

Llegó Para Ser Salvador

Fue un parto, si se quiere como todos los partos. La madre era joven y sana. El esposo estaba ahí para animarla, consolarla del sudor y las lagrimas. El embarazo había sido normal, Y el bebe, venia sano, hermoso, perfecto.

El lugar del nacimiento no parecia, quiza, pesebre; calentado por el aliento de los bueyes y la lana de las ovejas y alumbrado por una estrella nueva que habia aparecido en el cielo de Judea.

Asi nacio Jesucristo. Humanamente hablando, uno de los nacimientos más ignorados, pobres y humildes. Divinamente hablando, el más grande de todos los nacimientos. Porque Jesus, que nacio en un pesebre, de padres humanos sumamente pobres, es el Salvador, Señor, Maestro y Rey de toda la humanidad.

"Amigo," dice el poeta cubano Nicolas Guillen, en uno de sus hermosos poemas. "Cuando yo vine a este mundo Nadie me estaba esperando; asi mi dolor profundo Se me alivia caminando. Pues cuando vine a este mundo, te digo, nadie me estaba esperando".

Cuando Jesus vino al mundo, pocos, casi nadie, lo estaba esperando. Lo esperaba su madre Maria; tambien lo esperaba su padre Jose. Quiza algun pariente lo esperaba pero no el rey Herodes; ni tampoco Augusto Cesar; ni los filosofos de Atenas; ni los misticos de la India; ni los astrologos de Babilonia; ni los sabios de la China; ni los sacerdotes de Jerusalem.

Pero lo esperaban,, eso si, los profetas antiguos, que habian soñado de su venida; y lo esperaban, aunque sin darse cuenta, todos los pecadores de este mundo. El vino, al debido tiempo. Para usted y para mi. Para ser nuestro Salvador.

It was a birth, much like any other birth. The mother, healthy and young. The husband, there to encourage her, console her to endure the hardship and tears. It was a very normal childbirth. The child to be born beautiful, full of health and perfect.

The site of the birth, perhaps, did not appear to be a stable, warmed by the breath of oxen, by the wool of sheep and enlightened by a unique star that arose in the skys above Judea.

An so was born Jesus Christ. Mortally speaking, a birth that was among the most neglected, humble and poor. Divinely speaking, the most wonderous of all births. Because Christ, who being born in a stable, of poor and mortal parents is the Savior, the Lord, the Teacher and King of all that lives.

"Amigo," says a beautiful sonnet by the Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen "when I arrived to this world, no one expected me; and as such my pain is calmed. For when I came into this world, no one was expecting me." When Christ arrived into this world, few, almost no one awaited him aside from his mother, Mary and his father José. Perhaps a relative expected him but not Herod nor Cesear, nor philosophers from Athens or mystics from India; nor astrologers from Babilonia or wise men from China, much less the priests of Jerusalem. But some did expect him, the ancient prophets that dreamt of his arrival and although unaware of his arrival, all transgressors awaited him. He came, at the appropriate time. For you and me. To be our Savior.

Por El Hermano Pablo



Season's Greetings Comentarios de Bidal

by Bidal Agüero

I really can only imagine Christmas at a time that most people think was 2000 years or so ago.

I hear tell that men called prophets were said to be telling people of a person that was coming to be a Massiah or a Savior that would lift the people out of bondage, sin and corruption.

The prophets said that the person would be called wonderful. That he would be a Prince of Peace and a Mighty God. It was said that the person was to be the Spirit of the Lord.

They said that salvation from this person would be for everyone, men, women, for young, for old, for Jews, Gentiles, Romans, Greeks and to the rest of the world.

The prophets said that the person would be everlasting.

I hear tell that even the rulers of the lands feared the person that the prophets said would be King

I can imagine that the entire land was buzzing with excitement to see the coming of the person.

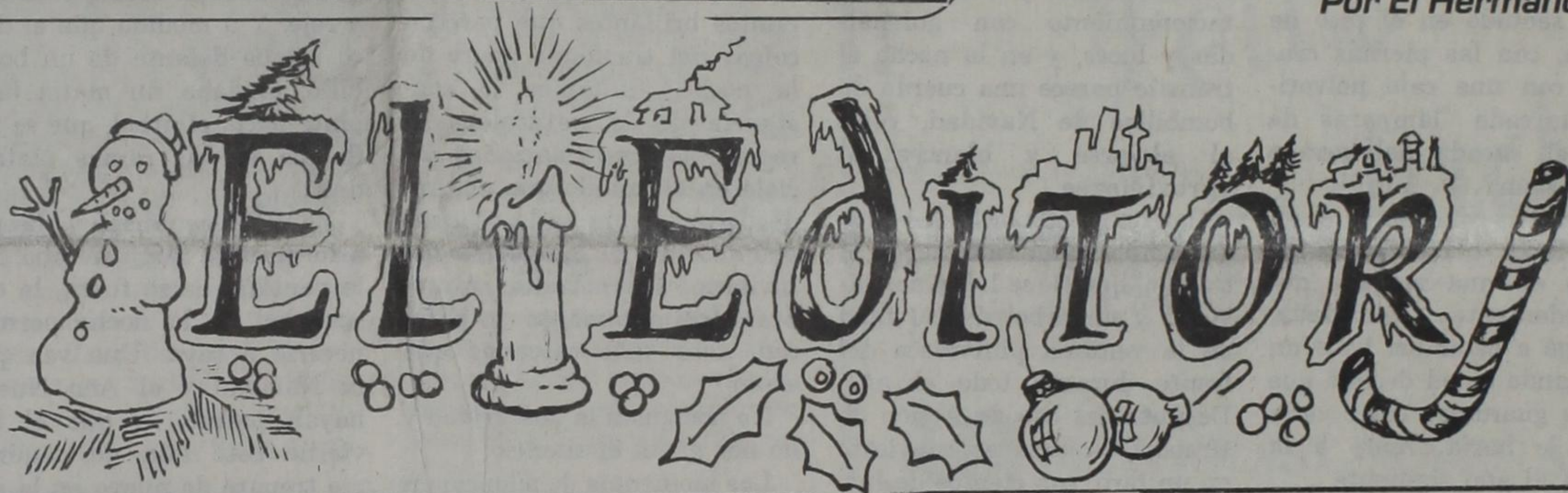
I can imagine that many were expecting a mighty warrior, a giant, an untouchable being that would overshadow everyone around.

Apparently there were other plans. I hear tell that the person came on a quiet night; to an obscure place with only his mother, his father and humble animals around to welcome the person.

I can't really imagine that the person who had been predicted to come to be a Massiah for so many years before, who would be King and so many waited for.....was a child.



Bottom row left to right: Olga, Marisol, Bidal Agüero. Top row left to right: Robert & Zenaida Reyes and Amalia Agüero and Joe Adam Riojas who just recently got married to Mollie Guzman. Merry Christmas from the entire family



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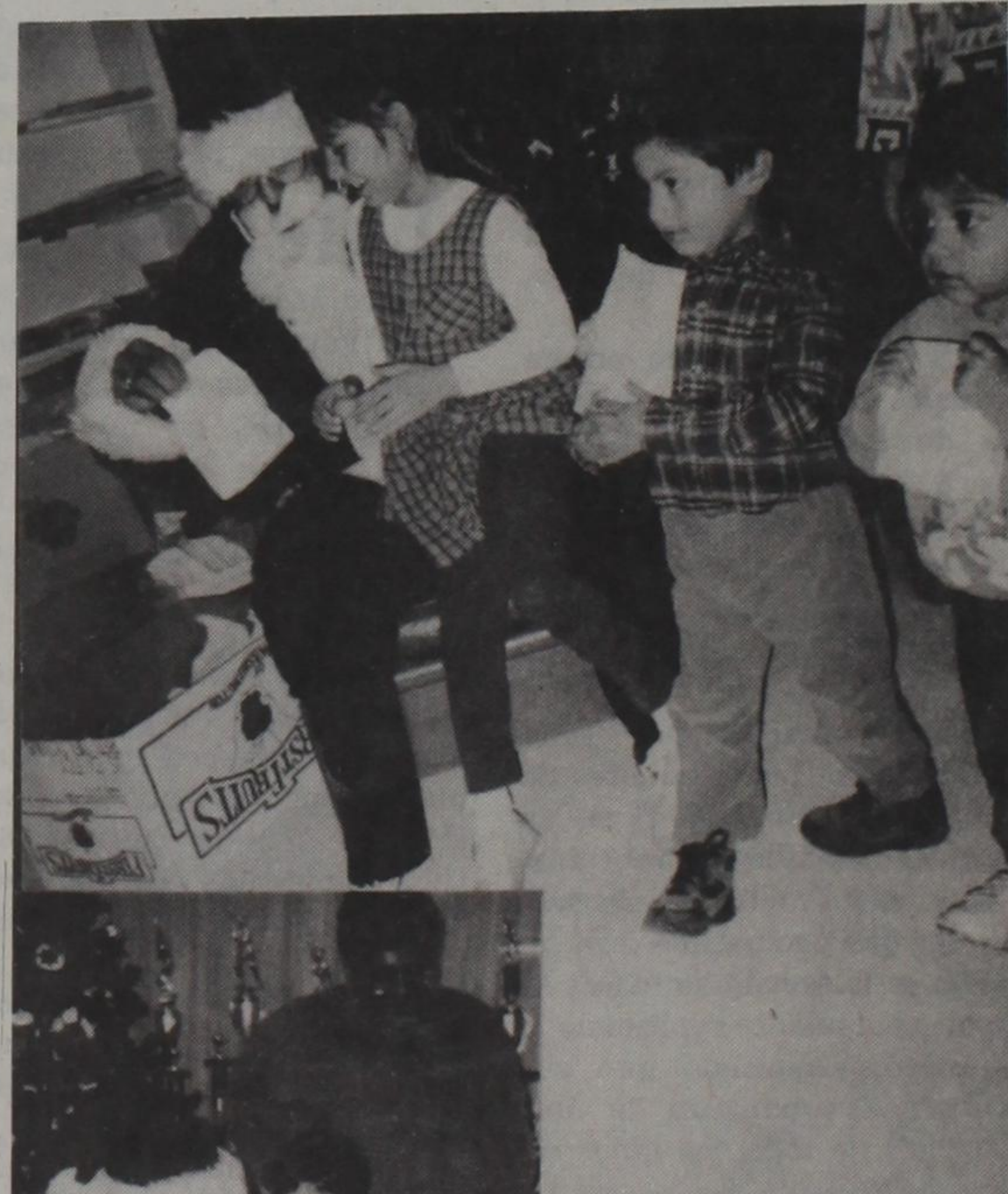
Week of December 23 to December 30, 1997

Lubbock, Tx

Feliz Navidad



La llegada de Pancho Clos se llevo acabo este domingo pasada en el Maggie Trejo Center. el proyecto es patrocinado cada año por el American GI Forum con la ayuda de Lubbock Power and Light.



Las Posadas were celebrated in Lubbock this year by Lubbock Centro Aztlan and Guadalupe Neighborhood Assoc. The program was made possible by a grant from the Lubbock City Council as recommended by the Lubbock Arts Alliance. Business helping included El Editor, VG & M Productions and Carrilo U-Haul and the Lopez Family.

Wadding The Lights --

A Landa Christmas Ritual

By Victor Landa

If you haven't already done so, then certainly sometime this week you may find yourself sitting on the floor of your house, legs crossed, with a dusty box marked "Christmas lights" retrieved from the garage or the attic.

If you're like me, the string of plastic lights will be gathered in a hopelessly tangled wad, made that way a year ago when you decided that you would just store them like that and deal with the mess next year.

Well, it's next year. There are some issues that you can't run away from.

What you'll do, because we all do it, is you'll plug in the string of lights to see if they still work properly. The mass of wire and prickly bulbs will glow and you'll begin to unravel it, laying it across the floor like a stream of tiny Christmas stars on the tile. The children, if you're young enough, will watch in amazement as you turn the house into a grid of red, green and white.

And then, because it always happens, there will be a string of lights that won't work. No need to panic, at least not yet. Everyone knows that in the

event of a malfunctioning string of Christmas lights, each tiny bulb must be inspected individually. You look for a loose connection, you take the bulb out and put it back in, you tap it with a finger, you jiggle it, then go on to the next one repeating the exercise, hoping that your efforts will bring forth light. After all, the children are watching.

If you're lucky, you'll find the source of the stringed darkness, restore the light and bring smiles to the faces of the kids.

Then you'll put your life and limb in peril by climbing a ladder to wrap the Christmas tree and line the roof with lights. You'll put lights on the tree and in the wreath, push them into bushes and drape them around your porch because 'tis the season.

We surround ourselves with lights every Christmas. We light candles and fireplaces. We line driveways with luminarias. Shopping centers fill their aisles and parking lots with garlands and lights, and at night traffic looks like a string of Christmas bulbs, red going and white coming.

There's a house I pass on my way home from work that has

Christmas lights and a Christmas tree in the front picture window all year round. After Thanksgiving the house becomes a beacon, with hundreds of lights in blue and white. I've often wanted to stop, knock on the door and ask why. But I haven't done it, mainly because I'm content with the answer I've imagined for years.

All around us, as the seasons progress and the days get shorter and the nights longer, we look to illuminate the darkness. Christmas is the perfect excuse to make our places festive, to make our darkness bearable.

It's as if we try to reflect the stars in the sky, the endless array of bright dots that seem hung on the black backdrop of night. We imitate nature's consistency by recreating the sky's constellations in the world that surrounds us, because even in the absolute darkness of the dead of winter the stars shine brightly and seem closer than before.

We don't like the darkness and we don't like the quiet.

Moments of silence in a conversation are usually described as tense and awkward, as if the objective of conversation is not to commu-

nicate but to fill a void. And so we converse as well by decorating and lighting our surroundings, as if to say, "There is no darkness here."

When I was a boy, we had an aluminum Christmas tree. It was packed in a box and every individual branch was neatly placed in a sheath. At the base of the tree we installed a rotating plastic disk with panels of green, yellow and red. And as the disk rotated in front of a light bulb, it sent a bright hue into the tree that reflected in the silvery branches. I could sit and watch it for a long time. Outside the window, the darkness of the night would remain at bay.

Once Christmas and New Years have passed and winter is well on its way, I'll climb back on the ladder and slowly take the lights down. The strings will tangle and I'll make a half-hearted attempt to untangle them. Then, as always, I'll decide to deal with them next year, and I'll put the wad in the box and carry it once again to the attic.

(Victor Landa is news director of Telemundo station KVDA-TV in San Antonio, Texas.)

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Merry Christmas

El Nacimiento Del Niño Dios

Esta navidad el mundo cristiano se prepara a celebrar el nacimiento de Jesús, el redentor del mundo que vino a pagar los pecados de la humanidad y a entregar el mensaje divino de paz y amor para iniciar una nueva época capaz de propiciar el pleno desarrollo del espíritu humano al servicio de sus semejantes.

Hoy como nunca nos encontramos alejados de estos principios. Una conmemoración de la llegada del humilde entre los humildes ha perdido su sentido filosófico, ha propiciado se apoderen los mercados del templo interno de la gente, dominando más la conciencia de la niñez, juventud y adultos la leyenda del Santa Claus proporcionador de todo tipo de regalos, cuanto más suntuosos más presuntamente cercanos al espíritu caritativo que debe reinar en la temporada.

Tan bien manejada ha sido la distorsión de la celebración navideña que para muchas familias pobres se convirtió en un verdadero martirio.

¿Cómo no sacrificar hasta el último centavo con tal de no dejar sin juguetes a los niños propios, cuando sabemos que el vecindario entero proporcionará a los suyos los juguetes más relucientes, los juegos

electrónicos sofisticados de la era moderna, los nuevos vestuarios cuando menos, que se acostumbran dar para hacer digna la celebración? ¿De qué...? ¡Ah!, si. Del nacimiento de Cristo.

Nunca como antes se hace más notoria la necesidad de volver al auténtico espíritu cristiano. Cada vez es más urgente llamar la atención a la humanidad para que voltee a ver el pesebre donde fue depositado el niño Jesús rodeado de pobreza, carente de lujos inútiles cuando su misión era redimir al mundo en contacto con los auténticos valores de la naturaleza entre los que nació, se desarrolló y creó su aún incomprendido mensaje de amor y paz.

El oportuno llamado del Papa Juan Pablo para no convertir la celebración navideña en una festividad de consumo, tiene más características simbólicas que apego a la realidad de comercialización en la que se encuentra desde hace muchos, ¡ay!, muchos años.

Corresponde a los guías espirituales del mundo hacer campaña permanente durante todo el año para hacer conciencia del auténtico significado de esta Noche Buena, de la humildad y pobreza que rodearon el nacimiento de Cristo, del Redentor del Mundo.

Desenredando Las Luces --

Un Ritual Navidenio De Los Landa

Por Victor Landa

Si usted no lo ha hecho ya, entonces de seguro en algún momento de esta semana puede encontrarse a usted mismo sentado en el piso de su casa, con las piernas cruzadas, con una caja polvorienta marcada "lámparas de Navidad" sacada del garage o del desván.

Si usted es como yo, la cuerda de luces plásticas estará reunida en una maraña desesperadamente enredada, que llegó a estar así hace un año, cuando usted decidió que sólo las guardaría como estaban y le haría frente a la maraña al año siguiente.

Bueno, el año siguiente es ahora. Hay algunas cosas de las que no se puede escapar.

Lo que usted hará, porque todos lo hacemos, es conectar la cuerda de luces para ver si todavía alumbran adecuadamente. La masa de alambre y bombillitos puntiagudos brillará y usted empezará a desenredarla, poniéndola en el piso como una corriente de estrellitas de Navidad sobre las locetas. Los niños, si usted es lo suficientemente joven, observarán con asombro a medida que usted convierte la casa en una rejilla de rojo, verde y blanco.

Y entonces, como ocurre siempre, habrá una guirnalda de luces que no funcionará.

No hay por qué asustarse, no todavía por lo menos. Todo el mundo sabe que en el caso de una guirnalda de luces de Navidad que no funciona, hay que inspeccionar cada bombillo individualmente. Se busca una conexión floja, se saca el bombillo del receptáculo y se le vuelve a insertar, se le dan golpecitos con el dedo, se le sacude; entonces se toma el siguiente repitiendo el ejercicio, esperando que sus esfuerzos produzcan la luz. Después de todo, los niños están observando.

Si usted tiene suerte, encontrará la fuente de la obscuridad encordada, restablecerá la luz y pondrá sonrisas en las caras de los chicos.

Después, usted arriesgará su vida y su salud trepándose a una escalera para envolver el árbol de Navidad y alinear el techo con luces. Usted pondrá las luces en el árbol y en la guirnalda, las empujará hacia dentro de los arbustos y las pondrá alrededor de su portal, porque "ésta es la temporada".

Nos rodeamos de luces en todas las Navidades. Encende-

mos velas y chimeneas. Situamos líneas de luminarias en los pasillos de entrada. Los centros comerciales llenan sus corredores y zonas de estacionamiento con guirnaldas y luces, y en la noche el tránsito parece una cuerda de bombillos de Navidad, rojos al alejarse y blancos al aproximarse.

Hay una casa por la que paso de camino a mi casa desde el trabajo, que tiene luces de Navidad y un árbol de Navidad en la ventana pintoresca del frente durante todo el año. Después del Día de Acción de Gracias, la casa se convierte en un faro, con cientos de luces azules y blancas. A menudo he querido detenerme, tocar a la puerta y preguntar por qué. Pero no lo he hecho, principalmente porque estoy contento de la respuesta que he imaginado durante años.

A todo nuestro alrededor, a medida que adelantan las estaciones y los días van siendo más cortos y las noches más largas, procuramos iluminar la obscuridad. La Navidad es la excusa perfecta para hacer que nuestros lugares parez-

can festivos, para que nuestra obscuridad sea tolerable.

Es como si tratáramos de reflejar a las estrellas del cielo, al despliegue interminable de puntos brillantes que parecen pulgar del trasfondo negro de la noche. Imitamos la constancia de la naturaleza al recrear las constelaciones del cielo en el mundo que nos rodea, porque aún en la obscuridad absoluta de lo más frío del invierno, las estrellas alumbran brillantemente y parecen estar más cercanas que antes.

No nos gusta la obscuridad y no nos gusta el silencio.

Los momentos de silencio en una conversación se describen a menudo como tensos y extraños, como si el objetivo de la conversación no fuera el de comunicarse sino el de llenar un vacío. Y así conversamos también al adornar y alumbrar nuestros alrededores, como si estuviéramos diciendo: "No hay obscuridad aquí".

Cuando yo era niño, tuvimos un árbol de Navidad hecho de aluminio. Estaba envasado en una caja y cada rama in-

dividual estaba colocada cuidadosamente en una envoltura. En la base del árbol instalamos un disco plástico rotativo con piezas de verde, amarillo y rojo. Y a medida que el disco rotaba delante de un bombillo, enviaba un matiz brillante hacia el árbol, que se reflejaba en las ramas plateadas.

Yo podía sentarme y observarlo durante largo tiempo. De la ventana hacia fuera, la obscuridad de la noche permanecería a raya. Una vez que la Navidad y el Año Nuevo hayan pasado, y que el invierno esté aún de camino, me preparé de nuevo en la escalera y bajaré lentamente las luces. Las cuerdas se enredarán y yo haré un intento medio descorazonado para desenredarlas. Entonces, como siempre, decidiré hacer eso al año siguiente, pondré el enredo en la caja y lo llevaré al desván otra vez.

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Lucifer Leads A Latino Holiday

By Rick Martínez

"Very well, imprudent young boy, it is clear that you are unaware of my great pride. Thank me that you leave alive!"

Lucifer, in the play "Los Pastores"

While Las Posadas is a Christmas event in Latino communities across the Southwest steeped in a ritual march, prayer and hymns, there is another cultural nativity event that features Lucifer and a range of devilish humor.

It is Los Pastores, the Mexican shepherds' play that has three centuries of history in the Southwest and continues to instill in barrio residents and their uptown kin a cultural link to a storied past.

So says anthropologist Richard R. Flores who -- not unlike George Plimpton in "Paper Lion" who put on a football helmet -- performed in Los Pastores for two seasons while doing specific research on an 82-year-old troupe in his native San Antonio.

Flores zooms in on the troupe, its players and history in his book "Los Pastores: History and Performance in the Mexican Shepherds' Play of Southwest Texas, Smithsonian Institution Press, No-

vember 1995, \$15.95 paperback, \$49 hardback (cloth).

Los Pastores is the story of shepherds thwarted by Lucifer and other devils as they bring humble gifts to the Christ child. It is a festive event, peppered with doses of comedy, in which the actors usually imbibe on tequila or other libations that serve to lubricate the creative juices.

"It's by no means solemn," Flores, an assistant professor in anthropology and Chicano Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, says.

"Quite a bit of drinking goes on with the male actors. Often the play is performed outdoors and, they reason, drinking warms you up. Or they'll figure out another reason."

It's an off-beat, three-hour performance that for generations has kept its audience. Indeed, the play opens with this announcement: "La gente ya no viene por devoción sino por diversión. (The people no longer come for devotion but for diversion)."

The nativity play has its roots in medieval Spain. Spanish missionaries brought the form to the New World, including the United States, where it continues to flourish in Texas, New Mexico, California and Mexico.

"The missionaries wrote versions of the play and used them to indoctrinate indigenous peoples," Flores says.

San Antonio's troupe dates to 1913 and has three generations of actors. It just started on its fourth with the inclusion of a 4-year-old.

This troupe has its roots in Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church on the city's Latino west side. A core group of families has fueled the troupe, but neither a familial link nor membership at Guadalupe are prerequisites for joining. Guadalupe Church provides a place to rehearse and furnishes a vehicle for taking members to performances.

Performances are not trained actors, nor are they paid. Donations are forwarded to the church.

Rehearsals begin in September and the play traditionally opens Dec. 24 at Guadalupe Church, with neighborhood performances continuing through February.

Pivotal in creation of this enduring legacy, Flores argues, is the fact that when Los Pastores is due to come to a neighborhood, neighbors join with a host to mow the lawn, rake the leaves and create a common feast of food

Continued Page 7



En ocasión de las festividades navideñas, las calles de las ciudades están abarrotadas de gente que camina de un lugar a otro, se detienen y entran o salen de las tiendas, en busca de regalos para los seres queridos. Es la tradición.

Durante las Navidades, hay mucha movilización de dinero; las empresas productivas por lo regular dan bonificaciones a sus trabajadores; debido a las ventas voluminosas, las tiendas emplean personal adicional, en fin, hay mil y una maneras de evolucionar el capital.

Es posible que para 240 millones de personas en los Estados Unidos no hay ninguna dificultad notable en estas navidades, pues de una manera u otra encontrarán recursos para celebrar la festividad.

Pero para una pequeña minoría que podría ser entre 500,000 a un millón de personas, la situación será diferente. Se trata de gente que no tiene por obligación que esconderse en alguna estación subterránea de trenes o camiones.

Nosotros llamamos a esas personas, los desamparados, aquellos que para comer tienen que rebuscar entre los desperdicios de alimentos en los zafacones o ser favorecidos por la caridad de algún transeúnte que se conmueve a verlos así.

Esas personas no tendrán navidad, o es posible que un gran número de ellas si las tengamos, dependiendo de que usted, lector, se conmueva con este comentario y se sienta con deseos de ayudar a uno de esos pobres desgraciados.

Es una ayuda tan sencilla por un día, dos, tres, de los que están cerca de la Navidad. Pedir más que eso, a lo mejor

será exigir mucho para buscar resolver un problema que quierase aceptar o no compete a las autoridades federales.

Nosotros, sin embargo, podemos aportar un granito de arena para algar a estas pobres

almas y de esa forma dar más calor a una celebración tradicional que tiene mucho que ver con el amor, es sacrificio y con el cuidado a los demás, porque surgió con el nacimiento de Dios hecho hombre, en su afán por salvar a la humanidad.

Se puede socorrer individualmente a un desamparado, dándole comida en la calle o quién sabe si de otra mejor forma.

Se puede contribuir con alguna organización o iglesia que haya preparado un encuentro para esa gente sin hogar.

Podemos coleccionar alimentos, ropa y a lo mejor buscar algún techo que ofrecer.

En fin hay muchas maneras de celebrar la Navidad, no sólo para nosotros que gracias a Dios disponemos de recursos (muchos o pocos) para cumplir con nuestras obligaciones familiares, sino también para esos seres de que estamos hablando.

No es que se pretenda resolver el problema de los desamparados de una vez. Eso es difícil hasta para el Gobierno Federal y las administraciones municipales.

Pero insistimos que individualmente podemos contribuir, al menos con demostrar a esas personas abandonadas y olvidadas por la sociedad, que todavía hay unos pocos seres humanos que si quieren ayudarlos tan siquiera a celebrar una Feliz Navidad.

Merry Christmas! ¡Feliz Navidad!

EL ORIGEN DE LAS POSADAS

Para conocer cómo se inició la práctica de las Posadas en México es necesario remontarse más allá del periodo colonial.

Los antiguos mexicanos celebran en la época invernal el advenimiento de Huitzilopochtli, temporada que coincidía con la práctica europea de celebrar la Navidad. Probablemente, fueron los religiosos agustinos quienes idearon la sustitución de personajes; desaparecieron a Huitzilopochtli del culto, pero se mantuvo la celebración durante la misma época, con características diferentes y siguiendo la tradición cristiana. Sustituciones similares se realizaron en los templos prehispánicos sobre los que se construyeron iglesias cristianas.

Los religiosos que tuvieron a su cargo la evangelización representaron en las posadas el peregrinar de José y María a su salida de Nazaret en camino a Belén, y, posteriormente, el nacimiento de Jesús. Esta representación se conforma de nueve posadas que se inician el 16 de diciembre, y consisten en solicitar alojamiento en ese simbólico camino a Belén hasta el día 24, fecha del nacimiento de Jesús.

Las Posadas, como se conocen en México, no existen en ningún lugar del mundo, fueron creadas para evangelizar y el pueblo las adoptó para conservarlas dentro de su cultura. En sus inicios, las posadas no eran como ahora las conocemos en esa época de coloniza-



- Entre santos peregrinos, peregrinos.....

ción se efectuaba una misa de aguinaldo que ya entonces se celebraba en España.

Como atractivo para lograr la evangelización los religiosos le agregaron a la celebración otros elementos que gustaron a la población nativa, como luces

de bengala, cohetes y las piñatas, aunque éstas ya se usaban en España el "Domingo de Piñata", o sea el primer domingo de cuaresma.

En esos tiempos se incluyeron, como parte de la celebración, los villancicos, cantos populares que se ejecutaban en diferentes festejos; entre ellos la Navidad. Estos cantos fueron conocidos y recreados por la población de México, una muestra es el siguiente: Los mejicanos alegres/ también a su usanza salen/ quien campea la lealtad/ bien es que aplauso campe;/ y con las cláusulas tiernas/ del mejicano lenguaje/ es un tocotin sonoro/ dice con voces suaves:/ la ya timojica/ totlazo Zuapilli/ maca ammo, Tonantzin/ titechmoicahillis/ Ma nel in Lihuicac/ huel timomaquitz/ ;amo nozo quen-

man/ timotlanamictiz?

El villancico anterior se atribuye a Sor Juana y a un Tocotin.

En el siglo XVIII, Carlos III prohibió estos cantos, prohibición que también se hizo efectiva en México. Aún cuando a su muerte se volvieron a poner en práctica, ya habían perdido arraigo en la población.

No sucedió lo mismo con las pastorelas, drama que representa la adoración que los pastores iban a hacer a Belén. Este tipo de teatro popular fue utilizado por los franciscanos para apoyar la consolidación de la nueva religión. La primera representación data del año de 1538 y se realizó en Tlaxcala el día de San Juan Bautista. Actualmente, se han conservado las pastorelas en varios estados de la república, para lo cual se

reunen grupos de personas que mantienen relación con la estructura popular religiosa para poderlas llevar a cabo.

Entre las representaciones de las pastorelas se dan diferentes interpretaciones, algunas formales en un escenario y otras, como "La Rama", que adquirió una estructura diferente tomando personajes de las pastorelas. Cada una de ellas se caracteriza por la cultura de los habitantes de los lugares donde se mantienen.

De las iglesias, las posadas pasaron a formar parte del ritual familiar y del barrio. Este cambio, que se dan en el siglo XVIII, significó que los nacimientos (representados en tiempos anteriores por pinturas y esculturas, algunas de ellas importadas), se multiplican en las casas. Para satisfacer esta necesidad, los artesanos mexicanos desempeñaron un papel importante. Además, el hecho de llevar a las casas, para satisfacer esta necesidad, los artesanos mexicanos desempeñaron un papel importante. Además, el hecho de llevar a las casas las posadas o "jornadas", como también se les llamaba en aquella época, propició una organización de barrios o de familias para cumplir con las nueve posadas.

Algunos lugares como Amozoc, en el estado de Puebla, Tlaquepaque, en Jalisco, se hicieron famosos por sus figuras de barro y actualmente siguen siendo lugares donde se puede

obtener lo necesario para el montaje de un nacimiento. En Guanajuato se hacían imágenes en cera y eran muy apreciadas por la población.

Aún cuando en las iglesias no desaparecieron del todo las posadas, en las casas adquirieron mayor popularidad. El pueblo las adopta y las transforma de acuerdo a sus posibilidades y sus propias características culturales. A las posadas, se agregaron alimentos especiales (que variaron en cada región), el baile (incluido ya en tiempos de la colonia) y la petición de aguinaldo encargado a grupos de niños y jóvenes, cosa que molestaba a las autoridades religiosas que en 1808 enviaron una carta al alcalde señalando que "El Ilmo. Sr. Arzobispo encarga que se eviten los coloquios, y las jornadas o funciones que en estos días se tienen por las noches en casas particulares, con cuyo pretexto hay desórdenes y bailes y otras diversiones incompatibles con la veneración que exigen los santos misterios del presente tiempo". La petición no trascendió y las costumbres navideñas se siguieron manifestando.

Con estos elementos llegan las Posadas del siglo XX, despojadas en buena medida de la religiosidad que, inicialmente, les había dado vida. Permanecen como una manifestación pagana, como dicen algunos, pero llenas de elementos que surgieron de las aportaciones del pueblo, que en cada lugar adquirió sus peculiaridades para hacer una expresión propia.

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THE CHRISTMAS WATCH: TIME PRESENT AND TIME PAST

CHRISTMAS GHOSTS AND TRADITIONS

By Cristóbal S. Berry-Cabán
In 1941, Christmas was a somber occasion. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor earlier that month and the United States' entry into World War II dampened the nation's holiday mood. Gifts were exchanged not so much in the joy of giving, but more as a longing for peaceful times.

That Christmas Eve a young man -- possibly one preparing to leave for war -- received a small, elongated, beautifully wrapped parcel.

It contained a Longines timepiece bearing the simple inscription:

M.L. to W.L.
12-24-41

Elegant yet rugged, the watch curved to fit a man's wrist perfectly. In better times, the style had captured the fancy of the

Fitzgerald era. It expressed a ruggedness chosen by veteran pilots, sea captains and adventurers throughout the world. Yet, in its elegance, it harmonized with tailored evening clothes.

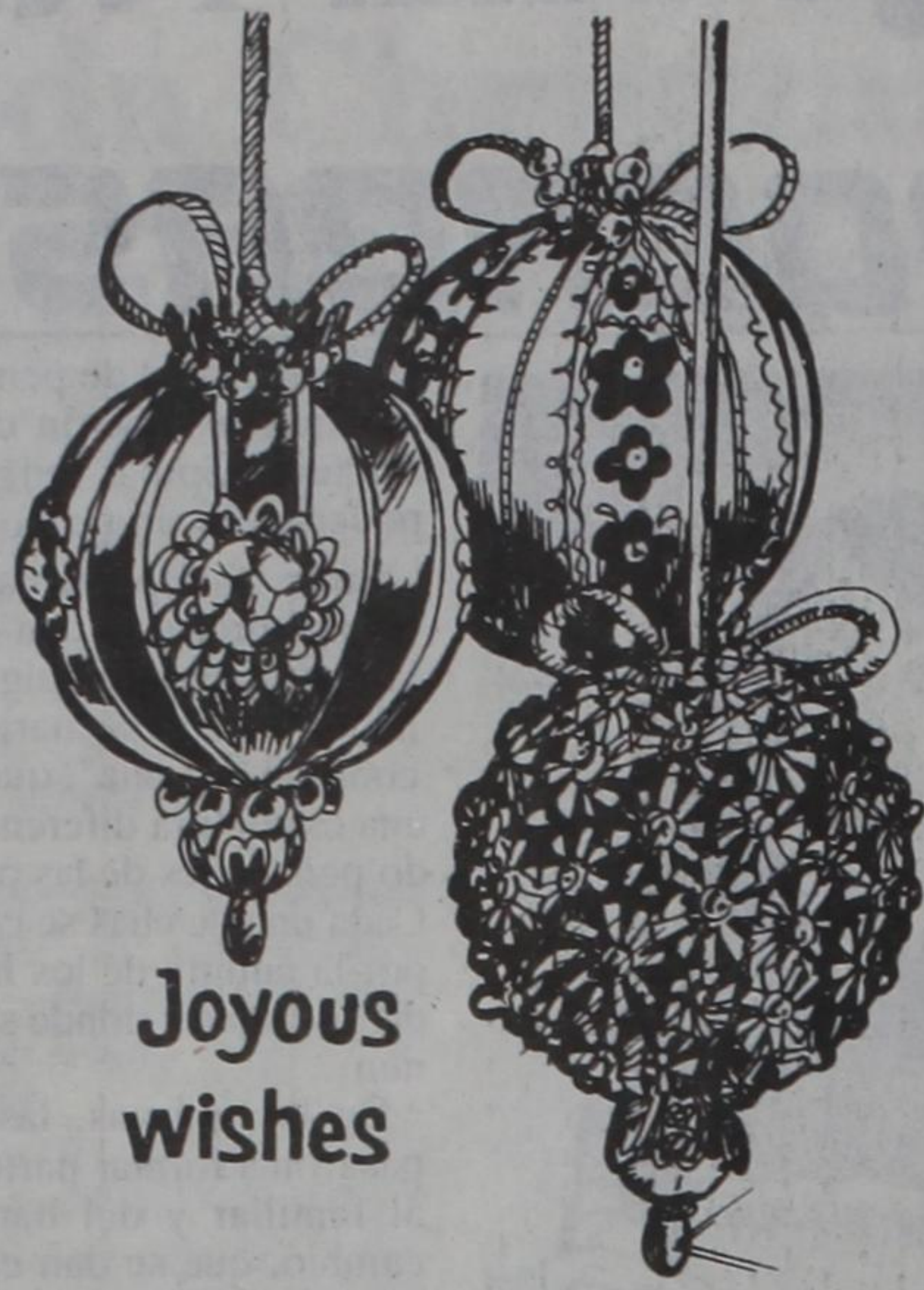
On the front of W.L.'s watch was a slender, arching crystal held firmly by a gold-plated metal case. Arabic numbers, from 1 to 12, marked the time. An inset hand dial spaced each second.

This year, half a century after M.L. gave W.L. the Longines as an expression of her love, I came across it at a Florida flea market.

It was a skeleton of its former self. Though it still marked time, it was in poor condition. I bargained for it and paid the price. I gave it a much-needed cleaning, a new crystal and, finally, a new, leather wrist band.

In return, it gave me a new appreciation of time.

When our ancestors first perceived the concept of time, they recorded it by the rising and setting of the sun. Later we came to understand that the regular succession of day and night is caused by the rotation of Earth's axis, a repetition



Joyous wishes

We wish to one and all a Christmas filled with peace and good will.

called solar time.

Sundials came along to offer more precision. The shadow of a pointer, or gnomon, cast by the sun onto a horizontal plate marked time in hours. Eventually came mechanical clocks, and watches. These inventions established the notion of artificial time segments down to minutes and seconds.

Now each morning, before I strap the Longines to my wrist, I undertake the ritual that prepares its mechanism. Holding the pinion between my right thumb and index finger, I wind it 10 complete turns.

Occasionally I forget to wind it, upsetting its circadian rhythm. Not realizing that my chronometer erred, I think, "I sure accomplished a lot already today," or wonder why my stomach tells me I'm hungry.

The dial, analogous to the solar day, acknowledges that time revolves in a circle. More

modern creations such as digital clocks and watches convey no such flow. They comprehend just one instant, displaying it in a vacuum. This hides the process that includes what went before and what comes after. A digital watch points only toward what should be accomplished "now."

On Christmas Eve I will wear my Longines to church. Later, each member of my family will open a gift given with the same love that M.L. felt for W.L.

On Dec. 24, my watch will be 50 years old.

In an age of battery- and solar-powered digital timepieces, this spring-run clock remains an ironic reminder that in our committed quest to save time, we are often deprived of what we value most: love, history, a sense of community.

(Cristóbal S. Berry-Cabán is president of Atlantic Resources Corporation in Reston, Va.)

It was cold and I wanted to run, but I couldn't. My grandmother was holding on to my hand and she didn't walk very fast. I could see the light shining through the stained glass windows at Holy Family Church. The bell was pealing loudly and the posada was about to begin. Tonight was special, because I was going to be in the procession. I wanted so to run!

El Paso has a unique flavor. Two cultures, Mexican and American, have blended to make Christmas a special time. Shortly after Thanksgiving the giant star is lit on the slope of Mount Franklin, ushering in the season. Rows and rows of tiny colored lights adorn the city on this side of the border, and in Juárez multicolored piñatas and bright pieces of paper with intricately cut patterns flap in the wind.

My house starts to bustle. Traditions are strong and there is much to do. We have to decorate. First to come out will be the nacimiento. The Nativity has a special place -- Mary and Joseph with the crib empty until Christmas Eve. When the candles are lit and the baby is laid, my grandson Carlitos will stand by and softly sing "Apio Verde (green celery) to you," the eternal comic version of "Happy Birthday to You," to the Christ child.

We have to shop and wrap gifts. Stockings will be filled and the kitchen once again becomes our haven full of the delicious smells of cinnamon, butter and hot chocolate all mixed with laughter and good cheer. Bizcochitos, cookies spiced heavily with anise, are baked. We spend a whole day making tamales and sacking them to take to friends and relatives.

We make buñuelos and hot Mexican chocolate. I recount how my grandmother would knead the dough with muchas ganas and hand me a testal. I would take the ball of dough and flatten it between my hand

and then place it on my knee over the clean piece of muslin, stretching it as far as it would go without tearing. I would pull down, away from my knee, until it would stretch no more.

She would then lift the paper-thin buñuelo and drop it gently into a pan of hot grease. When it was done, she would sprinkle it with sugar and cinnamon. Stacks of buñuelos two feet high occupied every available space in the big kitchen.

In the evening of two of us would set off to deliver our day's work. Hugs and greetings were exchanged as we were scooted into warm sitting rooms. I can't forget the smells of the cold night air as it mingled with the cinnamon on our buñuelos wrapped in white tissue paper covered with grease spots.

I don't decorate the tree until my daughter Marta is home. She lives far away in Rhode Island. As soon as she arrives she brings out the boxes and hangs the adornos on the fresh fir tree. The ornaments are old. They are made of straw, yarn and tin. There are tiny dolls my girls played with when they were little and construction-paper stars made by little loving hands in kindergarten, as well as long red chiles. These combined with strings of clear lights complete the tree. Poinsettias are everywhere. In Spanish we call them las flores de la Nochebuena. Merry Christmas, Feliz Navidad.

Greetings are exchanged in two languages everywhere. Carolers are heard outside and we open our doors to the young singers of the posadas. They come in, guitars in hand, and stand around our living room. "Quién le da posada?" they sing. Who will welcome these two weary travelers? They leave and continue until they reach the last house, where they will be received and

stay to celebrate. There the traditional piñata will be broken. The posada will continue through the nine days before Christmas. It's like a novena, hence the nine days. The luminarias are set up around the outside of the house on Christmas Eve. Small brown paper bags filled with sand and a candle lit inside adorn the rooftops and outline the house. It looks beautiful from a distance. Candles illuminating the way in the dark of night.

We drive to Holy Family Church to mass. The lights are shining through the same stain glass windows. I feel the ghosts in the old church as father begins the procession. After mass, we come home to open our gifts and enjoy each other's company. The tree and decorations stay up until Jan. 6, Día de Reyes.

On the feast of the Magi, I go to Juárez to buy the rosca de reyes, a round loaf of sweet bread decorated with raisins, nuts and colorful dried fruit. Before the rosca is baked, a little toy baby is pushed into the dough. As we each take our slice, we look for the baby. Whoever finds it will host another party Feb. 2, the feast of Candlemass, Día de la Candelaria.

Why all the fuss with traditions? The fiestas give the family an excuse to get together. The extended family gathers to celebrate and partake of good time.

They all come to our house -- our children and their children to nestle close by me and the ghosts that I always carry close to me. The little girl who held on to her grandmother's hand is now herself a grandmother. As the years pass, the memories fade more and more.

Now I will be a part of their money. That's how traditions are passed on. The grandchildren hold on to my hands now, observing, smelling, feeling and attaching themselves to that long line of identities that will make them who they are. (Elisa Martinez, of El Paso, Texas, is a teacher and writer.)

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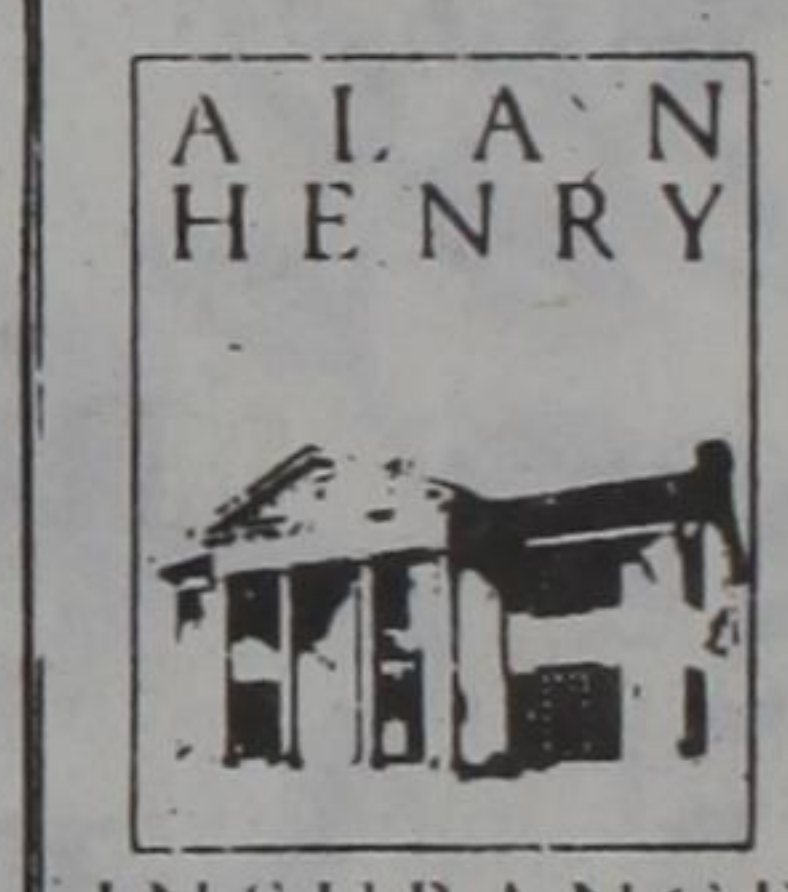
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Mexican American Christmas

by Raoul Lowery Contreras

Christmas Eve day seemed like a normal day to me that day, four years after our arrival in California from Mexico. This is the first Christmas I remember.

The cloudless sky was blue, the temperature, mid-60s. For little Mexican boys in Southern California, a White Christmas is rare.

Street cars clanged by every few minutes, including one that took my mother to work. My great-grandmother started grinding dried corn on a concave stone metate (meh-tah-teh) at daybreak, stopping only long enough to make my breakfast, then to tell me to go out and play.

Sensing something was up, I told my nana (great-grandmother) I would help her in the kitchen and promised not to get in her way. By 9:00, half a dozen women relatives were scurrying about our kitchen, getting in my way.

How my hands tired grinding corn into a fine flour. The corn flour, the masa (mah-sah), I was told, was destined for tamales (tah-mah-lehs). So was the spiced-up pork and beef, simmering in huge, separate pots. Then, with a wooden spoon, I folded lard into the masa until my arms almost dropped off. Nana brought our hojas (oh-haws, corn shucks), which had been soaking in water.

Smoothing each one out, she spread our masa out on individual hojas, adding a small amount of beef or pork on top, then carefully folded the masa around the meat. Wrapping the hoja around the whole thing, leaving one end open. Nana carefully stacked the tamales into a large pot for steaming.

There is no time certain for cooking tamales, thus they must be tasted from time to time. This process is best described in "Mexican-American Folklore," by University of Texas Professor John West.

"After an hour of steaming, the tamales should be ready -- and a taste-test is the only way to check. Off comes the top, then the blanket of shucks...the tamale is unwrapped, and if it comes free of the hoja, the prognosis is excellent. Then the tasting -- and rolling of eyes, and the pronouncement that these are the best tamales ever made -- make it plain that the hours of work have not been in vain."

Our tamales were the best ever made, by anyone.

Attention was then turned to making bunuelos (boon-whelohs), giant flour tortillas deep fried and sprinkled with cinna-



Merry Christmas

mon and sugar. Then, came Christmas cookies, bizcochos (beez-koh-chos).

With all the goodies around, I couldn't wait for my mother to come home from work. What I didn't know is that we would have to go on a Posada (poh-sah-dah) before we could attack the Christmas feast. Brought over by our Spanish ancestors, the Posada re-enacts the Christmas Eve in which Joseph and Mary went from house to house, inn to inn, seeking shelter.

That 1946 Christmas was so long ago, over half the world's population has been born since that evening, so I'd forgotten the words we sang that night. Until, that is, I read them in Professor West's book.

We went from house to house, singing in Spanish: "Who will give shelter to these pilgrims, who come, tired from traveling the roads?"

At each house we heard: "There is no shelter..." until we reached our apartment, where my nana sang, "Enter, holy travelers, receive this corner; although the chapel is poor -- I give thee from the heart." Shaking hands and hugging, we entered, salivating at the food to be eaten.

Grown-ups never tell little boys what's in Christmas packages, nor do they always tell them what's going on, even on Christmas Eve. No one told me my grandfather was returning from the Middle East, my great-uncle from Alaska, my paratrooper cousin from Germany, or that my infantryman Uncle Johnny was coming home from the Pacific.

World War II had taken the men of my family and scattered them around the world. But now, the war was over. I knew that; I had thrown torn-up newspaper out the window when San Diego went berserk on Victory Day. Men in uniform were coming home to the barrio every day.

No one told me the Contreras men were coming home for Christmas.

One by one, they arrived. I hardly remembered them, not having seen them for three years. Finally, up the stairs came my Uncle Johnny, at 21 the best-looking soldier that ever lived. What a glorious moment! I jumped on him, almost knocking him over.

He was home from the war, and he was alive. There would be no telegrams to our house; there would be no Contreras men buried on some Pacific island or in Flanders Fields.

Millions of American homes experienced a wonderful Christmas that year, as their men came home, too, but what made ours different and special was the tamales, the Posada, bunuelos and bizcocho cookies. And, of course, for us children -- a pinata.

In his "Mexican-American Folklore," Professor West quotes an unnamed priest, probably a Spaniard, as saying, "... the pinata I think is just something the Mexican people threw in for the kids because they have pinatas for every occasion. They added the pinata to try to get the kids to come to the celebration and maybe learn something about the true meaning of Christmas.

These Mexicans are so clever. It worked.



'Twas The Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the CASA,

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

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

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

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Flying South With Santa

By Patricia Guadalupe
I'm convinced Christmas is more fun in the Caribbean. I mean, just listen to the radio here in the States, with all that "Silent Night" thing and all those other solemn songs. Contrast that to the radio in Puerto Rico, where during the holidays, even church music has some sort of salsa or merengue variation. And there's no need to hide under layers of heavy clothing or worry that you'll slip on the ice if you wear those heels to the holiday party. The holidays don't end in Puerto Rico until mid-January. That certainly has to be more fun that going back to work here on the day after New Year's.

Thousands upon thousands show up at the terminal for the three-and-a-half-hour flight, although only a few of them will actually get on the plane. The rest are there for la despedida and last-minute reminders to say hi to Juniol, Paco, Pepe, Juan, Anita, Maria, Nelson, Willie and the neighbors and cousins. And they wait until you are far away to shout out the entire contents of your suitcase and who should get what is in it, even though you've gone over it ad nauseam at home. Oh, and don't forget, that bag is never checked with the rest of the stuff, because, ay dios mio! what if the airline loses it and you get there with no regalos?

Yep, it's that time of the year again. Time to head out to San Juan. The holiday starts in earnest at the American Airlines terminal at Kennedy International Airport in Los Nueva Yores. While other airlines serve the Caribbean, American has controlled close to 80 percent of the market for a long time.

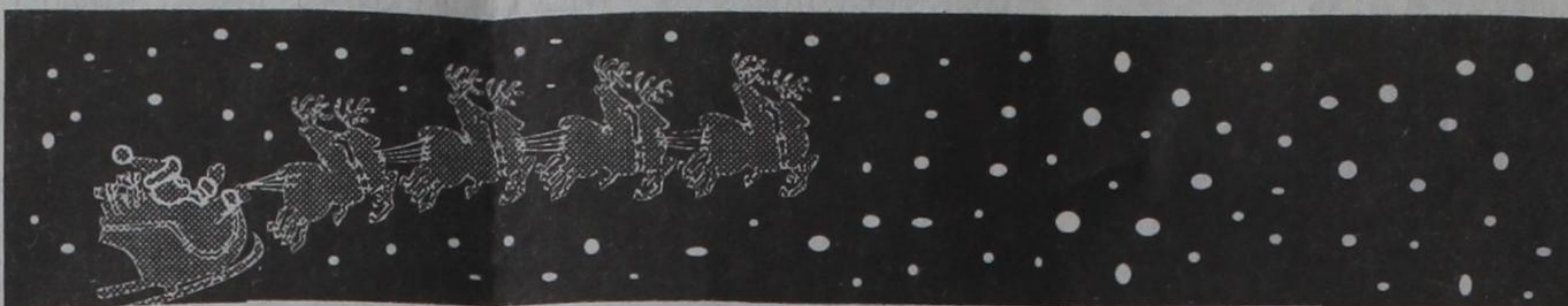
Whatever you can't fit in that bag because it wouldn't close, even though your fat cousin sat on it last night, is put in a box and wrapped with an entire roll of heavy-duty construction tape. "Paque no se abra." Then tied with rope, por si acaso. In big, black magic marker, the recipient's address is written down on all six sides of the box. In case, God forbid, it does get lost and it lands somewhere on the side where the address isn't written and where would the kind person who found it know where to send it?

And while the Puerto Rican population in the United States is expanding beyond New York, the Big Apple remains the island's mainland capital. And of the Dominican Republic, for that matter, so Kennedy is still it.

These boxes are the Puerto Rican Samsonites you may have heard about. Do you remember the commercial of a gorilla in a cage throwing around a suitcase that didn't break, no matter what the animal did? They had to have stolen that idea from a Kennedy Airport holiday flight. You could probably ship an entire 24-piece china set in a Puerto Rican Samsonite and nothing would break.

There are three groups of people who travel from Kennedy Airport at Christmas: the Puerto Ricans, the Dominicans and EVERYBODY ELSE. The everybody else are usually small crowds of white people, waiting silently for their flights to some "white people's" vacation spot, like Miami or Bermuda or Jamaica. Any sounds they make are drowned out by the hordes traveling a la casa de mami in San Juan or Santo Domingo.

Of course, no one thinks about what happens when you have to open one. I've seen near-riots at Kennedy when



mas gifts for someone on the island. And even though it's 10 below outside, many are wearing shorts and T-shirts, ready for the warm, tropical sun. When it's time to starting boarding, everyone, regardless of seat assignment, gets up and tramples the tiny young woman at the gate. We are desperate to get to the beach. Naturally, the minute the seat-belt sign is turned off, the

flight becomes a cabaret show. There's a lot of walking in the aisles, shouting and laughing -- and the requisite domino game is going. There may be a movie playing, but that's usually to give the small kids something to do while the adults perfect the art of socializing. After a while, a glance out the window and the deep blue water and mountains peek into view from under the clouds. Pretty soon you'll be

una noche entera cerrándola!" Claro que SIEMPRE ha alguien llorando cuando es hora de irse. Pero siempre es alguien que se queda para bregar con el frío y "noche de paz." Pobrecita. En la salida, el gentío espera, hablando duro, tocando salsa o merengue en esas radios enormes que seguramente son regalos de Navidad para algun familiar. Aunque probablemente hace bastante frío afuera, muchos llevan pantalones cortos y camisetas, preparados para el calor tropical. Tan pronto anuncian el vuelo, TODOS -- sin importar el asiento asignado -- se levantan y casi atropellan a la pobre muchacha en la entrada. Es tanta la desesperación por llegar a la playa. Y claro, al apagarse la señal

part of that Puerto Rican tradition of clapping when the plane lands, and you'll see the faces of thousands of relatives pressed against the glass at the Arrivals Terminal, excitedly jumping up and down. llego! ¡llego! In that crowd will be mami. "Ay mijita, you're so pale. You need some sun." Yep. Christmas is more fun in the Caribbean. No doubt about that. And a big part of the fun is the trip down. (Patricia Guadalupe, a veteran of these flights, is a columnist with Hispanic Business magazine and news director at the public radio network Pacifica Radio.) (c) 1997, Hispanic Link News Service. Distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Merry Christmas
Feliz Navidad

A La Isla Con Santa Clos

Por: Patricia Guadalupe

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

torriqueños, los dominicanos, y LOS DEMAS. Los llamados demás usualmente son pequeños grupos de anglosajones calladitos que mayormente viajan a lugares populares entre anglosajones durante esa época: Miami o Bermuda o Jamaica. No se ven ni se escuchan por el alboroto latino en el aeropuerto de los que van a "la casa de mami" en San Juan o Santo Domingo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Merry Christmas - Feliz Navidad

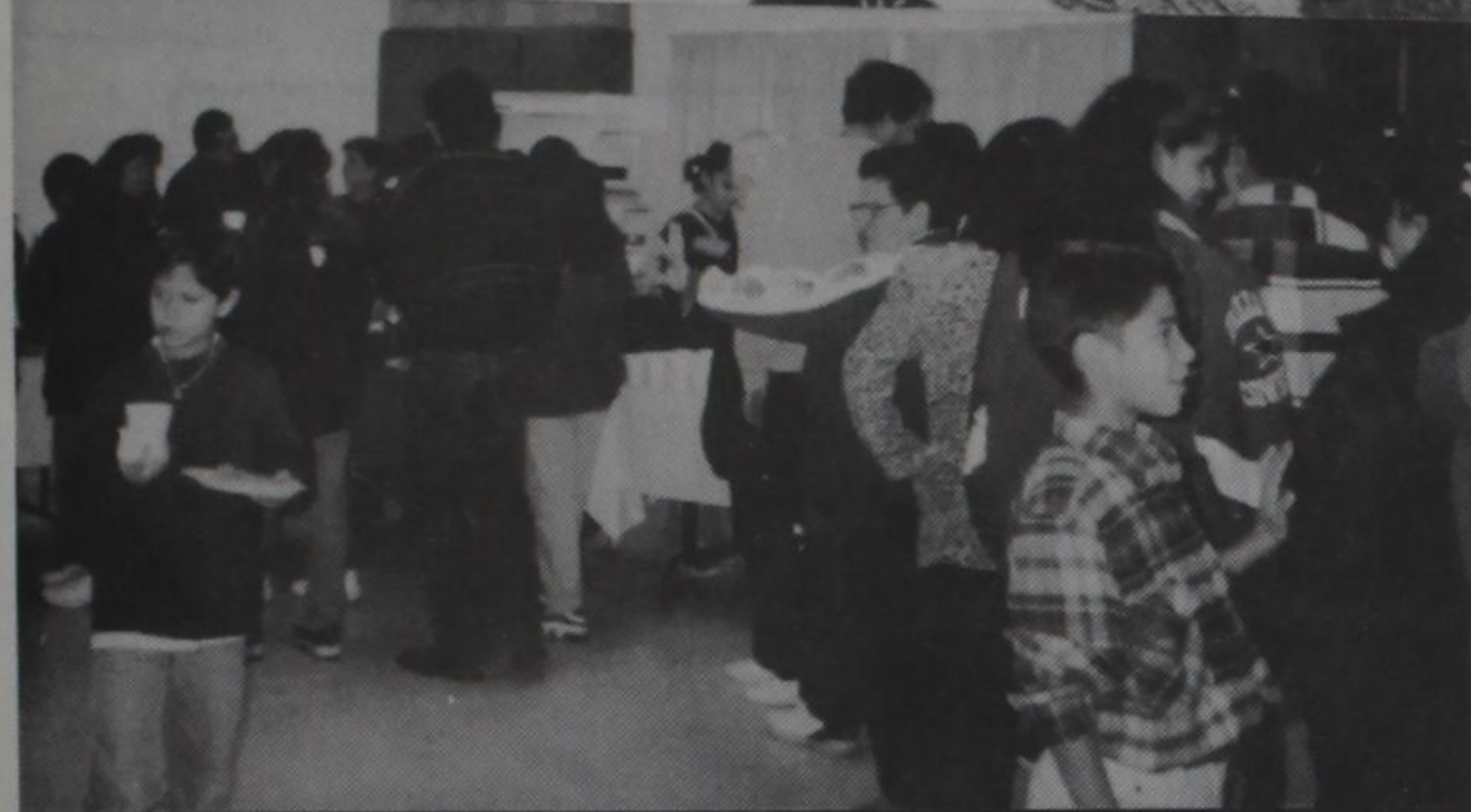
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Las Posadas En Lubbock

Las Posadas se celebraron en Lubbock esta pasada fin de semana en el Barrio Guadalupe. Se llevo a cabo una procesion ademas de se proveo comida para los que asistieron y dulces y regalos para los chiquitines. Gracias a El Consejo de Lubbock, El Lubbock Arts Alliance, Guadalupe Neighborhood Association, El Editor y VG& M Productions por su ayuda en esta celebracion de este año.



From Page 2

and drink. "It is this collective work that really makes a community a community," he says.

As perhaps a testament to its liturgical roots, many neighborhood performances of Los Pastores are sponsored by people who had made spiritual "promesas" -- often prayers to the Virgin Mary or St. Jude -- that they would in exchange for a blessing of some sort. Requested blessings can range from cure of a loved one's disease to remedies for financial woes.

On a larger scale, writes Flores, "One of the benefits of Los Pastores, I suggest, is the long-term presence of a cultural event that functions as a public reminder of the history and culture of the Mexican Americans."

While the San Antonio event has received wider attention through an annual performances at San Jose Mission -- usually covered by the media -- Flores sees this as diminishing the social context. The annual event is sponsored by the San Antonio Conservation Society.

"The conservation society really wants to preserve a tradition, but what they are preserving by turning Los Pastores into a performance for an audience is the formality of it, not the true sharing of a community that comes together to host."

Flores admits this is an anthropologist's deeper context not really shared by the players. He puts it into a historical context that includes Spaniards, Mexicanos and Tejanos from the establishment of the town of San Francisco de Bexar in 1731. The city of San Antonio was established in the 1820s. During the 20th Century there have been a number of Los Pastores troupes in San Antonio, but others died out in the 1960s.

Flores' book leaves us with a question not answered by publication time: Will current director Victor David Elizondo (called Vincente Manuel in the book), who has been in poor health, be able to perform this December in what would be his 50th anniversary with the troupe?

Flores doesn't know, but he plans to be at Guadalupe Church Dec. 24 to find out.

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Monseñor Plácido Rodríguez, Obispo de Lubbock
mensaje Navideño 1997
¡Felices Pascuas de Navidad!

Estimados feligreses,

En esta Navidad de 1997, quiero desearles las más felices Navidades a todos y a cada uno de ustedes. Espero que el padre del Cielo, quien nos colma con su mejor y único regalo del cielo, con su único Hijo, nacido en Belén, les llene de regalos y bendiciones por todo el año venidero, 1998.

Seguimos avanzando hacia el año del Gran Jubileo, año 2000. Ya llevamos un año de experiencia y e práctica en la preparación hacia el III Milenio, y este año lo hemos enfocado en la persona de Jesús, con los temas de fe, de bautismo, y en maria como modelo de fe. Con esta preparación ya estamos más listos y atentos para contemplar la Encarnación, la revelación plena del Amor del Padre, y el plan de Redención, que es su Hijo Jesús, nacido en Belén. Espero que todos los feligreses de esta Diócesis de Lubbock ya hayan descubierto las riquezas de la Iglesia, riquezas y bendiciones dispuestas al alcance de toda persona que busca al Señor.

Como Diócesis de Lubbock, y a se han hecho los planes y preparativos para el Gran Jubileo, y se han hecho según los planteamientos del papa Juan Pablo II. Espero que cada parroquia, sobre todo que cada Católico dentro de la parroquia, ya haya experimentado las bendiciones de la Encarnación. La parroquia es la expresión local de la Iglesia Diocesana, para que cada fiel se llene de la vida que es Jesucristo. Que la celebración local del nacimiento de Jesús en Belén sea lo que los llene de alegría, felicidad, y Redención copiosa.

Que la celebración Navideña en su parroquia y en su hogar santifique su hogar, sus hijos, y todo su trabajo. Que sus trabajos, ilusiones, y sueños de la vida se vean realizados en el Trabajo de la Salvación que comenzó con la primera Navidad.

Reiterando los mejores deseos y las bendiciones Navideñas, para que el Niño Dios, nacido en Belén, los colme de felicidad y los conduzca al año nuevo, 1998!
¡Felices Pascuas de Navidad! Y
¡un Próspero Año Nuevo 1998!

Mos Rev. Plácido Rodríguez, Bishop of Lubbock
Christmas Message 1997
Merry Christmas!

Dear Friends:

I wish you a most sincere Merry Christmas, filled with special blessings from Heaven! May you enjoy this beautiful season of free gifts, gifts of grace, and above all the Free Gift from the Father in Heaven, his Son, Jesus.

We are moving inexorably towards the Jubilee Year, 2000. We have one year of immediate preparation by focusing on Jesus, reflecting on faith, baptism, and on Mary as the model of faith. By now we are more prepared to contemplate on the Incarnation, the fullness of the revelation of the love of the Father, and on the fullness of our Redemption. I hope that we have discovered the richness and fullness of the church's treasury of grace, available to all who sincerely seek the Lord.

As a Diocese, we have set up the plan for preparing for the Jubilee, and we have been following the preparation plans given to us by the Pope. I now hope that each of the parishes and, above all, that each Catholic faithful in the parish, come to know of the blessings that the Incarnation brings. The parish is the full expression of the local Diocesan Church, which can bestow that fullness of life which is Christ Jesus. Your local celebration of the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem should fill you with joy and happiness and Redemption. May your local celebration in your parish and in your homes be the one that sanctifies your home, your children, and all your work. May you see your labors as being blest and adding more to the Work of Salvation being brought about in the Birth of the Son of God.

Once again, may you see in the Christ child being born in Bethlehem your greatest blessing and reason for joy.
Merry Christmas!

by Elisa A. Martinez

The padrecito is wearing purple vestments. That's because it's the first Sunday of Advent. The candles on the Advent wreath will be lit in anticipation of the birth of the Infant Jesus.

Tolina is making preparations to dress her niño, Baby Jesus. He needs new clothes and a sweater.

The niño is special because he will be the star of the Posadas when they lay him down in the manger on Christmas Eve. She changes his gown often. During the Christmas season, the nacimiento (Nativity scene) is very important in the Mexican culture. It occupies a central place in the house or a place at the front window for all who pass by to admire. The dominant figures are Mary and Joseph, with the empty manger that awaits the Baby Jesus. Countless shepherds and a menagerie of animals are placed lovingly on the hills and valleys that spread around the manger scene.

The three Magi -- the wise men -- await nearby with their camels, ready to offer their gifts as the bright star of Bethlehem shines above. Cactus, flowers and assorted knickknacks are placed on the nacimiento as each family

member adds her or his personal touch.

Every year the display grows, with these new figures carefully added. It stays this way until Jan. 6 passes. On that day, the three wise men leave their offerings and the family celebrates merrily, cutting the Rosca de Reyes -- a traditional bread for the Day of the Magi -- together and planning the festivity for Candlemas Day of Feb. 2.

The mercado is cold. It's very big and there is no central heating. People huddle around big iron stoves, stamping their feet trying to keep warm. There is a strong smell of kerosene that stays in their clothes.

In Juárez, the city across the Mexico-Texas border from El Paso, most homes use kerosene as fuel. Straw and tin decorations hang brightly from cords strung wall to wall. Colored tissue paper with intricate lace-like cutouts spelling "Feliz Navidad" adorn the walls. Piñatas in many shapes and sizes hang from wires strung on high.

Pointy stars, Santa Clauses, elves and other figures made out of tissue paper rustle in the breeze as vendors bring them down with their long poles for the children to admire. Red,

white and green lights adorn the altar of Our Lady of Guadalupe that welcomes the visitors as they walk in the front door. The mariachi that congregates there to serenade the tourists plays Christmas music interspersed with the usual repertoire.

There are mountains of dried red chiles and packages of dried corn husks. Strands of fresh garlic and boxes of Chocolate Abuelita -- Grandma's Chocolate -- are displayed strategically alongside spice racks loaded with cumin, anise, cinnamon, raisins and pecans.

I buy all these staples in generous amounts while visions of tamales, buñuelos -- fried, plate-size disks of dough coated with sugar and cinnamon -- and champurrado -- a rich, corn-based drink, flavored with Mexican chocolate -- dance in my head and make my mouth water.

This is the busiest time of year for the tortilla factories in our border cities. Long queues of people shiver in the cold and chat as they wait to buy the prepared masa for the Christmas tamales. I feel relieved when I finally walk out with my heavy, hot bundle tightly wrapped in white butcher pa-

per. The grocery stores display little blue boxes of lard and restock constantly as they're snatched up for the tamales and bizcochos -- small anise-flavored cookies made with lard. In the Mexican supermarkets, the bottles of ronpope -- eggnog with rum -- have red and green ribbons around their necks, ready for Christmas giving. Ronpope makes a delicious nightcap after a hard day in the kitchen. Ristras -- strings of red chiles -- or giant chile wreaths decorated with melcochas -- brown sugar candy -- are hung on every door.

In this U.S. border city, it's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas.

(Elisa A. Martinez, a teacher and writer in El Paso, Texas, is a frequent contributor to Hispanic Link.)

Merry Christmas



Feliz Navidad de Parte de El Editor Y Todos Los Trabajadores y Amigos Bidal, Olga Amalia Bob, Andre And All Our Writers



Feliz Navidad from Pinta the Family Wonder Dog

Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo!

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WHERE NEWS COMES FIRST.



Obispo Plácido Rodríguez, CMF, centro a la izquierda; Ysidro Gutiérrez, centro; y el diácono Jesse Guerrero, centro, a la derecha, siguen a los balladores de Denver City, los Matachines, encabezando la procesión anual diocesana de Lubbock en honor a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. El Obispo Rodríguez y más de 600 católicos de la diócesis caminaron las tres millas de la iglesia Our Lady of Grace al Christian Renewal Center.



El Padre Reynaldo Reyes de la parroquia universitaria Saint Elizabeth en Lubbock, centro a la derecha, acompaña a unos feligreses llevando el estandarte eclesialístico del tercer milenio, "Abran las Puertas de Par en Par a Cristo", mientras caminan con la procesión. Por primera vez, el servicio suplemental Címbus de recorridos cortos permitió a participantes en la procesión estacionarse en el Christian Renewal Center, Ir en autobús a la Iglesia Our Lady of Grace, y volver a pie a sus vehículos.

Que Dios Los Bendiga con Felicidades en La Navidad!

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