



Mazatlan

-- A Different Mexican Town --A Different Mexican History

A little bit of Europe tucked around Mazatlan's Machado Square
by Stuart Wasserman

Stuart Wasserman is a writer/photographer who lives in Portland, Oregon.

At 9:30 a.m. Mazatlan's Plaza Machado is coming alive. A slim middle aged Mexican man is bringing out the wooden tables and chairs from the Altazor Restaurant and coffee bar, a cool university run enterprise and bookstore that offers great breakfasts at great prices set on a European-sized square.

A sassy middle-aged Mexican-American woman named Gracia runs the place during the day. She was a schoolgirl in Tucson, but she came back to Mexico

as a young adult to take care of her father. Tending tables on the plaza, she sometimes greets you in Spanish, sometimes in English. Soon a small group of Americans will gather there for morning chess, a little flirting, and cups of rich mountain coffee from Veracruz.

Students carrying tubas and trombones walk across the plaza heading toward the stately 19th-century-building on the northeast corner of the plaza that houses both Mazatlan's 19th century ornate Opera House and the city's municipal arts collegio. Students stage performances throughout the year. The ornate theater is filled during other times of the year with national and international cultural acts from Europe and Latin America.

Around the edges of the square, restaurants and bars like Pedro y Lola and the Pacific Cafe are popping up, as well as a handful of expanding art galleries like NidArt located down the block from the Opera House. Downtown Mazatlan is being gentrified and much

Continued on page 2



NidArt Gallery, indigenous art from all over Mexico located a block from the Opera House



THE MEXICAN ART OF PAPIER MACHE

by Lynne Doyle

Lynne Doyle is a longtime Mexico File subscriber and contributing editor from Maine. The object of the Las Joyas de Mexico feature is to highlight for MF readers some of the lesser-known but most rewarding of Mexico's geographic, human and artistic treasures. Lynne can be contacted at

LinfordD@aol.com.

They are all over the place in Mexico – in every tourist shop and market in just about every city and town in the country – both large and small papier mache figures of one kind or another, executed with varying degrees of skill and artistry. The art form goes back a long way in Mexican folk art and is not limited to any one village or area as are many of the media unique to the country. Thus it is with some difficulty that I attempt to describe this very special expression of Mexican artistic genius. However, in my view, the various types of papier mache figures generated by Mexican artists reflects in a significant way the artistic styles of the areas in which they are generated, and many of them are especially beautiful, and so are worthy of some examination.

Continued on page 4

I	N	S	I	D	E
	Más o Menos	2			
	What Were They Thinking?	6			
	How Margarita Got Its Name	7			
	About Mexico	8			

más o menos

by David Simmonds

The most consistent challenge I have repeatedly faced in my 35 years of Mexico travel is how to make a phone call home to San Diego with some reasonable assurance that it won't cost me more than my hotel room. I have tried all the options that have come around over the years, and I usually discover that I have paid anywhere from \$1.00 to \$10.00 a minute once I get the bill. More recently, I have had good luck with my AT&T cellular phone. This phone still has the older CDMA technology that is common in Mexico and the charge has been consistently around \$1.20 per minute with roaming charges. The coverage wasn't complete, but not bad. Unfortunately, I accidentally drowned that phone while washing my Jeep recently and now that Cingular has bought AT&T, I had to buy a phone with the newer GSM technology. I'll find out how that works when I leave for Veracruz in a few days, but I'll be surprised if I am able to make a call.

But it looks like there may be a solution, if the reports I have read are accurate. The new option is the same that we have all used in the U.S. and Canada for years by dialing 1-800-555-1212. Now, while in Mexico, you can dial the same number preceded by a 0 (i.e., 01-800-555-1212). You will reach an operator or an automated attendant in English where you can place collect, credit card, third party or Bell Calling Card calls to people in the U.S. and Canada. No prepaid card is required and they claim their prices to be 65% lower than AT&T, MCI or Sprint. This is a proven system that has been in place in many countries world-wide including Australia, Norway, Germany, Thailand, the UK, and Japan, just to name a few. Visit the web site at www.01-800-555-1212.com. I'll let you know the damage next issue.

Mazatlan *Continued*



Interior of Angela Peralta Theatre

of it is being guided by the helping hand of a forward thinking volunteer organization of engineers, architects and entrepreneurs called the Center Historical Project or Centro Proyecto Historico.

As a veteran Mexico traveler who first visited Mazatlan in 1973, it is not hard to like the renaissance going on around this tiny square, the Plaza Machaco (or as it is affectionately called, the Plazuela Machado) – a square built by Europeans, something many residents of Mazatlan are very proud of.

Mazatlan has a history that's very different from the rest of Mexico. It was a small seaport town in the 1830's and 1840's. The population in 1820 totaled about 2,000 inhabitants. But soon that would change due to this port town's location as the last stop before San Francisco for ships westward bound from New York. In those days ships had to sail around the tip of South America to reach the San Francisco gold fields. These ships were laden with men mostly from Italy, Germany and Ireland. Revolutions in Europe kept them flowing to New York, and the California gold rush enticed them West.

Some stayed in Mazatlan, tired of the long journey northward by ship. Others returned to the semitropical seaport town they had visited once the gold rush had sputtered out.

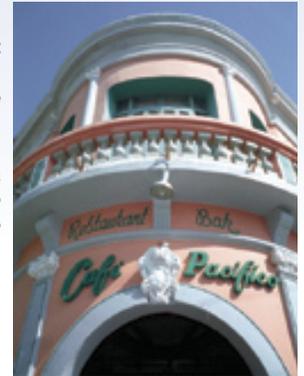
The Mazatlan we know today dates from that era. Mazatlan was booming in the 1850's and sported five opera houses, one of them just for the German population.

Mazatlan grew up around the Plaza

Machado, a central plaza without a church – a rarity in Mexico. Most Mexican cities were built after the conquistadors quelled the local Indian population. Padres soon followed and built a church on a central square.

The oldest building on Mazatlan's Plaza Machado spans the width of a block and has an impressive row of arches. It is called the Portales de Canobbio, a two story structure built in 1846 by an Italian Canobbio family. They lived upstairs and ran a general store below.

The first building to be renovated around Plaza Machado Square



Alfredo Gomez Rubio, president

of the Centro Proyecto Historico, calls the Canobbio House "Mazatlan's first building of commerce." The building was a combination feed, supply and hardware store. Today it houses the Museo Casa Machado, which features a 19th century collection of French and Austrian furniture, home decorations and antiques brought over by Mazatlan's soon to be wealthier families.

Today Mazaltecos joke with each other about their mixed heritage, often taking pride in their green eyes and other

Continued on page 3



A couple walks along Golden Beach sand

Mazatlan *Continued*

lighter European skin traits.

Mazatlan's French heritage stems from the Frenchmen who served in the army of Maximilian in the mid-1860's. Mazatlan's residents take great pride in the 1864 battle in which residents firing cannons repelled an attack from the French Battleship La Cordierre and sent the ship packing.

The battle took place along the beach front not too far from Machado Square. Each year as part of the city's Carnival celebration, the 1864 battle is recreated. Fireworks are shot off from a ship at sea and a response is given from the very hillside where the rusty cannons still stand.

A fireworks display takes place as part of Mazatlan's Carnival celebration on the Saturday before Fat Tuesday and can be seen all along the Avenida Olas Altas.

If you want to see remnants of Mazatlan's French heritage, visit the Hotel Playa Mazatlan located in the golden zone. Many of the wait staff come from a town up in the mountains call Macias. Ask any waiter or bartender and they will confirm this. Many Frenchman fled to the hills when the call for withdrawal came from Paris. It may not have been the tropical winds and beautiful Indian maidens that made them stay, but rather their disenchantment at having to face scurvy and another long grueling boat ride across the Atlantic Ocean. Instead many escaped to the hills and took up life in the countryside. The French ships sailed without them.

The architecture of the centro district around the Plaza Machado has a



The newest Pueblo Bonito offers grand style lodging

Olas Altas scenic view

French accent. According to Don Antonio Haas, a well respected elder in town and the first Mexican national to attend Harvard, the architecture of the area

could be described as Neoclassical – or what he calls aptly “neo-tropical.” To me it brought back memories of the designs around the French Quarter of New Orleans. Mazatlan has a stunning gothic-like Cathedral called the Immaculada Concepcion de Maria.

Don Antonio is credited with saving the French inspired opera house through his writings and oration. Now Mazatlan's new generation of movers and shakers have turned to the U.S. for help in the preservation of the 50 square block area around the square that on March 12, 2001, was declared a National Monument by the federal government, including 479 buildings of historical interest and value.

Alfredo Gomez Rubio spent the fall of 2002 in Washington D.C. at the Main Street Institute, an organization that is responsible for the makeover and revitalization of more than 400 town centers in the U.S. and Canada. There Rubio attended classes on the art of community building, working with the media, and fundraising. In January of last year, Rubio helped establish a formal association with a board of directors and a host of hardworking volunteer committees.

When I landed in town my cab driver pointed me to Rubio's restaurant on the square – Pedro y Lola. This romantic restaurant is named after two widely popular singers of the 1940's and 1950's, Pedro Infante and Lola Beltran. Infante also starred in many classic Mexican movies. Rubio is hands on at his restaurant. One night, as his local and foreign patrons enjoyed the warm ambiance of the square, Rubio hustled out to the curb to quiet a young driver who



was booming rap music from the giant speakers tucked in his trunk. “This has to become a classier place,” he grumbled.

Alfredo Gomez Rubio is a man in his forties with “77 Sunset Strip” good looks. He is bilingual and often speaks excitedly with his hands in motion.

Last February, the energetic director of Mazatlan's Centro Proyecto Historico drove with his family the 600 miles from Mazatlan to Phoenix just to catch a Rolling Stones concert.

Rubio's brother Manuel, who works as a banker in Switzerland, is also involved in spurring renovation. The Rubios are a fifth generation family who reside in the same family house that their great-great-grandfather built five blocks from the old town plaza.

These older families own real estate on the square and they watched over the course of several decades as development moved on to a different area of town. Now they are attempting to bring people back by saving the most beautiful architecture in Mazatlan. Still, movement is slow and it is not without controversy.

“It's hard to get Mazaltecos to agree on anything,” says political scientist Arturo Santamaria Gomez, a professor at the Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa. “Here in our city we have two different professional associations of architects, two different associations of hotel owners and five different professional associations of lawyers.”

During the 1960's new ultra modern

Continued on page 5

A series of papier mache skulls showing the widely varying styles of different artists. Unfortunately, none are signed. The three on the left were purchased in different parts of Mexico, the skull on the right from a Mexican art dealer in California. They range in size from eight to eleven inches tall.



Perhaps the most familiar figures are the very popular and inexpensive “viejos” that are such a large part of tourist fare. These figures vary in size from seven inches all the way up to 15 inches tall and no two are ever the same. They are made with scraps of cloth and miniature pottery, wood and straw pieces designed to reflect the elderly peasants of Mexico and the various ways they earn their livings. Added to the figures are miniature versions of pottery, various animals, packs of wood and straw, and many other expressions of rural life in Mexico. These figures have been around since I was a child living in Mexico, and while today’s versions are more varied and perhaps more skillfully done, the essential style remains the same. I have always been completely stymied as to why these figures are so inexpensive to purchase – the faces, hands and feet on these pieces are so very moving and expressive – but they are, which perhaps explains – in part at least – their enduring popularity. I am told that these figures are made all over the country now, but they originated in the famous Sermel factory outside of Guadalajara in the village of Tonalá.

The artists of Sermel are also responsible for the famous papier mache clowns sold all over the world. I have seen these little figures, generally about six inches tall,



Three clowns made by Sermel artisans in Tonalá, outside Guadalajara. The clown on the left was purchased in 1986 in London, the center was a gift to me in 1961, and the furthest right came directly from Sermel during a trip to Guadalajara in 2003. Although it is apparent that the center clown is somewhat faded and worn, the similarity of detail and style is nonetheless apparent. Each of these little pieces is about five inches tall.

all over the United States, the Caribbean and even in England. Not quite as inexpensive as the Viejo figures, these little clowns are nevertheless not cost-prohibitive and share the exquisite fabric details and facial expressions of other Sermel products.

Very exciting to me is a new line of figures initiated three years ago at Sermel, the folk dance series. Again, the facial expressions, figural postures, and fabric combinations are entrancing and each figure is totally unique. The costumes vary and represent individual dances from specific regions of the country. More costly than the Viejo figures, these pieces are generally between twelve and 14 inches tall, and I have seen them only in the Sermel factory gift shop in Tonalá.

Less widely known, perhaps because they are usually very expensive, are the alebrije figures originated in the 1920’s and 1930’s by the famous Linares family of Mexico City, the most widely recognized of whom was the late Pedro Linares. Pedro’s son Felipe and grandson Leonardo have become renowned artists in their own right and are still producing these original pieces, and the vintage dragons and monsters are still very marketable through dealers and the internet, although at sometimes exorbitant three-and four-figure costs.

Of singular significance to Mexican folk art collectors, each of these pieces boasts complex construction of newspaper or paper bags built over wire, intricate and colorful painting, and again, no two are alike.

Another very popular Mexican papier mache form is that of female figures with innocent little faces and yarn hair, intricately painted costumes and hats, and generally wide, heavily decorated skirts. Also in existence at least since my childhood, these pieces come from two distinct areas of Mexico that I know of – Guadalajara

(as distinguished by the signature Tonalá style of painting on them) and Mexico City, where the renowned artist Abelardo Ruiz has been creating them for at least 40 years. They vary in size from 3.5 inches tall to one of my favorite possessions, a 34 inch tall figure my husband fondly refers to as Shirley, after the friend who gave her to me. These figures vary in price – some 8 inch pieces can be had for as little as \$10 in markets, and some of the larger, vintage pieces for considerably more – but occasionally, some very intricate and valuable examples can be found on eBay for practically nothing.

Perhaps my favorite and most exciting example of the artistry of papier mache can be found in the skulls usually made for Day of the Dead celebrations. Two of these skulls made by the Linares family were featured in the Great Masters in Mexican Folk Art exhibit that toured the world several years ago. Unfortunately, these skulls are not found for sale in stores and markets in Mexico (I have seen them only in high-end art galleries), and when they do appear (usually from dealers



A series of signed female figures by the renowned artist Abelardo Ruiz. On the left, the figure – also a candleholder – dates from the 1960’s. The center figure, to which Sn. Ruiz has added the feature of untreated ribbon and silk flowers to the hair, was purchased in 2004. The figure on the right is old and rare – these pieces rarely have visible legs or feet. This is the only one of its kind I have ever seen. The left and right pieces measure 13.5 inches; the center is eleven inches.



An older example of a papier mache alebrije made by Felip Linares. This piece dates from the 1970's and has slight damage to one wing, but nevertheless is a fairly good example of the complicated construction inherent in these figures. This example is 26 inches from nose to tail and about ten inches in length.

or on the Internet), they are rarely signed in spite of the truly remarkable styles and patterns with which they are decorated. These pieces are an unparalleled expression of Mexican craftsmanship – the bold coloration and intricate designs reflect Mexican humor and artistic mastery as few other media do.

There is no end to what Mexican artisans will create in papier mache. We have all seen the marvelously realistic reproductions of fruit, vegetables and pastries in markets, intricately dressed catrinas in various sizes and ladies in antique French clothing and hats, and fantastical masks, nativities, fish and other objects with bold and complicated painted designs. Many people do not necessarily connect Mexican folk art and the medium of papier mache, especially Americans, who see papier mache in a way that is very different from the Mexican version. But Mexican artistry comes through in this medium in ways similar to other Mexican media

Continued on page 8



These figures are typical of those made in the Guadalajara area. They could be from the Sermel group, but they are unsigned, so I cannot be sure. However, the muted colors and painting design on the dresses are very similar to that found on the pottery from this region, hence clearly identifying the area from which these pieces originated. The taller figure measures 17 inches; the smaller eleven inches.

Mazatlan *Continued*

hotels were built to the north along Mazatlan's virgin beaches. The visionary leading that trend was an American, Ulysses S. George, a plastering contractor from Los Angeles who worked on the construction of the Griffith Park Observatory. He had first come down to Mazatlan to fish, liked the place, and in 1953 began building the first hotel across from Deer Island, one of three small islands that grace Mazatlan's waterscape. That man's grandson is Donn Vient, and he runs the hotel today. "Everybody thought my grandfather was crazy, muy muy loco," he said. But Vient adds with pride, "all the hoteliers followed him out here." Modern home construction began in the area behind the Golden Zone hotels. The move began to drain tourism away from old town. Soon the classy hotels like the Belmar on Old Town's Olas Altas beach fell into disrepair. The Belmar drew visits from Hollywood stars of the 1930s and 1940s like Clark Gable, Errol Flynn and Ava Gardner. In the 1950's John Wayne took a personal suite there. He visited when shooting several of his westerns in the state of Durango, located on the high plains to the east.

Today, the Belmar is a good choice for budget-conscious travelers who want a waterfront room at \$35 a night. La Siesta, two blocks away, features western facing rooms at the same price. The La Siesta houses the corner restaurant, The Shrimp Bucket, still a classic restaurant for seafood in Mazatlan.

Down the street from the Belmar, the new kid on the block, the high-rise Hotel Posada Freeman, reopened two years ago and offers much fancier rooms.

The Freeman originally built in 1950 had been a classic Mazatlan gathering spot. On Friday and Saturday nights its 10th floor El Palomar dance hall was the place to hear to the latest tunes out of New York. When it was built, the Freeman was the tallest building in the entire northwest of the country. It's a great place to catch



Grand view from atop the Freeman Hotel

sweeping views of the downtown centro district and the Pacific Ocean. While many of Mazatlan's preservationists were happy to see the grand old hotel come back to life they were unhappy with some modern additions. Herein lies a controversy that historic districts across America face. The new Freeman Hotel is affiliated with the Best Western Hotel chain which has a standard of signage – in this case one with a large fluorescent look. The Best Western sign now sits atop the Freeman building and some preservationists object to this desecration of a building that now sits in the 50 square block National Monument area. The building did not have that kind of lighting when it opened, so why should it now? The common view among Mexicans is that someone got paid off. Somebody got paid off! Although that may be possibly true, I for one enjoyed the light cast from the bright sign that allowed me to stay in the warm ocean waters long after sunset and still see my way safely about the beach. As a newcomer in town wandering the street after a couple of strong tequila drinks, the Hotel Posada Freeman sign allowed me to get my bearings quickly when I needed to.

The Centro Proyecto Historico is working hard to keep another U.S. import off the walls of old town

Continued on page 8



Puerto Viejo – Popular beachside restaurant located in Olas Altas

What Are They Thinking?

by Maryanne Wilson

A confirmed Mexicophile, Maryanne has visited Mexico a multitude of times. A native of New York City, and former travel agent, she considers herself a traveler, not a tourist. Having traveled to many places around the globe she finds herself drawn back to Mexico time and time again...particularly to Oaxaca. She is planning to spend about six weeks there this summer and will savor every moment.

Its pedestrianized central square is truly the heart and soul of Oaxaca. It serves as a meeting place, shopping mall, and concert venue. Although not the geographic center of the city, it is used by locals and visitors alike as a directional guide, the place from which to get one's bearings and the perfect spot at which to start and/or end the day. The zócalo itself is a feast for the eyes with is towering laurel and *jacaranda* trees, French-inspired gazebo, wrought iron benches and lush shrubbery.

The zócalo was the central reference point for the city as originally planned by Alonso Garcia Bravo in 1529, after the city, formerly called *Huaxyacac* ("near the acacia tree"), was established by decree of King Charles V on September 14, 1526. Along with the ruins of Monte Alban, the beauty of the zócalo was the reason Oaxaca was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1987.

This extremely lovely spot is sometimes a feast for the nose and ears as well, courtesy of the amazing aromas of fresh

tortillas and sizzling fajitas

and, in the evening, the enticing rhythms of strolling mariachis.

The numerous cafes and restaurants,



although not the best in town, provide a place to relax and have a frosty *cerveza* or a steaming cappuccino. Besides offering cooling shade from the afternoon heat and protection from the rain, it is the best of all locations from which to behold the ever-changing, constantly moving parade of people – balloon sellers, multi-generational families out for a stroll, business men hurrying along, jewelry vendors and teenagers shyly holding hands.

In mid-April, the powers-that-be in the local government began to dig up the zócalo, the city leaders having decided it needed a new look. Under the cover of night, jackhammers destroyed all the paved walkways around the zócalo and removed all the sidewalks and existing grass and garden areas. The bandstand and fountain remain, and it is promised that the canopy of Indian Laurels shading the plaza will remain untouched. In the process, accidentally it is claimed, a centuries-old Indian Laurel tree had its roots cut so severely that it fell over onto the *Palacio del Gobierno*. The "new look" also incorporates the *Alameda* (the adjacent plaza) and the atrium of the nearby cathedral. Planned replanting will be in the style of *Jardin Zoologico* behind the Santo Domingo complex, using desert plants and smaller trees, and will probably be just as barren, uninteresting, and visitor-unfriendly.

Devoid of the shade provided by the beautiful crown of ancient trees, daytime



temperatures may roast protestors and vendors, as well as locals and visitors, who remain for any length of time in the new desert landscape.

It is thought that the city leaders believe removing benches and other seating areas within the park is one way to keep local vendors (mainly members of the Triqui and other indigenous tribes) out of the square and restrict protest marches and sit-ins. City and state officials claim that all work will be completed by July 2005, in time for the anticipated hordes of visitors from around the world

who come for the annual Guelaguetza Festival. In addition, plans are afoot to close the Benito Juarez Market for the duration, build an underground parking lot and then rebuild the market on top.

It has been reported that all business has been devastated in the zócalo area. Restaurants have erected high tin fences to block the view of the big dig. The tables, however, are empty of patrons who have been assaulted by noise, covered in dust and dirt and offended by the dreadful desecration all around them. First time and return visitors to Oaxaca are bound to be shocked and appalled when they see what is happening to the extraordinary space. It remains to be seen how the hotels, market stalls, vendors, shops and restaurants in the will fare during and after all this – not to mention the certain loss of tourist dollars which help keep this city alive.

Indisputably, Oaxaca's zócalo, and the ancient buildings surrounding it, including the Cathedral that was begun in 1544, deserve a better fate than this. Protests are planned and marches are being organized. The first one was held on April 24th. Critics, outraged over this misguided project, are crying "ecocide" and asking UNESCO to look into the matter. Let's all hope that these efforts prove successful.

© 2005 Maryanne Wilson



Original zócalo included grand trees (far left). Construction has disrupted the stone work of this once ancient plaza (above left).

How the Margarita Got Its Name

by Jeanine Lee Kitchel

Jeanine Lee Kitchel is an ex-pat living in Puerto Morelos, Mexico. Her nonfiction travel adventure, **Where the Sky is Born: Living in the Land of the Maya**, can be found at amazon.com or from bookstores everywhere. She contributes to The Miami Herald, Planeta.com, Sac-Be News, and writes for Fodor's Travel Guides

Was there a Margarita behind the Margarita? Of course. But contrary to what you may have imagined, the woman was not a Mexican beauty but instead a fledgling Hollywood starlet. And though other Margarita namesakes have surfaced and vied for this distinction, I'm sure you'll agree our starlet is the real McCoy.

Years ago I heard a eulogy on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" for a man named Carlos "Danny" Herrera, who'd passed away at the age of 90 in San Diego. Although his name rang no bells, he left a legacy known far and wide. He had created one of the world's most famous cocktails – the Margarita.

On a wistful note in recognition of Herrera's passing, host Noah Adams unraveled the tale of how Herrera came to invent the drink that is synonymous with Mexico. It was 1992 and San Diego was paying homage to Herrera, who had been born and raised in Mexico City at the turn of the century, but had moved to

San Diego five years before his death.

According to the *San Diego Tribune*, Herrera had worked his way across Mexico as a young man, settling just south of Tijuana in 1929. Herrera and his wife built their house in the rugged countryside of Baja California. They added a bar in their home to entertain friends.

More and more people kept dropping in so they decided to open for business and a few years later, they added a restaurant. Then came ten hotel rooms and a swimming pool along with a booming clientele from across the border. Rosarito Beach just down the road was becoming a fashionable getaway for the Hollywood crowd and Carlos' place was an easy pit stop for a quick refreshment on the dusty Baja road.

By 1935 traffic was heavy. Carlos was a friendly guy with a quick wit and his bar-restaurant, named Rancho La Gloria after his daughter, attracted stars and socialites who became regulars at Rancho La Gloria before continuing south to Rosarito Beach or Ensenada.

Among the bar's clientele was an actress named Marjorie King. While all her friends were taking advantage of Carlos' talents as bartender, Ms. King did not partake in the afternoon revelry. She had an unusual problem. She was allergic, so the tale went, to all alcohol except tequila.

What luck, Carlos cajoled. Tequila is the national drink of Mexico, he said, as he poured the actress a straight shot of the clear, strong liquid, brought out a plate of fresh limes, and set a salt shaker beside her on the bar. Marjorie wrinkled her pretty nose, gave Carlos a "not so fast"

look, and informed him she hated the taste of it.

What was a girl to do? In those wild and reckless days just after Prohibition began, how could one stand idly by and not join in the fun? Herrera was determined to put an end to Ms. King's misery. He went to work.

Herrera decided he would create the ultimate concoction for the attractive actress. He started experimenting and came up with a winner – three parts of white tequila, two parts triple sec, one part fresh lime juice, a pinch of sugar. As the day was hot, he added shaved ice and blended the mixture with a hand shaker. Ms. King liked the looks of the drink immediately, Herrera reportedly said.

But how to serve it? Marjorie was no ordinary gal, and Herrera wanted to pay tribute to her sense of style. Something special was needed. He grabbed a champagne glass, dipped its rim in lemon juice and twirled it in a bowl of salt. Reshaking the contents, he then poured the frothy liquid into the champagne glass and presented it to the starlet.

The result – the famous Margarita, shaken, not stirred. And what a coincidence. The drink included all the ingredients of a traditional tequila shooter – tequila, lime and salt, but in a more appealing package.

How did this drink become known as a Margarita? Since Marjorie and her gang of friends came often to Rancho La Gloria, whenever their car caravan pulled up outside the bar, Carlos would spot the bunch, see Marjorie, and greet her with a hearty, "Margarita! Margarita!" the Spanish equivalent of her name. Then he'd start preparing her special drink.

It was instant name recognition. What else could it be called? Margarita was the perfect name for this sexy new drink. Meanwhile Marjorie (aka Margarita) went back to the States where she hung out with all her swell friends and introduced the drink to bartenders at some of the finer dining establishments in both Los Angeles and San Diego.

Continued on page 8



THE MEXICO FILE

Published ten times a year by Simmonds Publications
5580 La Jolla Blvd., #306 ■ La Jolla, CA 92037
Voice mail: 800-563-9345 ■ Phone/Fax: (858) 456-4419

E-mail: dave@mexicofile.com ■ Website: www.mexicofile.com

Subscription rate is \$39.00 per year in the U.S., \$49.00 per year outside the U.S.

PDF version available, see subscription box for details

Promotional rates are sometimes available. ©2005 Simmonds Publications

The Mexico File's contents are intended for the independent traveler. The information given is believed to be reliable, but cannot be guaranteed for accuracy due to constant changes that occur in a country this size. ■ Unsolicited stories, photos and letters are welcomed and encouraged. Postage should be included for any items to be returned. ■ This publication may not be reproduced in any form without written permission from the editor and the author of the article.

Editor: David Simmonds

Publisher: Robert Simmonds, Ph.D.

Contributing Editors: Lynne Doyle, Jane Onstott ■ Design/Layout: Paul Hartsuyker www.hartworks.net

About Mexico

Minimum Wage Support

Mexico City Mayor Andres Manuel López Obrador supports raising the country's minimum wage at 2 percent above the inflation rate to compensate for two decades of lost purchasing power. The minimum wage is now \$4.25 per day and the inflation rate is 4.5 percent. Worker's unions have countered that the minimum wage would need to increase by 300 percent in order to provide a bare subsistence for working families. A substantial increase would have a large effect on Mexicans' choosing to stay home rather than going to the U.S. for better paying jobs.

Obrador's Popularity Rises

A recent poll in Mexico City has shown that their mayor, Obrador, has gained popularity – now at an all-time high of 84%, up from 76% three months ago. A recent fight with President Fox's government over a minor legal case that could have prevented Obrador for running for president in 2006 has worked in Obrador's favor, improving his image and popularity. In a recent national poll, President Fox's approval rating has dropped to 60% from 64% because of his fight with Obrador.



Subscribe to The Mexico File.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Cost:

Printed version —
\$39.00 per year (10 issues)
\$65.00 for two years (20 issues)
(Add \$10.00 to price if outside the U.S.)

PDF version —
\$18.00 per year (10 issues)
\$34.00 for two years (20 issues)

Send check or money order to:
Simmonds Publications
5580 La Jolla Blvd, Suite #306
La Jolla, CA 92037

Phone 1-800-5MEXFILE

Mazatlan *Continued*

Mazatlan – graffiti. A new sign in the square reads, “El graffiti no es arte – es un deleto. No Manches! Mi Mazatlan es mi casa.”

Although Mazatlan's Centro Proyecto Historico is new, local citizens like Elaine Kemp have been struggling for a long time to bring pride back to the historic neighborhood. Kemp, a Mexican woman who was born in Los Angeles but left as a young girl, is the editor and founder of Viejo Mazatlan. This well-designed monthly newspaper is free. Written in Spanish but also translated into English, every article is about historical aspects of old town, the Plaza Machado Square, and the people who once lived there.

Mazatlan's old town is a work in progress. Every Saturday night, arts and crafts people set up booths on the square and give it a Berkeley bohemian feel. On Sundays, a festival ambiance takes over with vendors selling cotton candy and balloons while families with children parade around the square. Nightly, couples cuddle and nest on nearby benches. There are plenty of buildings not far away that sit vacant where you can see trees growing up in the center of old houses long ago abandoned. However, the streets are well lit and one can feel safe walking from the plaza down to Olas Altas beach where on any given evening an American ex-pat community gathers to “Ilevelo un Pacifico” at the Puerto Viejo, a small beach bar, carp about the Bush administration, and watch the sometimes glorious sunsets spread rich and various colors across the Mexican sky.



Margarita *Continued*

When asked its name, she explained that Danny Herrera, the bartender who'd invented it, called it a Margarita.

The name stuck and by the 1950s Margaritas were being served everywhere in Southern California.

Soon after that, the Margarita began to make its way around the world as Marjorie's Hollywood friends were globetrotters and took their love of the cocktail with them wherever they went.

So the next time you're taking a swig of that marvelous frothy concoction, think back on a time when Baja California was still just a rugged strip of sandy desert and Cancun didn't even exist. Think about a little bar with big views of the Pacific Ocean, and thank Carlos “Danny” Herrera for paying homage to a Hollywood beauty by inventing a delightful drink to brighten up her day. Salud!

© 2005 Jeanine Lee Kitchel



Papier Mache *Continued*

– bright, distinctive colors, complex, involved patterning with paint, as well as amazingly hand-crafted and totally individual pieces. If you have not already discovered its charm, it is well worth your consideration as you appreciate the remarkable folk art of Mexico.



My favorite examples from the Sermel folk dancers series. The faces are reminiscent of the Viejo figures made famous by this group of artisans, even though they are of younger people, and I am especially impressed by the naturalness of the clothes and posturs. Unfortunately, I have never found these figures anywhere but the Sermel gift shop in Tonalá.