department, and San Diego County Sheriff. My son Erik was a great help with this business and lived with me in Mexico from time to time while working on one project or another. Most of my clients never knew I didn't even live in the USA, much less work there. I was a formal, official, dryback...an illegal alien...one of 20,000 such living within 50 miles of the USA border. In reality I was straddling the fence, sucking up the best of both worlds and rejecting the worst of each at the same time.

#

Another restaurant took over my care and feeding, and I began bypassing Perrera's. My new eatery was called Pueblo Viejo [Old Town] and it occupied an entire Victorian mansion immediately next to the brewery. The manager of this restaurant, Josefina, knew exactly what to do for me. She flattered me unbelievably and she fed me like no other person ever had done before. I would take every person who came to visit me to eat at Pueblo Viejo just to show the place off, beaming as if it was mine. I had them cater several special meals for me for different types of groups from the mundane to the incredibly sexual, and they made each of those occasions just a bit better than the one before it.

Live music flourished in Pueblo Viejo. There were roaming mariachis and special name acts were booked now and then. The ambiance was just about perfect for any relaxing, romantic dinner.



I had lobster-prepared differently each time-once to three times a week...stuffed crab...Alaskan crab legs...abalone, and Pueblo Viejo's own well hung and aged Black Angus beef...whatever it was it couldn't be beaten.

Then, one bleak Christmas Eve, Pueblo Viejo, the proud old wood-frame Victorian next door to the Tecate brewery, burned to the ground and my favorite of all restaurants was to be no more ever again in spite of numerous attempts at reviving it.

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Eventually the brewery took over the burned-out location and designed and built a rather nice beer garden in its place.

The brewery was the single largest business in town and it occupied a number of square blocks near the heart of downtown Tecate. For a number of months I tutored the executives of the brewery in Conversational English. I had a great time doing that and enjoyed the run of the brewery. While the complex was rather large, it was totally state of the art and almost fully automated. There were very few employees needed to watch the gauges and throw the switches. Perhaps the very best thing about the entire brewery experience was the private tasting room. Here, whenever they felt like it, the brewery executives [an unbelievably coddled and rewarded few] had access directly to the pure beer as it finished the brewing process and prior to pasteurization.

The flavor is incredible. If they could only bottle that stuff they would make another million bucks instantly. Pasteurization ruins all of it, the appearance, and especially the flavor. I cherish the memory of my days at the cerverceria.



Real men, at least real Mexican men, all think that real men have to drink cuyamas. That is the quart bottle of Tecate brand beer; nothing else will be considered. If you dare to even think about drinking a Corona in their presence, they would assault you. All real men drink their beer right out of the quart bottle and the warmer it gets, the better it tastes...or so they would have you believe. I could never get it straight and I would secretly suck up the Coronas, cold, like a real wussy man, letting the taste of the lime linger on my lips as long as it wanted to....

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One of the major things the city of Tecate did every year was to host the equivalent of a county fair. This was an occasion of much celebration with carnival-type rides and amusements and games of chance spread out all over the downtown area. With exhibits and displays from the town's major industries

that were all growing day by day as the town itself grew day by day stretching outward from the downtown center and reaching way out up and down over the foothills and climbing higher and higher every day.... Ah progress!

Another civic pride event sponsored by Tecate was a bull run patterned after the annual run in Pamplona, Spain. It was, of course, called Pamplonada. They would close off the major downtown street, install metal fences down the length of it, and run the bulls and whatever spectators were drunk

enough down the street through the metal fence. The onlookers watched from outside the fence or from atop it. They were all very well fortified with cerveza and margaritas and partying to the max. Many of them were dressed in the traditional Pamplona white, accentuated with blood red scarves and berets.

It was like a large, roving party. Whole groups would form by accident and drift off into different bars to drink awhile before reforming by accident again somewhere else. I encountered numbers of friends at Pamplonadas who didn't even know I lived there, or that the party could be quite that good.

After a few years of this, and a few ugly incidents involving drunk tourists hassling the livestock, the city fathers decided to abandon the angry bull spectacle as an official event. One more roaming party hit the dust. I had become accustomed to inviting lots of friends to Tecate on the day of the bull run, and boogieing right on through the night.

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Just a few miles outside of town, in an entirely different atmosphere, John Allesio had his Rancho Tecate Resort and Country Club. An oasis of palm-lined greens and all manner of things to do. This was an ultra elite place for the ultra elite to hide out and relax far away from unwanted scrutiny. Here the fantastically connected family members met directly with the nonexistent mafia and the wealthier planters with the usual greedy Border Patrol purchasers. Ah progress!

Only they could afford Allesio's prices for sharing fleeting moments of quiet relaxation without being interrupted by mundane illegal affairs.

Originally, many years before, the location had been a spiritual and meditation retreat operated by Alan Watts. It was huge, covering many rolling, forested acres. The entire complex was crisscrossed with roads and at various suitable vantage points, large amphitheatres appear out of nowhere. There were lecterns facing vast open spaces of nature from which you could expound on any subject to your heart's content. There were birds and scurrying things through the underbrush and more and more trees. A perfect tranquil place for very perfect silence and solitude, at an out-of-sight price.

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There were times when I would take miles long walks around Tecate at random, moving up one residential street and down another. There were hills, too, and the streets ran up them and down the other side. A long walk was really a workout. Some of those walks would be down the railroad tracks leading out of town and through the heavy growths of old live oak trees.

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After my graphics consulting business died because of personal computers and desktop publishing, I began searching out another direction for moneymaking. For the longest time I considered the possibility of publishing an English-language newspaper for Tecate, and all the illegals who would have access to it. La Voz Gringo de Los Tecates...but like all talkative gringos, it never took flight. As a preliminary hype, however, I made a Los Tecates bumper sticker out of the logo and handed out hundreds of them to people who proudly wore them everywhere they went.



Another plan was to open a Stateside type quick-food restaurant. I named it Papa Gringo's but had no intention, ever, of doing the cooking. I was burning out on Mexican style antojitos and wanted a greasy hamburger. For a while I planned a second restaurant, this was to be a breakfast and lunch place named "Mortie's Munchies" and decorated entirely in Mickey [Mortimer} Mouse motifs. Fortunately I was too lazy to move either effort toward completion.

I had been consulting with Vaquero, a Mexican manufacturer of leather goods and cowboy apparel accessories, about repositioning their business in the USA market. That took me about a year during which I learned everything there was to know about the leather goods and horse/cowboy industry business. I involved Erik in this enterprise as well. In short order we formed Western Gold.

There were many people surrounding me who were excellent artisans in the craft of handbraiding. Most of them became known to me because most of them worked for Vaquero. They could braid damned near anything you could get them close to. They gave me the idea for the new business.

I stole all Vaquero's best artisans and opened my own company touting superior quality material at appropriately overpriced rates and walked into the industry right at the top level of the marketplace.

I had a hell of a few good years there running from horse show to horse show, from rodeo to rodeo, touting my wares.



While Erik and I were operating Western Gold, many of the outlying ranches around Tecate became familiar to me as well, as sources of leather, raw cowhide, horse manes and tails, cow tails, anything braidable. I was particularly fond of some of the beautiful thoroughbred horse ranches in nearby Valle de Las Palmas. One of them, where racehorses were trained, was for sale. For a brief time, we fantasized about buying it. Then there was the rastro...the sacrificio...the butchering place, where most of the town's meat products were slaughtered and carved up for butcher purposes. Sort of like a quick trip through sensory hell.

There were some aspects of the leather business that were very hard to endure and that represented the worst of it, being in the rastro. You would literally be walking through discarded bits and pieces of animals, skin, hooves, unborn calves, entrails, excrement, urine, and lots of foul things. The stench was indescribable. There was a running stream of this, blood red, through the entire establishment and out of it and trickling off through a neighboring field. I decided to reserve these very difficult duties for myself because there was no way I could pass them along to anyone else.

Erik and I devised the story that I had been living there on a fabulous ranch and working in the business for decades and he more or less grew up in it. I was turning more and more of the management of the business over to him as heir apparent. In truth, he did get Western Gold some rather impressive contracts as finishers for merchandise for other manufacturers. The orders were rolling in and we were filling them...struggling, but filling them. Our merchandise was going all over the world and it was being seen everywhere and gaining more and more notice. We steadfastly held to a position of being top dog with the best quality work at the highest going rates and would not compromise with any possible associate. It was nice being No. 1 mostly because we said we were No. 1;

you can learn quite a bit about doing business that way.

The shit detail was my personal job. I would take the horse tails or the cow tails, liberally coated with excrement or worse, and set them all aside. They would be sorted for color then processed in bunches. I had three or four old fashioned metal washtubs in the back yard. I would dump the shitty tails, by color, into one of those tubs containing cleansers and start washing them, barefoot, crushing-grapes fashion, straight out of a Lucille Ball sitcom. I would put each group through several washings until the water would run clean. Then I would spread the cleaned hair out on drying racks in the sun.

After the hair was dried, I would dye it in a huge cook pot atop the kitchen stove. We had special colors formulated just for us by DuPont Chemical Co. on the pretense that it was an agricultural industry experiment. They made dyes in colors for Western Gold that didn't exist anywhere in the industry, and they gave us about a two-year supply to test run with [and I did report the results of the tests to them]. The colors were vibrant and extremely special [and contained a number of toxic items forbidden to use by the government]; the dye was a total success and no one else in the industry had those colors except us. Prior to that, the industry standard was to use Rit dye to color the animal hair with.

The hair looked wonderful, spread out on drying racks, in all those colors. We made a specialty out of red, white, and blue hair. The white was highly bleached, not dyed. One of our specialty items was mecates, horsehair ropes exactly 22 feet long in brilliant red, white, and blue. Patriotic horses prefer Western Gold.

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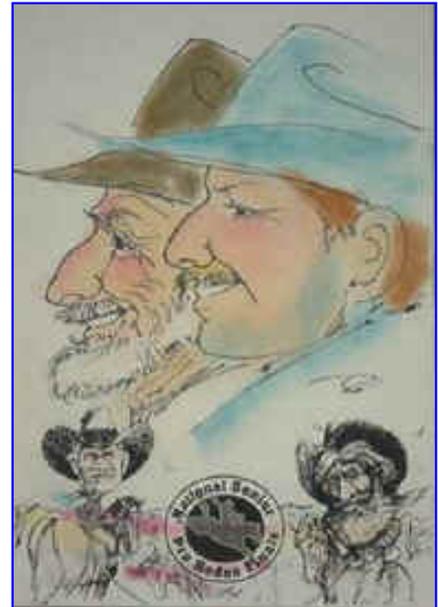
And time passed and NAFTA came and started ruining everything. Every import/export form was different. Every rate of taxation different. Everything that had been done before was no longer being done. All kinds of foul garbage was being dumped onto the Mexican marketplace after decades of dead storage in the USA labeled "unfit for human consumption." Ah progress!

The end was in sight for me. I was getting too old for that kind of crap. I had done my form filling out and my tax paying and my legal being and I just couldn't keep up with it any more. And an offer came from a German conglomerate operating out of Guadalajara to buy Western Gold outright. Of course they turned out to be crooks, and robbed me blind...but I was out of business and burned out on NAFTA.

The biggest thing of all, and the most difficult to handle, was being in a location and a position where I was forced to watch the hypocritical drug suppression being done by the wholesalers. I got to the point where I never wanted to see another one of them wearing their two-faced perp hat again.

I knew damned well it was time for me to turn my back on the things that were torturing me and, at last, retire and say...

Good-bye to all that....



Los Dos Jefes; Caricature of Earl and Erik Kemp of Western Gold. Reno, Nevada. Dated 19_?

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***For Carmen, Sofia, and the ever-popular Ike Hatfield; duenas all.**

When they took the Fourth Amendment, I was silent because I don't deal drugs. When they took the Sixth Amendment, I kept quiet because I know I'm innocent. When they took the Second Amendment, I said nothing because I don't own a gun. Now they've come for the First Amendment, and I can't say anything at all....

--Tim Freeman



Sunset over Ajjic.
Photo by Dianne Murray dated September 1971.