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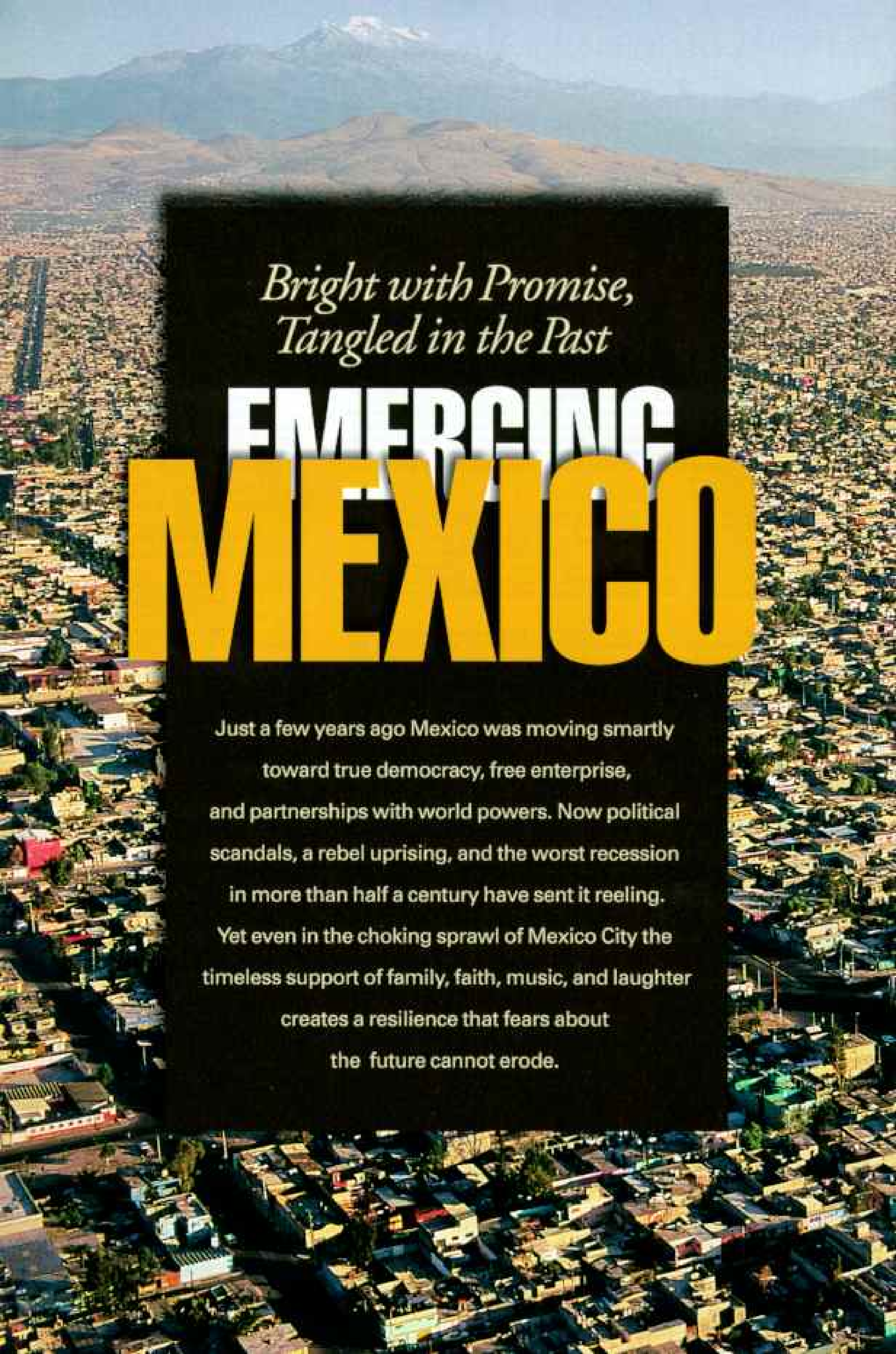
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An aerial photograph of Mexico City, showing a dense urban sprawl with a mix of colorful buildings and greenery. In the background, a large mountain range is visible under a clear sky, with the highest peak covered in snow.

*Bright with Promise,
Tangled in the Past*

EMERGING MEXICO

Just a few years ago Mexico was moving smartly toward true democracy, free enterprise, and partnerships with world powers. Now political scandals, a rebel uprising, and the worst recession in more than half a century have sent it reeling. Yet even in the choking sprawl of Mexico City the timeless support of family, faith, music, and laughter creates a resilience that fears about the future cannot erode.







EMERGING MEXICO

The story of Mexico echoes the land itself, an arduous landscape of peaks and valleys rising and falling like the country's tumultuous history.

Growth and decline, hope and disappointment—all play out across the centuries here. The Mexican land, which nourished America's first great civilizations, has endured the shock of European conquest, frequent wars, hard poverty, and civil travail to be born again as something new.

Today Mexico's 95 million people seem poised for another momentous change. Rich in natural resources, blessed with strong family ties and a hardworking populace, Mexico is ready to move from the ranks of developing nations into a new role, this time as a modern player on the world stage. But those hopes have been tarnished, at least for the moment, by political corruption, civil unrest, environmental pollution, and the Mexican government's devaluation of the peso. The resulting economic woes have exacerbated tensions along the United States-Mexico border, where drug trafficking and illegal immigration rise each time the peso falls.

Such ripples touch neighbors in all directions, for our lives are ever more closely linked—by the North American Free Trade Agreement, by the recent guarantee of 20 billion dollars in U.S. loans to Mexico, by the growing influence of Hispanic culture spreading north of the border, by the hefty U.S. investment in new businesses south of the border, and by modern communications that shrink the world with each passing day.

We set out not to produce a tourist's guide to Mexico nor to revisit the nation's archaeological treasures, which have accounted for no less than 40 titles in *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC*. Instead we wanted to explore how our neighbors are facing the current economic and political crisis and to gauge how they are shaping their own future. A team of a dozen people—the photographers and writers you will meet in *On Assignment*—traveled the breadth and length of this rugged country over most of a year.

What follows is their portrait of Mexico—a complex country caught in yet another moment of painful rebirth, somewhere between a turbulent past and a promising future.

—THE EDITOR



GULF OF MEXICO *Fueling the Nation*



STUART FRANKLIN

Surplus natural gas burns off as an oil platform crew tends its rig off Campeche. Mexico sits atop petroleum fields that produce some three million barrels of crude a day. Half keeps the country running; the rest is exported, mostly to the United States.

EMERGING MEXICO *Bright with Promise, Tangled in the Past*

BY MICHAEL PARFIT

It is New Year's Eve in Reality, Mexico, and the rebel kids are dancing. The band plays marimba music over the murmur of a generator; people make their own power in Reality. The dancers—all Tojolabal Indians—are like teenagers everywhere: They giggle and flirt and then dance together shyly, but in Reality some are *militantes*, trained to carry arms for the rebellion. They are among several thousand Zapatistas, a group of rebels from all over the southern state of Chiapas that has helped focus the mood—and maybe the future—of the huge, emerging nation of Mexico.

Like their oddly named town, La Realidad, these kids are symbolic. Desperate, poor, reeling from setbacks but still determined to win their cause of land reform and representative government, they are like most of Mexico. And, like Mexico, they may appear to be just dancing, but actually they are poised, waiting for a momentous change.

Tonight the people of La Realidad expect word from their charismatic leader, who wears a ski mask and bandoliers of bullets and calls himself Subcomandante Marcos. Will there be more violence? Will there be peace?

Across Mexico people are waiting. Driven by the decay of the old political order, by the pressure of financial disaster, by modern links to the outside world, and by a gradual building of agitation at all levels, change seems inevitable. But its direction is unknown. Will there be economic collapse and civil war, as some fear, or is this tension a necessary prelude to the emergence of a revitalized Mexico ready to fulfill its promise as one of the great nations of the world?

At the end of a hard century, Mexico is struggling. This country, 756,000 square miles of deserts, forests, highlands, volcanoes, endless seashores, and trembling earth, populated by 95 million people, is classified in the jargon of world economics as a "developing nation."* Mexico's people are poor—they have a per capita income of \$4,000, compared with \$25,800 in the United States. In many places, including large parts of its cities, living conditions are squalid. Drug trafficking is increasing. Pollution is legendary. Politics are in turmoil. And, though the country is a partner in a dramatic new experiment in trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico has been battered by the recent devaluation of its currency. The gap between rich and poor is widening. The poor—both the cramped residents of the teeming cities and the indigenous peoples of the forests—are growing restless. Even the relatively small middle class has conducted protests and work disruptions. Everyone, it seems, wants something new.

THE AIR OVER MEXICO is as hot and turbulent as the land below. I've spent a lot of time in it recently, flying my small Cessna from the bustling north to the old colonial heartland in the center, to the Mexico City sprawl where one-sixth of this nation lives, to the strife-torn jungles of the south, learning about both the turbulence and the emergence of Mexico.

My first view was of its human geography. The patterns people have left over the past 500 years of living and working on this land tell a single story: Across a geography shaped by fire, flood, and blowing sand, Mexicans have woven a complicated tapestry of village, city, and farm vastly different from the disciplined landscape to the north of the border.

In the U.S. and Canada, geometric boundaries make a checkerboard on the land that looks printed by machine. But in Mexico every field has its own shape and

*See "A Traveler's Map of Mexico," a double supplement to the September 1994 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.



each road its unexpected curve. The landscape looks handmade. And when I landed here and found friends among the country's warm people, I realized that if I was to comprehend today's Mexico, I must first understand the fundamental differences and unexpected strengths these patterns reveal.

"ME ENCANTA MÉXICO." Students taught a visiting friend this phrase first: "I am enchanted by Mexico." The enchantment they wish to share is for a Mexico that exists separately from chameleon politics and moves to a slower drumbeat. This ancient realm of landscape, religion, culture, and family is deeply loved by the people. Just as it is safe to say that the politics of Mexico are starting to change, it is also safe to say that these basic things will remain. This love of place, of background, of identity is rooted in geography and time.

The land is tumultuous. Mexico is more mountainous than Montana and rises far higher than Colorado. Though it is only a quarter the size of the continental U.S., the country is made up of so much crumpled land that it seems as if you could iron it out flat and wrap it around Asia. In the north the landscape looks like Nevada and southern Arizona—sweltering broad desert valleys and long bareback mountains. Farther south the great lumpy highland of the central mesa rises amid multiple mountain ranges to lofty, cool valleys punctuated by volcanoes. South of that, more mountains tumble to the low, swampy Isthmus of Tehuantepec, beyond which more hills rise, clothed in rain forest.

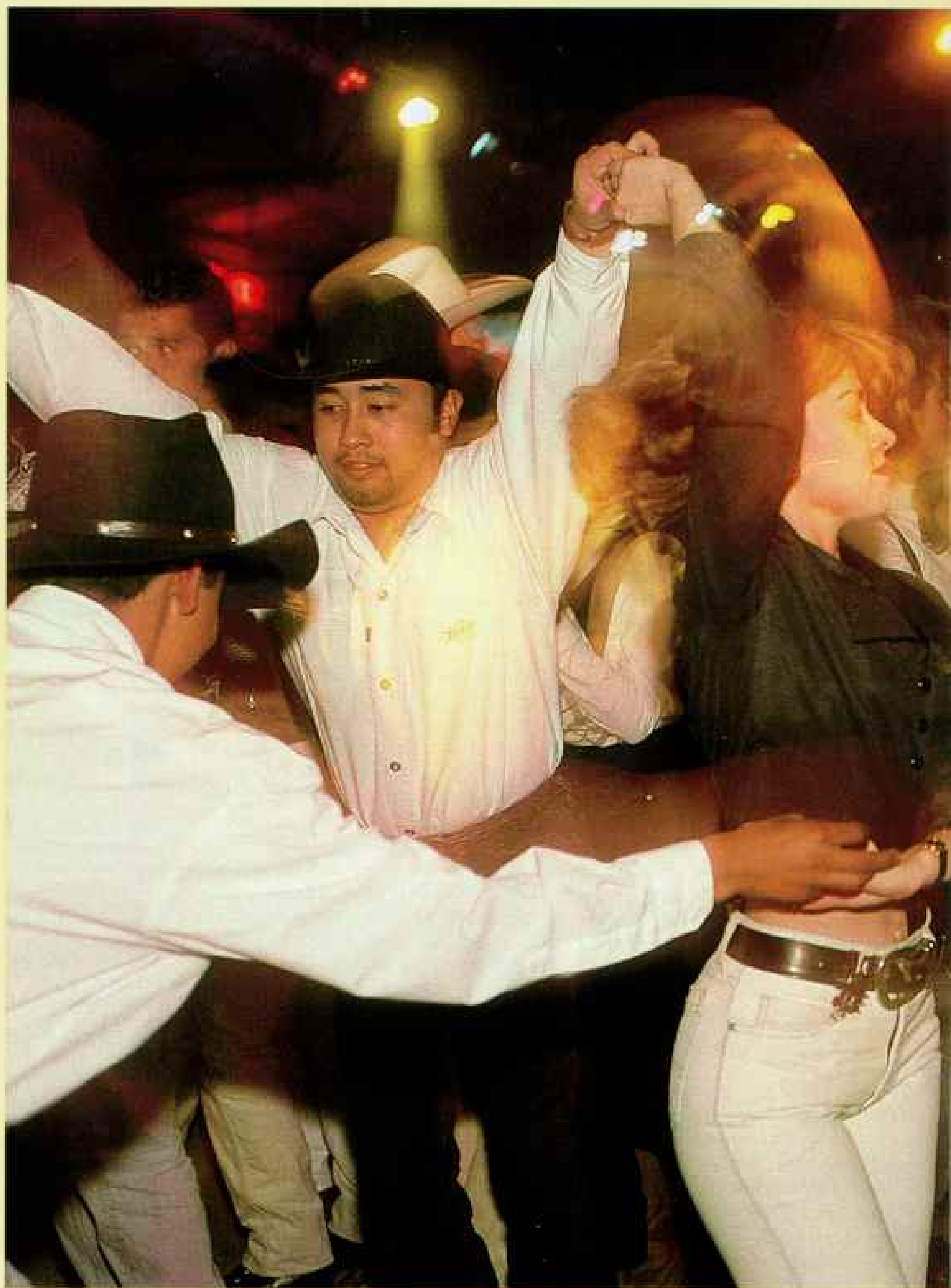
The foundations of human life here go back to the time of geologic formation; some lava peaks are younger than the bloodlines of the people who live in their shadow. Early hunter-gatherers had the variety of food that elevation change offers, and the later Indian farmers could use the relatively abundant rainfall of the high valleys for their fields of corn, the golden grain first developed here. The dramatic terrain and climate also played a role in creating the many intricate civilizations of early Mexicans by separating people into groups that fought over land, water, and slaves.

When the Spanish hit the beach in 1519 and conquered Mexico as fast and ruthlessly as the gods they were first thought to be, they found huge veins of silver and other minerals that volcanic and seismic forces had lifted to this land's rocky surface. Within a few years 5,000 mines were producing the silver that would build Spain's famous Armada and finance its wars. The oppressive rule of the Spanish stamped Mexico with an imprint of

(Continued on page 16)



AREA: 756,000 sq mi. **POP.:** 95 million. **CAPITAL:** Mexico City. **LANGUAGE:** Spanish, more than 50 Indian languages. **RELIGION:** Roman Catholic, Protestant. **ECONOMY:** Petroleum, petroleum products, motor vehicles, consumer electronics, steel, textiles, coffee, cotton, fresh and processed foods, tourism.

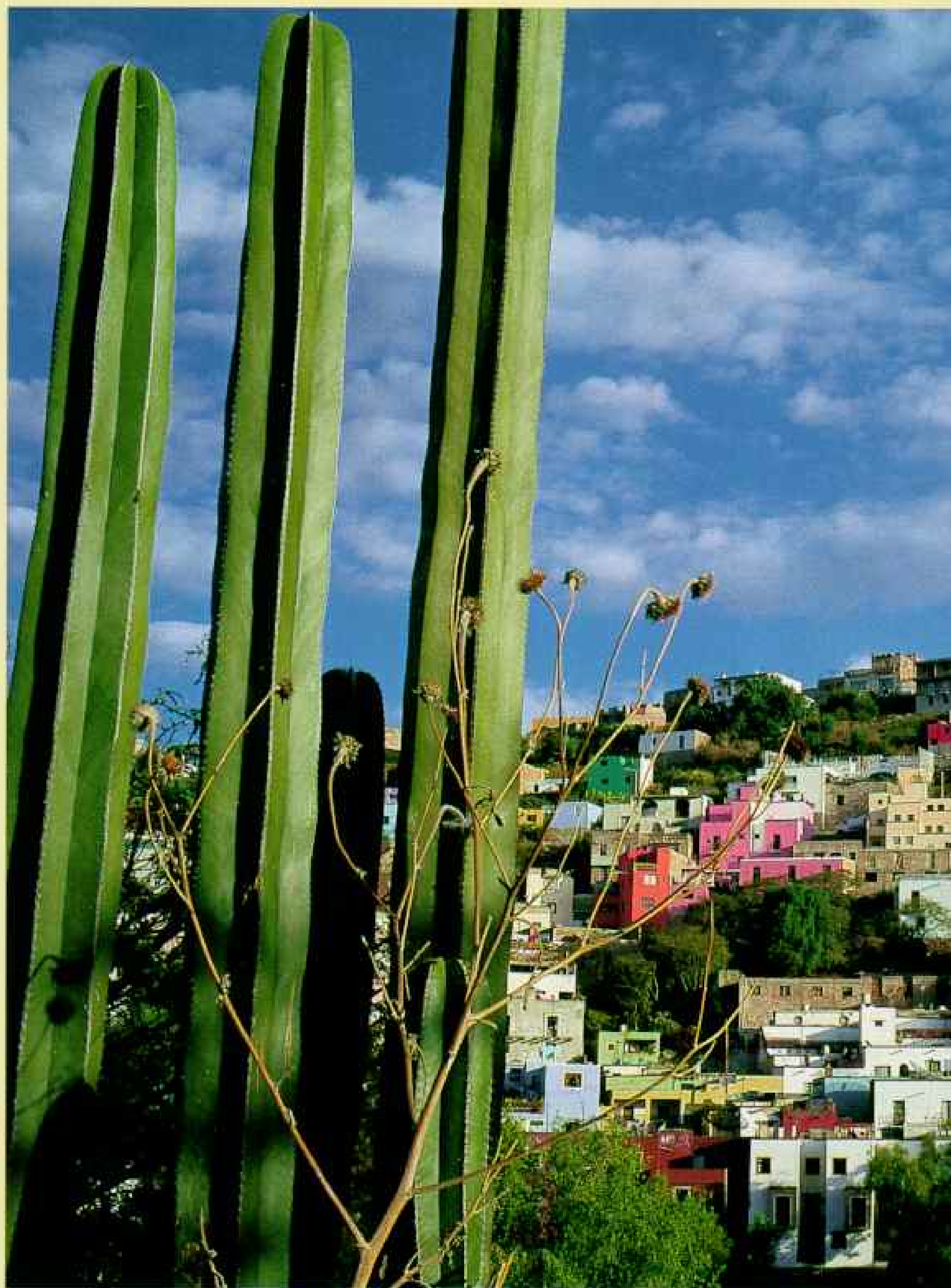


MONTERREY *Still Kicking*



ALICE WEBB

Big hats, brass buckles, and tall boots swirl to *norteña* music at the Far West Rodeo nightclub. "Lots of customers don't know what the name means. They just like the atmosphere," says bouncer Argelio Muñoz. This city takes pride in a savvy toughness able to withstand economic punches.



GUANAJUATO *Forge of Rebellion*



DAVID ALAN HARVEY

Blue skies drape Guanajuato 188 years after fires of revolution scorched its horizon red. Then Indians, mestizos, and those of pure Spanish descent bore arms against Spain in an 11-year war of independence. Now a cultural center, the city lures seekers of a quieter life from the crush of the capital.

EMERGING MEXICO *Bright with Promise, Tangled in the Past*



European religion, agriculture, and industry, but unlike the colonists to the north the Spanish did not obliterate earlier races. Instead, the mixing of Spanish and Indian has created a people like no other on earth.

Mexico has three ethnic divisions. People of European descent make up perhaps 10 percent of the population and tend to be among the wealthy elite. At the other end of the income scale are the remaining full-blooded Indians—about a third of the population, most in the region of stripped rain forests in the south. But Mexico is dominated by mestizos, people of Spanish and Indian blood.

So for most Mexicans the deepest ties to this land date not from the arrival of a ship loaded with homesick Europeans but from people who came here on foot so long ago that even myth does not remember. Within the blood of these Mexicans run the civilizations of Olmec and Maya and Aztec, as well as the urgent hungers of the Spanish.

"No matter what the government says, we're not leaving this land," declares a defiant Domingo Díaz, who—like these three masked Indians—jealously guards the land he has seized.



TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI

Bands of land-starved villagers in Chiapas, one of Mexico's poorest states, are evicting families from large ranches, some of them owned for generations.

of independence, war with the U.S., civil war, another conflict, this time with France, then three decades of dictatorship.

The dictatorship was drowned in blood in the revolution of 1910, in which more than a million people died. This led to a constitution modeled on the U.S.'s and passed in 1917. But by 1929 the party now known as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) had shaped a system that looked like a democracy but worked like an authoritarian regime. The party and the government were inextricably linked, much the way the Communist Party was tied to the U.S.S.R. Freedoms of speech and press were curtailed, and elections were controlled by a combination of machine politics, corruption, and fraud. Voters at some polls were handed "ballot tacos" — several ballots stuffed into one — so they could cast multiple votes. Loyalists were bused from place to place to vote repeatedly.

This makes for a rich culture. The Roman Catholic Church dominates spiritual life, but in Mexico its rituals, like the candles and candy skulls of the Day of the Dead, are so imbued with indigenous tradition that you can almost hear the wail of an Aztec war song in the smoky shadows of village churches. Daily life is a celebration of contrasts, according to Octavio Paz, the nation's Nobel Prize-winning author. Mexicans, he has observed, "delight in decorations, carelessness and pomp, negligence, passion and reserve." Life is deep and desperate, and the Mexican, drawing on the extravagant landscape and the conflict of origins in the blood, is filled with great emotions.

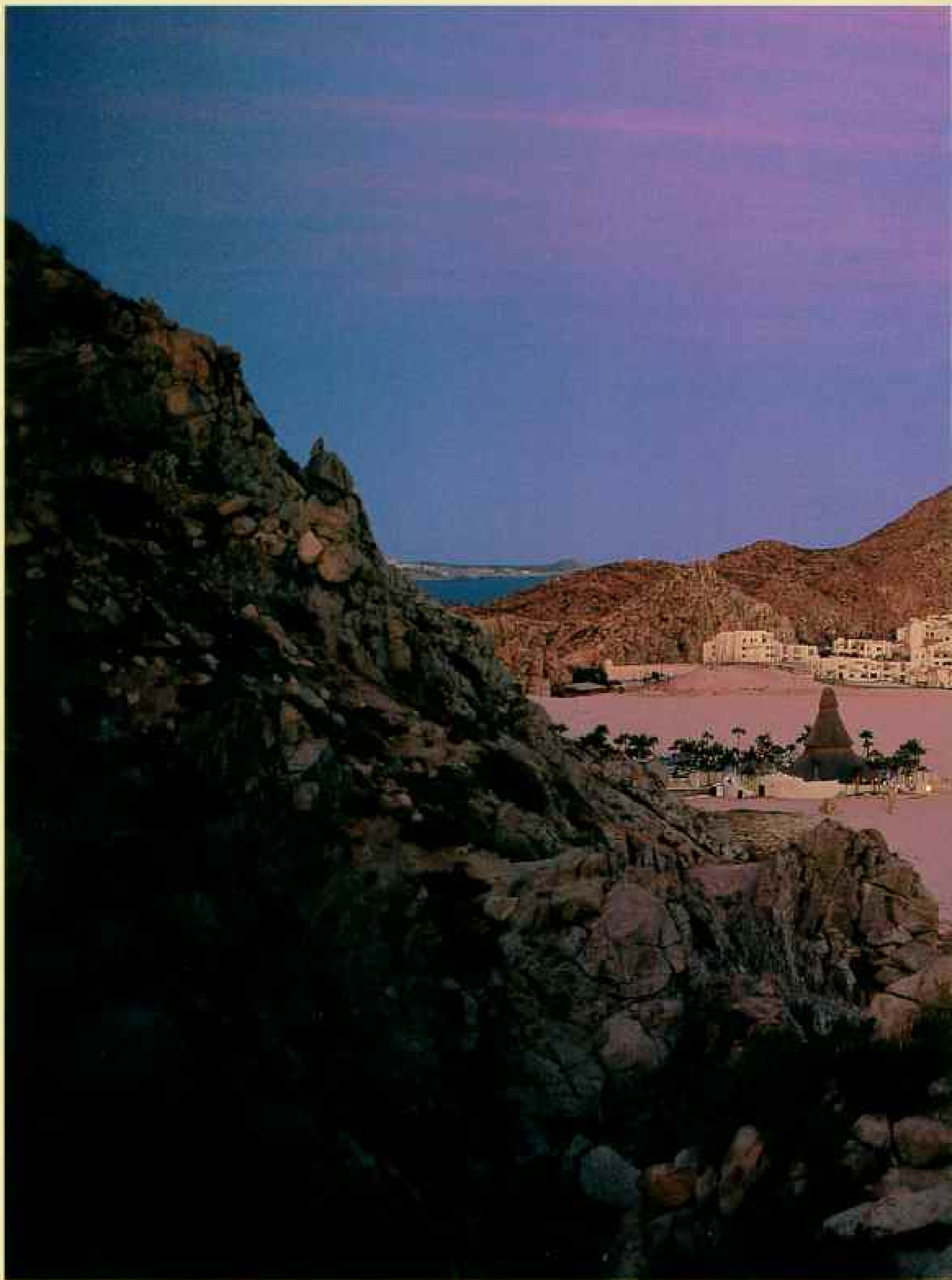
You see this every day, in business, in friendships. Life is personal all the time. A handshake is a deal as strong as a signature in blood. And a joint venture is not just lawyers and boardrooms; it is drives in the country, talk of brothers and children, an embrace at day's end.

The combination of culture, family, and memorable landscape anchors Mexicans and draws wanderers home. In a tiny fishing village on the west coast I asked three fishermen if friends who had struggled to slip into the U.S. as illegals ever came home. "Of course, yes," said one. "For fiestas, for holidays, for Christmas." This didn't mean just a quick airline visit. It meant miles of desert walking, sweltering bus trips, and then the dangerous return journey north. They come back to Mexico because there are children and cousins here, the sound of *ranchera* music, subtle and spicy food, and the glow of sunset on Popocatepetl. The things that matter remain.

"When I feel like I have to force my smile, I know it's time to come home," said a Mexican woman whose work takes her overseas. "I don't have to force a smile here. Here, I'm always laughing."

"WE HAVE EVERYTHING," one Mexican told me in exasperation. "So why are we in crisis?" The answer may lie in history. The Mexican people have survived centuries of war followed by periods of stifling authority. The Spaniards ruled for 300 years. After their reign the 19th century brought a war

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CABO SAN LUCAS *By Day and By Night*



DAVID ALAN HARVEY

The buck — and peso — stop here, land's end in Baja California. Investors have poured fortunes into construction of resorts on the 800-mile-long peninsula. Come nightfall, drug traffickers do big business in remote areas by staging airdrops of illicit cargo worth uncounted more millions.



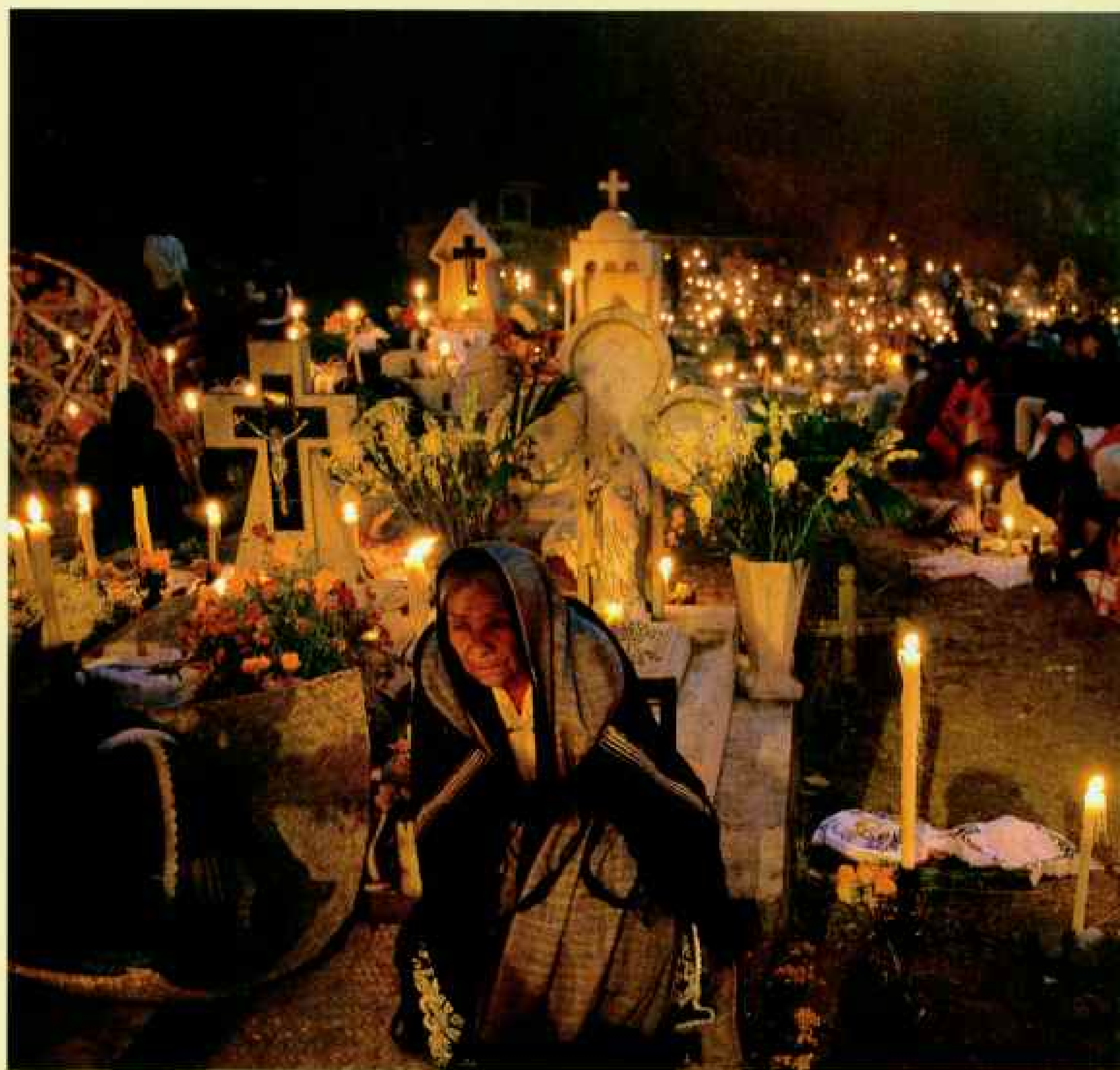
JURIQUILLA *Blood in the Afternoon*



DAVID ALAN HARVEY

Bouquets and bravos shower amateur matador Mauricio Ocampo, who salutes bullfight fans from a ring in Juriquilla, near Querétaro. One of some 200 weekend warriors, he will help keep the Spanish tradition alive "as long as time permits and the bull doesn't get me first."

EMERGING MEXICO *Bright with Promise, Tangled in the Past*



But the PRI also initiated some landownership reform, developed and distributed oil wealth, and provided more stability than Mexico had experienced the century before. It responded, albeit slowly, to its citizens' demands. Roads got paved; schools were built. "It was not all fraud and force," says Charles Krause, Latin America specialist for *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, who researched Mexico's changing political and economic scene for this issue of the *GEOGRAPHIC*. "The PRI also provided services in return for loyalty." The loyalty was widespread.

Today all that has changed. Mexico's regime has been repeatedly shaken to its foundations, sometimes by nature itself.

The decline of the PRI began in 1968 when the army killed more than 200 students during a demonstration over social reform, shocking the nation. Then, in 1985, when an earthquake killed 10,000 people in Mexico City, the government's response was slow and inefficient; Mexican citizens,

Candles light the way for spirits returning home to Michoacán's island of Janitzio on El Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. Every November 2 Mexicans keep vigil in cemeteries, greeting



DAVID ALAN HARVEY

the souls of loved ones with prayers, flowers, and their favorite foods. Says island resident Teresa Talavera: "Bad things can happen if we ignore the dead."

and inertia, like the stone heat that brews in the depths of volcanic Popocatepetl. But when the Mexicans act, they act inexorably. Such a heat is growing now. Everyone in Mexico can feel it, but no one seems able to predict its outcome. Only one thing is certain: Whatever happens to Mexico will be in character. And what is the character of today's Mexico that will shape tomorrow's? That's the intriguing question.

One day as I flew above a mountain range north of Guadalajara, trying to understand the vast and enigmatic country beneath me, I remembered what a woman from the northern city of Monterrey had said: "We think we have three Mexicos. In the south they are dancing. In the center they are planning. And in the north we are working."

I flew on to see those Mexicos and many others, each revealing the national character with a story wrought as if by hand, like the tapestry I saw on the landscape—woven with politics, family, and the past. □

who independently rescued, housed, and fed victims, lost faith in the government's ability to take care of them. Three years later the hotly contested national election was accompanied by fraud—computers broke down with the race undecided and were booted back up with the PRI's victory installed.

In the early 1990s the government rode high on President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's economic reforms, which encouraged the takeover of state-run industry by private companies, friendly relations with the U.S., and the signing of NAFTA, and led to a growing middle class and hope among the poor. But catastrophe hit in 1994: Indians rebelled in Chiapas on the day NAFTA took effect. The PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta, was assassinated by a 23-year-old factory worker, who claimed to be acting alone, although conspiracy theories abound. Investors from abroad—and Mexican businessmen—lost confidence in Mexico, forcing the new president, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, to devalue the peso. A severe recession ensued, throwing more than a million people out of work. Although Mexico's trade surplus with the U.S. surged to an all-time high in 1995, based largely on the peso's lower value, the economy is still floundering.

So is the PRI. Salinas's once shining image and the hope it represented to the Mexican people were both tarnished by revelations that his brother may have spirited more than 100 million dollars from the nation's treasury.

"The system is dead," author Carlos Fuentes told Charles Krause, who found evidence of change all over Mexico, though not that dramatic: A free press is struggling to emerge in print and television. Opposition parties have won important local elections. The middle class, battered by the crisis, is restless. "People are really frustrated," said a teacher. "They want to pay off what they owe, but they can't. If things get worse, an uprising could very well come from some sector of the population. What else could people do?"

"IN MEXICO," Porfirio Díaz reportedly said after he was thrown out as president and dictator in 1911, "nothing happens until it happens." He meant that Mexicans operate on both patience

MEXICO

Pushing the Limits

Patriotic with a passion, all who can crowd onto the main plaza respond to *El Grito*—the president's cry of *¡Viva México!* on September 15, the eve of Independence Day. "They may scream at the government all year, but tonight people come out to cheer," says one resident of the capital. There's plenty to inspire complaint in a megacity of at least 16 million people. Yet migrants pour in daily from the provinces, hoping against all odds to find better jobs and more comfortable lives.



CITY

BY MICHAEL PARFIT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STUART FRANKLIN



MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*

From the sky Mexico City looked like the scattered rubble of the end of the age of oil, smothered in the smoke of its own terminal fires. Looking down, I could imagine an apocalyptic kind of Diogenes, with his honest lamp, searching through this murk for one optimistic man.

His name was Jorge Carmona, and he sold maps from a bicycle cart on a corner of Avenida Netzahualcóyotl in a part of the vast Mexico City sprawl of the same name. Carmona was 70 and didn't have a lot of teeth. But he had a terrific white beard, a great smile, and a filthy straw hat that he took off with a grandiose gesture to greet me.

Carmona had at least a hundred maps on the cart. There were maps of Mexico City, Monterrey, Michoacán, Tijuana, Nayarit, and Chiapas, all places I would visit in my Mexico journey. I liked this old guy and wanted to buy them all. And because it's tempting to ask the most ordinary people for answers to the most extraordinary problems, I wanted to ask him for a map of Mexico's future.

I didn't, because the thought was foolish. He offered one anyway. When I asked Carmona if he was an optimist, he pursed his lips and tilted his head back as if to kiss the sky.

"Oh yes!" he said. "Not because of the government. It has too much money, and keeps it. But because of the people. They can invent new ideas, new ways of living."

The megalopolis of Mexico City, with at least 16 million people spread over a thousand square miles—roughly the area of Rhode Island—is one of the most crowded places on earth. Here, as much as anywhere, people survive by ingenuity. On street corners clowns dance, kids wash car windows, old men sell gum. People go door-to-door to collect cardboard for recycling. Once I saw a man methodically removing then replacing a single batch of street cobbles, hoping for street-repair tips from motorists.

These street people—most driven by genuine desperation to this work, which pays very little—underline the city's present instability. Fifty years ago Mexico City was elegant and sedate and had three million inhabitants. Glimpses of its beauty remain in places like Xochimilco, where fiestas float in barges on misty avenues of water that once carried vegetables and flowers from farms to Aztec royalty. And history elbows its way into the present—as you can see at the Plaza of the Three Cultures, in which an Aztec ceremonial site where thousands of human hearts were torn out and an old Spanish church are surrounded by the office and apartment towers that mark the culture of the 20th century. But these glimpses are just islands. Everywhere the city pushes up against the limits of geography, environment, and human well-being.

Nothing here seems stable. The city is ringed with volcanoes, is shaken regularly by earthquakes, and is built on a lake bed into which its buildings slowly sink. (The foundations of the more valuable structures are rebuilt, but many others—like a medical clinic on the corner that Carmona works—list into the ground like sinking ships.) The city's web of streets is clogged with traffic; its air is so thick that residents have chronic sore throats and burning eyes. Aquifers and rivers that supply its water are overextended and polluted—cholera recently killed several people when they drank from a spring after their city water ran out.

Most of the people of Mexico City are poor, and many are driven to

crime. Poverty and violence have been part of life here since at least the 1600s, when a new underclass arose, romanticized by the *lépero*, a criminal vagabond who lived by his wits. But within the past decade even the once secure upper classes began to feel threatened. Government and the police are no source of stability; they're so thoroughly corrupt that the little bribe called *mordida*—the bite—is more common than mosquitoes. Because of payoffs and influence, the law, as one reformer put it, “is only a vague point of reference.”

In the face of this despair there are glimmers of hope from the recent past. In 1985 an earthquake killed perhaps 10,000 people. Government response was slow, but citizens acted like one big family, rescuing survivors and offering help to those who had lost all.

“That is the moment when civil society realized it had its own powers,” said Carlos Fuentes, the novelist. Today, facing their uncertainties, it seems as if the people of Mexico City recognize that for all their improvising, what they can depend on most is one another.

Jorge Carmona is a good example. Fifty years ago, when he moved to Netzahualcóyotl, on the outskirts of Mexico City, it was just a dry lake bed, which burned his bare feet with its alkaline soil. He built his house with discarded wood and sheets of metal. Over the years people moved here by the thousands from the countryside, building neighborhoods they christened with hopeful names such as Maravilla and Colonia del Sol.

Conditions were as tough as those the newcomers had left behind. “There were no roads, no water, no houses, no vegetation,” Carmona said. “But we had a lot of ideals.”

With some rudimentary help from the government, the people pieced together a semblance of those ideals by hand. When I talked to Carmona, the huge city of Netzahualcóyotl—perhaps two million strong—was still chaotic, but the shacks had been replaced by rows of concrete-block and stucco houses. In the avenue where Carmona parked his bicycle cart, people had planted broad strips of trees and flowers. Carmona grinned and gave one last word of advice, which reminded me of how tough this long journey had been, and is still.

“If you don't invent,” he said, “you will die of hunger.”





MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*



"This is living archaeology," says guide Elizabeth Maldonado Peña as her wooden boat glides past Xochimilco's *chinampas*, last of the water gardens that filled Aztec Tenochtitlan. Now a park, the area protects singing crickets, wading cranes, and fragrant chamomile from urban encroachment.

MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*

Mexicans didn't invent the notion of family, but they nurture it and depend on it. You can see this on any Sunday in the heart of Mexico City, Chapultepec Park. The park is a 1,700-acre swath of grass and trees that was once hunting grounds for Aztec kings. Here thousands of families gather, the vital force of the Mexican character.

"Family is very important here," said Karen Budd Vázquez Santaella, a high school teacher whose income has been halved by *La Crisis*. "My parents have helped me a lot. Family members help find work, give you money. They speak to a cousin, who speaks to an in-law, and pretty soon you end up with something."

On Sunday in Chapultepec, young couples push strollers along stone walkways bordered with hedges. Little girls in straw hats take pony rides, and boys kick soccer balls under a canopy of trees. Kids suck on mangoes that have been shaped into flowers; their chins drip ecstatically. Women in their Sunday best stroll across the lawn in front of Chapultepec Castle, Emperor Maximilian's former palace, which rises above the park on a high hill.

One of our reporters, Ann Williams, came across a family of 11 enjoying a lunch of tostadas and juice beside the lake.

A woman at the table flashed a smile and offered Ann the fragrant fixings for a chicken tostada.

"I toasted the tortillas myself last night," said Noemí Muñoz López, a 28-year-old mother of two who had spent half the night cooking. She helps keep track of assorted uncles, nieces, and cousins who ebb and flow from the metropolis as Mexico's fortunes change and who gather here on Sundays when they can.

Most of Noemí's kin are rooted in the state of Veracruz, where relatives still grow sugarcane on a patch of earth handed down from generation to generation. But with the family growing, sugar prices falling, and good jobs scarce in Veracruz, younger family members have been forced to head for the city.

"I just arrived two weeks ago," said one of the youngest, Josué Muñoz, 22, Noemí's nephew. Josué was staying at an uncle's house, searching for work in one of the city's many clothing factories.

"It was hard to leave Veracruz, but I realized that I have family here to help me," Josué said, looking around at relatives who hold good jobs in the city. "I hope to find more opportunities here."

Such dreams—often fed by genuine hunger—inspire people to move here from the desperate countryside, as they have for decades.

"Dreams help us survive," said Ester Juárez Muñoz, Noemí's 24-year-old niece, who arrived in Mexico City a few days before. Like Josué she's relying on the family for food, shelter, and moral support. "We're awake, but we're dreaming together. We even tell each other the dreams we have at night. Otherwise we'd get dried up inside and bitter."

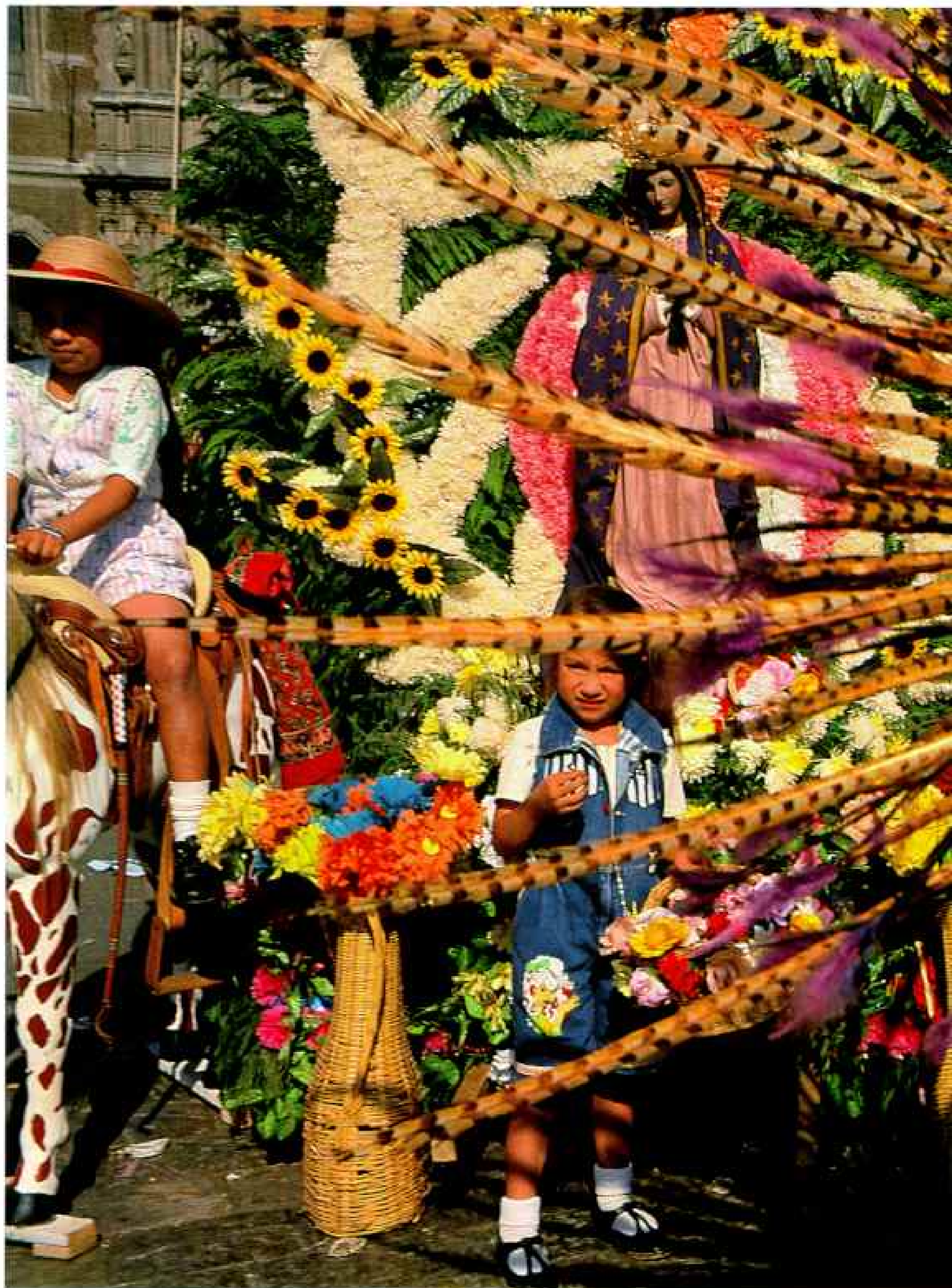
Through the long afternoon this family's dreams revealed themselves, one by one. Erica, 17, a high school student, studies hotel management. Ester hopes to work in a bank. For her part, Noemí wants to go home to Veracruz for good some day, with the whole family. Meanwhile, she has the gift of gatherings like this one, where the kids play amid the comforting laughter of relatives.

(Continued on page 35)



National security is the order of the day during the annual military parade that honors Mexico's independence. With mounting unemployment creating a crime wave, personal security concerns the city every day. Robberies rose 40 percent last year. A holdup of an ATM patron was interrupted by police.





MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*



A kaleidoscope of native costumes and Roman Catholic images, the December 12 festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe celebrates the marriage of New World and Old in Mexican religion. Pilgrims sing and dance all day to mark the appearance of the country's patron saint to an Aztec convert in 1531.



Overpopulation has sickened the city. Encircling mountains trap the smog generated by cars and factories, making eyes burn, noses run, and throats rasp. Victims hit hardest require treatments such as the supplemental oxygen given to a baby at the Legaria Pediatric Hospital. "That ward has 15 beds," says





MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*

Shadows lengthened across the park, and as Noemi's family left, everyone held hands to keep the swirling crowds from breaking the Muñoz family apart.

"Even in crisis and tragedy Mexicans are always telling a joke," a woman said. One is about Raúl Salinas de Gortari, the former president's brother. He's accused of, among other things, buying animal feed to resell to poor people for them to eat. When Salinas dies and reaches the pearly gates, St. Peter asks his qualifications.

"I stole 500 million pesos from the poor of México," he says.

"You think that'll get you into heaven?" St. Peter says.

"Sure," Salinas says. "You'll get your cut."

There's a flash of lightning, and Salinas finds himself in a shack in Mexico City. "*Buenos días*," Satan says. "Have a tortilla."

Corruption in Mexico City—and all over the country—is legendary. It hits people at all levels, from the grand larceny of politicians to the cop who settles the ticket in the street.

"I get a visit at least once a week," a bar owner said. "I have to pay, because there's always something wrong. I have to feed them for free. They come, drink Grand Marnier, and then tell me I should turn off the ceiling fans to save money. The moment I see those guys with their smiles and the Mexican flags in their lapels, I say, 'Jesus, I'm doomed.'"

"Corruption is to Mexico what repression was to Chile and Argentina," said Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, a congressman who recently served on a commission on corruption.

We were in a small office in an alley between rich and poor sections of the city. In the street below, people bartered for T-shirts and mangoes at a *mercado*, and kids played games in a video parlor. Aguilar, a slender man with abundant salt-and-pepper hair, was thoughtfully wary. On the table in front of him was a stack of reports that described millions of dollars of government malfeasance.

Dr. Francisco Colín Navarro. "On the worst days it's full, and we still have children waiting in the emergency room."

In burgeoning Naucalpan a fetid stream washes trash against a grate at a dam built to control floods. New neighborhoods have leveled trees that once soaked up the rains.





MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*



Plaintive cries and the sharp notes of a trumpet punctuate the harmonies of mariachis who bring the ballads of Jalisco's cattle ranches to Garibaldi Plaza. Customers buy a song for a few dollars, then drift to cantinas for tequila and tortillas wrapped around grilled chorizo and melted cheese.

MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*

"Corruption was for so many years so intricate a part of the system that Mexicans did not feel particularly offended by it," Aguilar said. "It is entrenched in traditions and structures. It is the most democratic thing of our system. You can even have influence as a humble man in a little town if you know the judge. So corruption gives everybody access."

But revelations that the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, president from 1988 to 1994, siphoned tens of millions of dollars out of the treasury have shocked the nation, and Aguilar thinks the people are ready to change. Even cops on the beat have demanded relief from a system in which they're expected to take bribes and pay off supervisors. During one protest a policeman who was penalized for not collecting bribes persuaded

Second choice for the top job, President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León soldiers through his term. Charismatic Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta, candidate of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), seemed destined to win the 1994 presidential election until he was slain at a Tijuana rally. Since then Zedillo, a U.S.-educated economist, has struggled to lead the country through a brutal peso devaluation, disclosure of massive corruption in the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and rumors that a PRI faction had Colosio killed.



his friends to tie him to a cross in the middle of a busy intersection. The man hung by his wrists for six hours.

But to fight corruption here is to risk your life. A police chief investigating corruption in Tijuana was gunned down last year. Another was poisoned in Mexico City. In 1984 Aguilar was kidnapped and beaten by thugs trying to silence him. Recently aides outside a building where he was investigating suspicious records were attacked and briefly kidnapped. Was it just a robbery or a threat? He didn't know.

Aguilar gathered the evidence on the table and put it into a small, battered satchel. He went downstairs. The air was warm, and the place was full of voices and music. Aguilar locked the door behind him and stepped into the street, a slight man in a dark suit carrying a bag full of danger, as optimistic in his complex way as the map salesman was in his simplicity.

I found it hard to imagine that this one man could make a real difference, but Mexico City's very turmoil may make change possible. If there is hope for this grand and troubled old city, though, surely it's in the character of the people themselves, people with the determination of Aguilar and the family vitality of Noemí Muñoz López and the anger of the cop who hung from the cross to demand his own right to honesty — all staking their lives on inventing a better future.



DANTE BUSQUETS-SORRIL, GAMMA LIAISON

Buried where he was born – in Magdalena de Kino, Sonora – Colosio draws one last crowd. Then President Salinas (above, at center) still commanded respect as he stood by Colosio's father at the March 1994 funeral. Now called a crook and mocked by masks sold on the street, Salinas hides in exile, though no charges have been brought against him.



MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*



Fresh stucco and a coat of bright paint will finish a house built, and now shared, by three brothers in Barrio Norte, an old sand quarry. "I'd like to have my own place," says the wife of one brother. "But every day things are more expensive. That makes it impossible for us to leave."



MEXICO CITY *Pushing the Limits*



Everyone has to pitch in for the Hernández family to survive. Six-year-old Angie Elizabeth (left) does her part on a weekend, juggling at an intersection while her mother, Gabriela, behind her, takes a breather with her baby sister, Sara Nayeli, and her uncle José. Her father, José Antonio, clowns nearby with more children.

Every other minute cars stop at the light, and a new act begins. One child somersaults, shakes a balloon-plumped bottom, or wiggles a dance sitting on a parent's shoulders. Out of half-opened windows hands offer small coins before the traffic starts up. An average day brings about ten dollars.

"Necessity taught us how to entertain people in this way," explains Gabriela. She and her husband have seven children to feed as well as his three

orphaned brothers. "I'd rather have my children beg than steal," she says.

While José Antonio looks for a job with decent pay, clowning pays the rent for two rough rooms beyond the city limits in Netzahualcóyotl. There Gabriela gets seven-year-old Ana María and eight-year-old Eduardo ready for school (bottom left). It's Ana María's first day in first grade, and her father sends her off with new pens and notebooks marked with her name (below).

During the week José Antonio takes some of the younger children downtown to perform. Gabriela stays home to care for the older ones after school. "Some people who watch me from their cars think I'm lazy. They tell me to get a job," she says. "But how can I do that? There's no work." □



SIERRA

Backbone of the Frontier



MADRE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX WEBB



Caught in the fast lane of change, Tarahumara Indians trek home on a newly paved highway in the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua. Once the stronghold of renegade Indians and gunslinging desperadoes, Mexico's rugged northwestern cordillera is changing forever. Commercial logging and drug trafficking now reach into lonely upland valleys where time has pooled for generations.

As one Tarahumara laments, "These are ungrateful times."

SIERRA MADRE *Backbone of the Frontier*

“Beyond that river the country’s very wild and dangerous,” a crusty prospector warns greenhorn Humphrey Bogart in the film *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. “Mountains rise above the clouds . . . valleys which are full of deadly insects and huge snakes and ferocious tigers so big and strong they can climb trees with burros in their mouths.”

Rough by reputation, exotic even in name, the Sierra Madre Occidental (or Mother Mountains of the West) remains one of the last untrammeled wildernesses in Mexico.

The northern portion of the 800-mile-long range is famed for its immense, mile-deep gorges (below) — Mexico’s answer to the Grand Canyon.

Such daunting topography

has proved a barrier to settlement for centuries— and a godsend to renegades from Geronimo to Pancho Villa.

Today, however, the Sierra’s maze of volcanic peaks, dusty plateaus, and vast chasms has been penetrated by a growing network of roads. Even so, the mountain range that muscles southward from the U.S. border is still remote enough to





shelter some 60,000 reclusive Tarahumara and a smaller number of Tepehuan Indians. It also preserves an astonishing diversity of wildlife.

"We barely know what we have in the Sierra, but we do know what we've lost," says Mexican environmentalist Edwin Bustillos. "Grizzly bears are gone, and the wolf and the imperial woodpecker are probably well on their way."

Scientists on both sides of the border agree that the Sierra's mosaic of high desert, tropical forest, and stands of pine and oak—one of the richest assemblages of habitats in North America—is vanishing fast. The culprits: overgrazing and intense logging.

Efforts to save the region's last 2 percent of intact old-growth forest are under way. But old habits—formed by decades of living hand to mouth, boom to bust—die hard.

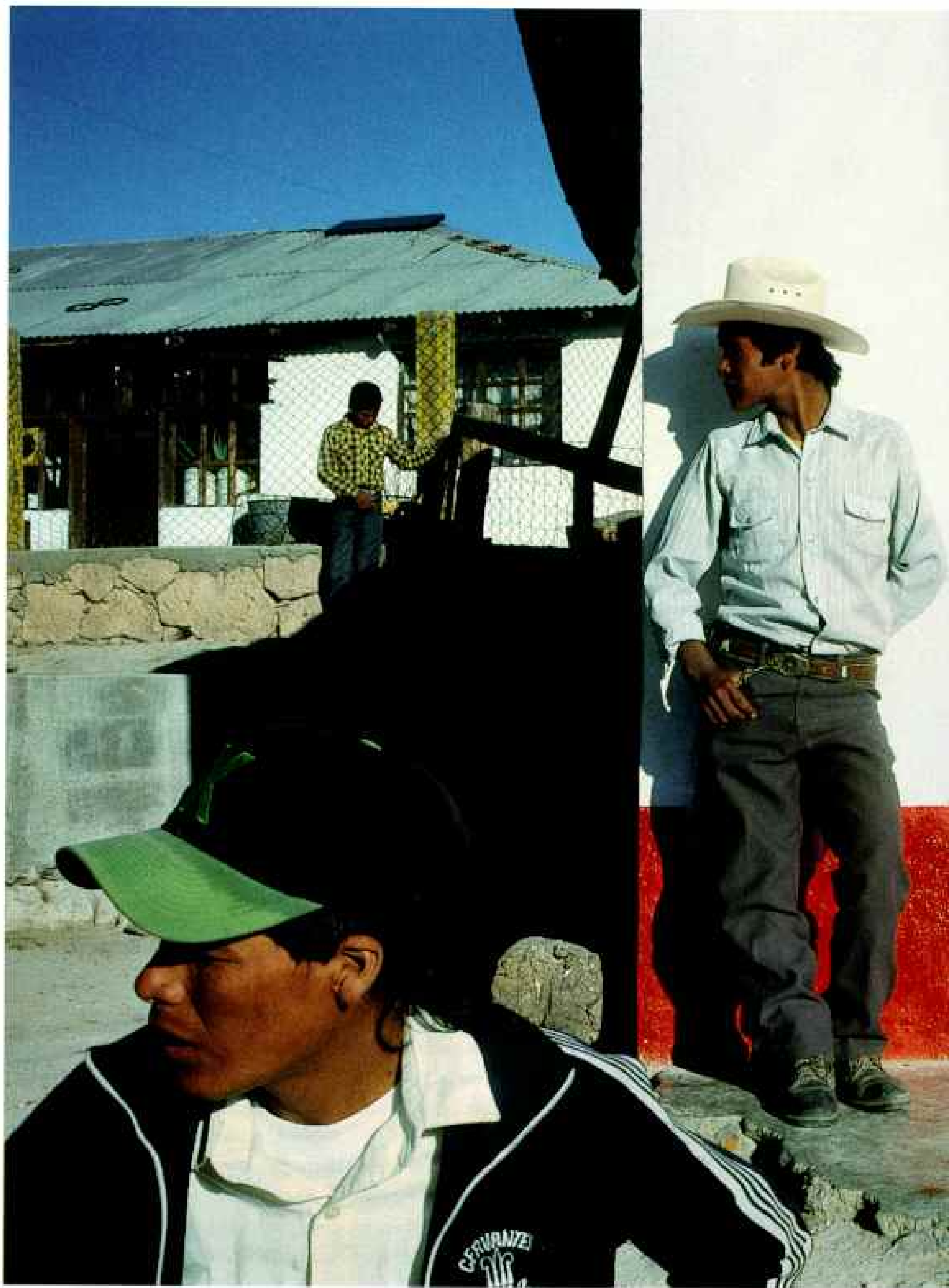
"Thousands of people live

off the timber," says Pedro Beltrán, a grizzled logging-truck driver. "When the forest is finished, so are we.

"*Así es la vida*," he says, intoning what might be considered a mantra for all Mexico: "That's life."

Meanwhile, in the craggiest corners of the Sierra such contemporary troubles can seem deceptively far away. In the Tarahumara's sunburned canyons, shamans still offer sacrifices of meat and corn to ensure good harvests. Work-gnarled mestizo farmers still plant their crops by the phases of the moon. And daily life still plods along at a pace set centuries ago by men and supplies jouncing overland on the backs of sweating mules.

"I watch the satellites pass over at night," says Benito Parra, an octogenarian mule skinner. "They are very few. And they must have more important places to go."



SIERRA MADRE *Backbone of the Frontier*



Looking for traffic, not trouble, Tarahumara youths wait to hitch a ride home after the Virgin of Guadalupe Day celebration in the village of Norogachic. "People here are more *tranquile* than in the cities," says a villager. "The city has too many temptations."

SIERRA MADRE *Backbone of the Frontier*

A murky trickle sustains life in Aboreachic, where Virginia Cruz (right) uses the dregs of her valley's surface water to scrub clothes.

Four years of drought have forced many seminomadic Tarahumara to migrate to bare-knuckled lumber towns such as Creel (below) in search of government assistance or work. Others venture as far as Ciudad Juárez, some 350 miles away on the Texas border.

Calamities of a man-made sort plague Marina Rivas (below right), a Tepehuan whose husband was run off his subsistence farm a year ago by Mexican narcotics traffickers.

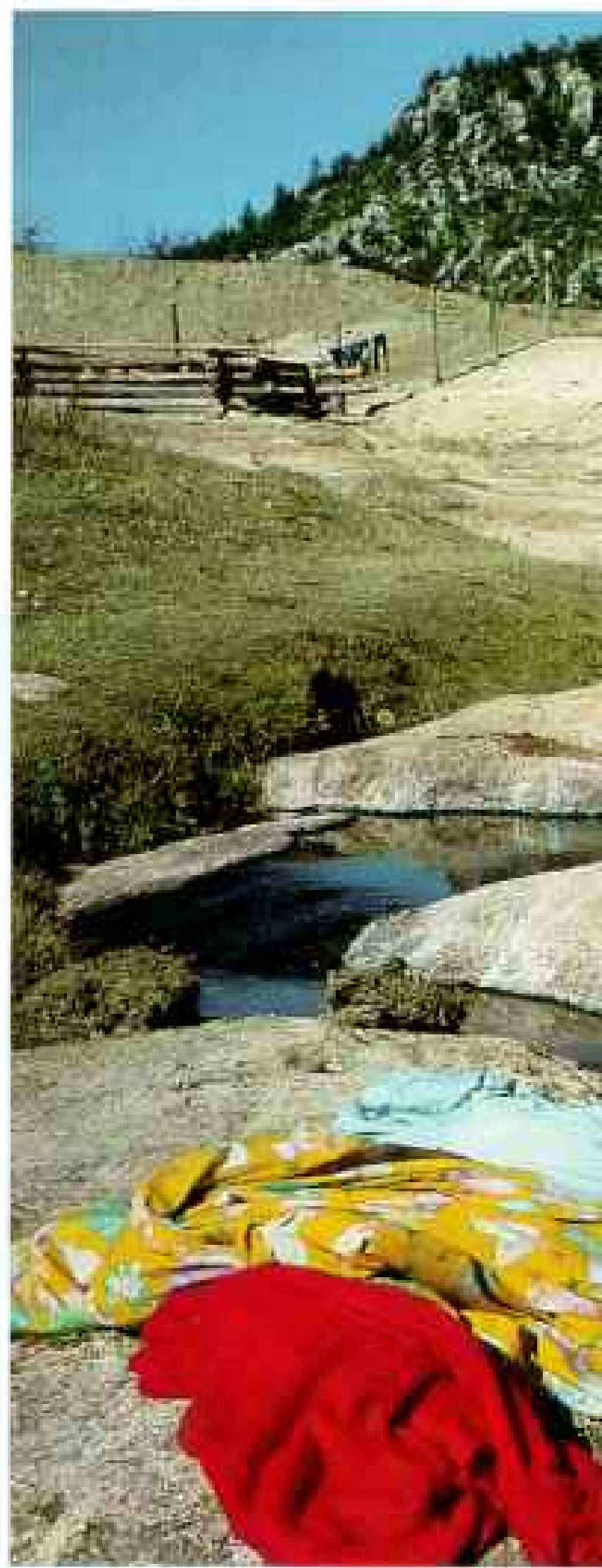
"He was defending our land, so they sent two men to kill him," says Rivas. Uncertain of his fate, her hopes fade with every passing day. "I don't think he'll ever return."

Intimidated by armed thugs, many Indians have been coerced into planting opium poppies—the source of heroin—or marijuana in their isolated fields. The price of resistance: more than 150 Tarahumara and Tepehuan killed in Rivas's canyon homeland since 1988.

Like earlier bonanzas of silver, hoofed stock, and timber, drugs are only the latest rough-hewn commodity to be wrenched from the Sierra Madre—often at the Indians' expense. But now there is a difference: The frontier's once wide horizons are shrinking.

"These people have survived centuries of lawlessness by withdrawing," says a human rights worker of the mountains' shy native people. "Only now there isn't any place left to go."

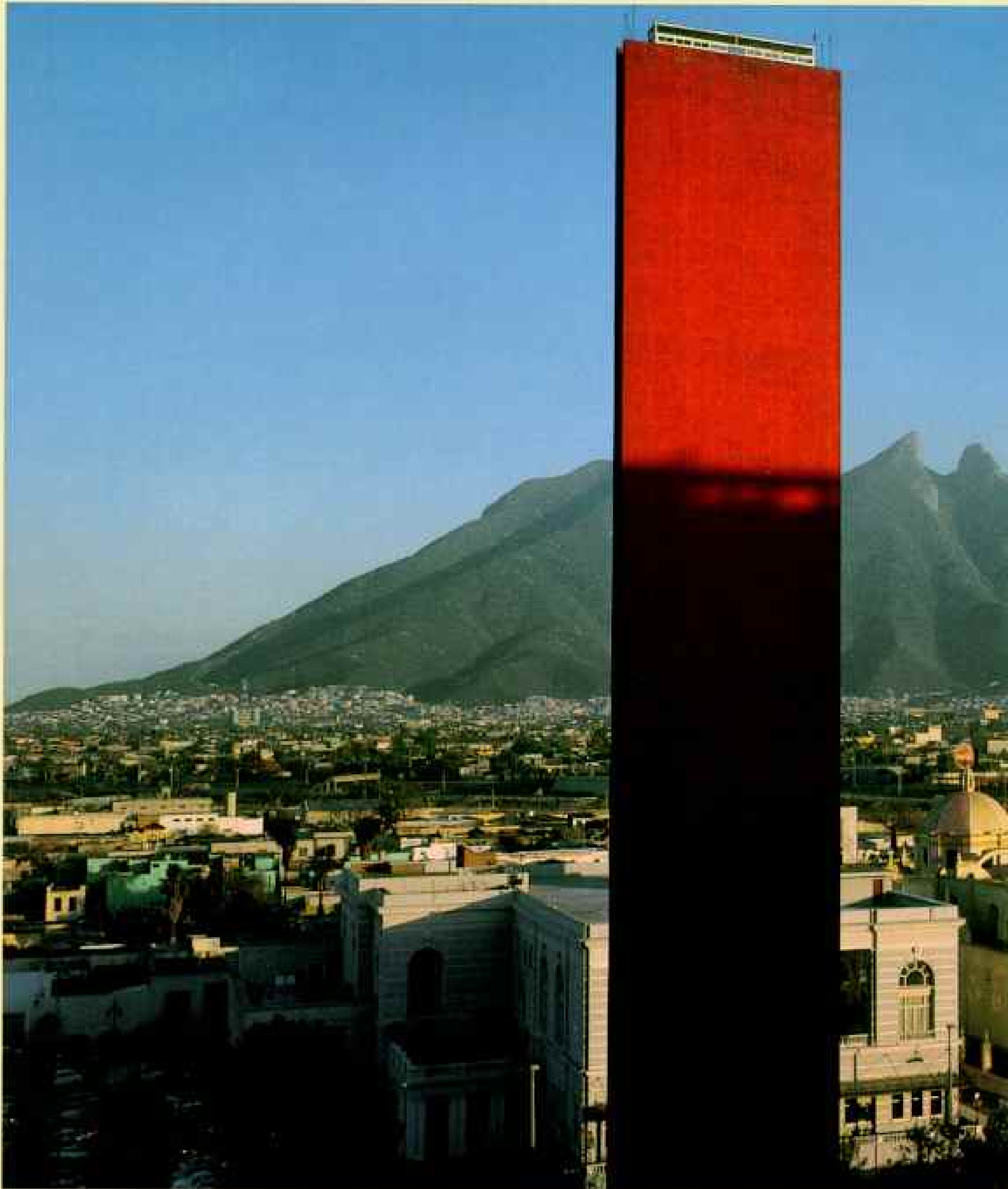
—PAUL SALOPER





MONTEREY

Confronting the Future



BY MICHAEL PARFIT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX WEBB



As bold as the city that built it, the Lighthouse of Commerce shoots skyward, eclipsing Monterrey's colonial-era cathedral and its landmark, Saddle Mountain. A monument to entrepreneurial spirit, the 230-foot-tall tower reminds all that industry shaped this community – and will see it through the current downturn. Many companies, in fact, are rebounding. "They were in a crisis in the '80s too, and they survived," notes a businesswoman. "They usually do."

MONTERREY *Confronting the Future*

It's like a bar of steel pulled fresh out of the furnace and stabbed into the center of the city, still glowing hot. It rises in the heart of the northeastern metropolis of Monterrey, a hardworking city of three million people. The name of this concrete symbol is Faro del Comercio, the Lighthouse of Commerce.

Commercial drive is not Mexico's image. The country presents a *mañana* face to the world: laid-back, easygoing. This is a small part of the truth. Mexicans seem able to put up with things they can't control, like time. But when it comes to work, they know how.

This is vivid in Monterrey. The city lies on dry plains studded with yucca trees, with its back to a ridge of mountains so steep that from the air it looks as if Mexico were a rug pushed up against the wall of Texas. Monterrey is a sprawling, spacious city, with a clump of office and hotel towers at its center. The city spreads across the desert—factories, *colonias*, and businesses often interspersed with patches of open land or slums and connected by broad avenues or modern expressways.

Monterrey is wealthier than many Mexican towns. There are golf courses for the rich—memberships range from \$35,000 to \$200,000—and shopping malls for the middle class. Monterrey has taken more strides toward a fully developed economy than much of the nation. Two of the characteristics of Mexico—family values and willingness to work—plus Monterrey's relative closeness to the border have made a powerful force for development. But the economic crisis has weakened this force. Businesses have failed, and unemployment is high. Today Monterrey is caught between the enticing economy of the north and the characteristics of its heritage, which offer strengths and weaknesses for the future.

"The first settlers here were so isolated that they developed a different culture," said Alejandro Garza Lagüera, who is part of the largest billionaire family in Monterrey. "They were real settlers; they didn't depend on grants from the king of Spain. They had to work hard." Garza Lagüera's grandfather built a brewery, and since then the family has expanded into everything from steel and banking to glass and chemicals. "They were prolific," Garza Lagüera said, "both in generating new enterprises and having children." He smiled. "You have to multiply the businesses faster than the family." Today the family is known as the Garza Sadas; it has been called the most important business family in Latin America. The family is an example of one of the vital differences between the United States and Mexico: Throughout the spectrum of commerce, work and family still mingle intimately.

Chief executives are linked by blood rather than professional background, and work is conducted on a much more personal level. "You don't get right down to business," said an American who has worked for charitable organizations with Garza Lagüera. "First you socialize, they get to know you, they ask about your family. After dinner they put out a bottle of Chivas Regal, and you talk."

This family work ethic can affect both the economy and the community. With billions controlled by a few linked individuals, family investment decisions can affect the whole nation. At the company level, family-like concern for employees leads companies to offer classes, low-interest loans, and financial counseling. The Garza Sadas have helped finance colleges, museums, galleries, and performing arts centers.

“A professional CEO looks ahead just four months,” Garza Lagüera told me. “A family business takes a longer look and gives more to the community.”

If this traditional part of the Mexican character enhances Mexico’s version of modern business, another piece of the past undermines it. In terms of resources Mexico is not poor: It is rich in minerals and oil and has a share of good farmland. But from the days when Spanish royalty removed much of the silver from Mexico to finance its wars, the wealth created by these assets has been held in relatively few hands. Half the nation’s wealth is reportedly controlled by about two dozen family groups, among them the Garza Sadas. More than half of Mexican families live on less than a thousand pesos (\$135) a month.



The difference between rich and poor — worsened by the crisis that has shrunk the middle class and lowered the value of workers’ wages — leads to high crime rates, pushes desperate illegal immigrants into the United States, and casts a shadow on Mexico’s hopes for the future.

When I visited the Garza Sadas’ brewery, bottles on conveyor belts clattered together with a musical roar like a thousand sleigh bells ringing. In a break room a mustached man I will call Chucho laughed with his friends.

“We sit in the break room and tell jokes to ease the tension,” said Chucho,

a 38-year-old with a bright smile but with his own fears for the future. “It’s tough right now.”

This tension is caused by the crisis, by corporate belt-tightening in Monterrey, which has led to layoffs and makes Chucho feel less secure, and by the simple frustration of being poor.

Chucho makes about 500 pesos a week. Although he has a house, air-conditioning, and three children in school, he has no money for extras. By the time his wife pays for basics, there is around ten dollars a week left, not enough to get ahead.

In Houston or Detroit, hard workers like Chucho would fill the malls. In Mexico they struggle to pay their bills for flour at the company store. The average wage in Monterrey is five dollars a day. Most economists argue that a key to a healthy economy is to put purchasing power into the hands of consumers. Chucho and his family are potential consumers, but they don’t make enough to consume.

One night I walked through the downtown plaza by the Lighthouse of Commerce. Spotlights turned it pink. A five-year-old boy was trying to sell paper cups of tamarind pulp. His 14-year-old sister sold candy nearby. They were from the poor side of town, the side that still dominates Mexico. I bought a cup. Then it struck me that here was a piece of the national character that could someday build a strong Mexico: Among all the poor people trying to make a living on the streets, I had seen very few beggars. Rich or poor, the families of Mexico prefer to work.

MONTERREY *Confronting the Future*

Shortcut to prosperity, a glass-covered bridge links a hotel to the city's new convention center — main attraction at an international business complex built on the grounds of a foundry gone bust. A runaway success, the center books big events such as trade shows two years in advance.

Free trade, coupled with the domestic slump, has forced companies here to become globally competitive. Vitro glassworks has rebuilt its original 1909 building as a museum, but its machines — like this bottle press (below) — are state-of-the-art. "We've modernized to keep up with the market, and we intend to continue doing that," says spokesman Hiram Peón. "We're not going to disappear."

Like many manufacturers in Monterrey, Vitro began as an

offshoot of another business. In this case the Cuauhtémoc-Moctezuma brewery, which produces Dos Equis and other beers, started up a glass factory to supply bottles. Today Vitro produces everything from car windows to fine crystal in factories throughout the hemisphere.

The brewery also started a steel plant, Hylsa, to make caps and cans. Hylsa is the only company in the world making ultrathin sheets of steel by hot rolling — quicker and cheaper than the standard cold process. The product cools for 72 hours in the yard (bottom right) before shipment to clients. "It has been quite a revolution from bottle caps to steel sheets, but we've held on," says engineer Victor Treviño. "Now even with the economic crisis we're doing well."







MONTERREY *Confronting the Future*



As if divinely inspired, a gown materializes at Expo Tu Boda, a traveling wedding show launched here five years ago that introduces brides-to-be to fashions, florists, photographers, even pink Visa cards. "We're a young country and very romantic," notes organizer Ricardo Cantú.



"The family is the key to everything for us," says Felipe González (right, at far left), who helps his daughter Verónica Aurora with homework on a Sunday afternoon during half-time of a football game broadcast from the U.S. Felipe's wife, Virginia, reads the paper, waiting with daughter Mónica Andrea and son Felipe Angel for play to resume.

Busy lawyers, Felipe and Virginia still find time to come home at midday to share *la comida*, the main meal, with

their children. "We don't change that for anything, no matter what happens at the office," Felipe says. "If the family disintegrates, the whole country will fall apart."

Both of the Gonzalezes grew up in big, struggling families typical of many in Monterrey. "But all of us went to college and have professional careers," says Virginia. "We've gotten ahead, and we want that for our children too."

Yet the job market is changing along with Mexico itself.

"In our day a degree was a big advantage," says Felipe. "Now everybody has one, so you have to do more, speak several languages, get special training." Neither he nor his wife speaks English, but all their children do. The oldest two also take French lessons.

Already working on a business degree, Felipe Angel plans to study abroad in the future. "I want to see something of the world," he says. "But I'll come back here to settle down. I love this city."



MONTERREY

Confronting the Future

Nestled in a serene valley, Las Misiones country club pamperers city golfers. "Everything here has to be first class to keep members," explains manager Viviano Villarreal. "We're 20 minutes from downtown, and people aren't accustomed yet to driving out so far." After the game, players are served drinks at linen-covered tables overlooking groomed gardens of palms and bougainvillea.

Competition comes from two other private-golf facilities as well as Mexico's first public course. "Monterrey is the capital of business in Mexico, so there's money for people to join clubs like this," says Villarreal.

Money also gives the city polish, with industry helping to support education and the arts. "We have theaters, libraries,

museums, just about anything you'd want," he says. "You had to go to the States for that when I was growing up here."

For those who can afford it, there's also plenty to shop for. Malls offer Bull Rider boots and Benetton, Cartier and Paloma Picasso, Adidas and Donald Duck. Many stores display signs in English, symbols of an increasingly bilingual and bicultural character.

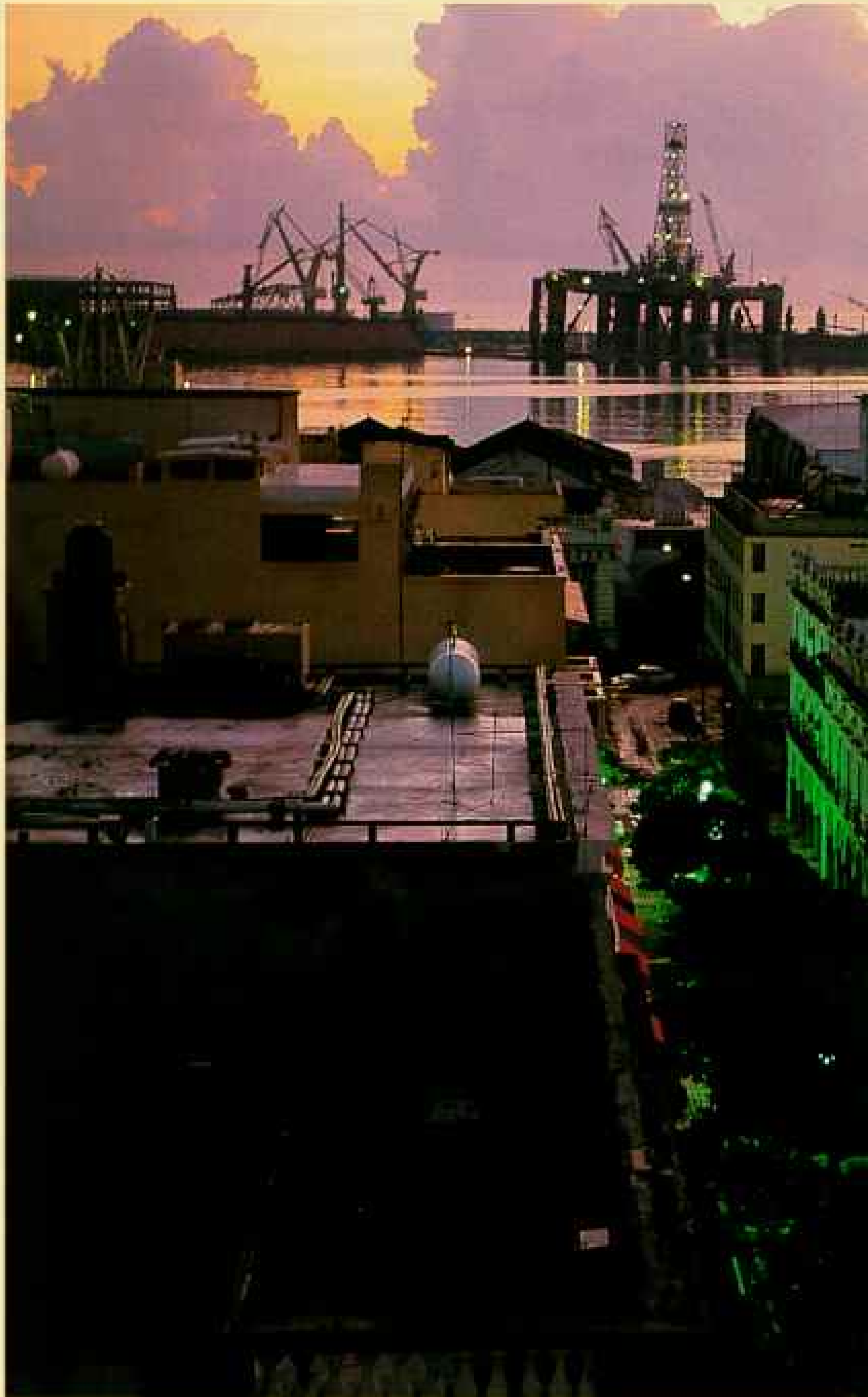
Like Mexico's northern neighbor, Monterrey now attracts migrants. "I used to think it was strange that people in the U.S. couldn't tell me where they were from," says Hiram Peón, a native of Yucatán. "But Mexicans are starting to move around too. You have to go where the best opportunities are." Monterrey is still one of those places. □



VERACRUZ

Gateway to the World

Last night's lights still shine at dawn at the Municipal Palace in Veracruz harbor, heart of the state of the same name and one of the busiest ports in Mexico. Hernán Cortés dropped anchor here in 1519, opening a portal for trade. Rich in oil, seafood harvests, and cultures drawn from distant lands, Veracruz is also a world of back-road virtues, where tradition reigns. Says one Veracruzano: "All that is good in Mexico starts here."



PHOTOGRAPHS BY STUART FRANKLIN



VERACRUZ *Gateway to the World*

Spilling from the slopes of the Sierra Madre Oriental to the Gulf of Mexico, the state of Veracruz forms a 450-mile-long crescent. Since Spanish colonial times the harbor at the city of Veracruz has been the point of entry for diverse cultures—either staging invasions or seeking a share in the state's abundant resources. These newcomers—Spaniards, Africans, Greeks, French, Italians, and Cubans—blended with the indigenous people to create a *mélange* of traditions that are unique to Veracruz.

Long before Cortés these tropical lowlands were the domain of the Olmec, Mesoamerica's oldest civilization, which rose to prominence 3,000 years ago, developing religious ideas, mathematical concepts, and a calendar system that would be adopted later by the Maya and Aztec.

Master carvers, the Olmec disappeared mysteriously around 400 a.c., leaving behind gigantic basalt heads believed to represent their rulers. Most are on display in Mexico's museums, including the Museum of Anthropology in Xalapa (right), the capital of Veracruz state.

Many of the Olmec sites were located atop vast salt domes, which, to modern geologists, means the presence of oil. Today that oil fuels a

billion-dollar industry, second only to manufacturing.

Mexico is the leading oil producer in Latin America, with the world's eighth largest reserves. Yet even the gargantuan oil industry has been vulnerable during the country's economic crisis.

To raise cash to service the national debt, Mexico's state-owned petroleum company, *Petróleos Mexicanos*, or Pemex, has been hanging "For Sale" signs on plants that produce petrochemicals for photographic film, antifreeze, nylon stockings, and fertilizers.

Sharing the Gulf with Pemex oil tankers is Veracruz's fishing fleet, the largest in Mexico. Each day before sunrise some 11,600 boats pull out to harvest shrimp, clams, oysters, crabs, and fish—enough to supply 12 percent of the country's commercial seafood needs.

The grit and grime of the oil industry and the frantic sorting of fish—this is what many outsiders think of as the essence of Veracruz. Yet there is another—a calmer, quieter Veracruz—down any country road.

In the fishing village of Mandinga, for example, a cool Gulf breeze softens the humid afternoon heat as the town's residents—mestizos partly descended from African slaves—go about their business along dusty streets that

seem to lead nowhere. A few times a week a sprinkling of tourists stop by to sample the day's catch in the lazy shade of grass-covered *palapas*. "Life is much simpler here," says fisherman Julio Rodaleón Enríquez, as he bags a fresh harvest of oysters.

Perhaps too simple. Many men leave the village and set out for Mexico City, searching for something beyond the monotony of fishing. "They don't do very well in other places," says fisherman José Luis Cruz.



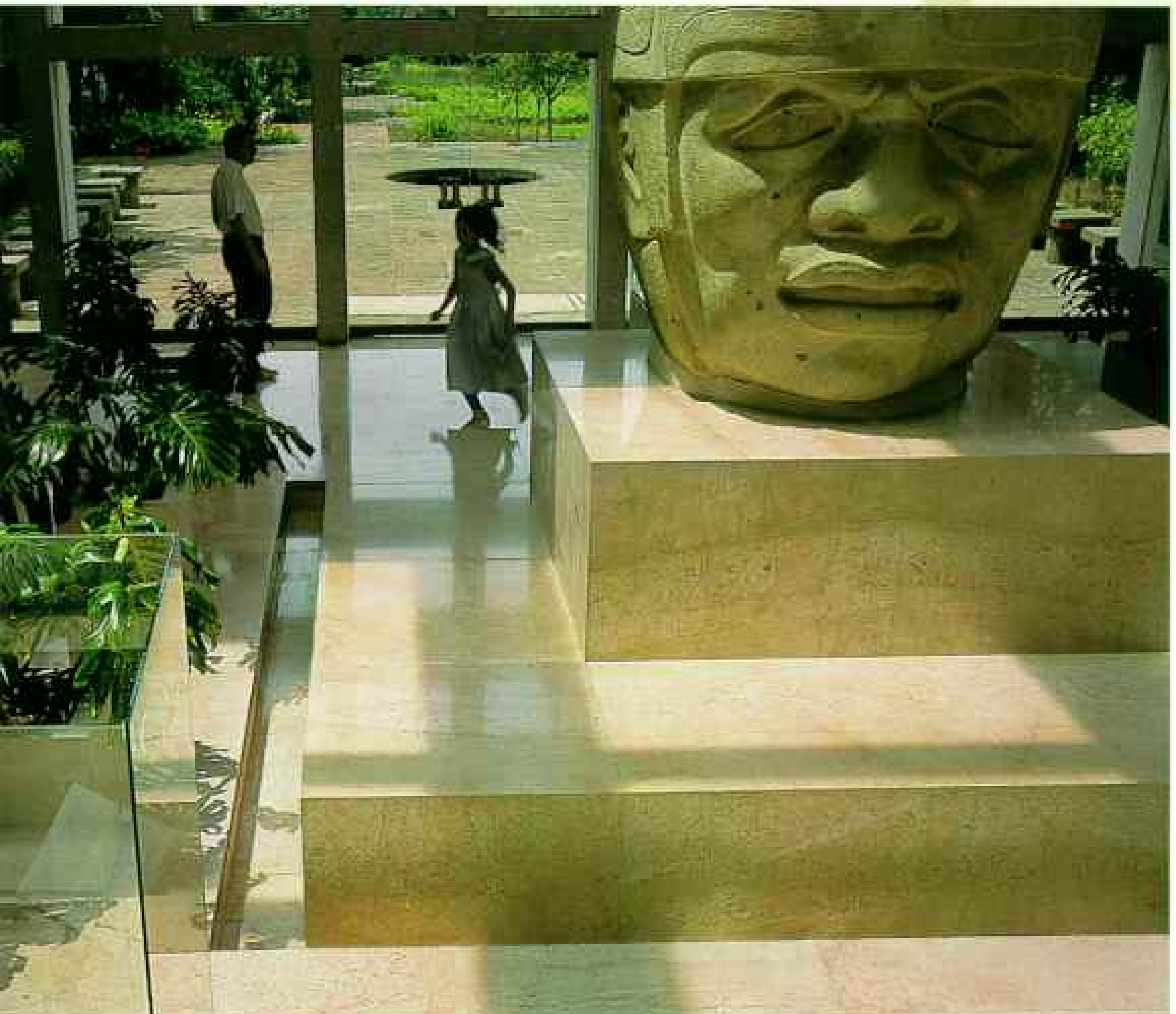
Alfonso. "So they come back. At least here they always have a job."

And they have their music. Of all Veracruz's cosmopolitan influences – food laced with Italian spices, healing practices from Africa, sensual dances from Cuba – it is music that speaks to the souls of the state's 6.7 million people.

Beneath sun-drenched palm trees, trios of string musicians rouse listeners with *el son jarocho*, a blend of styles from

around the world that has become the typical music of Veracruz. Between numbers – and rounds of beer and boiled shrimp – dueling marimba bands launch into ear-busting renditions of "Veracruz," the unofficial state anthem by native son Agustin Lara.

"For Veracruzanos," says veteran marimba player Matias Montejo, "music is the highest thing."





VERACRUZ *Gateway to the World*



A tree is a lonely survivor of slash-and-burn practices in Los Tuxtlas Mountains, where cattlemen cleared the rain forest to plant grass. Environmentalists have acquired parcels for reserves, but, says botanist Guillermo Angeles, "We don't know if we'll ever be able to restore the rest."

VERACRUZ *Gateway to the World*



Racking up points, youngsters test their skills on *la maquinita*, their name for the video game outside a grocery store in Tlacotalpan. For a peso, players get to run high-tech obstacle courses in five mythical worlds. In real life they will be lucky to get past the obstacles of their own world, a dwindling town of 15,000 in the Papaloapan River Basin.

"It's a nice town, peaceful, clean, and secure," says store owner Felipe Romero. "But there's nothing much for the kids to do once they finish school. Nothing but fishing and raising sugarcane, beans, or bananas. If they want something else, they have to leave."

Once a bustling port, Tlacotalpan faded when it was bypassed by the railroad that came to the region in the last century—a story repeated in many of Veracruz's small towns. Now not much is left except crayon-colored houses,

fishing boats bobbing on the waterfront, trees laden with green bananas, and an occasional round of dancing in the plaza—necessities of life in sedate, seductive Veracruz. □

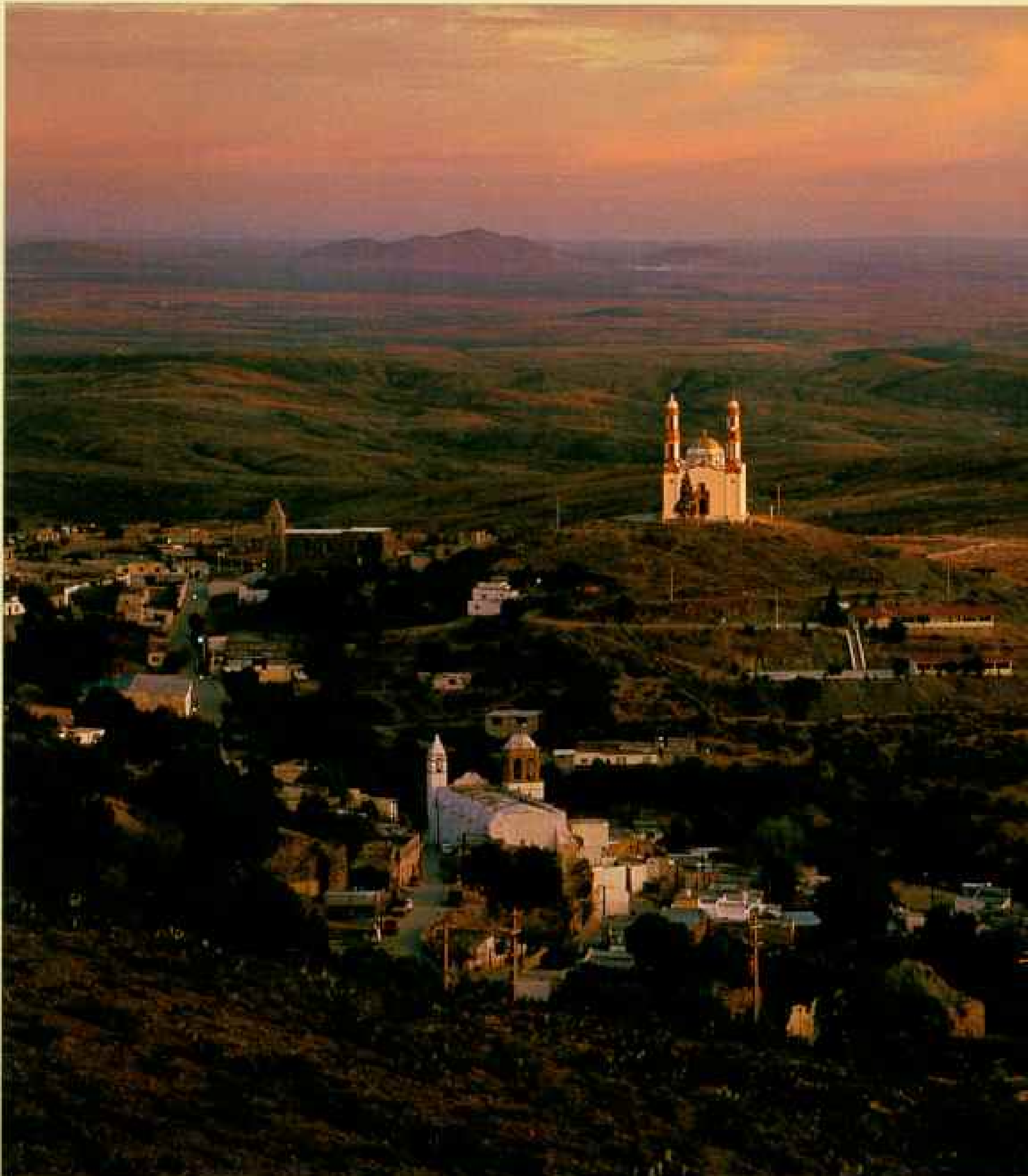
—CASSANDRA
FRANKLIN-BARBAJOSA





HEARTLAND

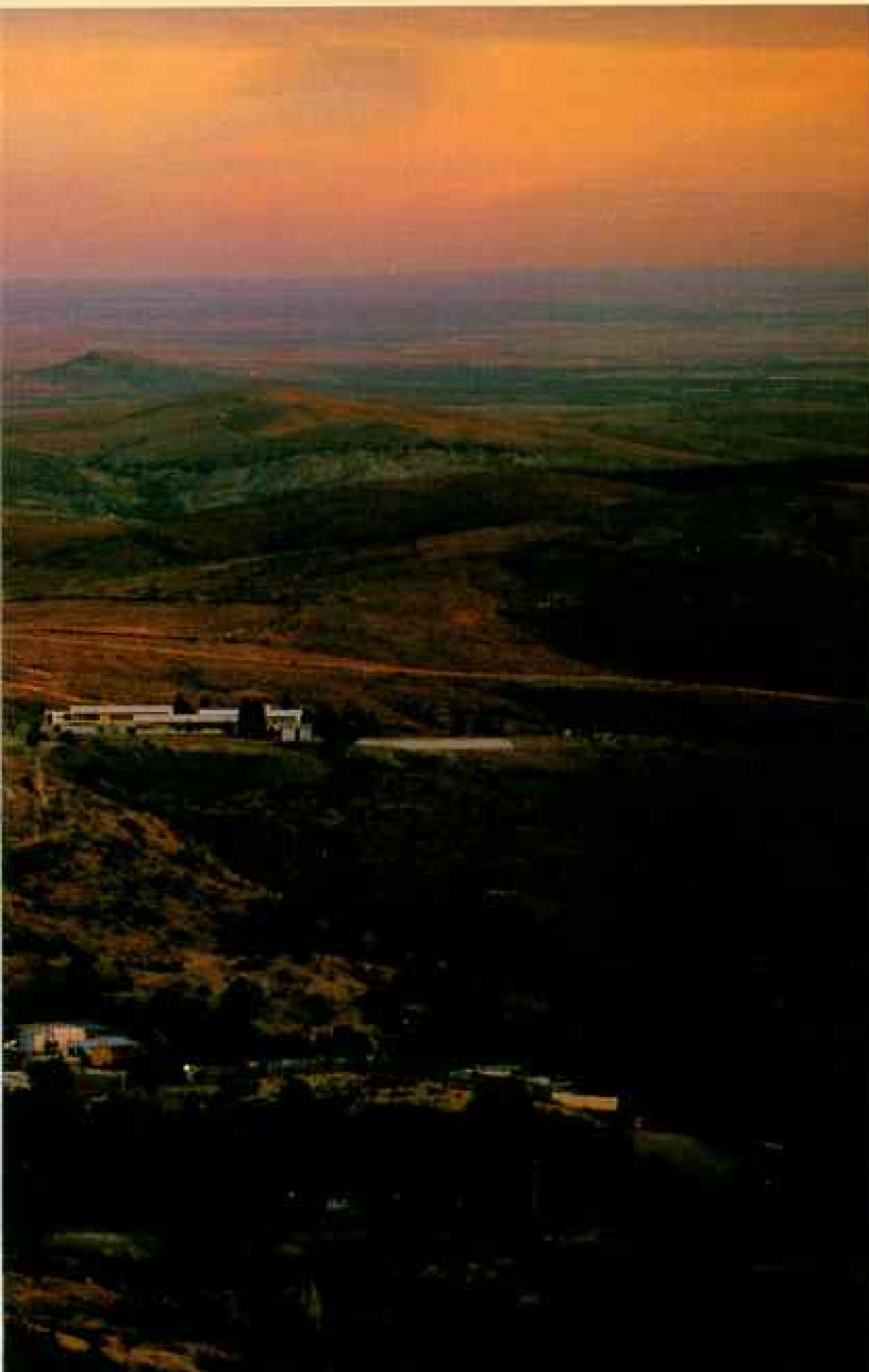
Eternal Mexico



& THE PACIFIC

BY MICHAEL PARFIT

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ALAN HARVEY



A hundred years ago, citizens of Vetagrande built La Iglesia del Calvario high on a hill, after tearing down a house of ill repute. The town near Zacatecas once wallowed in the excesses of its silver-mining wealth, but production declined in the late 19th century. Today Vetagrande is a ghost of its glittering past.

The patina of colonial Spain still warms the heartland of Mexico, offering a balm if not a cure for current economic pain.

HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*

The young fisherman smiled a lot and, like many Mexican men, pretended to shrug away the important things. His name was Fredy Irene Gonzales, and he sat with a beer in a small village bar in western Mexico. He was married, had one daughter and another child on the way. He smiled and shrugged.

"I am very happy to be married and have a child," he said, "because now I know my own blood."

Blood binds Mexico. It's what makes Mexicans work, and what makes them fight. I saw both these characteristics in Mexico's heartland, which begins just west of Mexico City and extends north to the old Spanish silver-mining country, south into a fertile land of forests and lakes, and west to the sun-hammered coast. Life seems so old here, and time so quiet, that some call this region México Profundo.

The past that resonates here was hard. Spanish explorers found silver near Zacatecas in 1546 and started a rush that made Mexico, for a time, one of the most fabulous sources of wealth in the world. Millions of pounds of silver were shipped out in ingots and crude pesos. This enriched Spain but cost Mexico's Indians dearly. Because the mines required a great deal of heavy labor, the Spanish forced Indians to work 12 hours a day, hauling ore out of narrow tunnels on their knees. Drawn by the silver, Spanish immigrants made this land home, sowing influence and culture for centuries.

As I flew from the red-earth farms of Zacatecas in the north to the orchards of Michoacán in the south, the human landscape looked as worn and familiar as old marble stairs softened by centuries of passing feet. From the sky, churches stood out in the evening light like little golden icons. Across the hills wandered networks of long stone fences, which made me think of antiquity and patience, of people with generations of time.

Later, as I drove along the roads, I saw women carrying bundles of firewood on their heads, and old flatbed trucks with brightly painted rails taking loads of *campesinos*, farmworkers, to the fields. Bougainvillea trees, each vying with its neighbor for a more vivid hue of violet, stood outside thatched market stalls where people sold bags of oranges for 34 cents a kilo. Over herds of bony Brahman cattle, vultures lazed around in the sky, waiting on drifts of breeze for the slow passage of time.



Things move slowly here, as I discovered on a Sunday morning in a magical village on an island in a mangrove estuary. Here, legend says, the Aztec came to build their capital a thousand years ago. They stayed briefly before climbing into the central highlands to build their famous Tenochtitlan, leaving behind only the island's name—Mexcaltitán—which means "house of the moon."

The pace of life here seems governed by tide and stars. The main street is a rough circle that runs all the way around the island. The road is less than a mile long and made of dirt, with high concrete sidewalks. People throw their wash water out onto it, so there are patches of damp dust. Almost every year the estuary rises with storm runoff and floods the town. Then people put their big couches and mirrored dressers and framed paintings of Jesus on their roofs or in the big wood-and-fiberglass canoes that the men go fishing in and wait until the water goes down.

I walked around and around on this road. There are no cars, no motorcycles, and only a few bicycles on the island, so everyone just walks. All the doors to the houses were open, revealing hammocks, double beds, and tapestries of Christ. Occasionally, modern life intruded when ranchera and reggae music from boom boxes blasted from the doorways. At El Camarón seafood restaurant I saw a sign offering credit only to hundred-year-olds accompanied by their grandfathers.

Old and new mingle in small ways here. On the street was a stack of gnarled acacia limbs to be used in rebuilding a roof, but children were also bouncing up and down on a ten-foot-long steel bar to be used in the roof for reinforcement. And when I spoke with Caín Estrada Irene, who quit school eight years ago at the age of 14 to become a fisherman like all the other men in his family, he used a surprising phrase. I asked him what it takes to cast a net from a canoe for several hours a day, and he replied with an expression from basketball: "You've got to know the moves."

On the circular street I ran into Juan García Tovar, a short man with a big belly, a torn T-shirt, and dark bare feet. Eagerly he drew lines in the dirt to demonstrate the use of a fish fence, which works like a corral to herd fish into a net. He spoke of a legendary—but unlikely—day on which two men caught 30 tons of shrimp and mullet in one haul. "People have been fishing here since the Indians," he said.

Behind him a teenage girl in a short orange skirt stood in a doorway and looked out under her lashes at a curly-headed boy who smirked past, trying to grow his mustache. Someone handed the girl a baby to hold, and she jiggled it in her arms.

That night I slept in a hotel that had chickens in the backyard. I dreamed about the circular road going around and around, like the long story of Mexico, families being born and dying and being born again. I dreamed of Indians having visions of the saints, fishermen repairing nets, and people building houses with acacia logs. I dreamed of girls standing in doorways, watching the boys and holding the babies.





HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



All smiles – for the moment – Gabriel Hernández begins married life. With few jobs in Vetagrande, he works out of town for low wages to support his mother, six siblings, wife, and soon a new baby. "I wish them luck," says friend Mario Zapata. "When men take on too much, they leave for good."

HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC

Eternal Mexico

I awoke thinking that the road of old Mexico never ends, and though you may not be sure as you walk on it where you are in time, you always know who your cousins are.

But if blood is glue and history here, it is also the hot source of conflict. On another peaceful morning, Alejandro Barragán, family man and upstanding citizen in the town of Uruapan del Progreso, sat with a group of friends in a brick courtyard, drinking good coffee in the mellow air and planning disruption.

"*Mira*," said Barragán. "Look. When you are defending your family's heritage, you cannot be afraid."

Uruapan del Progreso, an old city of about 250,000 people, lies in the heart of México Profundo. Uruapan looks calm, but like the nearby wooded hills, which in fact are volcanoes, Uruapan rumbles with unrest.

Here, as in many towns across Mexico, people of the middle class are in revolt. The friends in the courtyard were members of a controversial group called El Barzón, a nationwide organization of debtors defending their blood.

"For the Mexican," Barragán said, "the family is the base and the nucleus of society." Like Fredy, the young fisherman, he gave a little shrug and smile, as if this didn't matter much. But it did. Barragán, a middle-aged man who spent 20 years developing his construction-supply store and remodeling enterprise, gave up his business to the economic crisis, but when it threatened his family's home, he fought.

Overwhelmed by debt after the 1994 peso devaluation drove interest rates to more than 100 percent and left almost without work because everyone else was in the same boat, Barragán started losing everything he'd worked for. He lost two new cars. He took his three kids out of private school. He lost his phone service. There are no 17-peso boxes of cookies in the house when 6-peso bread will do. "Certain foods are not necessities," he told me tactfully.

But Barragán is not willing to give up his *patrimonio familiar*, the inheritance he will give his children. "Look," he said, glancing around his house, "this is not mine. This is theirs." His gaze took in a large, immaculate room filled with bamboo and wicker furniture. A black-and-white photograph of his wife rested on the mantel, and framed photographs of his kids covered the coffee table. "That is what you stand for."

Barragán once owed about 150,000 pesos on his home—at the time about \$45,000. Now, he says, "I've lost track of how much I owe, but it's at least double." With his business gone and his income dwindling, he could no longer make payments. Last year, after agonizing for weeks, Barragán joined El Barzón.

El Barzón literally means "harness" but also alludes to a well-known song about a peasant who suffered for his debts at the turn of the century. Most of its members, like Barragán, were prosperous merchants and farmers until the crash of the peso.

Nationwide, El Barzón claims about a million members. Their program is two-pronged—legal action and civil resistance. The latter has



Champion *charro* Alejandro Pedrero practices fancy ropework, hallmark of Mexican cowboys.

In Tupátaro, Guanajuato, family and friends (right) turn out for the Feast Day of San Miguel and an afternoon of *jaripeo*, rodeo Mexican style.





HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



Loosening up with a practice run, charros on the Pedrero ranch in Jalisco get set for competition. *Charrería*, the sport of charros, developed from the routine handling of horses and bulls. "We break bones, even lose thumbs and hands," says Gustavo Pedrero. "But we live for the danger."

HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



The spotlight is on carriage drivers, who save the day for foot-weary visitors to Guadalajara, Mexico's second largest city. Capital of Jalisco, the colonial-style city struggles to balance worldliness with traditional values. But when the peso went down, crime went up. Now officials find that crime control—like airborne toy parachutes (right)—is often beyond their reach.

made them famous. Barzonistas have carried coffins into bank offices, smothered courts with thousands of lawsuits, and blocked highways with tractors. Once members barged into a bank, tore off their clothes, and stuffed them into tellers' cages, each protester shouting, "My clothes are all I have left, and now they're yours."

One of their most effective tactics has been the simple show of numbers at foreclosure hearings. Not only does this get public attention, but it also often halts the legal proceedings that the Barzonistas oppose. This is very much like actions farmers sometimes took in the U.S. during the Depression—they would show up at farm foreclosures in such threatening numbers that no one would bid.

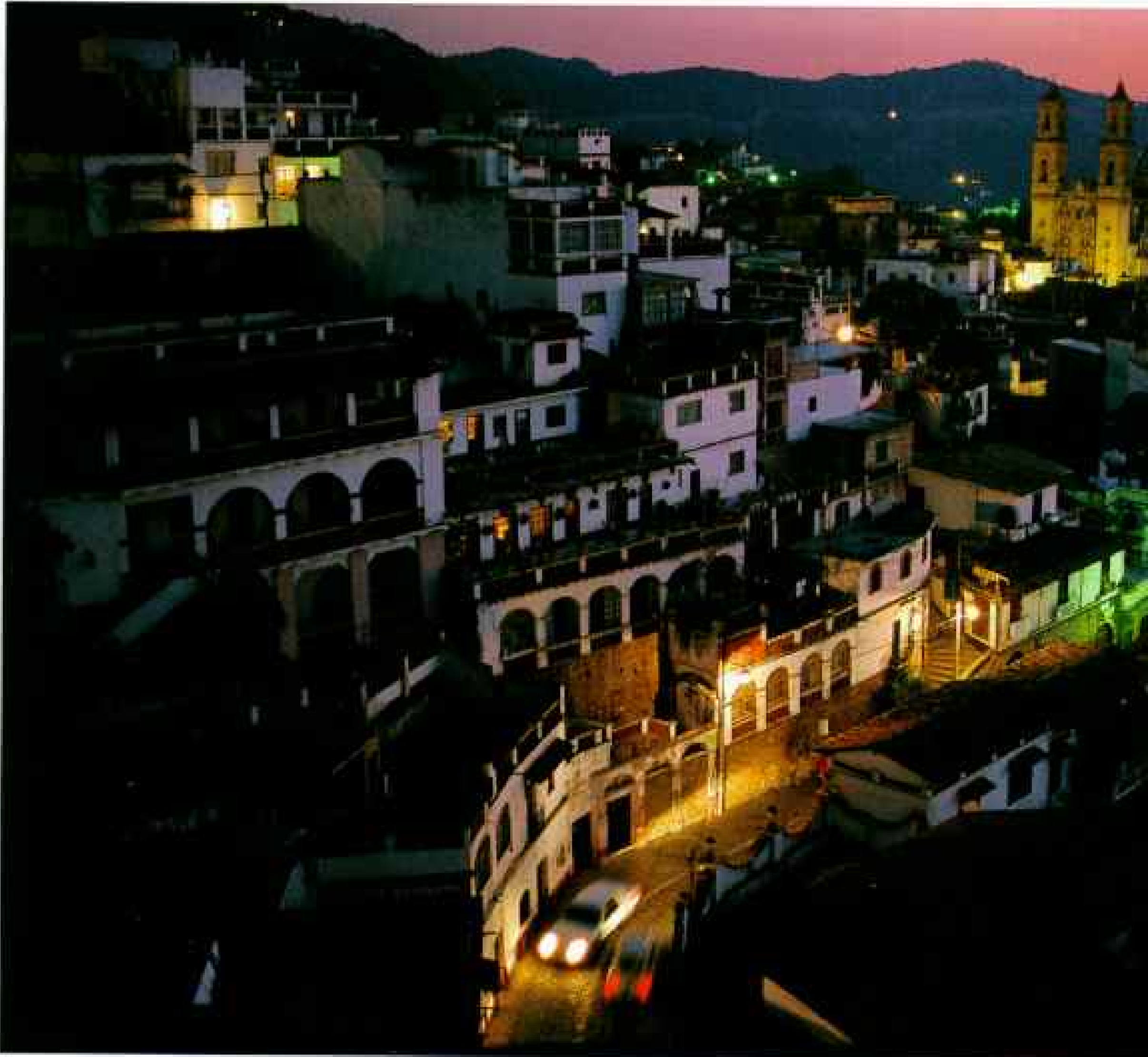
Though some banks claim that El Barzón has had little effect on their business, they worry about their image. "In terms of banks' profits, El Barzón is not significant," said Carlos Chávez Solís, director general of consumer banking for Banca Cremi. "But politically it is important."

El Barzón has become so powerful that it represents more than just a reaction to debt. Many Mexicans now see the debt protesters as part of a widespread grassroots political movement, which includes the Civic Alliance, an organization that sends election observers to polling stations to ensure fair elections.

"Look," Barragán said, speaking of the middle class in general, "we were a very passive sector, and we are waking up. It is no longer possible to continue being passive."

"When judges see two or three of us," said Idolfredo Pérez Pardo, a Barzonista in Uruapan, "they say, 'Here come those clowns from El Barzón.' But now, when they see hundreds of us, they realize there's







HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC

Eternal Mexico

At first light Taxco rouses to another day in the silver trade. The Guerrero city of 95,000 touts itself as the “silver capital of the world,” not for rich veins—most were tapped out by the early 19th century—but as home to Mexico’s most skilled artisans.

Unlike Vetagrande, which dedicated itself to mining and is now suffering a collapse, Taxco still prospers. Going beyond the traditional religious items made in other silver cities, Taxco began crafting jewelry, tableware, and art objects in Mexican designs.

“Silver is native to Mexico,” says designer Emilia Castillo. “So I do Mexican things, like a vase with a salamander crawling up the side.” Here the second-generation silversmith works with master artisan

Frumencio Estrada to perfect a swan pitcher (below left), one of myriad designs hammered out in her workshop.

More than 60,000 of Taxco’s people make their living with silver, each month using about 60 tons mined all over Mexico. Even so, the city has not escaped Mexico’s crisis. “The banks are broke, so we operate without them,” says Roberto Romo, director of Castillo’s company. “Fortunately 95 percent of our product goes to the U.S. and France. Dollars and francs keep us afloat.”

Foreign currency from customers who live as far away as Japan (below) helps keep Linda’s Silver Shop in business. Owner Linda Cuevas offers Mexicans a deal: “They can’t afford what they used to, so I give them a discount.”





HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



Gossamer wings skim Lake Pátzcuaro as Tarascan Indians set out with butterfly nets. They will form a circle and dip in unison to catch tiny white *charales*. But the fish are declining, and Janitzio islanders are worried. "All we have is water," says a local. "If we can't fish, we can't eat."

HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*

a problem." Pérez had joined Barragán and 13 other Barzonistas in the courtyard on that peaceful day to cause a problem. Among them were the owner of a trucking company, several avocado producers, a wholesaler, a mango farmer, and an optometrist. A slogan on a sign in the courtyard said: "Day by day there are more debtors, more disgraced Mexicans, more Barzonistas." Sitting by a dry fountain, these people looked well fed and prosperous, but they were, in truth, broke—and unashamed.

The Barzonistas were waiting for a call to action. "We have a, well, informant, in the police offices," Barragán said.

The telephone call came: A Barzonista across town was about to be arrested for nonpayment of a debt. Once the arrest summons was signed, there was little the Barzonistas could do to stop the arrest. But they might succeed if they could block the signing of the summons. So the protesters piled into a parade of pickups led by Barragán in his beat-up red truck. Looking like a posse of well-dressed campesinos, they rolled through the narrow streets, past bicyclists carrying chickens, past

Streetlamps draw shy teenagers out on Mexcaltitán, an island village. When love strikes, the boy spirits the girl off—in keeping with custom—and they live together. Marriage has to wait. Says one young lover: "Weddings cost too much."





markets where sliced watermelons and pineapples made heaps of red and gold in warm morning shadow.

At the police station Marco Antonio Barriga looked worried. He was director of preliminary investigations for the state attorney general's office. His next case was the summons for the arrest of Valentín García, the Barzonista who hadn't paid his debts. Now the official was facing Valentín's wife, María Bonilla, and 14 solemn Barzonistas.

Barragán sat down in front of Barriga's desk. The others crowded around. Barragán spoke quietly with that little shrug of humor that must have told Barriga he was serious. "Look," he said, "this is wrong. The police should not be used to settle debts." He smiled. The Barzonistas stood close around the desk.

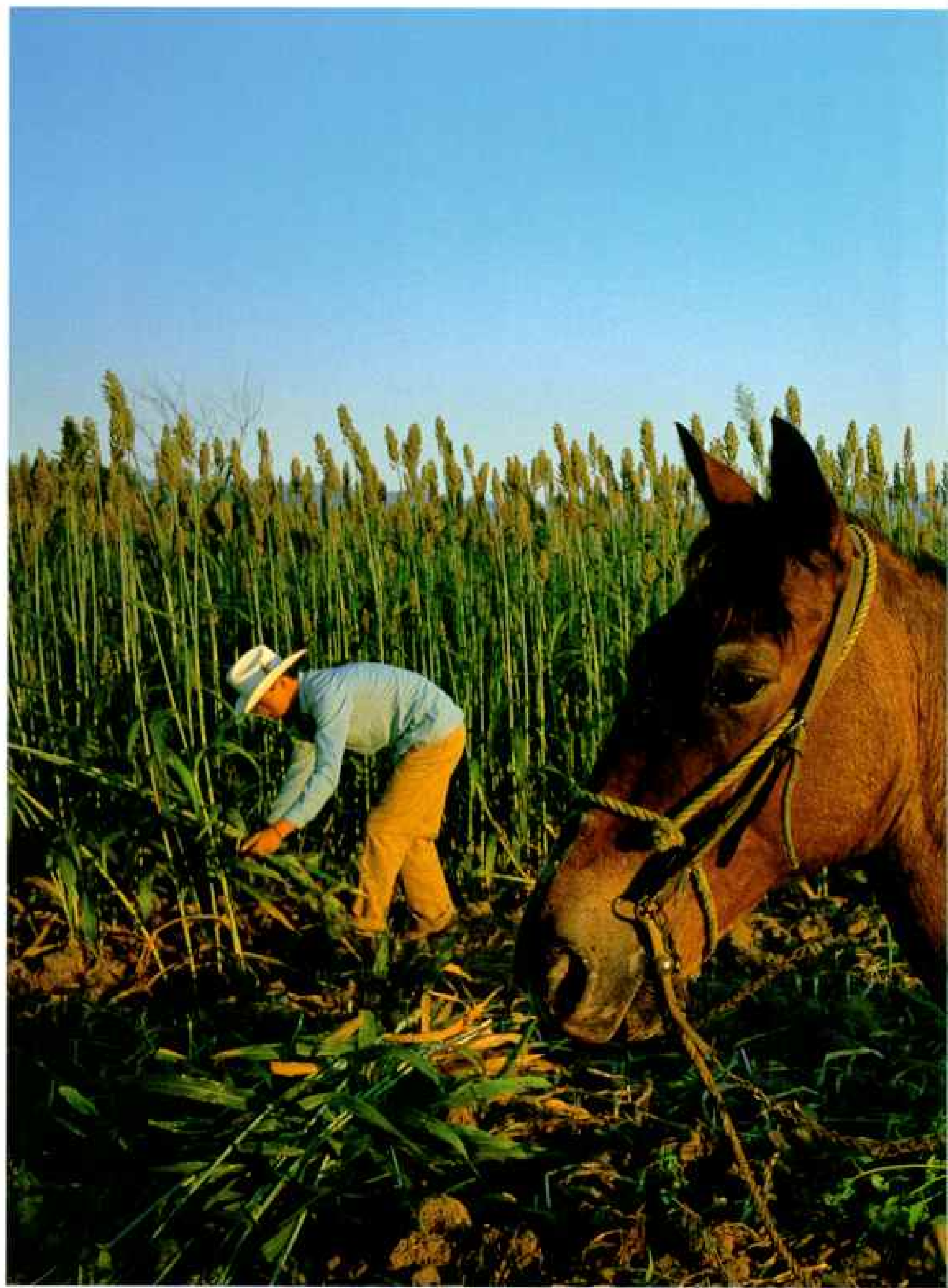
The tension was concealed. The guys around Barriga's desk could have been a group of farmers negotiating a corn sale. The scene was orderly and calm, which gave it power. These protesters were not some fringe group; they were the heart of the nation, once its stability, now a source of upheaval.

In a few moments Barriga was smiling, and so was María Bonilla. Like many other cases in which El Barzón has been involved, the arrest had been indefinitely postponed. María and her husband were safe for now. Another little piece of Mexico's authoritarian rule had eroded, and another small piece of Mexican debt went unpaid.

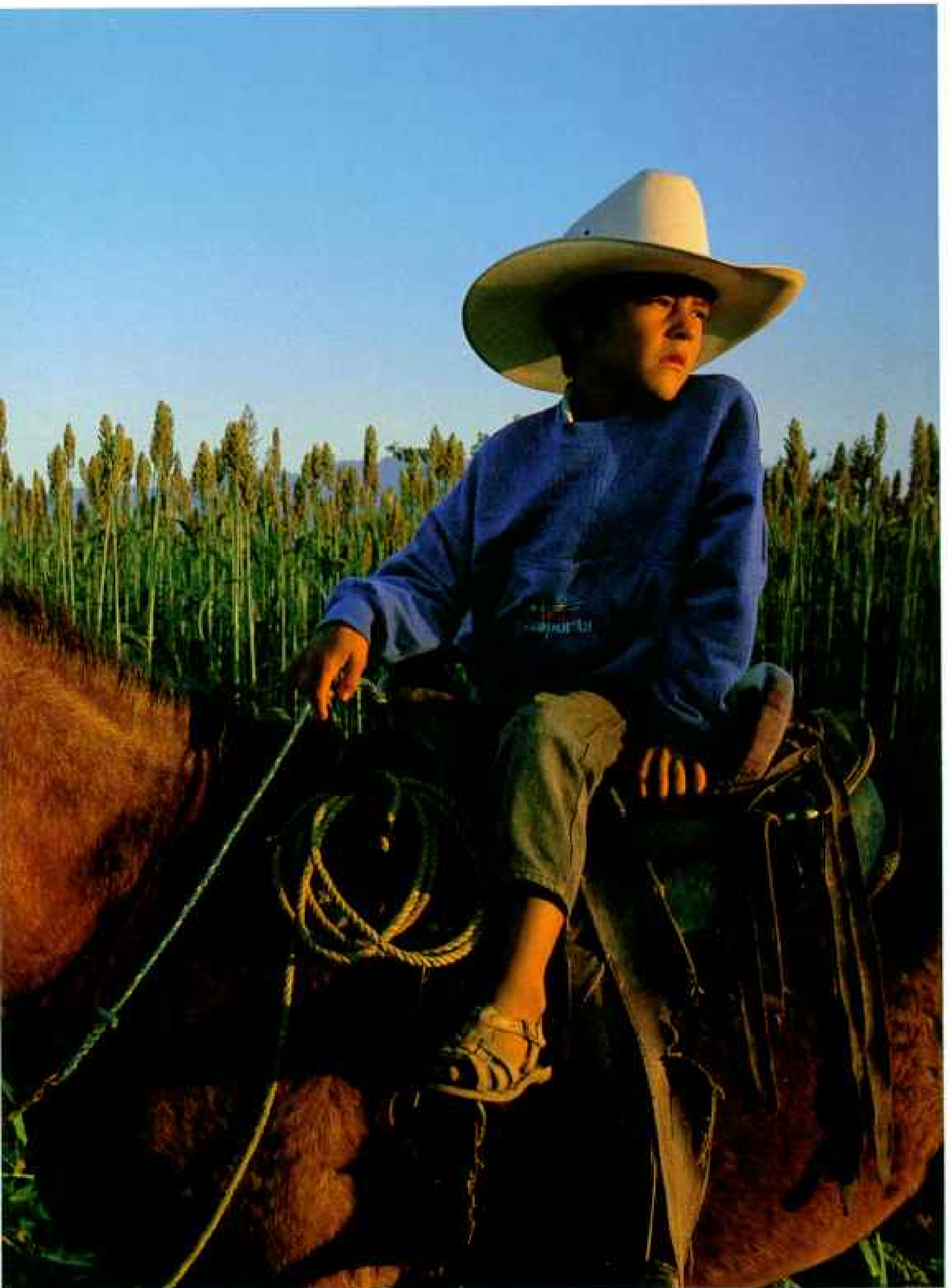
Why are there no big confrontations over these refusals to pay debts? "You can't take someone's house, because there's no one to buy it," banker Chávez had told me.

Barragán had a different answer. "Look," he said, "the government and the judges don't want people making a lot of noise. They don't want a small thing to turn into a big thing." In other words, they are afraid.

The Barzonistas strode out of the station. The pickup trucks rumbled slowly away down the street. Alejandro Barragán got into his old red truck and went home to his family.



HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



Lost in thought, seven-year-old Jorge Nava gazes across a field of daydreams as his cousin gathers sorghum on a farm in Jarretadera, Nayarit. Though the rest of the state exports produce to the U.S. and Japan, farmers in this small coastal area grow corn, sorghum, and tomatoes for local use.



HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC

Eternal Mexico



Before Richard Burton arrived amid gales of publicity in 1963 — with Elizabeth Taylor at his side — to film *The Night of the Iguana*, Puerto Vallarta on the coast of Jalisco was little more than a quiet fishing village, splendid in its solitude.

Burton, Taylor, and the iguana are long gone, and Puerto Vallarta has burgeoned into one of Mexico's busiest resorts, last year drawing some 2.4 million tourists to beaches strewn with palm-roofed refreshment stands (below) — an influx that contributed more than 300 million dollars to the Mexican economy.

Despite Mexico's troubles tourism still thrives, as it does in other Pacific coast resorts such as Mazatlán, Manzanillo, and Acapulco.

Packed up for the day, an

ice cream vendor stops for a friendly exchange on the *malecón* (left), the broad walkway edging the Bay of Banderas. Here in the heart of Puerto Vallarta, locals make their living off tourists — and one another — selling everything from handmade tablecloths to grilled fish on a stick.

Amid boat races and whale-watching, traditional celebrations go on as usual. To honor the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint, worshipers make yearly pilgrimages to shrines throughout the country.

In Puerto Vallarta mariachis join the faithful in a long procession to a local church. With trumpets poised and violins at the ready (below left), they strike up a reverent tune for *Nuestra Señora*.





HEARTLAND & THE PACIFIC *Eternal Mexico*



Its rocks worn by scouring tides, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, invites long walks along its shore. Mexico also has a long walk ahead on the way to recovery. Says one optimistic citizen: "This country is too rich and too precious, and our people are too strong to give up."

TIJUANA &

Magnet of Opportunity

Taillights glowing like sparks in the night, northbound cars wait to cross North America's busiest border, passing from Tijuana to San Ysidro on a Sunday evening. Like other Mexican cities along the U.S. border, Tijuana lures foreign investors with cheap labor and proximity to U.S. markets, while beckoning workers from across Mexico with the chance for a new beginning. Here their dreams converge and sometimes collide, pulled hard by the magnet of the north.



THE BORDER

BY MICHAEL PARFIT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX WEBB





The Tijuana street was slimy with mud. A solitary car slid sideways down the hill, straightened out, and made it to a corner. The lights of the ramshackle houses up the canyon shone against the storm's low clouds and made the place look like a movie set, built to represent misery.

From inside one small home came the sound of laughter. I knocked. The door opened, and there was Mónica García, a 19-year-old medical student wearing a sweatshirt and sweatpants that said LSU. She had a happy smile, as if someone had just been telling her a joke. The light inside the house shone out into the mud, like the glow of the dream contained inside, which was coming true in this city of possibility.

Tijuana seems a tough place to live. It has plenty of noise, dirt, pollution, corruption, drugs, and crime. But the hundreds of people who work their way to this booming city each week from all over Mexico are also tough, and they come here for a reason: Tijuana is Mexico's frontier town, its land of opportunity.

"You don't come here to give up," said Héctor Osuna Jaime, the city's recently retired mayor. "You come to Tijuana because you're going to make it."

Mónica García is going to make it. She looks gentle and vulnerable, but she's resilient too. She's had to be. She and her mother were abandoned by her father four years ago, when she was 15. She got a job, worked eight hours a day, stayed in high school, and won a scholarship to a university to study medicine.

"Always, always, always," she said, "when I was little, I would go by the university and say, 'One day I will be there.' Now I am actually there." She smiled, but her eyes brimmed. "When something is difficult," she said of the tears, "accomplishing it is very emotional."

Tijuana is a magnet—for years it has been the most active illegal crossing area in all 1,936 miles of the Mexico-U.S. border. But many of the people who come here end up staying. For them, Tijuana itself is a place of fresh chance, flexible class structures, hustle and hope.



TIJUANA & THE BORDER

Magnet of Opportunity

I first saw Tijuana 25 years ago. Then it was barely more than a ragged cluster of stores and homes that pressed up against the California border like children with noses to the window, all longing to be on the other side. But when I returned recently, Tijuana appeared as a city in its own right, a sprawl of low buildings washing from the Pacific's edge far up into the dry hills to the east, disappearing into the haze. As always in Mexico, it looked as if everyone was trying to have as many neighbors as possible.

It is not a beautiful city. "My first impression when I moved here two years ago was that it was relentlessly jumbled," says Sandra Dibble, one of the GEOGRAPHIC's team of Mexico reporters, who lives in Tijuana. "It's a clutter of street signs, half-raised buildings, video shops, shoe stores. But

there's always a surprise: the family that serenades you at a street corner, the highway underpasses with murals of butterflies and flowers, the streambeds where men are busy making bricks."

Tijuana's character changes from street to street. In one *colonia*, or neighborhood, people wash laundry in tubs and dump the water on the dirt. Up another road you pass dozens of modest homes built of concrete block and metal. Across town in wealthy Colonia Chapultepec, magnificent homes are built like fortresses right to the edge of the sidewalk. Guard dogs go crazy behind the walls, and the only people out are maids sweeping walks and handymen polishing cars. Yet rich is never far from poor. Upper-middle-class sections abut neighborhoods of shacks with chickens, stray dogs, winding dirt roads, and crumbling embankments.

Above all, Tijuana seems young. Teenagers sprint across streets of moving traffic, feet barely touching the ground. Young newcomers scratch together homes in new colonias in dusty canyons on the outskirts. They buy used garage doors or wooden warehouse pallets to build walls. They find some rusted bedsprings to make fencing. They cut milk cartons in half for flowerpots. Still, among these homes that look like hovels, there is a pervasive mood of *muchas ganas*—the desire to get ahead. People get up early to work in factories or shops, sometimes traveling by foot and bus for an hour or more each way. It's like an old tent town during Oklahoma land-rush days: tough life, hopeful people.

"It's a question of attitude," Mónica García said. "If you want to do it, you can."

It was early morning in Tijuana, and José Domingo Vigil López was upstairs at his tire lot in a little concrete-block office, working the phone. "Yes! Yes! We have 16-inch rims!" Outside, the dusty yard was heaped with black mounds of tires, and a pair of guard dogs were tied near a small shed. On the other side of the chain-link fence traffic rushed by on the Boulevard Insurgentes, a main artery to fast-growing eastern Tijuana. Vigil had just arranged to send a used motorcycle tire to



TIJUANA & THE BORDER

Magnet of Opportunity

Chaos rules on the cluttered streets of Tijuana (left), a city of one million whose 5 percent population growth rate is among the highest in Mexico. After decades of improvisation Tijuana's leaders now embrace urban planning, though low tax revenues leave them hard-pressed to pay for it. Then again, money is only one of their problems.

As in other border cities, police have been unable to stop drug cartels from using the area as a springboard to the U.S. Although U.S. Customs inspectors nab drug runners—like a man who tried to smuggle bricks of marijuana (below) into Laredo, Texas, in his car's gas tank—many argue that curbing U.S. demand, not interdiction, is the answer.

But now border cities face

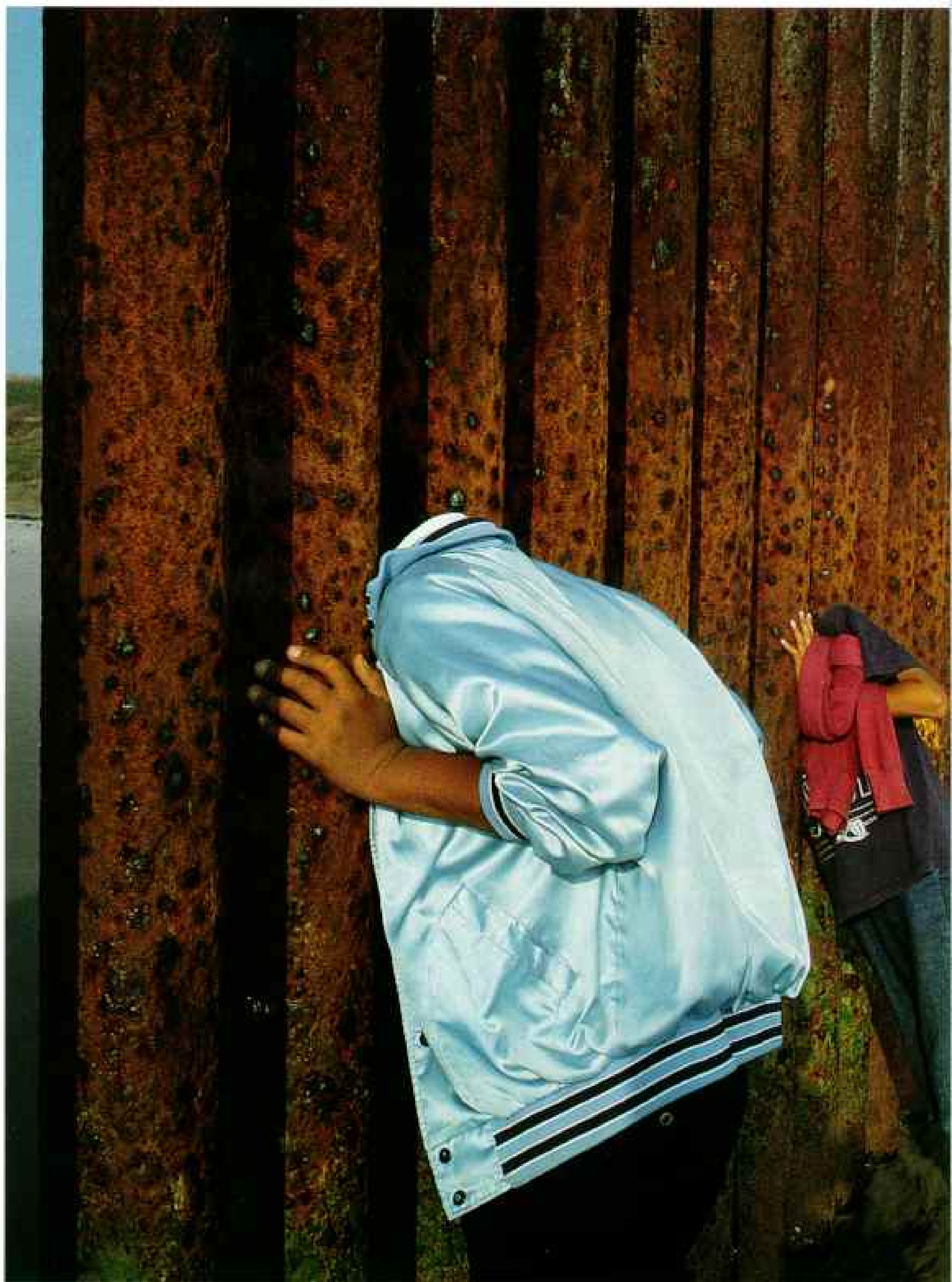
their own growing demand for narcotics. In Tijuana drug use on the streets is up despite the city's special SWAT teams, who arrest offenders by the truckload (below left) for petty crimes, including possession.

Gangs from the U.S. further compound the problem, officials say, by smuggling weapons into Mexico. "They come here to settle scores, leaving us to deal with their violence," says SWAT leader David Rubí Gómez.

Yet *tijuanenses* will talk for hours about how they love their city, its cosmopolitan flavor and lively mix of cultures.

"Hard work is what will move us forward," says Mayor José Guadalupe Osuna Millán. "The benefits of being on the border far outweigh the disadvantages."





TIJUANA & THE BORDER *Magnet of Opportunity*



Rusty steel pilings mark the border at Playas de Tijuana, where beachcombers peek at *el norte*. More than 1.2 million people were apprehended last year trying to illegally enter the U.S. from Mexico. As long as Mexico's economy falters, a migrant predicts, "Mexicans will keep on coming."

TIJUANA & THE BORDER

Magnet of Opportunity

someone's home, and now he was working out a deal with a retail store. "Come on over! Have I got a special for you!"

Tijuana seems built on old tires. There are an estimated five million scrap tires in the state of Baja California, which has a population of about two million. Tires or pieces of tires are used to shore up hillsides and as steps and flowerpots. You would not think that Baja needs any more. But Vigil did, and now, at 45, he's on the way to riches.

Vigil likes to wear a leather coat with a fox-fur collar, cream-colored cowboy boots, and a big gold ring that glitters with diamonds. But he's easygoing and gracious in manner. In 1970 he was an ambitious young man, the son of a farmer from a small town near Guadalajara, in the Mexican heartland.

"That town was too small for me," he said, so he took the 36-hour bus ride to Tijuana and went to work for his brother-in-law, who cut up tires to make soles for huarache sandals.

That job was too small for him too, so in 1978 Vigil set out on his own with an old GMC pickup and two helpers. Periodically they crossed the border, loaded up enough tires to almost flatten the truck's own six-ply, and staggered home to sell them.

Now Vigil has three businesses—tires, concrete blocks, and auto parts—18 employees, and a 1994 wine-colored Ford Probe.

Vigil hung up the phone and headed out to the yard. Here was a stack of used truck tires destined for Tijuana's garbage trucks. Here was a tidy stack of tires—discards from police cruisers in the U.S., which will be used by Tijuana's cops. Scanning the yard proudly, Vigil remembered the day when a flood washed his new business away. "I was only able to save a truck, a car, my wife, and my baby daughter from the water," he said. Afterward, he went right back to work on a rented lot on higher ground. "I would work morning until night to once again open a path for myself," he said.

Tenacity and luck are part of most success stories here. But the foundations are built on restless drive.

"Most of us who are not from here came searching, searching," Vigil said. "Some intended to go to the United States but couldn't get across and stayed here. Others went across and earned some money, then came back to work here. All of us came from the interior with the intention of progressing. I am not a person who settles. I like to climb, climb."

Vigil's business, like many in Tijuana, is based on commerce across the border. The border is marked by a swath of bare ground and a fence. The fence is just a big slab of military steel mats of the kind used to make temporary runways in Korea and Vietnam. It has small holes in it, through which Mexicans peer, day and night, watching the patrols on the U.S. side. The presence of the fence gives Tijuana its edge. At night, although no actual charge goes through the wall, it seems to glow: It is lighted by stadium lights for more than three miles and is guarded by scores of agents. But what makes the wall really stand out is as invisible as electricity: It's the way it looms in the imagination. To those on the hungry side it glitters with danger, lawlessness, but most



Faded but not forgotten, Francisco Madero, a hero of Mexico's 1910 revolution, adorns a piñata factory in Ciudad Juárez, across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas. Downriver in Nuevo Laredo lovers linger near the civil registry, where births, marriages, and deaths are recorded.





of all chance. On the receiving side the border is two-faced: It means both cheap labor and fears over immigration and drugs.

These are tough issues in Mexico's relationship with the U.S. Even as the overall economy has faltered, the drug trade has boomed. It now brings between \$10 and \$30 billion into Mexico every year and is run by several violent cartels, including at least one in Tijuana. It is tied directly to more legitimate businesses: Vast amounts of drug money, for instance, are rumored to be laundered through Tijuana's racetrack.

Meanwhile, the troubled economy continues to push Mexicans into the U.S. Of the 1.2 million Mexicans apprehended crossing illegally last year, the Immigration and Naturalization Service reports that nearly 400,000 were caught in the westernmost 14.5 miles of the border. (Many are repeat offenders.) The wall is being strengthened. Since October 1994 the U.S. has been enforcing a program called Operation Gatekeeper, designed to reduce the flow.

"Tijuana has been the busiest corridor," says Alan Bersin, a U.S. attorney who is special border adviser to Attorney General Janet Reno. He's known as the Border Czar. "It's much harder to cross here than it ever has been."

After a hard rain in Matamoros, on the southern Rio Grande, the city's system of aging storm drains often backs up, turning this canal into an open sewer that threatens the health of the city's 300,000 people. To solve the problem, Matamoros is designing a new waterworks



JIM RICHARDSON

TIJUANA & THE BORDER

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All I want to do is cross," said a young man by the name of José Luis Macedo, but so far he hasn't.

Macedo is 25 and married, with a three-year-old son. He is a small man with fine features and light brown eyes that fix on you as he speaks, commanding attention. He has a serious, thoughtful air. If things had been different, he might have been a lawyer or a preacher.

"I have the blood of the Mexican. Mexico is where I was born, where I lived, where I have suffered but also laughed," Macedo said. He paused. "But I am disappointed."

Disappointment came early for Macedo, who grew up with five brothers and sisters in a tiny adobe house in Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos. His father often came home drunk and beat his mother, who eventually sent her husband packing. "My mother would come home late, tired, her feet blistered because she had to walk so much. She always worked; we always had beans to eat. She was my mother and father."

Macedo dropped out of school so his mother would have one less bill to pay. He drifted from job to job and began taking drugs. He stole to support his habit and at 19 was sent to jail. Free again after a year, he began turning his life around. He married Libia Zulema Ibarra, and they moved to her hometown, Guadalajara, where he worked as a car mechanic, she as a receptionist. Together they made about 260 pesos, then worth about \$80, a week. In December 1994 the devaluation of the peso hit them. "All of a sudden the rent shot up, transportation went up, everything went up. But our salary didn't go up." That's when they began talking about the United States and came to Tijuana.

"I want to go to Chicago," Macedo said. "My brother has a hot dog stand there." His brother Juan left home ten years ago, and they've had no direct contact since. "I felt sad, because he was the oldest man. He said he wanted to have houses and cars and things of his own."

Macedo knows almost nothing about his brother's life in Chicago; he doesn't even know where Chicago is. "If I find him, I'll stay with him. If not, I'll work at anything—subsist at first, then do something else. Life there is easier. You don't want to always live in a mediocre manner; you want to get ahead."

The porous border has been called Mexico's vaccine against crisis, because it lets restless young men like Macedo get out of the country before restlessness becomes rebellion. Some Mexicans argue that the U.S. will only encourage instability in its neighbor if the policy of tightening the border continues.

"Mexico hasn't had a big social uprising because we have this escape valve," said Héctor Osuna Jaime, the former mayor. "If there was no place to go, they'd have to make a solution here."

While Macedo yearns for Chicago and waits to cross, he has found a job right here in Tijuana. He works for a company under contract to the South Korean electronics giant Samsung, which has a *maquiladora*, or assembly plant, for televisions in Tijuana.

and is looking for 54 million dollars in development loans from NADBank, the binational bank created by the North American Free Trade Agreement to modernize infrastructure along the border.





A portable shoe store lends a touch of flair to a drab dustscape in eastern Tijuana, a growing *maquiladora* district. The tax-free assembly plants, many foreign owned, employ nearly 700,000 people nationwide and pump life into towns like Reynosa (left), where workers wait for a bus.

TIJUANA & THE BORDER

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Tijuana makes seven million televisions a year and calls itself the television capital of the world. The *maquiladoras* produce sets more cheaply here than at home or in the U.S.; average wages are \$30 to \$50 a week. Tijuana offers a growing pool of workers, and it's as close as a manufacturer can get to the world's largest market for electronic goods.

"Foreign companies have *got* to be here," said Carlos De Orduña, former president of Mexico's National *Maquiladora* Association. The association represents companies like Samsung, Sanyo, Ford, General Electric, and the thousands of others that have already invested billions of dollars in Mexico, no matter how unstable the country might look. De Orduña said that NAFTA has spurred the growth of *maquiladoras* in Tijuana, where they employ about 100,000 workers. Though it's not been the boom he'd expected—partly because of the peso devaluation—he thinks NAFTA will eventually be a big success. "Mexico's problems may delay history," he said, "but they're not going to stop it."

And how will this affect José Luis Macedo and all who use Tijuana as a way station? Statistics indicate that many will find a home in this community, where, as Osuna says, "they still have their old culture and their old friends and their old family." And if NAFTA does improve the Mexican economy, fewer may feel the pull to go north.

For now, Macedo has a job to suit his restlessness. He spends much of the day standing in an open courtyard, wielding a big hammer, smashing defective television screens.

On a clear spring day Mónica García is at home studying. The road is dry now except for damp patches where people have thrown out dishwater. García is studying inside the frame of a house she is building with her mother; last vacation she made 1,500 concrete blocks for the walls.

She puts down the textbook, goes into her sister's home next door, and talks.

"Ever since I was a kid, I've said, 'I don't want to sell newspapers and chewing gum in the streets,' " she says. "I've always wanted to study. There has to be progress in Mexico. We have to work but also to think and reason."

She sits on the tattered sofa that is also the bed she shares with her mother. She looks both serious and content. Around her is an explosion of family: little girls with long black hair; her mother, who looks like an Indian elder; her shy sister; her grinning brother-in-law, both arms casted from a motorcycle accident. The little colonia was like a village in the hills, a piece of old Mexico infused with a new idea that's characteristic of Tijuana: That restlessness, hard work, and persistence can actually get you something good on the south side of the border.

"There were moments when we had no money, nothing," García says. "There were moments of such stress, where you'd say, 'I want to die.' But never at any moment have I said, 'I will stop studying.' Always, always, I will forge ahead."

□

YUCATÁN

Maya Heart, Modern Face

Reminders of past radiance, temple ruins at Tulum, the Maya City of the Dawn, shine like beacons for early morning fishermen off Mexico's Caribbean coast. Just as the Maya long resisted Spanish rule, modern Yucatecans remain proudly disdainful of control from distant Mexico City. "Several times we declared independence," boasts a wealthy businessman. The peninsula's days as a lost corner of Mexico have ended, though, as waves of tourists sweep onto the inviting coast.



PENINSULA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI



YUCATÁN PENINSULA *Maya Heart, Modern Face*



Ready to blossom, Ana Laura Rosado parades in a horse-drawn taxi through her hometown of Izamal with the dress she will wear this night for her long-anticipated *quinceañera*, or 15th birthday party, which marks a Mexican girl's ascent to womanhood.

Embodying the mix and match of tradition and modernity that goes with youth these days in Yucatecan towns, Ana plans a stop at church to attend Mass before riding off to her

party at a local schoolyard to dance the night away.

If Ana ends up following the trend, she will join the procession of women migrating to the peninsula's largest city, Mérida, population nearly one million, to hire on as a pieceworker at one of the new foreign-owned apparel plants.

A region with a history of boom and bust, the Yucatán Peninsula is only now recovering from the collapse of the fiber industry. From the 1880s

until the end of World War II, much of the world's twine and rope was made from raw henequen fiber exported from Yucatán. Large plantations of henequen, a spiky agave, carpeted the peninsula's northwest corner.

The monopoly brought great wealth to Mérida, reflected in the grand colonial buildings that ring the plaza where Eulalio Martín sells hats off the top of his head (right). Synthetics and foreign competition



eventually uprooted the market, wiping out jobs and fortunes.

To help the area switch to an alternative crop, local entrepreneurs are planting citrus trees on former henequen plantations. Limes are popular, sold to soft drink firms for the oils in the skin. "I am grateful for this new business," says José Antonio Contreras, manager of a citrus nursery outside the town of Yotholin. "There is no middleman between me and my customers. I can make my own company."

Still, the countryside in all three peninsular states – Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo – is slowly emptying of people. In villages where most of the region's 900,000 indigenous Maya live, young people hear the siren call of the new Caribbean resorts. Since the 1970s more than 150,000



Yucatecans have flooded into Cancún to find work.

"Most newcomers don't even speak Spanish, only Maya," says Cancún tourist official María Elba Carranza. "The resorts are the biggest pull on the peninsula, and since I've been here I've seen villages turn into cities."





YUCATÁN PENINSULA *Maya Heart, Modern Face*



"A very towered land," marveled a 16th-century Spanish historian describing the Caribbean coast and its horizon of Maya temples. Modern travelers behold a similar profusion of towers at Cancún. One-quarter of Mexico's foreign tourist revenue comes from this mega-resort.

□
—THOMAS O'NEILL

CHIAPAS

Rough Road to Reality

Left behind by the herd, a calf is shouldered by ranch hand Rafael Gómez Celorio in Mexico's southernmost state — one of the poorest. Chiapas trails the nation in social reform by decades and has paid with recent unrest. Indian rebels launched a bloody 1994 uprising. Emboldened by their actions, poor *campesinos* have overrun more than 1,700 ranches. At the heart of each seizure is the still unfulfilled promise of land pledged to Mexico's poor by its 1917 constitution.



BY MICHAEL PARFIT
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI



CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*

Drawn machetes slapped against trouser legs. Dark eyes stared in anger. About 40 Tojolabal Indian men and women surrounded two men—an American and a Mexican—in front of an empty ranch house in a steamy corner of Mexico about as far south as you can get without drifting into the jungles of Guatemala.

The Indian men were sweaty. Their work clothes were stained with dirt from the cornfields. The women wore the pleated skirts and embroidered blouses characteristic of the Tojolabales, but they were not like the Indian women on the streets of the nearby cities, who draw their shawls across their faces and shy away when they see strangers. These women crossed their arms and stood their ground in front of the two men they had trapped. They talked angrily, and the phrase that came through was “This is our land.”

The sharp edges of the machetes gleamed. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC writer Priit Vesilind, one of the two trapped men, knew he was in trouble.

This was inside an area of the state of Chiapas that the Mexican government had designated as a “zone of conflict.” These Indians might be Zapatistas, rebel Indian farmers named for Mexico’s revolutionary war hero Emiliano Zapata. The Zapatistas had declared war on the government on January 1, 1994. Priit, here as part of the GEOGRAPHIC’s Mexico team, accompanied by Jesús López, a photographer acting as his interpreter, knew that the serious fighting had lasted only for the first 12 days of that year. But a peace agreement had not yet been signed, and the Zapatistas still claimed to represent all Mexican people in a fight against the government for economic change and freedom.

The Indians argued over the fate of the interlopers, and finally their leader turned to Jesús: “We thought you were the federal police, and you must know that we are prepared to protect this land with our lives. Give us your film, and we will let you leave in peace.”

Jesús handed him the film cartridge, and the leader held it high in the air like a trophy.

This happened near a 160-mile-long stretch of paved road and dirt track that we came to describe, with varying degrees of irony, as the Road to Reality. It was the route from the urban Mexico of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, capital of Chiapas, to the thatch- and metal-roofed homes of a village to the east, in the Lacandón rain forest. The place was called La Realidad—Reality—and was as close to a headquarters as the rebels had.

What’s taking place in Chiapas has touched a chord with the Mexican people. Zapatista demands for land and autonomy—focused by the eloquence of their spokesman, a bandolier-clad masked man who calls himself Subcomandante Marcos—have become a movement that may shape the future. “Chiapas continues to be the tail that wags the Mexican dog,” a journalist wrote recently.

The Road to Reality was a curious adventure. What we found along the way was a chaos of passions, a roar of incendiary words, a pent-up anticipation. Ever since the Zapatistas retreated to their day jobs in the cornfields, all Mexico seems to have been poised, waiting through its distress for some answer to come.

I flew to Chiapas down the Gulf coast. A twist of wind from a cold front made the flight uneasy. Surf lashed the long sand islands and the few towns of fishermen that perched at the mouths of estuaries. At

Tuxtla Gutiérrez, where I landed my old Cessna, the Road to Reality runs past a typical conglomeration of modern Mexico—fancy homes buried in bougainvillea, a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise, new car showrooms, *colonias* of wood-and-mud shacks. But then the pavement winds up into the rough piney mountains of the Chiapas highlands, mists drift across the view, and suddenly there are Zinacantan Indian women walking beside the road like figures out of a time beyond memory, wearing their neon combination of magentas, oranges, pinks, and flaming reds jumbled together with sparkling silver thread.

High in the old city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, I talked with Ronald Nigh, who was there January 1, 1994, when all this started. He recalled how his wife awoke him, shouting in his ear, “The revolution has begun!”

Indian rebels wearing ski masks and carrying rifles had blocked the road out of town, preventing her from driving to the airport early that morning. They pointed their rifles at her little green Volkswagen and said, “Get out of here!”

Nigh was stunned. He’s a low-key man with curly hair, a wispy beard, and an observer’s thoughtful eye, who has lived here 25 years. His wife, Kippy, owns a vegetarian café called Casa del Pan, and Ronald runs a foundation that promotes organic farming among the Indians. He knew they were angry about long-term losses of culture and desperate about short-term economic and political circumstances. The price for coffee, their main cash crop, had fallen, and a population boom put pressure on the land the Indians already had. Ranchers were fighting and occasionally killing peasants who were trying to take land guaranteed them in the 1917 constitution. But he’d heard no rumors of armed rebellion.

“I just sat on the bed and stared at the wall,” he told me, remembering that day, “and kept saying: ‘It’s not logical.’”

Much has changed since then. Peace observers from France and Italy eat often at the Casa del Pan. When I had breakfast at the café, an Indian girl named Lucía was selling cloth-and-wood models of the charismatic Subcomandante Marcos.

His fame was not earned by military success. Soon after rebellion broke out, the uprising was beaten back by the government at a cost of 145 to 400 lives—the estimates of troops, civilians, and Zapatistas killed vary widely, depending on who’s talking. The government withheld a final blow, and the Zapatistas retreated into a brooding tension in which Marcos switched from the sword to the pen, launching a flood of articulate





CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*



Distinctive clothing patterns and the ribboned Indian hat of Chiapas brighten the market of San Andrés Larrainzar. Chiapas has dozens of Indian communities, each with a unique everyday dress – and specific sets of grievances that must be sorted out by federal authorities.





CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*

letters and diatribes to newspapers around the country.

The brief explosion and its lingering half-life have defied logic to become a national romance of rebirth. I had seen signs that read "Support the Zapatistas" spray-painted on walls in Mexico City. The rebels are demanding land, economic support, and education, but their rallying cry is for wholesale change: fully representative national government and regional autonomy.

When our team came to Chiapas, the Zapatistas were mired in slow peace talks with the government in a small town called San Andrés Larrainzar. Priit Vesilind was allowed a brief glimpse of eight comandante negotiators sitting at a square table, wearing ski masks and traditional Indian ribbon-draped hats.

Marcos was not among them: Though the Mexican government has identified him as a university graduate named Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, that has not been verified, so he continues to nurture the mystery. He describes himself only as one of several Mexican leftists who came to the Lacandón in the early 1980s to organize Indians and wound up leading a revolt.

The chief government negotiator sounded pragmatic.

"We have to focus on development and partnership," he said. "We can't discuss electoral reform or the presidency or the structure of the supreme court. Things like that are not in their capacity to negotiate."

A French anthropologist advising the Zapatistas anticipated glory. "The results," he said, "will build a new Mexico."

Meanwhile, along the Road to Reality, other things were going on.

Chiapas, it has been said, has a "soul of cross and mountain." In Mexico religion colors life, but in these hills it paints life blood red. The Bishop of San Cristóbal, liberation theologian Samuel Ruiz, is accused of encouraging the Zapatista rebellion, and he is acting as a mediator in

the peace negotiations. But a separate complication is the struggle between those who practice a local Indian version of Catholicism and Protestant Evangelicals, so intense that perhaps 20 people have been killed.

Not far from the road the two scenes of religion were strikingly opposed. In the mountain town of Chamula, Catholicism and Maya spiritualism mingle in a unique religious form. Here, in a church, above a floor covered with pine needles, saints with pale faces stare from glass boxes, each with a mirror hung around the neck to reflect the sun god. Indian women and their babies sit in front of these saints, lighting candles. Beside them are bottles of Pepsi or of *posh*, the sugarcane liquor used in some church ceremonies here, and gourds fashioned into whistles used by shaman healers. The women place nests of eggs beneath the saints and sometimes sacrifice chickens.

To the south, in a bullring near San Cristóbal, about 10,000 converted Indians sit in the stands, singing evangelical hymns. In the ring a band with conga drums and saxophone wails its praise. On a stage an evangelist from British Columbia shouts, "Praise the Lord!" Beside him a

Mountain farmers play a waiting game with clouds as the rainy season nears its end in the fall. Chiapas activists demand federal help in bringing irrigation and modern techniques to remote farms. Until that day, a Chamula Indian must tend her field by hand.



translator yells, “¡Gloria a Dios!” Then a Chamulan man shouts in Tzotzil: “*Ich’un ta muk’ li Kajvaltike!*” The crowd roars.

Across Chiapas more than a third of the indigenous people have converted to nondenominational Protestant churches. The *evangelistas* may appeal to some Chiapans because they challenge traditional patterns of power and culture and offer a way out of dependence on intoxicating posh.

Another tradition, private ownership of land, has also unraveled. Land reform that followed the 1910 revolution in Mexico and split up huge land holdings in favor of farmworkers barely touched Chiapas. Now *campesinos*, emboldened by the Zapatistas, are simply walking onto farms and ranches, including some of those on which they worked, and seizing the land by threatening owners. So far more than 1,700 holdings have been taken over. The *campesinos* are turning them into collective farms called *ejidos*. That was the case at the thousand-acre farm where Priit and Jesús were detained. The Indian farmers there were planting new cornfields and building new homes; they expected sooner or later to have to fight.

“Look,” one of the machete-wielding Indians had said, “the fact is we took the land. We started asking for it 40 years ago.”

One of four former co-owners of the ranch is Efred Bañuelos, a laconic man who looked drained when Priit met him in the disheveled home in Comitán where he lives now with his wife and four children. He wore a green camouflage cap and a thick gold ring with a missing stone. Around his neck were two charms, a crucifix and a little gold AK-47 rifle. Bañuelos was waiting, hoping the peace talks would solve his problems. “In the meantime,” he said, “pretty soon we won’t have enough money to feed the kids.”

Bañuelos and his wife, María del Socorro Reyna Camacho, moved to Chiapas in 1988, and after some searching found a suitable ranch to buy. “We checked all the papers,” María chimed in. “Everything was legal, and we got a certificate. We



CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*

A Catholic cathedral marks the heart of Chiapas's capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez (left). But Protestant evangelism is growing, even in strongholds like San Cristóbal (below), where first Communion has been celebrated for most of the town's 468 years.

started to plant good grass and trees. We even started to breed cattle."

María, a plump young woman, was dressed in a black housedress and white patent-leather shoes. She looked oddly prim and out of place in a room cluttered with stacks of old clothes and toys. She grew animated as she described their relations with the campesinos. "We paid them the highest wages in the area. When they had sick relatives, we took them to town. We gave them cash loans and medicine for free."

Bañuelos said that, yes, some landowners had mistreated their workers. He had been warned of an uprising, but the last thing he'd expected was for the campesinos to turn on him.

"They came at six in the morning, screaming like coyotes," he recalled. His brother and his brother's eight-year-old son were the only ones on the ranch. "They broke down the doors with axes. They took our furniture, our saddle horses, our cattle, even our pickup truck. They —"

His wife interrupted.

(Continued on page 128)





CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*



Eva Cruz Martinez is 16, and her head is filled with dreams. She studied hairstyling in Mexico City, but here in San Cristóbal money is tight. Her father is ill. Now she and her mother wait outside the house of a moneylender. Finally an answer: No money available this morning; come back later.



CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*



They carry antiquated weapons and their formation is far from precise, but a march of a hundred Indian rebels in La Realidad on the eve of peace talks created a sensation. Since the 1994 uprising they had rarely appeared in daylight.

Claiming the name Zapatistas — after Mexican Revolution hero Emiliano Zapata — the rebels guard the true name of their spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos (below left). He has described himself as “owner of the night, lord of the mountain, man without a face and with no tomorrow.” A rebel for the 21st century, he posts his manifestos on the Internet.

The government hoped to dull his appeal by identifying him as the privileged son of a furniture salesman — and a

non-Indian besides — but he remains the symbol of Indian demands for land ownership, economic aid, and education. His stated goal is to fashion the Zapatistas into a national political movement.

While condemning rebel tactics, Mexico’s government admits the legitimacy of their complaints. And though federal money for fighting poverty pours into Chiapas, not enough, critics say, actually reaches the people.

As a show of force, armed government Humvees rumble through La Realidad (below), though the Zapatistas have now declared their mission to be a non-military struggle. Says Marcos: “We invite all those Mexicans who [want] democracy, liberty, and justice for us and our children.”



CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*

"They've been saying that all the land in Chiapas belongs to them. That's absurd. We are Mexicans, they are Mexicans."

Bañuelos too seemed to expect bloodshed. "I always carry a pistol now," he said. "I'd rather be in jail than allow them to capture me. I'd rather die on the spot, defending myself."

Everyone expected to kill or get killed, it seemed, but nobody was killing. There's more violence in Mexico City in a week than there has been in the past 30 months in this war zone, where the combatants have been shooting words instead of bullets. This sharpened the anticipation. Maybe it all came from Marcos, whose rhetoric is heavy with self-sacrifice.

Some of that could be heard in La Realidad at a New Year's Eve party that also celebrated the second anniversary of the Zapatista rebellion. Chickens and hardworking women rule La Realidad. The women carry firewood and babies and cook corn tortillas over wood fires.

The rebels hauled in a generator so there could be marimba music and dancing. Long after midnight one of the comandantes produced a VCR and a TV, popped in a tape, and there on the screen, with his ski mask and bandoliers, a pipe in hand and the sounds of roosters crowing in the background, was the champion of the revolution.

Marcos, like many Mexicans, combines a sense of the absurd with fateful views. He's invented fanciful pasts for himself: He told one journalist that he'd worked as a waiter in San Francisco and that he was gay. Tonight he was grim: He spoke about a dramatic shift in goals, changing the Zapatistas from an army into a national political movement. Then his speech took familiar flight, embracing the extravagant expectations of Chiapas and Mexico: death, darkness, glory, and redemption.

"We were born in the night," Marcos said. "And in the night we live. And in the night we'll die. But the light will come in the morning for all the rest, for all of those who today cry through the night, for those who are denied the day, for those for whom death is a gift. For all of them, the light."

When it was over, the Zapatistas turned off the TV, and Marcos disappeared.

Mexico was restless as I left it. In Tuxtla the debtor's group El Barzón was planning a demonstration at city offices. Up near Mexico City the volcano Popocatepetl was erupting. I flew north from Chiapas right past the volcano and watched brown ash explode out of its crater and smoke down its flanks in gusts of heat and wind.

Over Netzahualcóyotl and Mexico City I saw billows of smog; they did not hide clumps of fluorescent pink patches, market awnings that looked like poinsettias blooming among the gray blocks of houses. To the north the heartland was a blend of dry brown fields and green irrigated fields, and I remembered the timelessness I'd seen there, the age-old patterns of farm and village and church.

Night fell as I flew northwest out of Mexico, sad at leaving this



Luis Argüello's wide load won't cause a traffic jam in downtown Altamirano. Vehicles are so scarce — and wages so low — that a builder finds it cheaper to pay Argüello to haul lumber piece by piece to a building site. The



burden of 1994's fighting, which claimed an estimated 145 to 400 lives—mostly rebels and civilians—hit this area hard. Nuns at a local hospital were vilified by government supporters for treating wounded rebels.

magnificent landscape and this nation of resilient, affectionate, and passionate people. I thought of something Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, an independent congressman, had said in Mexico City. We were talking about Subcomandante Marcos. "There is political strength and appeal to people who fight for a rural Mexico that couldn't be and has never been." He waved at the window, where the noise of an outdoor market filtered up from below. "This is Mexico," Aguilar said. "This is the Mexico we all don't want to acknowledge. Most people live in urban poverty, scratching at modernity, part-time with nothing, and part-time with things they can't afford. The only future that will work will reconcile our past with that reality."

All Mexico, like Aguilar, knows change is coming. "The coin has been tossed," one man said. "It still hangs in the air."

No one knows what the future will be, but Mexico's character will help shape the path ahead: the love of life and land and family and fiesta, the ability to survive on shaky ground, the willingness to work hard, the sureness of belief, the stamina of patience, the gift of ideals. I left Mexico with these strengths in my mind, thinking of these neighbors of ours, the people of Mexico, not with distrust but with affection and respect.



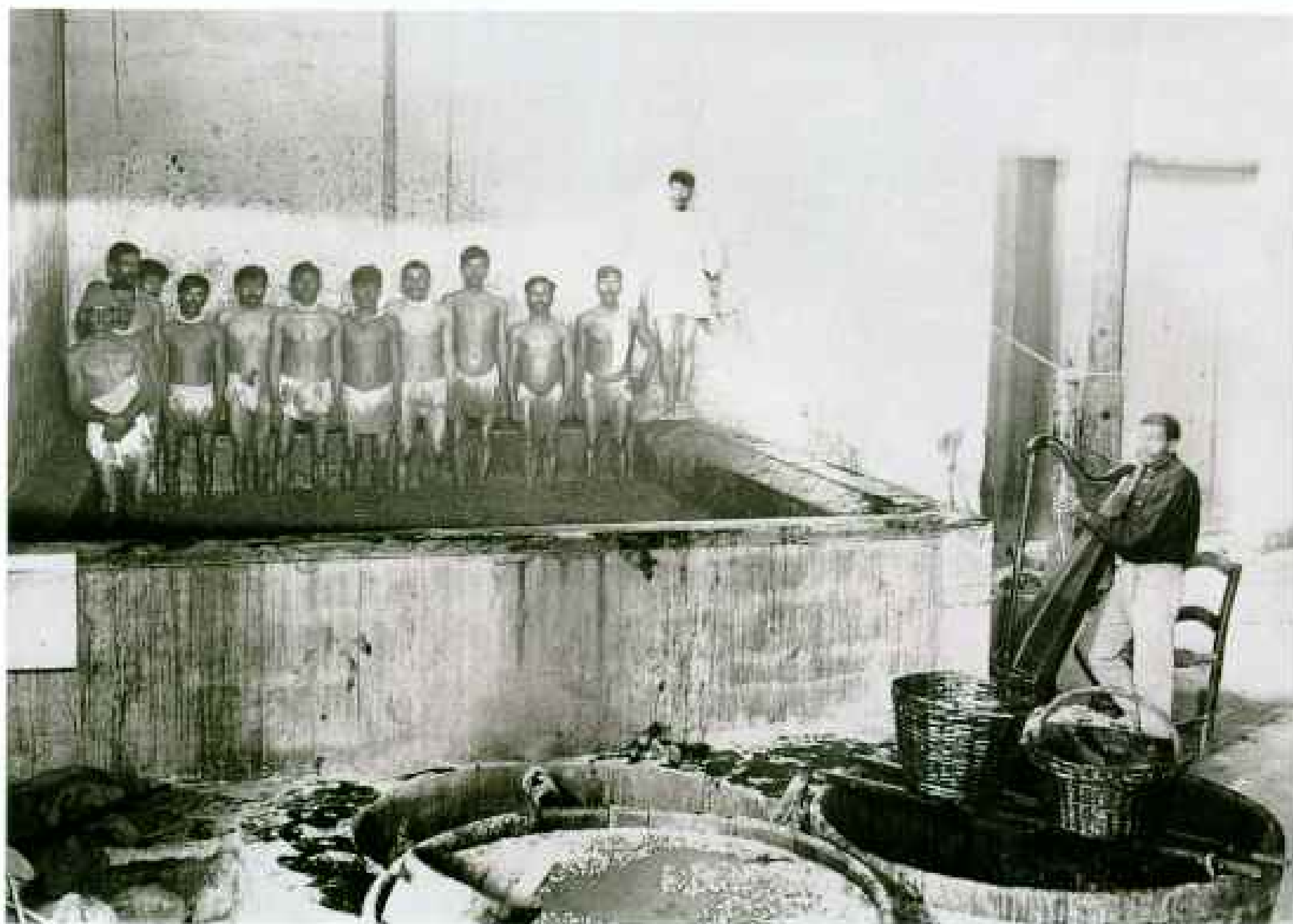
CHIAPAS *Rough Road to Reality*



In San Cristóbal's Independence Day parade, children of Mexico's latest rebellion honor heroes of the 1810 break with Spain. Others wear bandoliers symbolic of the 1910 revolution. For this celebration, in a moment of unity, all the country joins in a jubilant "*¡Viva México!*"



FLASHBACK



E. HEARTE STUDIO

■ FROM THE GEOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES

Grape Expectations in Mexico

Winemaking was afoot in 1922 in Parras de la Fuente, Coahuila. With a harpist keeping time, these men daily danced a ten-ton vat of grapes into pulp. The juice was then drained off to make wine. "It is said that treading grapes in this way makes a much better wine," the photographer's notes reported. "Pressing grapes by machinery sometimes breaks up the seeds, which give an unpleasant taste."

The Marqués de Aguayo winery in Parras, founded in 1593, once claimed to be the oldest in the Americas. The business closed in 1989. This photograph was never published in the *GEOGRAPHIC*.



Matt Ryan and design staff on roof of Red Oak House, Dublin, Ireland.

In 1995, LG's annual sales grew 40% to over US\$64 billion.



It's nice to meet you.

It's Matt Ryan's job to listen.

As a Senior Designer at LG Electronics Design-Tech, Matt must intimately understand the different aesthetics of each European country. And then translate that understanding into intelligently designed TVs, microwaves and other products. (Matt and his colleagues even helped design their company's Red Oak House headquarters.)

At LG, we listen a lot to our customers. We think that habit explains why we're leaders in advanced applications like thin-film transistor liquid crystal displays and high-definition TV.

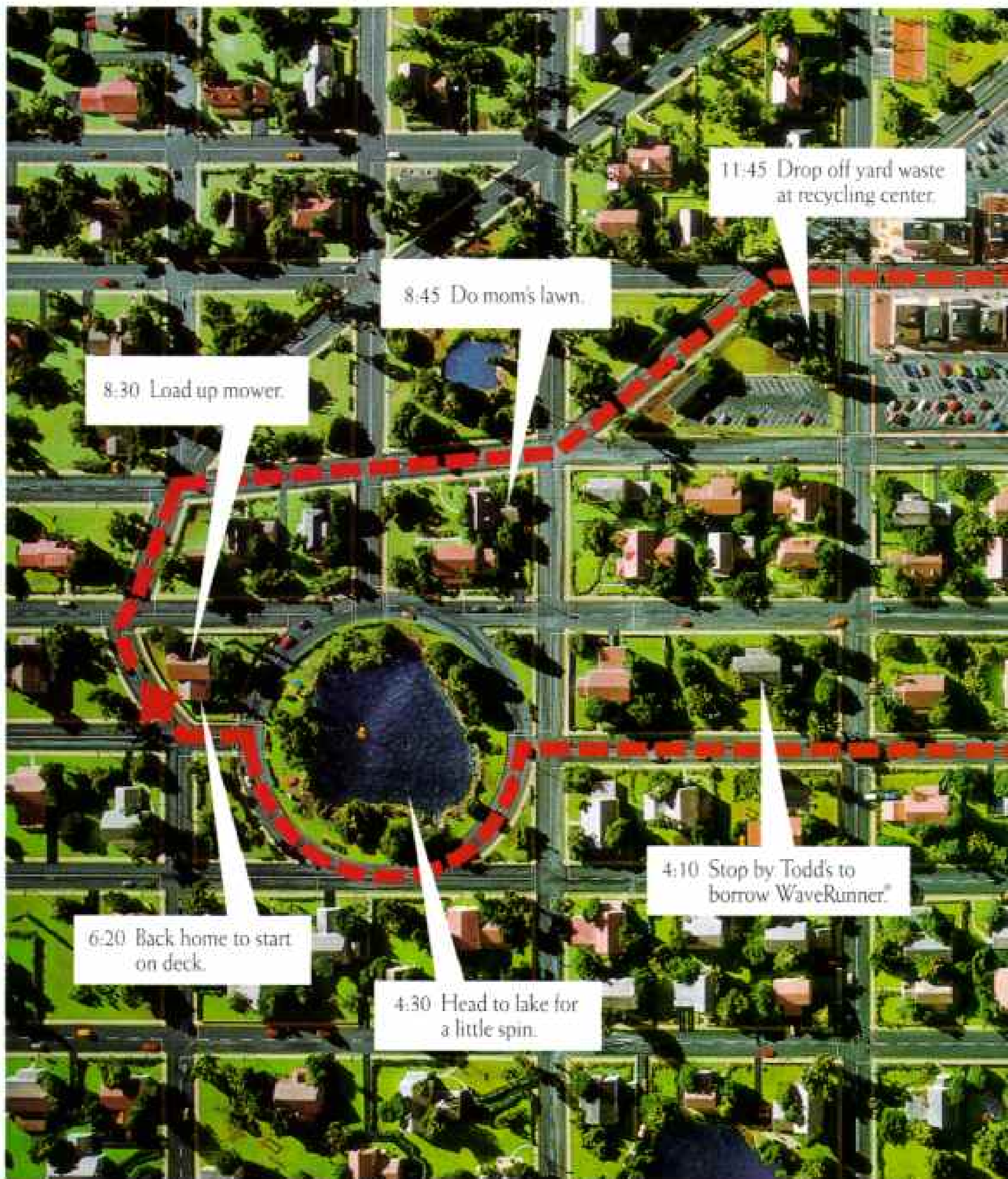
We're active in many other business areas too, including DRAM memory chips, pharmaceuticals, and satellite communications.

And the same dedication and customer focus Matt Ryan and his fellow designers bring to their work, our 126,000 other employees bring to our other areas of expertise.

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Built Ford Tough 

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12:40 Take mower to hardware for repair.

1:20 Pick up dry cleaning.

1:45 Drop off movies.

3:00 Recruit Danny to help with deck.

2:15 Pick up lumber for deck.

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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



MEXICO

A Special Issue

AUGUST 1996

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COVER: *A family comes to worship in Chiapas. Above: Celebrating Independence Day, September 16.
Both by Tomasz Tomaszewski*



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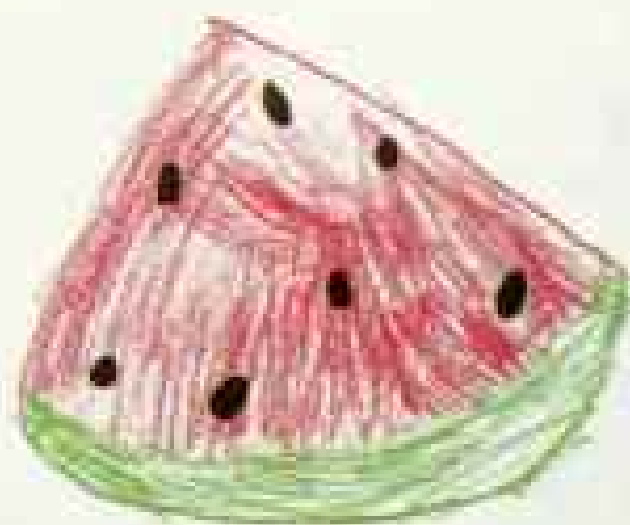
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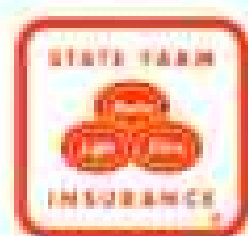
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I Goto MY
house in MY DREAM
has a lot of
seeds, but it taste
good. I like making
it grow. I like
the color on it too.

MY WATERMELON
I GROW MY
WATERMELON IN MY GARDEN
IT HAS A LOT OF
SEEDS, BUT IT TASTE
GOOD. I LIKE MAKING
IT GROW. I LIKE
THE COLOR ON IT TOO.
THE END
4-25-91 PHASE KELLY

It may be a while before we know if there's a budding young Hemingway in Maureen White's kindergarten or first grade classes. But even if they don't go on to become great writers, these students will be good readers. Because Maureen is using the children's own stories to teach them to read. And she's doing it with the help of some truly remarkable "coaches" – their parents.

Through a mixture of symbols, pictures and some rather creative scribbling, Maureen's Haverhill, Massachusetts students "write" stories. Then, using computers, their coaches help them translate these stories into written words. So the children learn how letters, words and sentences work, while their parents, many of whom have never touched a keyboard before, learn about computers and word processing. And both discover learning is something you never outgrow.

For her achievements, State Farm is proud to present Maureen with our Good Neighbor Award, and to donate \$5,000 to the educational institution of her choice.

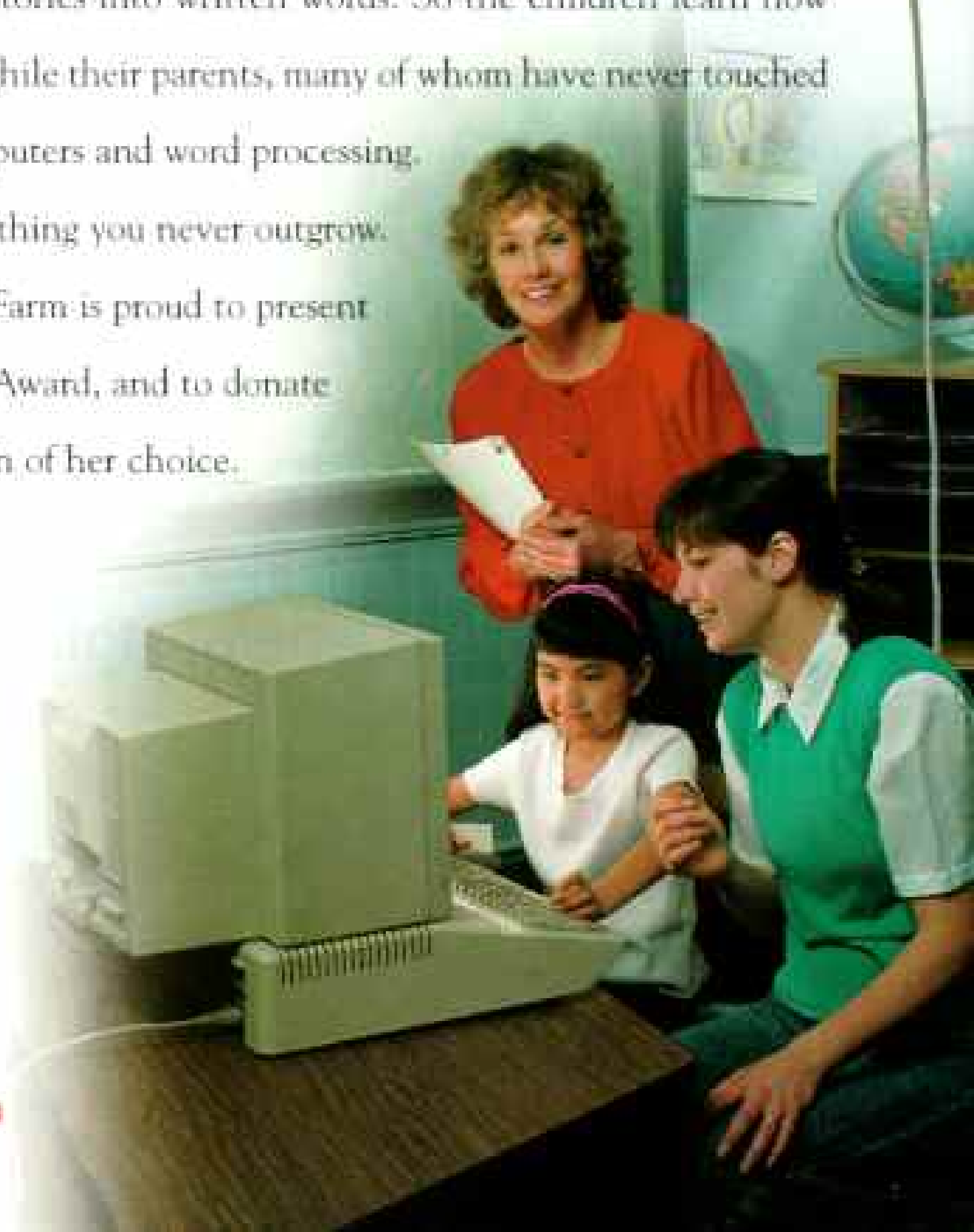


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Behind the Scenes

Adventures in Mexico

An Armadillo Armful

THE ARMADILLO was for sale for 30 pesos, says photographer Tomasz Tomaszewski, who saw this young vendor in a Yucatán doorway. "I knew if I didn't buy it, its only future was as soup." Transaction completed, Tomasz drove off to release the creature. "As it walked into the jungle," says Tomasz, "it looked back like it could not believe its luck." Tomasz called home to Warsaw that night on his daughter Maryna's 17th birthday. "Your present," he told her, "is one happy armadillo."



STUART FRANKLIN

Been There Before

HE COULD NOT shake the feeling of déjà vu. Though photographer Stuart Franklin often works in Mexico, he'd never visited the waters off Campeche. Yet the Pemex oil platform he was shooting was oddly familiar. Turns out he had been there before—just not in Mexico. He'd photographed the same platform eight years before in Scotland's North Sea. Its name—and location—had been changed in the meantime.



TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI, DAVID ALAN HARVEY (BELOW)



That Creative Spark

HE SAW the boys carrying cardboard boxes as they dodged the falling fireworks in Taxco, Mexico. Photographer David Alan Harvey didn't stop to wonder why. "I just moved in with my camera," he says, "entranced by the bright hail of sparks." Soon his shirt was on fire, but bystanders quickly beat out the flames. Says Dave, "So that's what the boxes were for! Protection!"



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STEVE MCCURRY

The Unforgettable Cover Girl

ELEVEN YEARS after she appeared on the June 1985 cover of *GEOGRAPHIC*, people still ask Steve McCurry about “the girl.” “I’ve heard offers of adoption . . . and marriage; somebody even has a tattoo of her face,” says the photographer, who shot the portrait in a crowded Afghan war-refugee camp in Pakistan. Last year this massive banner—printed backward—was displayed in Madrid at an exhibit of *GEOGRAPHIC* photos. The face always attracts attention, Steve notes, “But I never found out her name. I have a friend in Pakistan who continues to look for her.”



SUSSE BRIMBERG, NGS

A Star's Trek

SCOTTY HIMSELF beamed up—at George Stuart, chairman of our Committee for Research and Exploration—when *Star Trek* actor James Doohan visited headquarters recently. A 20-year Society member, Doohan was especially interested in the Cartographic Division. He's not our only *Enterprise*-ing colleague. Leonard Nimoy, who played Mr. Spock, narrates an exhibit called “Geographica” in our Explorers Hall.

Found in the Translation: Poetry

THE WASHINGTON STAFF of our Japanese edition noticed that some titles—renamed by the Japanese staff, then translated back to English for double checking—sound a little like poetry.

- “Mountain Goats: On the Edge of Earth and Sky” (April 1995) became “White Dancers Living on Cliffs.”
- “In Praise of Squirrels” (November 1995) became “Little Lives Darting About the Garden: The True Colors of the Cheery Squirrels.”
- “A Passion for Trout” (April 1996) became “In Clear Streams, Letting Your Spirits Soar: The Lure of Trout Fishing.”



—MAGGIE ZACKOWITZ

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Long-Acting Antihistamine

BRIEF SUMMARY

(For full Prescribing Information, see package insert.)

INDICATIONS AND USAGE: CLARITIN Tablets are indicated for the relief of nasal and non-nasal symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis and for the management of idiopathic chronic urticaria.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: CLARITIN Tablets are contraindicated in patients who are hypersensitive to this medication or to any of its ingredients.

PRECAUTIONS: General: Patients with liver impairment or renal insufficiency (GFR < 30 mL/min) should be given a lower initial dose (10 mg every other day) because they have reduced clearance of CLARITIN Tablets.

Drug Interactions: Loratadine (10 mg once daily) has been safely co-administered with therapeutic doses of erythromycin, cimetidine, and ketoconazole in controlled clinical pharmacology studies. Although increased plasma concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of loratadine and/or descarboethoxyloratadine were observed following coadministration of loratadine with each of these drugs in normal volunteers (n = 24 in each study), there were no clinically relevant changes in the safety profile of loratadine, as assessed by electrocardiographic parameters, clinical laboratory tests, vital signs, and adverse events. There were no significant effects on QT_c intervals, and no reports of sedation or syncope. No effects on plasma concentrations of cimetidine or ketoconazole were observed. Plasma concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of erythromycin decreased 15% with coadministration of loratadine relative to that observed with erythromycin alone. The clinical relevance of this difference is unknown. These above findings are summarized in the following table:

Effects on Plasma Concentrations (AUC 0-24 hrs) of Loratadine and Descarboethoxyloratadine After 10 Days of Coadministration (Loratadine 10 mg) in Normal Volunteers

	Loratadine	Descarboethoxyloratadine
Erythromycin (500 mg Q8h)	+ 40%	+46%
Cimetidine (300 mg QID)	+103%	+ 6%
Ketoconazole (200 mg Q12h)	+307%	+73%

There does not appear to be an increase in adverse events in subjects who received oral contraceptives and loratadine.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: In an 18-month oncogenicity study in mice and a 2-year study in rats, loratadine was administered in the diet at doses up to 40 mg/kg (mice) and 25 mg/kg (rats). In the carcinogenicity studies, pharmacokinetic assessments were carried out to determine animal exposure to the drug. AUC data demonstrated that the exposure of mice given 40 mg/kg of loratadine was 3.6 (loratadine) and 18 (active metabolite) times higher than a human given 10 mg/day. Exposure of rats given 25 mg/kg of loratadine was 28 (loratadine) and 67 (active metabolite) times higher than a human given 10 mg/day. Male mice given 40 mg/kg had a significantly higher incidence of hepatocellular tumors (combined adenomas and carcinomas) than concurrent controls. In rats, a significantly higher incidence of hepatocellular tumors (combined adenomas and carcinomas) was observed in males given 10 mg/kg and males and females given 25 mg/kg. The clinical significance of these findings during long-term use of CLARITIN Tablets is not known.

In mutagenicity studies, there was no evidence of mutagenic potential in reverse (Ames) or forward point mutation (CHO-HGPRT) assays, or in the assay for DNA damage (Rat Primary Hepatocyte Unscheduled DNA Assay) or in two assays for chromosomal aberrations (Human Peripheral Blood Lymphocyte Clastogenesis Assay and the Mouse Bone Marrow Erythrocyte Micronucleus Assay). In the Mouse Lymphoma Assay, a positive finding occurred in the nonactivated but not the activated phase of the study.

Loratadine administration produced hepatic microsomal enzyme induction in the mouse at 40 mg/kg and rat at 25 mg/kg, but not at lower doses.

Decreased fertility in male rats, shown by lower female conception rates, occurred at approximately 54 mg/kg and was reversible with cessation of dosing. Loratadine had no effect on male or female fertility or reproduction in the rat at doses of approximately 24 mg/kg.

Pregnancy Category B: There was no evidence of animal teratogenicity in studies performed in rats and rabbits at oral doses up to 96 mg/kg (75 times and 150 times, respectively, the recommended daily human dose on a mg/m² basis). There are, however, no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. Because animal reproduction studies are not always predictive of human response, CLARITIN Tablets should be used during pregnancy only if clearly needed.

Nursing Mothers: Loratadine and its metabolite, descarboethoxyloratadine, pass easily into breast milk and achieve concentrations that are equivalent to plasma levels with an AUC_{0-24h}/AUC_{0-12h} ratio of 1.17 and 0.85 for the parent and active metabolite, respectively. Following a single oral dose of 40 mg, a small amount of loratadine and metabolite was excreted into the breast milk (approximately 0.03% of 40 mg over

48 hours). A decision should be made whether to discontinue nursing or to discontinue the drug, taking into account the importance of the drug to the mother. Caution should be exercised when CLARITIN Tablets are administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: Safety and effectiveness in children below the age of 12 years have not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: Approximately 90,000 patients received CLARITIN Tablets 10 mg once daily in controlled and uncontrolled studies. Placebo-controlled clinical trials at the recommended dose of 10 mg once a day varied from 2 weeks' to 6 months' duration. The rate of premature withdrawal from these trials was approximately 2% in both the treated and placebo groups.

REPORTED ADVERSE EVENTS WITH AN INCIDENCE OF MORE THAN 2% IN PLACEBO-CONTROLLED ALLERGIC RHINITIS CLINICAL TRIALS

	PERCENT OF PATIENTS REPORTING			
	LORATADINE 10 mg QD n = 1926	PLACEBO n = 2545	CLEMASTINE 1 mg BID n = 538	TERFENADINE 60 mg BID n = 684
Headache	12	11	8	8
Somnolence	8	6	22	9
Fatigue	4	3	10	2
Dry Mouth	3	2	4	3

Adverse events reported in placebo-controlled idiopathic chronic urticaria trials were similar to those reported in allergic rhinitis studies.

Adverse event rates did not appear to differ significantly based on age, sex, or race, although the number of non-white subjects was relatively small.

In addition to those adverse events reported above, the following adverse events have been reported in 2% or fewer patients.

Autonomic Nervous System: Altered lacrimation, altered salivation, flushing, hypoesthesia, impotence, increased sweating, thirst.

Body As A Whole: Angioneurotic edema, asthenia, back pain, blurred vision, chest pain, conjunctivitis, earache, eye pain, fever, leg cramps, malaise, rigors, tinnitus, upper respiratory infection, weight gain.

Cardiovascular System: Hypertension, hypotension, palpitations, syncope, tachycardia.

Central and Peripheral Nervous System: Blepharospasm, dizziness, dysphonia, hyperkinesia, migraine, paresthesia, tremor, vertigo.

Gastrointestinal System: Abdominal distress, altered taste, anorexia, constipation, diarrhea, dyspepsia, flatulence, gastritis, increased appetite, nausea, stomatitis, toothache, vomiting.

Musculoskeletal System: Arthralgia, myalgia.

Psychiatric: Agitation, amnesia, anxiety, confusion, decreased libido, depression, impaired concentration, insomnia, nervousness, paranoia.

Reproductive System: Breast pain, dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, vaginitis.

Respiratory System: Bronchitis, bronchospasm, coughing, dyspnea, epistaxis, hemoptysis, laryngitis, nasal congestion, nasal dryness, pharyngitis, sinusitis, sneezing.

Skin and Appendages: Dermatitis, dry hair, dry skin, photosensitivity reaction, pruritus, purpura, rash, urticaria.

Urinary System: Altered micturition, urinary discoloration.

In addition, the following spontaneous adverse events have been reported rarely during the marketing of loratadine: abnormal hepatic function, including jaundice, hepatitis, and hepatic necrosis; alopecia; anaphylaxis; breast enlargement; erythema multiforme; peripheral edema; seizures; and supraventricular tachyarrhythmias.

OVERDOSAGE: Somnolence, tachycardia, and headache have been reported with overdoses greater than 10 mg (40 to 180 mg). In the event of overdosage, general symptomatic and supportive measures should be instituted promptly and maintained for as long as necessary.

Treatment of overdosage would reasonably consist of emesis (ipecac syrup), except in patients with impaired consciousness, followed by the administration of activated charcoal to absorb any remaining drug. If vomiting is unsuccessful, or contraindicated, gastric lavage should be performed with normal saline. Saline cathartics may also be of value for rapid dilution of bowel contents. Loratadine is not eliminated by hemodialysis. It is not known if loratadine is eliminated by peritoneal dialysis.

Oral LD₅₀ values for loratadine were greater than 5000 mg/kg in rats and mice. Doses as high as 10 times the recommended clinical doses showed no effects in rats, mice, and monkeys.

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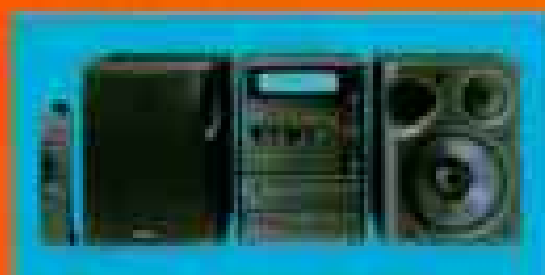


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tests. If they fail to meet our requirements, we just keep trying until
we get them right.



PHILIPS

Forum

Jerusalem

I enjoyed the article in the April 1996 issue because Alan Mairson's observations were a lot like mine when I was in Jerusalem in 1986-87. The city was just as intolerant and confused then as it appears to be today. I was ashamed to witness the separation and enmity among the three groups. I think it is an ugly city where the worst in man is exhibited.

LARRY R. BROOKS
São Paulo, Brazil

This moving story of a spiritual odyssey misses the point of present tensions in the city. Jerusalem is not simply a spiritual home for three world religions; it is the secular center of the State of Israel.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
*Professor of Sociology and Political Science
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey*

The appearance is created that Jerusalem has equal weight for all three religions. In fact only for the Jews is it the one and only place of religious and temporal significance.

ROXANNE DOUPE
Scotts Valley, California

The Jewish population of Jerusalem has always been predominantly Orthodox, but it does not consist primarily of ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews. In reality a wide spectrum exists among Orthodox Jews in Israel. And many Orthodox Jews do support cultural events and attend universities.

ANDREA BANK
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The holiest spot for Judaism is not the Western Wall but the Temple Mount, which it adjoins. The Muslims forbid Jews to worship at the Temple Mount. This is why they pray at the Western Wall.

JEREMY GRAUS
Oranit, Israel

Storming the Tower

Thank you for the absolutely insane article on the free climb of Trango Tower in Pakistan. This is the *GEOGRAPHIC* at its best. The men who climbed must be totally nuts. But they demonstrated beautifully "mind over matter."

YURY MONCZAK
Montreal, Quebec

As a fellow sport climber I found the physical achievement of the ascent awe inspiring. However, I hardly think the end justifies the means. I can't help but wonder why the group allowed a young, inexperienced climber to decide for himself

whether to proceed. And Todd Skinner's rejection of local law to come down after his visa expired is more than poor ethics.

JOHN DeLELLO
Rapid City, South Dakota

Bill Hatcher's photographs create a sense of the intimidating, unforgiving tower and the skill and sacrifice required for such a feat. As tremendous as the climb itself was, I am equally amazed at the skills required to capture it on film.

ROB DAVIE
Baltimore, Maryland

I am curious to know what they did with their garbage and human waste.

PATRICIA STAMBOR
Seattle, Washington

Like most mountaineers today, the climbers burned or buried their biodegradable refuse and packed out the rest—along with 200 or so pounds of previous expeditions' remnants they picked up along the way.

I made it! I climbed the Trango Tower. My very old body ached from the effort. The article was so well written that I found myself vicariously reaching for hand- and footholds to save my life and reach the top. Age has not dulled my imagination, and I thank the magazine for yet another pleasing adventure.

CHARLES E. BUNYEA
LaFollette, Tennessee

Trout

Cathy Newman's story was very entertaining, but she should have journeyed to Tasmania. Australia's island state offers the trout fisherman a mecca of trout, magnificent locations, uncrowded freedom to fish. Come down to Tassy; you will not be disappointed.

J. D. ROGERS
East Brighton, Victoria, Australia

Your article was a true delight and a boon to mankind—and to womankind and childkind as well. Even the trout would have to like it.

WILLIAM WERTZ
Tyrone, Pennsylvania

I have always wanted to know what fly-fishing is all about, but I was surprised that the article did not mention anything about the pain a fish feels when it bites into a hook. I would like to know what happens to the fish that undergo the catch-and-release experience. It seems as though it would be more humane to just cook them for dinner than to set them on their way again to suffer another painful jab in the mouth.

DARREN SIOW
Singapore, Singapore

Experts debate whether, and to what degree, fish feel pain. Most anglers do not consider catch-and-release inhumane.

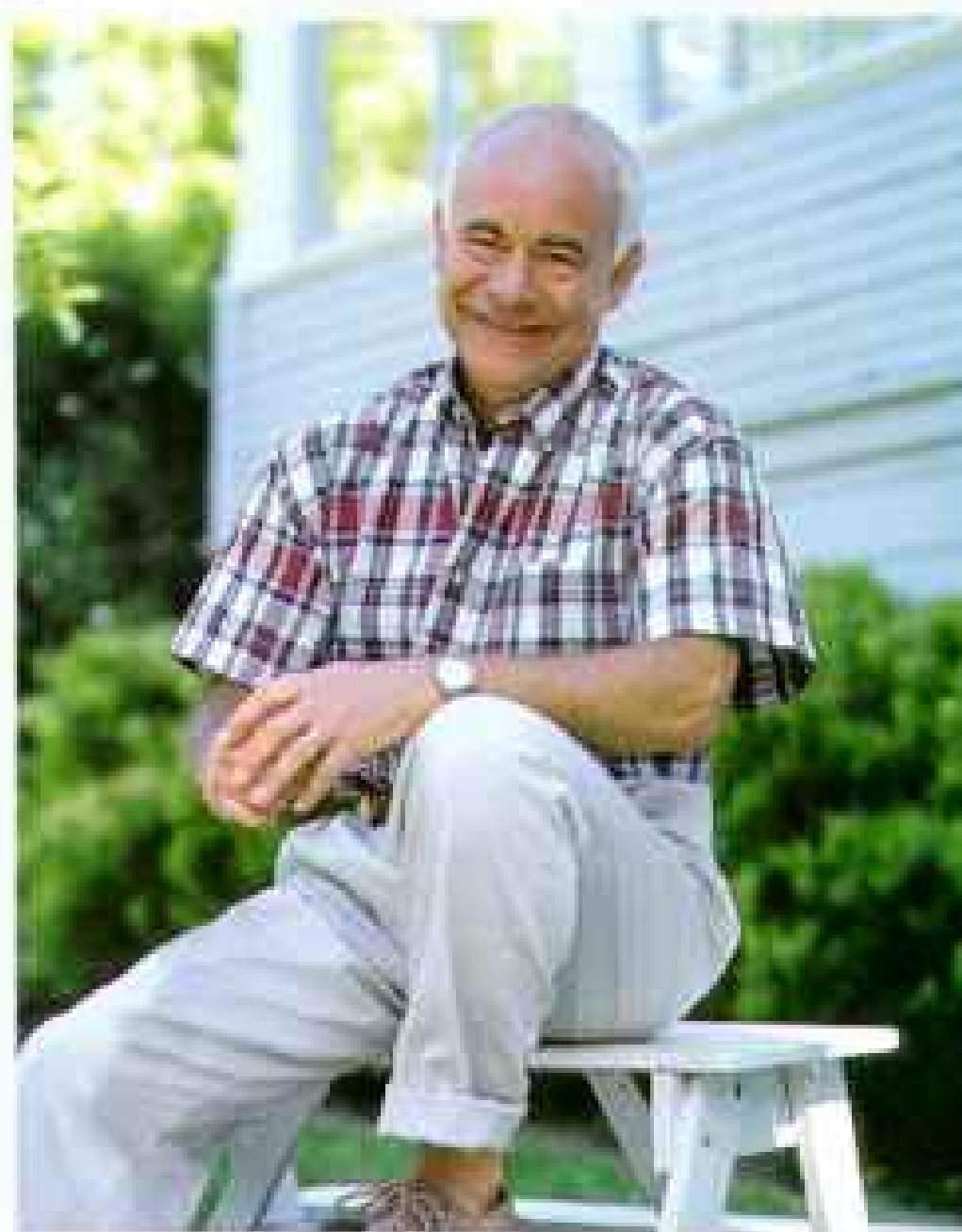
When I was a young girl, I raised rainbow-trout fry in a 65-gallon tank in our basement. I had many



Annie, Papa and me
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other pets along the way, including a 165-pound English mastiff, but none gave me a thrill like the race of the trout at feeding time.

HEATHER BAKER
Newark, Delaware

Too little is being done to return streams and rivers to the pristine condition necessary to sustain wild trout. Instead we pump millions of hatchery fish into our waters. How can fishermen feel joyful snagging overfed artificial imports in streams no longer able to sustain the spectacular wild species native to our waters?

GUS JANCA
Oshawa, Ontario

I believe it was Izaak Walton who said, "The time spent fishing is not deducted from your account."

WILFRED DYKE
St. John's, Newfoundland

The origin of the statement is obscure. The wisdom, if not this exact phrasing, has been traced back to a Babylonian proverb.

The Anasazi

Visiting Arizona's Canyon de Chelly in May 1995, I was much impressed by its powerful air. I don't know if I was the first Japanese visitor to the canyon, but no one I know has heard of the place. Visiting the canyon has led me to pay attention to ethnic histories of Arizona and also to the recognition of ethnic problems in my district in Japan.

KYOKO YUASA
Sapporo, Japan

Seen firsthand, there is no doubt that the cliff-top ruins were defensive structures. But inconvenient? Archaeologists and others seldom scale these heights during the rainy season, when the hot summer months are broken by frequent afternoon thunderstorms. Water flows as from faucets near many ruins, often precisely where the largest pots have been found. High terraced dams, gardens, and *tinajas* [large earthen jars] are also common, reducing the need to "trace and retrace" one's steps to the canyon floor. It is too easy to forget that the Old Ones were much more advanced than we are in practical matters of survival.

GALEN HUNT
Woodland, Washington

A good article suffered from the inclusion of cannibalism theories. Christy Turner's work is based on a model from faunal analysis. He assumes that since animals are butchered for human consumption, human bones found in a similar condition have resulted from a similar cause. The application of forensic analytical techniques by a number of archaeologists (including myself) has shown violence and mutilation, ritual and domestic violence, and mortuary bone cleaning to be as likely a correct interpretation as cannibalism.

PETER Y. BULLOCK
Museum of New Mexico
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Andrew Ellicott Douglass's National Geographic-sponsored research undergirds much of the knowledge behind David Roberts's beautifully told "Old Ones of the Southwest." See the December 1929 issue. He used tree-ring growth to reconstruct rainfall data earlier than A.D. 1000 and ascertained construction dates for almost all building sites. The dates showed successive abandonment for newer sites, as mentioned by Roberts. Douglass's classic, elegant methodology remains a paradigm of research: verifiable, repeatable, significant, even useful and harmless. Its methods are almost equally applicable to any kind of investigation.

ARMAND E. SINGER
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia

China's Buddhist Caves

You identify the Buddha as a sixth-century B.C. Indian prince. He was born in Lumbini when there was no India or Nepal. Present-day Lumbini lies within the borders of Nepal.

RAJESH DHAKHWA
Clifton, New Jersey

I think the mysterious offering (page 63) is a large piece of newly drawn honeycomb, containing in its many cells nature's sweetest gift.

AL FREEBURNE
Central Point, Oregon

Aran Islands

During a tiring tour of Ireland in 1993 we planned a three-day rest at Inisheer, having heard that it was the least commercialized of the islands. Upon our arrival we looked around and saw nothing but dismal skies and gray rock. My wife and I had the same thought: Why did we ever want to spend three days here? But Inisheer worked its magic. Three days later we didn't want to leave.

WILLIAM D. FEENY
Verona, Wisconsin

The history behind the individual family-coded, handmade wool sweaters of the fishermen and their canvas-covered boats would have added tremendously to the article. The highlight of any island visit, though, is the narration of the colorful jockey cart drivers as you bounce along the winding roads.

JOHN HALLINAN
Phoenix, Arizona

I feel sympathy for those on both sides of the tourist question. While working summers in several U.S. national parks, I saw firsthand the impact tourism can have on a fragile area. Yet I also spoke with the people who had wanted to visit these faraway places all their lives. The solution lies in people asking themselves, "How is what I want to do going to affect this area?" before doing anything.

JANET BOTTIGLIER
Lakewood, Ohio

Letters for FORUM should be sent to National Geographic Magazine, Box 37448, Washington, D.C. 20013-7448, or by fax to 202-828-5460, or via the Internet to ngsforum@nationalgeographic.com. Include name, address, and daytime telephone. Letters may be edited for clarity and space.



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Geographica

Uncovering a Ritual Center in Veracruz

FOR NEARLY a century, archaeologists have roamed through Mexico, uncovering remnants of ancient civilizations. Yet new sites still emerge, offering tantalizing hints that the story of Mexico's past is far from complete.

In Veracruz state, Mexican archaeologist Jaime Cortés Hernández has been probing Cuajilote, reported in the 1920s but virtually ignored since.

He has found that it was a major ceremonial site from A.D. 400 to 800, with some 50 buildings; today most are vegetation-covered mounds. Two rows of pyramids flanked a broad avenue more than half a mile long, a temple at one end and a ball court at the other.



GEORGE E. STUART, 1982

Among the finds: a unique steam bathhouse meant for community ritual bathing.

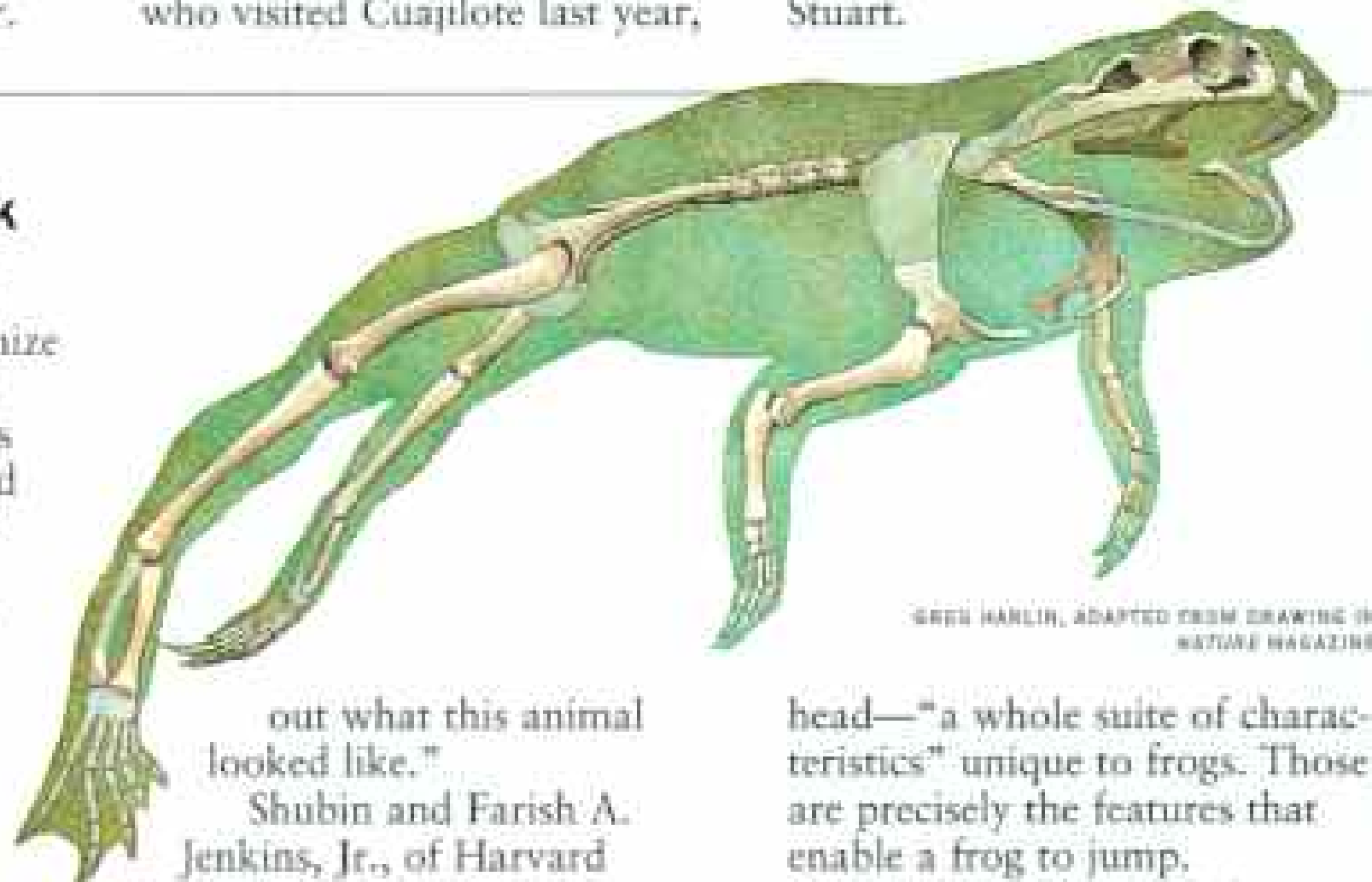
Cortés Hernández and National Geographic Society archaeologist George E. Stuart, who visited Cuajilote last year,

emphasize how the builders integrated rivers, streams, and mountains into their design. "This place is a beautiful example of sites still coming to light in Mexico," says Stuart.

Jurassic Frog Hops Into the Record Book

KERMIT, THE FROG PUPPET of Muppet fame, would recognize this guy as kin. But he'd be astonished at his age and his home: Jurassic era rivers and streams where the northern Arizona desert is today. That's where scientists supported by the National Geographic Society found the tiny, delicate bones of the oldest frog species yet known—190 million years old, the precursor of today's 4,000 frog and toad species.

"We have five partial skeletons, none more than three inches long," says Neil Shubin of the University of Pennsylvania. "The challenge was to find



ORIS HARLIN, ADAPTED FROM DRAWING IN NATURE MAGAZINE

out what this animal looked like."

Shubin and Farish A. Jenkins, Jr., of Harvard University, discovered the bones during a 1983 expedition but did not identify them as froggish until recently.

The creatures possessed long hind limbs and fused tail vertebrae tucked inside an elongated pelvis that points toward the

head—"a whole suite of characteristics" unique to frogs. Those are precisely the features that enable a frog to jump.

The oldest previously known frog lived 175 million years ago in what is now Argentina. The researchers combined the Latin *prosalire*, "to leap forward," and Navajo *bitis*, "high over it," to name the Arizona critter *Prosalirus bitis*.

Now is the time to experience the endless adventure of Mexico.



The inspiring Mayan ruins of Tulum are surrounded by exotic vegetation and the stunning beauty of the Caribbean Sea.

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Mo-o-o-ve Over for Cow-tography

HALF HOLSTEIN, half Angus, and all American: That's Miss U.S.A. of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, a six-year-old cow that comes by her name naturally.

Owner Billy Bowman says he hadn't noticed this prime example of cow-tography until "my city slicker partner, Bobby Callaway, pointed it out. We just named her right there." Bowman's heard of cows that bear Mickey Mouse's image but jokes, "That's easy; maps are hard!"

Bowman's 2,000-head herd is a stew of beef and dairy cattle. Most beef cows soon end up in feedlots, but not Miss U.S.A. "She'll be with us till she dies," he vows. "That map of America has saved her life."

Farmer Washington's Revolutionary Barn

"I HAVE RESOLVED to build a Barn and treading floor at Dogue Run," George Washington wrote in 1792 of his Mount Vernon plantation. He designed a unique 16-sided building in which horses would walk in a circular path on wheat straw to separate the grain, which then



RICHARD DEVALICA, PALM BEACH POST

fell through slits in the floor into a storage room below.

President, general, and surveyor, Washington was truly a farmer at heart. Mount Vernon is re-creating his barn to spotlight this role. The new barn, to be dedicated next month, is near Washington's mansion on the Potomac River, three miles from the original site. Dogue Run is now covered by suburban homes.

"Washington realized that the tobacco market was in decline, so he moved to wheat," says Dennis Pogue, Mount Vernon's director of restoration. But he only used the barn for a few years; in 1796 the President bought a portable threshing machine to do the job.

Discovering a Gene to Fight Rice Blight

IN SCIENTIFIC TERMS, and human terms too, it's a breakthrough: California-based scientists



IAN MARTIN

have for the first time cloned a disease-resistant gene of the rice plant, an important food staple (GEOGRAPHIC, May 1994).

Gene Xa21 helps rice plants resist a bacterial disease called leaf blight. The team engineered new varieties of rice containing the gene and showed that the new plants and their descendants also ward off the disease, which can wipe out a crop.

Pamela Ronald of the University of California, Davis (above, at center), notes that bacteria frequently develop new forms, so disease resistance isn't always permanent. "This gene isn't a cure-all," she warns, "but it's an important tool."

—BORIS WEINTRAUB



MARIA STENZEL



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Black Spider Monkey (*Ateles paniscus chamek*) Size: Head and body length, 38 - 62 cm; tail, 63 - 93 cm. Weight: Approx. 7.8 - 9.5 kg. Habitat: Mature rain forests in western Amazonian Brazil, Peru and Bolivia. Surviving Number: Unknown. Photographed by Luiz Claudio Marigo.

WILDLIFE AS CANON SEES IT

A strong prehensile tail enables a black spider monkey to hang from even the most flimsy branch, freeing its arms and legs to reach for a fruit or tender leaves. On the underside of the tail tip is a bare tactile pad that ensures a tight grip for such maneuvers. One of the largest frugivore monkeys of South America, the black spider monkey swings in graceful looping curves through the upper forest

canopy in search of favored fruit. Though still widespread, this charming monkey has been driven to extinction in many areas where it used to be abundant, a result of habitat loss and hunting pressure. As a global corporation committed to social and environmental concerns, we join in worldwide efforts to promote greater awareness of endangered species for the benefit of future generations.

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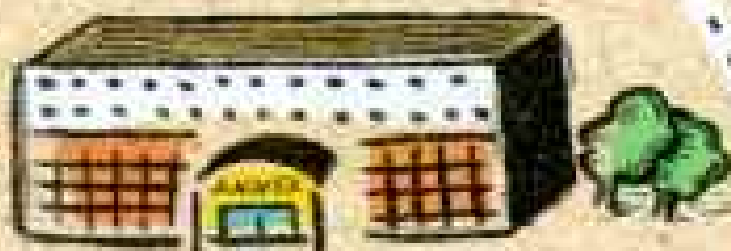
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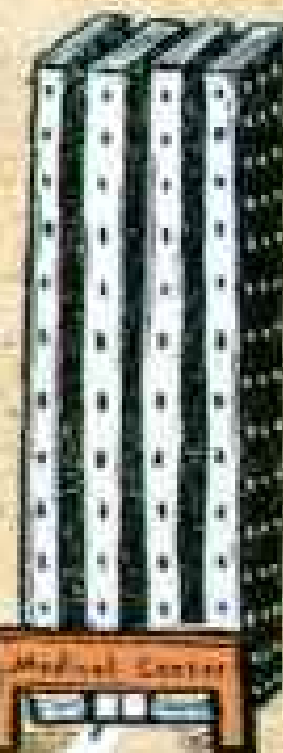
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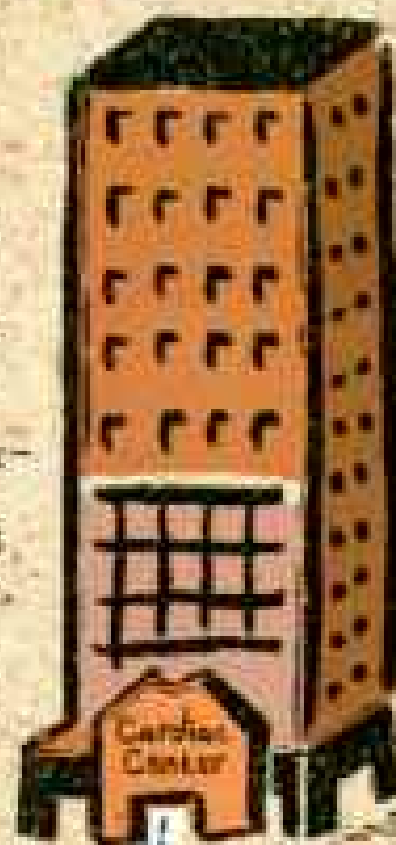


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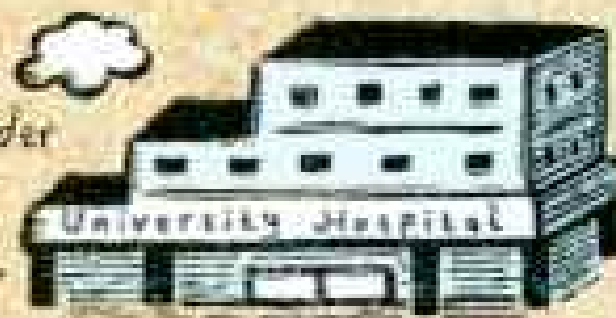


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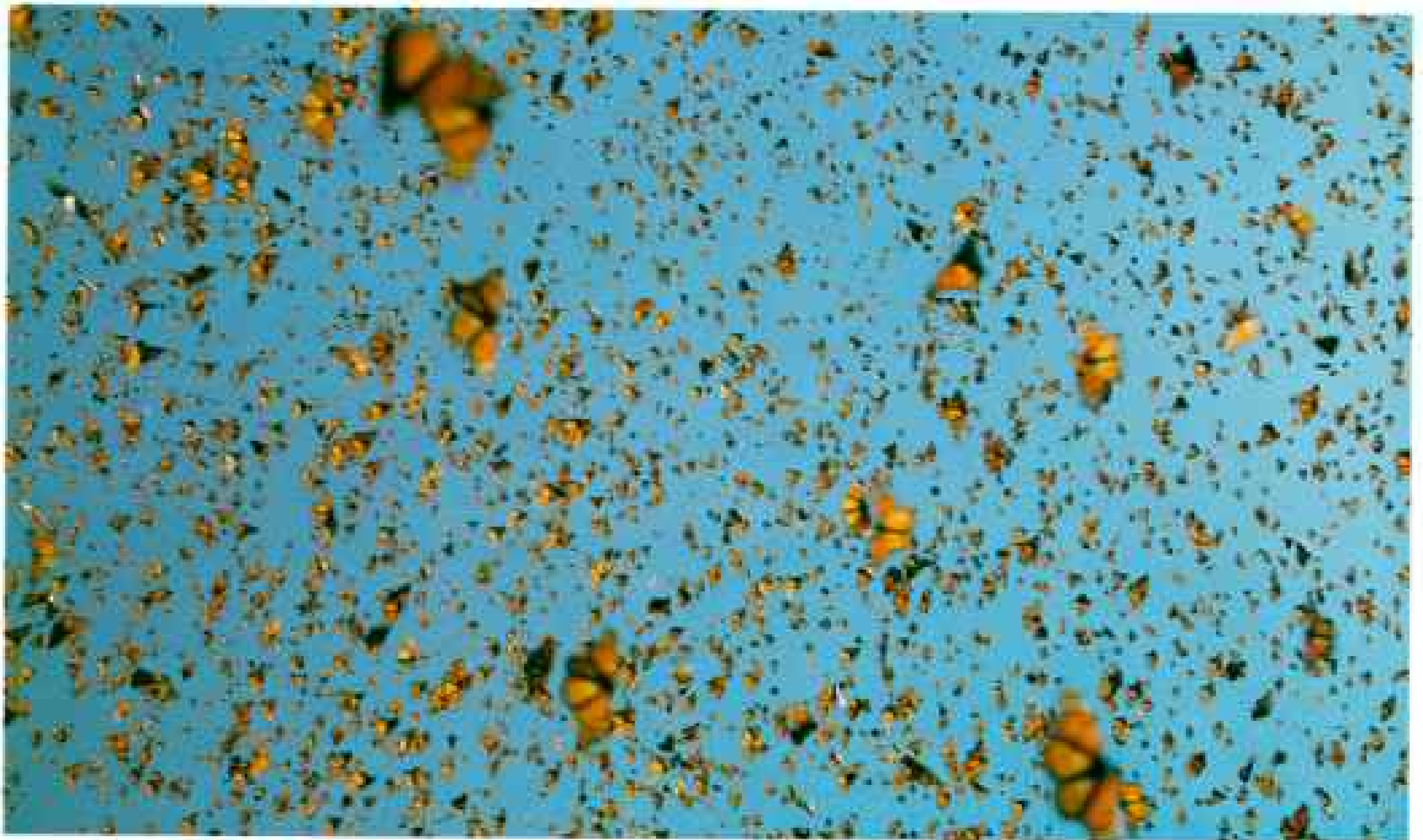
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Earth Almanac



FRANK LANTING, HINDEN PICTURES

Monarchs: A Multinational Asset

SKIES OF WONDER: The long-distance migration of monarch butterflies in eastern North America may be in jeopardy. Last April representatives from Mexico, the United States, and Canada agreed to discuss ways to preserve the monarchs' shrinking winter habitat in Mexico, reduce the use of herbicides on milkweed—sole food of monarch larvae—and encourage young students in all three countries to count the migrating monarchs.

After breeding in the U.S. and southern Canada, huge numbers of the butterflies gather in staging

areas and head south, some flying more than 2,000 miles. They winter in fir forests in the volcanic highlands of south-central Mexico.

But in Mexico, of at least nine wintering sites, only five, totaling just 62 square miles, are designated sanctuaries. Despite government restrictions, some forest has already been cleared by poor farmers and commercial loggers, and more is under pressure. "We're not going to have a monarch migration in 20 years if those reserves aren't expanded and protected," says dean of monarch researchers Lincoln Brower of the University of Florida.



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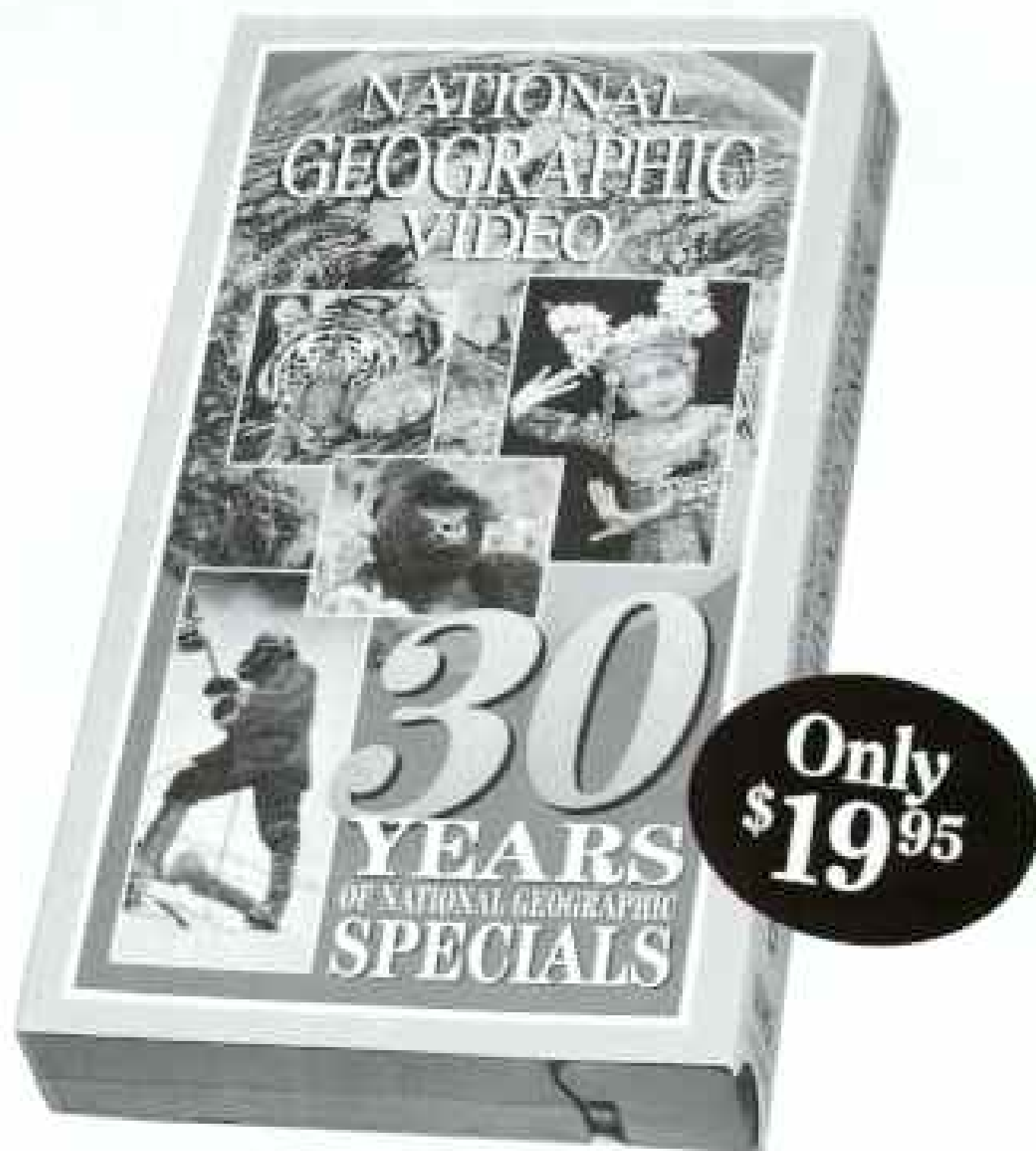
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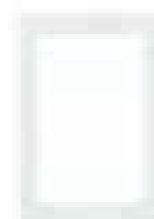
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RICHARD DOWNS

Noisy Skies Over the Wilderness

PEACE AND QUIET is in a holding pattern over 130 national park sites—about a third of the system—where noise problems caused by aircraft overflights have been reported. From Hawaii to North Carolina, tourists in the parks' friendly skies are causing angst on the ground. About 80,000 scenic flights a year now take tourists low over the Grand Canyon, for example, nearly three times the number in 1987, when the National Parks Overflights Act was passed.

That act put nearly half of Grand Canyon National Park off-limits to flight-seeing planes and helicopters; those that legally buzz over are restricted to flight corridors. Solitude-loving backpackers and other critics say the act isn't working.

"Sound bleeds from those corridors into the flight-free zones—so they're not noise free," says Dave Simon of the National Parks and Conservation Association. Safety, more than aesthetics, concerns the Federal Aviation Administration, which may soon issue revised rules for Grand Canyon pilots. Since 1980, at least 60 people have died in flight-seeing crashes in or near the canyon.

Seals or Cod: A Raging Canadian Issue

WHEN ATLANTIC COD numbers crashed in 1992, the Canadian government regarded the harp seal as an important culprit. This year officials encouraged sealers and out-of-work fishermen to hunt the species, which is not endangered, by raising the limit to 250,000. The quota will likely be met. Last year when it was 186,000, bad weather and ice conditions held the harvest to 65,000 seals, including this one in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Any seal with a gray coat may be killed; commercial hunting of

young whitecoat pups for their pelts was halted in 1987 after widespread protests. But that campaign also dried up markets for other seal products, such as sealskin and oil, markets the government wants to rejuvenate. Meanwhile, hunters are paid a subsidy for seal meat, still eaten in eastern Canada.

Conservationists charge that many male seals are killed only for their sex organs, prized as an aphrodisiac by Asians, including those in Canada. And opponents reject the government's contention that harp seals eat too much Atlantic cod. "Their diet includes more than 100

species—they rarely eat Atlantic cod," says David Lavigne, executive director of the International Marine Mammal Association. "Basically, the cod industry collapsed because of overfishing."



E. C. LOCKWISSE

Whooping It Up

RECORD HIGH, 158 endangered whooping cranes sailed into Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and vicinity in Texas last winter. Conservation has helped this wild flock wing back from near extinction. Because of hunting and habitat loss, only 15 cranes were reported here in 1941. Last winter's count included 28 chicks, also an all-time high. From its summer nesting grounds in Canada, the flock will return to Aransas in October.

—JOHN L. ELIOT



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Making an Issue of Mexico

IT WAS the magazine article that grew. "Mexico was planned as a big story," says illustrations editor JOHN ECHAVE, "but the Editor felt the pictures were so good, and there was so much to say, that it just took off."

Also taking off were freelance writer MICHAEL PARFIT, with wife Suzanne, who covered Mexico in his Cessna. Aided by



MICHAEL PARFIT, BY JESÚS LÓPEZ



JOHN ECHAVE AND CONNIE PHELPS, BY SISSE GRIMBERG, HGS



TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI, BY JESÚS LÓPEZ

photographer JESÚS LÓPEZ, who worked wonders for several staffers on this issue—even talking one writer's way out of a hostile situation—Mike wove text from strands supplied by our reporters in the field (facing page) and from the photographers who preceded him. STUART FRANKLIN captured Mexico City from a high-rise perch, and ALEX WEBB took one small step for man—and photography—in a Monterrey museum. DAVID ALAN HARVEY took aim in Zacatecas, and TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI shot a demonstration in San Cristóbal. The sign Tomasz saw in one town proclaiming, in five languages, "No Photographers Allowed" was an exception. The four sent a total of 2,850 rolls of film back to headquarters, where CONNIE PHELPS steered the layout of pictures and final design.



DAVID ALAN HARVEY



ALEX WEBB, BY JESÚS LÓPEZ



BY SALVADOR MARIÑA COY



JESÚS LÓPEZ, BY TOMASZ TOMASZEWSKI

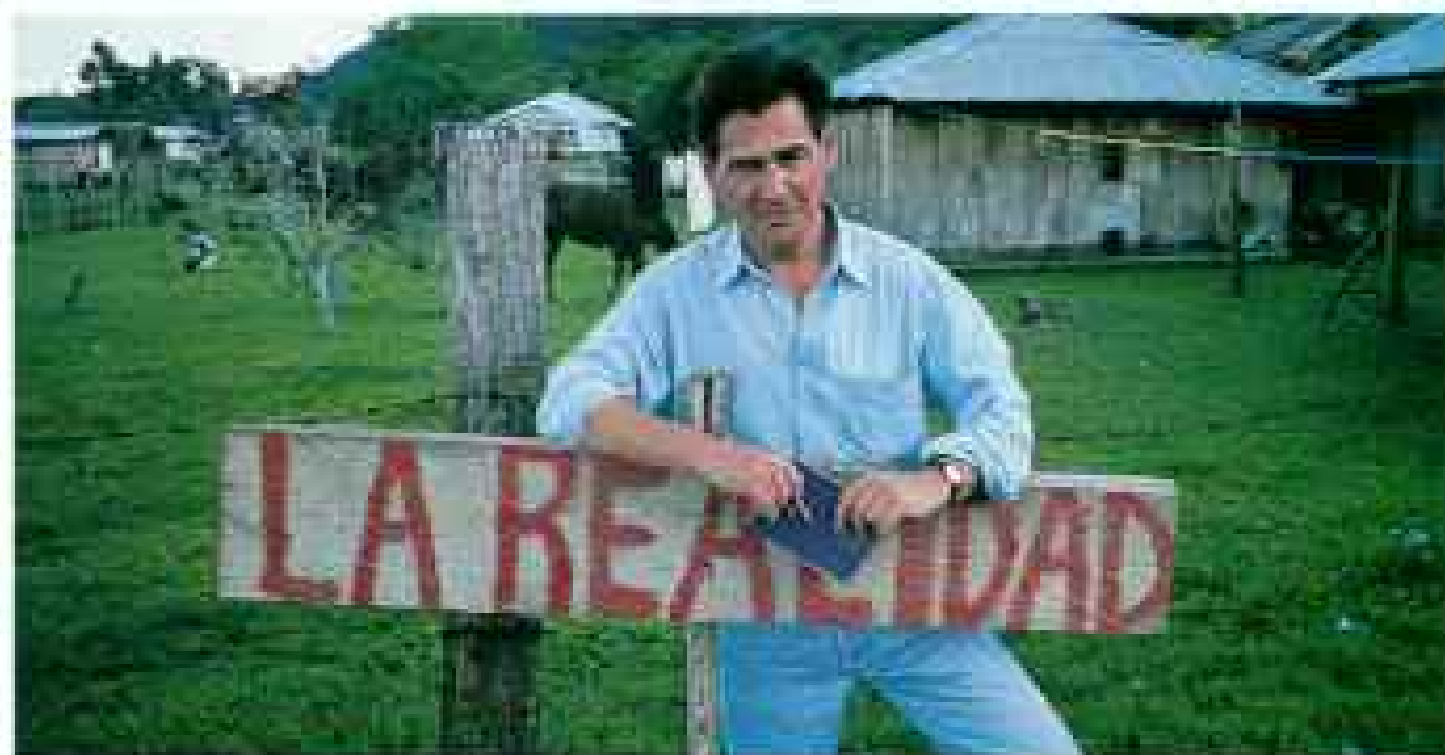
ON ASSIGNMENT IN MEXICO

"We were there to put the sounds and tastes and textures of Mexico onto the page," says PRIT VESILIND about our team of six journalists, including CHARLES KRAUSE, Latin America correspondent for PBS's *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*. This past March they fanned out across the country in search of the real Mexico, supplying the latest firsthand information to writer Michael Parfit.

Prit found Rosa Martínez Lopes, an enterprising teenage weaver who sells handicrafts for her village of Zinacantán. Writer ANN WILLIAMS and interpreter LILIA RUBIO shared a traditional Sunday family picnic in Mexico City's Chapultepec Park. In Michoacán a Tarascan woman taught writer CASSANDRA FRANKLIN-BARBAJOSA all she needed to know about crushing dried insects to make red dye. Former staffer SANDRA DIBBLE, now with the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and PAUL SALOPEK, from the *Chicago*



PRIT VESILIND; BY JESÚS LÓPEZ



CHARLES KRAUSE; BY TOMAZZ TOMASZEWSKI



LILIA RUBIO (LEFT) AND ANN WILLIAMS; BY JESÚS LÓPEZ



PAUL SALOPEK; BY JESÚS LÓPEZ

Tribune—both fluent in Spanish—also contributed to this special issue. Paul traveled to the Sierra Madre mountains of Chihuahua to interview Tarahumara Indians; Sandra hit the streets of Tijuana—where she lives—to find harmony with Jorge Vargas, one of the town's singing policemen. "He speaks very nice English," she says of the lieutenant, "that he learned from watching cartoons as a little kid."

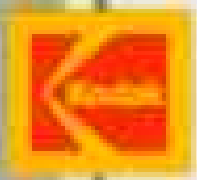
The real Mexico? Our people found it in her people.



SANDRA DIBBLE; BY JOHN GIBBINS



CASSANDRA FRANKLIN-BARBAJOSA; BY A. L. BARBAJOSA



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