

The Cuba That Awaits Pope John Paul II

By Margarita Engle

When Pope John Paul II visits Cuba this month, what will he find?

Superficially, Cuba looks a lot more like the rest of Latin America than it did a few years ago. Small private businesses are legal now, so the streets of Havana are filled with artisans and hawkers. Licensed vendors sell everything from their grandparents' antique books to homemade shoes and figurines carved in native woods.

Since farmers can now market a portion of what they grow, there are booths offering fruits, vegetables and meat. Prepared meals are available at outdoor stands, in cafeterias and in small home diners called *paladares*.

There is, however, a significant difference between Cuba's markets and those found in other parts of the Third World. In Cuba, national currency cannot be used at many of the stores. While islanders with access to foreign currency suffer little privation, those limited to the Cuban pesos earned at government jobs must rely on scanty official rations, primarily rice.

When potatoes are in season, people learn to adapt. A meal



in the home of a hard-working doctor, laborer or university professor might consist of potato soup, boiled potatoes and a mayonnaise substitute concocted from potatoes. Next door, a neighbor who works in a tourist hotel or restaurant can use his dollar tips to feast on roast pork or chicken. As a result, prostitution and other illicit methods of obtaining foreign currency have thrived.

Transportation is just as inconsistently available as food. In Havana, the vast majority of commuters depend on bicycles and *camellos*, semi-trucks converted into huge makeshift buses, with humped forms that gives them the nickname "camels." In the countryside, long distances

are covered on foot or in horse-drawn "taxis."

The scenes I'm describing may sound much like those found in other Third World countries, but there are crucial distinctions unnoticed by the casual visitor. In Cuba, personal freedom remains the scarcest commodity. Residents of rural areas are prohibited from migrating to Havana without official permission; all residents are prohibited from leaving the country. Since the end of the U.S. government's acceptance of rafters as political refugees, the only ways for a native to get off the island are to marry a foreigner or win the U.S. immigration lottery.

Most people are forced to re-

main where they are, adapting reluctantly to the confines of their situation. One of my great-uncles is a highly respected doctor. Since the wages of all physicians are pathetically low, pizza is sold out of a makeshift kitchen in his garage, and pigs, ducks and chickens are raised in the back yard.

To make matters worse, the gradual breakdown of pest control programs and urban plumbing systems has resulted in deadly plagues of hepatitis, dengue fever and various mosquito-borne diseases. Last summer, the Cuban government even tried to accuse the United States of waging biological warfare against the island's crops after an outbreak of a common and widespread subtropical species of thrips.

Other hardships are less absurd and more frightening. On a recent trip to Cuba, a young man told me he was fired from his job after protesting the beating of a co-worker as a punishment for "incorrect thinking." Despite all the publicity about the pope's visit, churchgoers are still persecuted, and pastors are frequently arrested for their efforts to evangelize.

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News Briefs

INS to Immigrants: Know Your Rights

Immigrants will get pamphlets next year informing them of their civil rights and what to do if they are abused by immigration or boarder patrol officials, reports Associated Press.

INS Commissioner Doris Meissner announced the outreach plans in response to findings by a citizen's advisory panel created by Congress to recommend ways the INS can better handle any complaints against its employees.

The panel of private citizens, Department of Justice and INS officials, and a representative of the Mexican government concluded in a Sept. 30 report that the public lacks information about and confidence in the INS complaint process.

English-Spanish posters and complaint forms have been displayed in immigration processing centers since 1996. Next year, the INS will distribute written materials and organize community meetings to explain how to make a complaint.

The agency will also publicly distribute written copies of its policies on the use of force, firearms, pursuit, searches and its powers to arrest, interrogate and detain people, and provide more training for employees about proper conduct.

Human rights groups have complained that although the INS has nearly doubled its boarder patrols in the last four years, its resources for dealing with complaints of civil rights abuses have not kept pace.

John Chase, director of the INS Office of Internal Audit, said the agency in 1997 received about 230 serious complaints involving allegations of physical abuse, down from about 350 in 1996. Total grievances were up to about 1,800 this year from 1,553 last year, an increase Chase attributed in part to improved awareness among immigrants of their rights.

Benefits Cut to 135,000 Disabled Children

Roughly 135,000 children -- more than one-tenth of all the children receiving federal welfare disability benefits -- have been ordered cut off over the last five months because they do not suffer from what the welfare legislation called "marked or severe" disabilities, reports The New York Times.

Federal officials estimated that the reassessments announced last week would probably result in 35,000 children being restored to the rolls. Almost all, they said, would involve cases where mental retardation was a factor. New York state officials said they expected that 2,000 children would be returned to the rolls.

"The cases get tricky to sort out in your mind," said James Coseo, associate commissioner of the state's Bureau of Disability Determinations, the agency assigned to make decisions on behalf of the federal government. "There are kids who are clearly not 100 percent, but the rules, as now redone, say they don't deserve benefits. There were a lot of cases, too, that were cut and dried."

The welfare legislation signed by President Clinton in 1996, as it concerned disabled poor children, was an outgrowth of a belief among lawmakers that many of the 1 million children receiving disability benefits suffered from only mild handicaps. As a result, the Social Security Administration put together a complex set of standards to determine who still qualified.

The legislation represented a significant retreat from recent history. In New York, for instance, federal, state and city officials had worked jointly in the early 1990s to expand the universe of children receiving the benefits. Tens of thousands of children in the city who suffered from learning disorders or behavioral problems were moved onto the federal rolls.

And it is largely those children who are now being removed. State officials said roughly 60 percent of the children who had been granted benefits chiefly because of attention deficit disorder were having their benefits terminated. And 84 percent of the children for whom learning disorders or speech and language problems were their central disabilities were losing benefits.

On the other hand, the officials said, only 28 percent of those claiming mental retardation were being cut.

Marlene Torain of New York said she spent six months trying to convince officials that her 5-year-old son, Jonathan, still qualified. He had a range of problems: His legs were in braces, and he was under the care of a psychiatrist for behavioral problems. If he was cut, Ms. Torain said she would try to get him regular welfare benefits. The letter eventually came. The benefits would continue.

"It was the first time I had relaxed in a long time," she said.

Paula Schmecker, the mother of a 9-year-old boy, is anything but relaxed. She is awaiting a decision on her son, who suffers from heart disease, hyperactivity and severe myopia. "It would mean disaster," said Mrs. Schmecker, whose husband teaches at a yeshiva. "They are trying to cut as much as they can. They think people and their problems are illegitimate. I have an expensive boy who I try and build up as much as I can. How can I do that without funds?"

Law Curtails Help for Undocumented Immigrants with AIDS

Under the sweeping changes to Federal immigration and welfare laws enacted last year, undocumented immigrants with AIDS living in New York City are about to lose their Medicaid benefits, reports The New York Times.

And for some of the undocumented immigrants with AIDS, Federal immigration authorities in New York who had once granted them temporary legal status have begun the lengthy process that could lead to deportation.

As a result, people like Antonio, 40, an undocumented immigrant whose AIDS was diagnosed six years ago, now faces a wrenching choice. He can remain here and risk deportation. Or, after 13 years in New York City, he can return home to Cali, Colombia, where he will not have access to protease inhibitors, the new AIDS drugs that have helped to keep his disease in check.

Equally frightening, he says, is the prospect of returning as a gay man with a reviled disease. No one in his family knows of his condition except his brother, who has advised against returning.

In the past, local officials with the Immigration and Naturalization Service had the authority to grant humanitarian relief to undocumented immigrants facing extreme hardship. The officials could grant temporary legal status, often for several years, to those with AIDS. This in effect made

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"El Respeto al Derecho Ajeno es La Paz."
"Respect for the Rights of Others Is Peace"
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La Cuba Que Aguarda Al Papa Juan Pablo II

Por Margarita Engle

Quando el Papa Juan Pablo II visite Cuba en este mes, ¿qué encontrará?

Superficialmente, Cuba se parece mucho más al resto de América Latina ahora que hace unos cuantos años. Los

negocios pequeños privados son legales ahora, de modo que las calles de La Habana están llenas de artesanos y vendedores. Los vendedores con licencia venden de todo, desde los libros antiguos de sus abuelos hasta zapatos hechos en casa y figurinas labradas en madera del país.

Ya que los campesinos pueden llevar ahora al mercado una parte de lo que cultivan, hay kioscos que ofrecen frutas, vegetales y carne. Las comidas preparadas están disponibles en los kioscos, las cafeterías y los pequeños comedores llamados "paladares."

Hay, no obstante, una diferencia considerable entre los mercados de Cuba y los que se hallan en otras partes del Tercer Mundo. En Cuba, la moneda nacional no se puede usar en muchas de las tiendas. Aunque los isleños que tienen acceso a las divisas extranjeras sufren poca privación, aquéllos que están limitados a los pesos cubanos que ganan en sus empleos del gobierno deben contentarse con raciones oficiales escasas, que consisten primordialmente de arroz.

Cuando las papas están en temporada, la gente aprende a adaptarse. Una comida en la casa de un médico, un trabajador o un profesor universitario, puede consistir de sopa de papas, papas hervidas y un sustituto de mayonesa preparado con papas. En la casa contigua, un vecino que trabaja en un hotel o restaurant para turistas puede usar sus propinas en dólares para darse un banquete de puerco o pollo asado. Como resultado, la prostitución y otros métodos ilegales de obtener divisas extranjeras han florecido.

El transporte es igualmente tan poco disponible como el alimento. En La Habana, la inmensa mayoría de los viajeros depende de bicicletas y "camellos," camiones "semi," convertidos en enormes autobuses improvisados, con una forma de joroba que les da su remoquete de "camellos." En el interior,

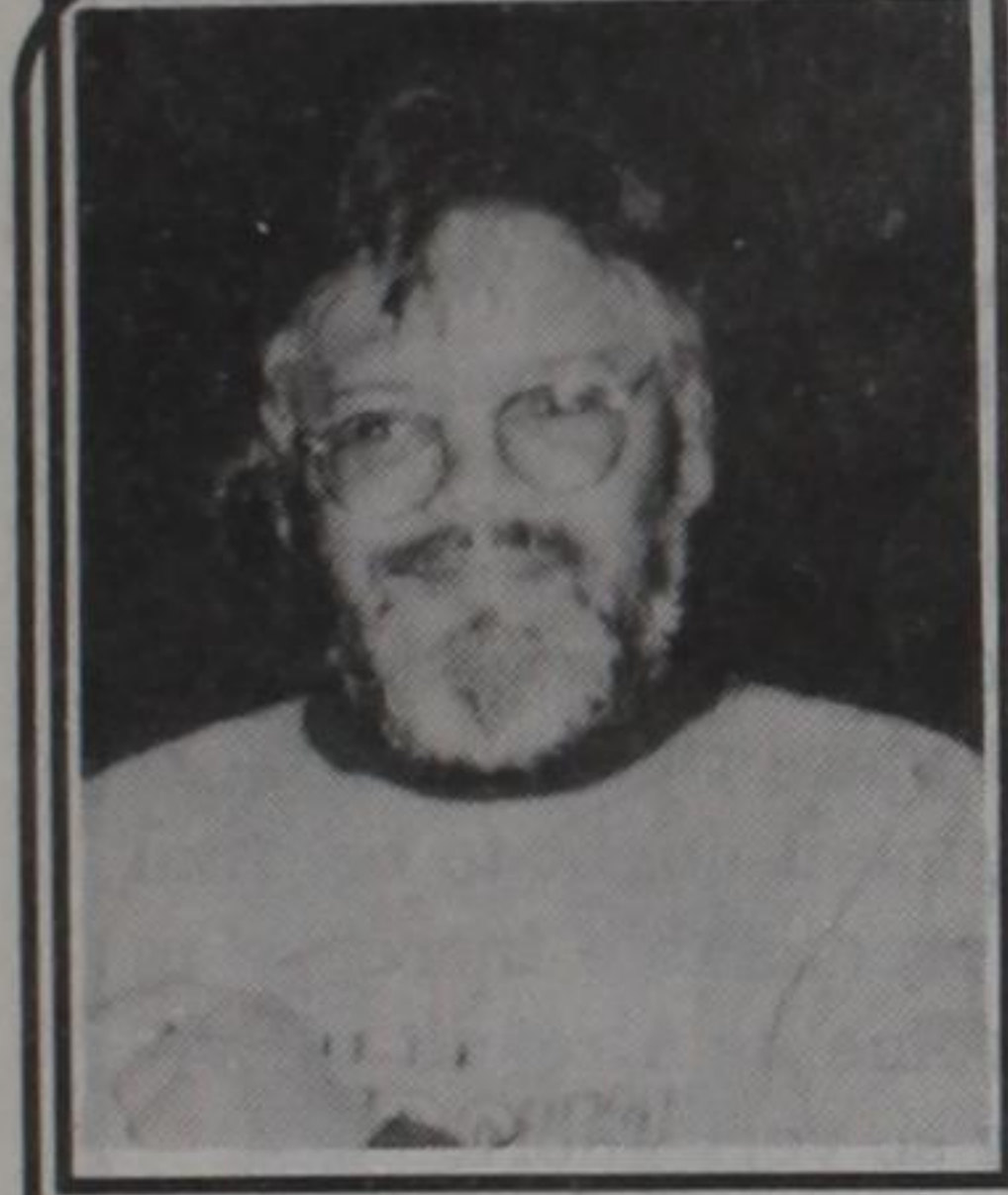
las distancias largas se recorren a pie o en "taxis" tirados por caballos.

Las escenas que estoy describiendo pueden sonar muy parecidas a aquéllas que se encuentran en otros países del Tercer Mundo, pero hay distinciones críticas que son invisibles para el visitante casual. En Cuba, la libertad personal continúa siendo el producto más escaso. Los residentes de las zonas rurales tienen prohibido ir a La Habana sin permiso del gobierno; a todos los residentes se les prohíbe salir del país. Desde que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos no acepta balseros como refugiados políticos, el único modo en que una persona oriunda en Cuba pueda salir de la isla es casarse con un(a) extranjero(a) o ganar la lotería de inmigración de los Estados Unidos.

La mayoría de las personas se ve obligada a permanecer donde esté, adaptándose nuevamente a los confines de su situación. Uno de mis tíos-abuelos es un médico muy respetado. Puesto que los sueldos de todos los médicos son patéticamente bajos, la pizza se vende en una cocina improvisada de su garage, y los puercos, patos y pollos se crían en su traspatio.

Para empeorar las cosas, la ruptura gradual de los programas de control de las plagas y de los sistemas de alcantarillado urbanos ha resultado en la propagación de plagas mortíferas de hepatitis, fiebre del dengue y otras enfermedades transmitidas por mosquitos. En el verano pasado, el gobierno de Cuba llegó a acusar a los Estados Unidos de librar una guerra biológica contra las cosechas de la isla, después de un brote de una especie tropical común y muy extendida de "trips"

Otras dificultades son menos absurdas y más atemorizadoras. En mi viaje más reciente a Cuba, un joven me dijo que había sido despedido de su empleo después de protestar contra la golpiza que le dieron a uno de sus compa-



Comentarios de Bidal

I hardly ever make resolutions, mainly because it's hard to think of what one wants to do or what other people would want others to do all year.

I say what other people would want others to do because to

me that what may people do when they are trying to become a better person, lose weight, change a habit, etc.

Very rarely does anyone change just because they want to. I mean - when does anyone ever stop smoking or drinking just because they want to. More of the times it's because their doctors told them to, it's not fashionable, other people want them to stop or sometimes it's because they were told to do so.

I can remember one person that did what he wanted to as far as a resolution was concerned but that's about all. They say that resolutions are meant to be broken. So what's the use. Well again it's because other people do it. "My friend did it, so I guess I should do it too."

In any event. Back to the point. I don't normally do resolutions, but maybe this year I will. It's just a question as to when. I don't know if it will be before the new year or after. I guess it'll be sometime when I sit down at this computer and get the urge to write them down. Til then I guess the readers of this column will just have to keep on reading.

**All of us Here At
El Editor Hope
Everyone Has a
Happy and
Prosperous New
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Feliz Y Prospero
Año Nuevo 1998**

De Regreso Al Bacalao

Por Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo

Cuando yo era pequeño, el viernes significaba una comida en casa de mi abuela. Pero aunque abuela era casi mi cocinera favorita, los viernes el olor del bacalao estropeaba mi apetito.

Mi madre anticipaba el plato de este bacalao ahumado sobre arroz, con bastantes "viandas", primordialmente tubérculos de la cocina puertorriqueña: Batata (boniato o camote), yautía, malanga, yuca, ñame y pana. Sobre todo esto, mi madre vertía una buena cantidad de aceite de oliva dorado.

Aunque todo esto lucía bien, yo no podía superar olor fuerte y penetrante. Aún hoy, aunque he aprendido que el bacalao tiene su atractivo, tengo una reacción casi freudiana a su olor.

Mi experiencia de la niñez se desvaneció de mi memoria cuando, hace cerca de 30 años, la Iglesia Católica de los Estados Unidos eliminó la necesidad de abstenerse de comer carne los viernes. Por lo menos, yo podría escaparme del olor que había perseguido de tal modo al sexto día de la semana.

Pero ahora, a medida que nos adentramos en 1998, los obispos han recomendado el regreso del pescado los viernes. Un dirigente católico, el Cardenal Maida de Detroit, ha instado a que se emprenda la abstinencia de carne a fin de enfocar atención sobre la oposición de la Iglesia al aborto y al suicidio asistido.

El mundo de habla hispana (que incluye a los latinos y las latinas de los Estados Unidos) puede no ser afectado por cualquier cambio, al menos en un sentido técnico. Después de la victoria en la Batalla de Lepanto, en el siglo XVI, cuando Felipe II de España fue el único monarca que corrió a la defensa militar de

Italia contra los turcos, el Papa eximió a todos los súbditos hispanos y a sus descendientes por perpetuidad de la prohibición de comer carne los viernes.

Cuando me enteré de este decreto durante mis estudios como profesor, me dí cuenta de que mi familia comía todo aquel bacalao, no por razón de cualquier obligación, sino porque les gustaba.

Puesto que mi abuela ha muerto, no iré a su casa. Pero mi esposa come bacalao y "viandas" con el mismo gusto que mi madre. En realidad, cuando ellas se reúnen, es la comida que preparan una para la otra. El olor se impregna en toda la casa, como lo hacía en mi niñez en aquellas visitas. A menudo, dura dos o tres días más.

Si los obispos restablecen la necesidad de comer pescado los viernes, estoy seguro de que obtendré un mérito doble en el cielo: Por abstenerme de comer carne y crédito de Dios por soportar el olor.

Mi única reservación es que los obispos estadounidenses puedan descansar demasiado sobre el asunto del aborto como razón para que haya viernes sin carne. No es una penitencia para mi madre, mi esposa y como 262 de mis parientes el comer bacalao con "viandas".

Si ellos reciben la idea de tener mérito extra por parte de Dios por esta práctica, podrían empezar a comer bacalao no solamente los viernes, sino desde los miércoles.

Ahora, por una parte, doy la bienvenida a la oportunidad

de conseguir un lugar más alto en el cielo que algunos de mis parientes. Ellos obtendrán menos mérito porque el comer bacalao es algo que a ellos les gusta, no una penitencia. Pero para mí el sacrificio es doble: Comerlo y tolerar el olor.

No obstante, desearía que hubiera un modo más fácil.

Quizás el énfasis debería ser sobre los viernes sin carne como un recuerdo cultural y colectivo para los católicos. Como ha observado mi buen amigo, el Padre Virgilio Elizondo, teólogo mexicano-americano, la cultura es un elemento sólido en la práctica de la fe.

De modo que, ¿qué hay de malo en restablecer la práctica sólo para fortalecer un sentido de identidad católica (y latina)? Al mirar mis propias experiencias, tengo un cierto cariño por aquellos viernes, debido a lo que representaban para la familia, aún cuando mi paladar no se deleitara. La transmisión de los valores religiosos y culturales tradicionales a nuestros hijos es un objetivo de todos los padres latinos.

Regresaré al bacalao si encuentro allí la fuerza de la familia, que es mi legado latino.

(El Dr. Antonio M. Stevens-Arroyo es catedrático de Estudios Puertorriqueños en el Brooklyn College, Universidad Municipal de Nueva York, y ex-presidente del Programa para el Análisis de la Religión (PARAL en inglés).

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Back To Bacalao

By Antonio M. Steven-Arroyo

When I was a little boy, Friday meant a meal at Grandmom's house. But although Abuela was just about my favorite cook, on Fridays the smell of bacalao spoiled my appetite.

My mother looked forward to a plate of this smoked codfish on rice, with plenty of viandas, mostly tubers from the Puerto Rican cuisine: batata, yautía, malanga, yuca, ñame and pana. Over all of this, my mom poured golden gobs of olive oil. Although all of this looked good, I couldn't get past the strong, pungent smell. Even today, although I have learned that bacalao has its appeal, I have an almost Freudian reaction to its smell.

My boyhood experience faded from my memory when, some 30 years ago, the Catholic Church in the United States abolished the need to abstain from meat on Friday. At last, I could escape the odor that had so haunted the sixth day of the week. But now, as we enter 1998, the bishops have suggested the return of fish on Fridays. One Catholic leader, Cardinal Maida of Detroit, has urged that the abstinence from meat should be undertaken in order to focus attention on the church's opposition to abortion and assisted suicide.

The Spanish-speaking world (which includes U.S. Latinos and Latinas) may not be affected by any change, at least in a technical sense. After victory in the Battle of Lepanto in the 16th Century, when Philip II of Spain was the only monarch to rally to the military defense of Italy against the Turks, the pope exempted all Spanish subjects and their descendants in perpetuity from the Friday prohibition on meat. When I learned of this decree during my studies as a professor, I realized that my family ate all that bacalao not on account of any obliga-

tion, but because they liked it.

Since my abuela has passed on, I won't be going to her house. But my wife eats bacalao and viandas with the same gusto as my mother. In fact, when they get together, that is a meal they prepare for each other. The smell permeates the house, just as it did in my boyhood, on those visits. Often, it lasts two or three days more. If the bishops restore the need to eat fish on Fridays, I am sure that I will get double merit in heaven: merit for fasting from meat and credit from God for putting up with the smell.

My only reserve is that U.S. bishops may dwell too much on the issue of abortion as the reason for meatless Fridays. It is not a penance for my mother, my wife and about 262 of my relatives and in-laws to eat bacalao with viandas.

If they get the idea of extra merit from God for this practice, they might start eating bacalao not only on Fridays but on Wednesdays as well.

Now on the one hand, I welcome the opportunity to get a

higher place in heaven than some of my relatives. They will get less merit because eating bacalao is something they like, not a penance. But for me, the sacrifice is double, eating and putting up with the smell. Nonetheless, I wish there were an easier way.

Perhaps the emphasis should be on meatless Fridays as a cultural, collective memory for Catholics. As my good friend Virgilio Elizondo, the Mexican-American theologian, has observed, culture is a strong element in the practice of the faith.

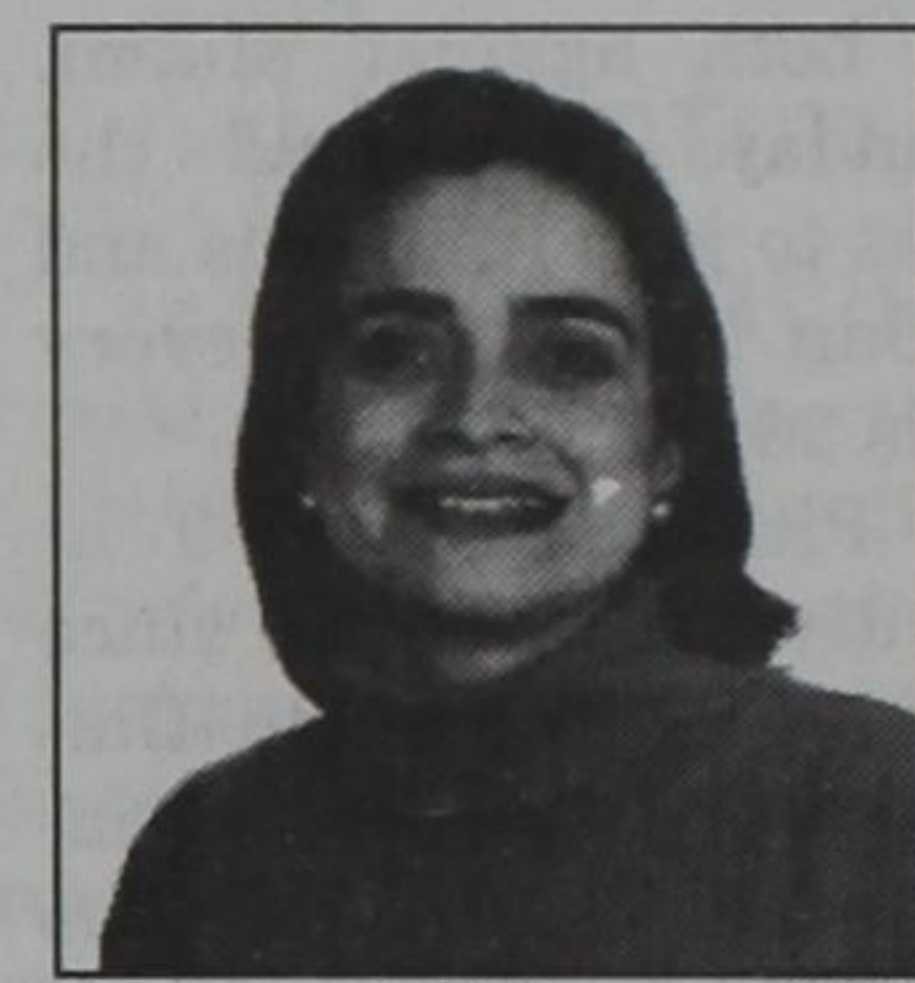
So what is wrong with restoring the practice just to strengthen a sense of Catholic (and Latino) identity? Looking into my own experiences, I have a certain fondness for those Fridays because of what they represented to the family, even if my palate was not delighted. Transmitting traditional religious and cultural values to our children is a goal of all Latinos parents.

I'll go back to bacalao if I find there the strength of family that is my Latino legacy.

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Los 17 miembros del Grupo Salvaje compraron sus boletos como grupo. Después del sorteo se reunieron en casa de Jimmy para revisar todos los boletos. Al revisarlos, descubrieron que habían igualado tres de seis números en algunos boletos. Para asegurarse, Nora y Jean decidieron volver a revisar. Fue entonces cuando descubrieron que no sólo habían igualado tres números, ellos habían igualado los seis números.

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NFL Teams Get Ready For Playoffs

By DAVE GOLDBERG

The Kansas City Chiefs had the best record in the AFC this year and the Denver Broncos were the NFL's best team for the first half of the season. New England was in the Super Bowl last season and Pittsburgh made it two years ago.

In other words, the four teams left in the AFC playoffs all have legitimate Super Bowl hopes.

The NFC? Unless there's a major, major upset, wait until the conference title game, when Green Bay is at San Francisco.

That was reflected Monday in the betting lines set forth by the people in Las Vegas who know such things. The 49ers and Packers each are favored by 13 over Minnesota and Tampa Bay, respectively. In the AFC, the lines are under a touchdown: Pittsburgh by six at home over New England and the Chiefs just 1½ points over the Broncos.

"If I had all the playoff money John has taken out of my pocket, I'd be a rich man," Kansas City coach Marty Schottenheimer likes to say of John Elway, who beat him twice in AFC championship games when Schottenheimer was with Cleveland and almost did again in one of the landmark games of the 1997 season.

That was Nov. 16 in Kansas City. Elway took the Chiefs from his 20 to the Kansas City 17 in a minute to set up Jason Elam's field goal for 22-21 lead with a minute left. But in the defining moment of the Chiefs' 13-3 season, backup quarterback Rich Gannon drove Kansas City far enough to allow Pete Stoyanovich to

kick a 54-yarder that just got over the crossbar and gave the Chiefs a 24-22 victory.

Had Stoyanovich missed, the Chiefs would have been three games behind the Broncos and probably would have wound up a wild card. Instead, they went on to win the AFC West and Denver was the wild card after losing three of its final six games.

The Broncos beat Jacksonville 42-17 Saturday, setting up the matchup of the weekend.

Here's a look ahead (in order of appearance) at this weekend's menu.

New England (11-6) at Pittsburgh (11-5)

Just three weeks ago, when the Steelers came back from an eight-point deficit in the final two minutes to beat the Pats 24-21 in Foxboro, New England was written off. Pete Carroll wasn't Bill Parcells, Curtis Martin was out, there was no way they were going back to the Super Bowl.

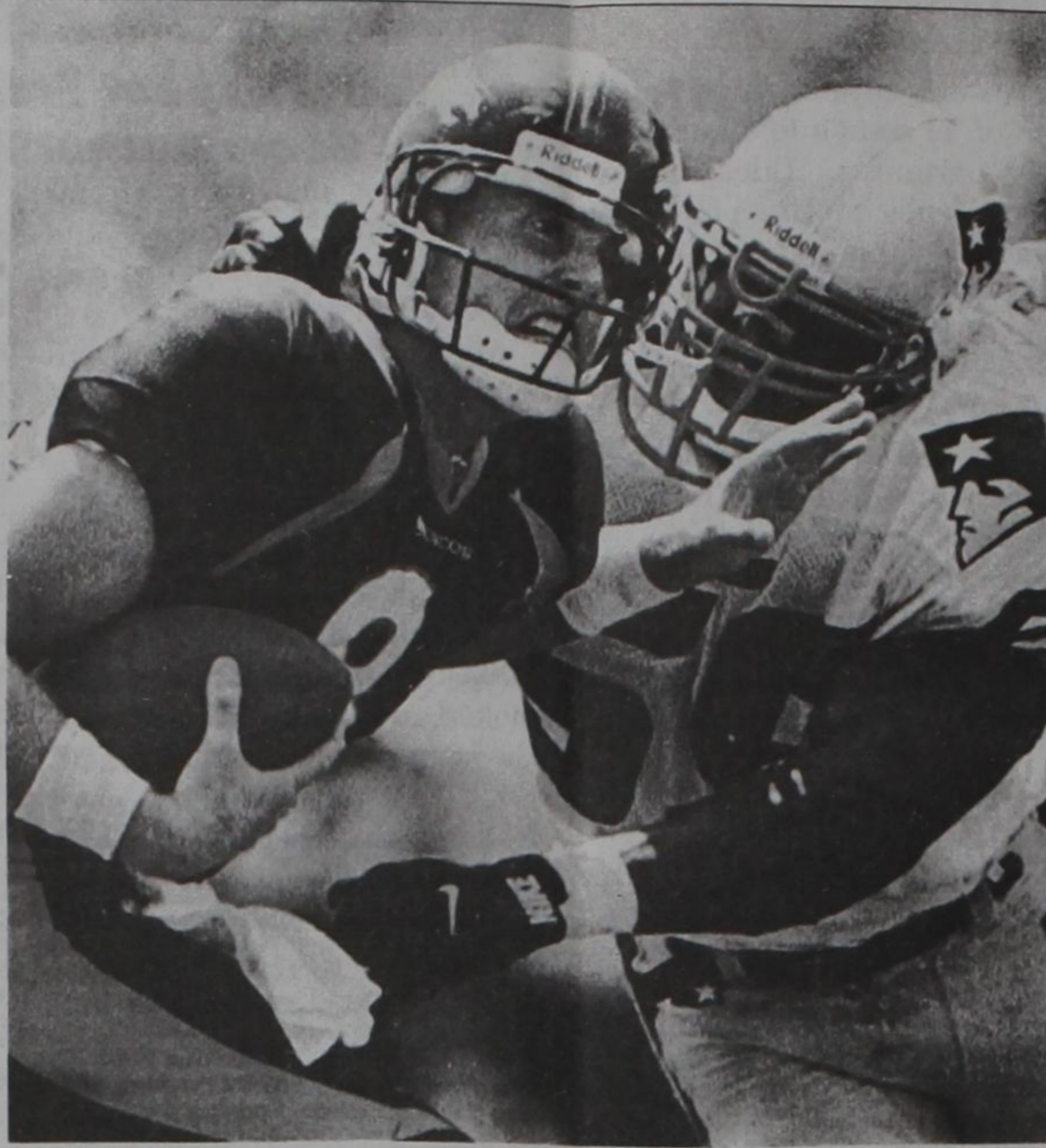
The Pats are still the odd team out in the AFC.

But their defense has been Parcellian in the last two games, both against Miami. On Sunday, they held the Dolphins to just 162 yards and made Dan Marino look every bit of his 36 years.

Yes, Pittsburgh is 7-0 at Three Rivers Stadium since an opening-game loss to Dallas - the only game this season in which the Cowboys looked like their old selves. And yes, Martin is still questionable for this game.

"It's going to be very, very tough going into Pittsburgh," Carroll says.

Still, don't write off the Patriots. Last year's experience certainly won't hurt.



Minnesota (10-7) at San Francisco (13-3)

Another replay - the 49ers won 28-17 in Randall Cunningham's first start at quarterback for the injured Brad Johnson.

The Vikings' win over the Giants was a combination of luck and Minnesota's experience. New York's young team couldn't collect itself when things starting turning sour and Cunningham, Jake Reed, Cris Carter and John Randle held together for the Vikings.

But the 49ers won't wilt.

Yes, they don't have the cornerbacks the Giants used to contain Reed and Carter most of the game - New York's Jason Sehorn is close to what the 49ers' Rod Woodson used to be. But they have Steve Young at quarterback instead of Danny Kanell,

which means they won't go into a shell if they take the lead, and they'll get more than field goals off turnovers.

Most likely this is Dennis Green's last game.

Tampa Bay (11-6) at Green Bay (13-3)

The Bucs played decently in two losses to the Packers this season and they probably outplayed them in the 26-21 defeats in Green Bay.

But that game was Oct. 5 and this will be Jan. 4, when the temperature is almost sure to be below 42 degrees (if not 42-below). The Bucs have never won in those conditions, and while this is a totally different team than the one that had 14 straight losing seasons, there seem to be too many things going against them to carry the Bucs' turnaround one step farther.

And here's a bottom line: Discount the 41-38 loss at Indianapolis, in which the Packers were clearly looking ahead to Dallas, and the Packers have outscored their opponents since Oct. 27 by an aggregate 216-92.

Moreover, no opponent in that stretch (save Indianapolis) scored more than 17 except Buffalo, which got 21 in a meaningless final game. And four of the eight teams the Packers beat during that stretch made the playoffs: the Patriots, Lions, Vikings and Bucs.

One more stat for good measure - the Packers have won 26 straight at Lambeau, 23 in regular season, three in the playoffs.

Denver (13-4) at Kansas City (13-3)

It would be poetic justice if Denver, which was shocked by Jacksonville as the top seed

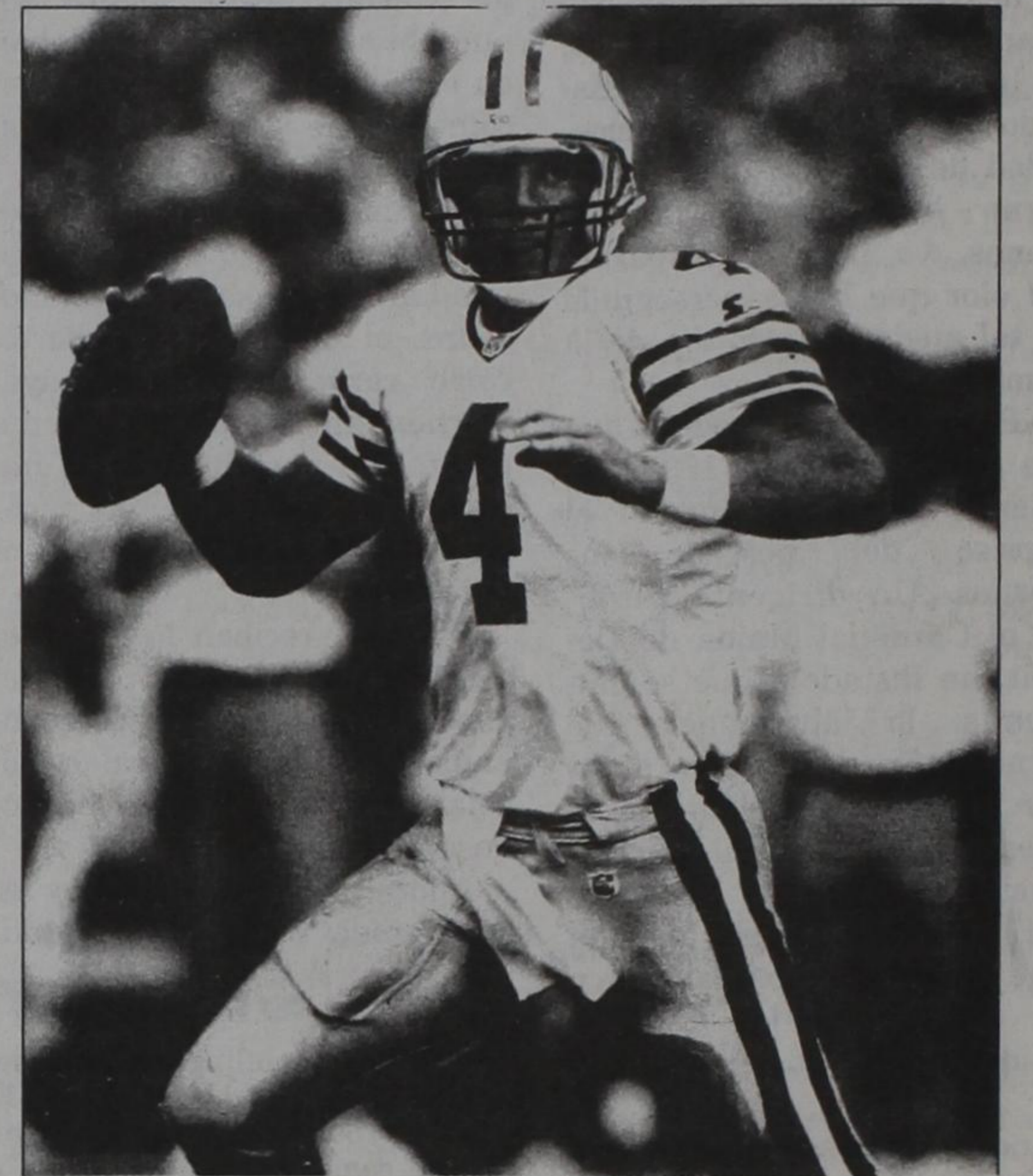
last season, makes it to the Super Bowl this year via the wild-card route.

But the wild-card journey can hurt - literally. Terrell Davis, who is absolutely crucial to the Denver offense, bruised his ribs in the third quarter after running for 184 yards against the Jaguars on Saturday.

"There is no decision to be made," Davis says of his status for this game. "I'm playing. If it improves as much this week as it did since Saturday night, I'll be fine."

Schottenheimer's dilemma is at quarterback. Gannon was 5-1 as a starter after Elvis Grbac separated his shoulder, and Grbac was rusty in his return in the meaningless final game against New Orleans. Still, Grbac will be the starter.

Feliz Año



This Year In Sports

By Ian Love

1997 was the year in which sports bared its teeth for all to see.

From Mike Tyson chewing off a piece of Evander Holyfield's right ear in their heavyweight championship bout to sportscaster Marv Albert admitting he bit a former lover during a liaison in a northern Virginia hotel room, sports fans were treated in full view to some of the sporting world's most sordid escapades in 1997.

Not to be outdone by Tyson and Albert, Latrell Sprewell of the Warriors attacked and threatened to kill head coach P.J. Carlesimo not once, but twice. The behavior of these three made the consistently boorish behavior of the White Sox' Albert Belle and Charles Barkley of the Houston Rockets seem almost child-like.

At least there was some measure of punishment to go with these offenses. The Nevada Boxing Commission banned Tyson for life though he is eligible to apply for reinstatement in a year, begging the question: How long is lifetime in Las Vegas? Sprewell lost his \$32 million contact with Golden State and before any other owners could make a move to rehabilitate the recalcitrant forward, Commissioner David Stern added a one-year ban from playing in the NBA. Sprewell will have a hearing before an arbitrator in January to try



and reduce that sentence.

For his part Albert agreed to a guilty plea in his sodomy trial but received a one year suspended sentence as a first time offender. In the aftermath of his sensational trial Albert lost his announcing jobs with NBC and Madison Square Garden, but before the year had run out he hit the talk show circuit in an attempt to revive his tattered image.

But the news wasn't all bad in 1997. There were memorable moments that remind us of why these games so often

pull at our heartstrings. The rise of Tiger Woods and his amazing run at the Masters changed the face of golf. The 21-year-old Woods thrilled the nation with his 12-stroke victory over the best golfers in the world and he endeared himself with more still with the emotional embrace of his father on the edge of the 18th green at Augusta.

Baseball made strides with inter-league play its yearlong tribute to Jackie Robinson. Acting Commissioner Bud Selig capped the tribute by retiring Robinson's No. 42 for all time for all teams. The Florida Marlins, in only their fifth season, capped a ho-hum World Series with a thrilling extra-inning Game 7 victory over the Cleveland



Indians. But by November, baseball began to slide back to form as owner Wayne Huizenga began the wholesale dismantling of the World Series champs to any and all takers. Baseball purists were put off further when Selig committed sacrilege by moving the Milwaukee Brewers from the American to the National League as realignment became a reality due to the addition of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays and Arizona Diamondbacks next season.

The NBA continued to capture the nation's fancy as the Chicago Bulls, though showing they were getting a little long in the tooth, still man-

aged their fifth championship in seven years. In the process, Michael Jordan showed against the Utah Jazz that there is none better when a championship on the line.

Nostalgia buffs were rewarded in NFL when the Green Bay Packers brought back memories of Vince Lombardi and Title Town. After two seasons of knocking on the door, the Packers burst through in Super Bowl XXXI with a 34-21 victory over the New England Patriots. The season also saw the rise of relative newcomers Jacksonville and Carolina, both of which reached the league championship games.

In college football, the Florida Gators closed the '96 season by beating Florida State 52-20 to capture the school's first national title. The surprising Michigan Wolverines went through the 1997 campaign undefeated and ranked number one thanks in large part to the play of Heisman trophy winner Charles Woodson.

In college basketball, Arizona came from out of the middle of the Pacific 10 to claim the national championship with an 84-79 overtime victory over defending champion Kentucky.

The sports world also waved goodbye to some leg-

Continued on Page 5

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RAMAR HISPANIC MEDIA

De La Primer Pagina

neros de trabajo por "pensamientos incorrectos." A pesar de toda la publicidad sobre la visita del papa, los feligreses que asisten a las iglesias son perseguidos aún, y se arresta con frecuencia a los pastores por sus gestiones para evangelizar.

Amnistía Internacional y otros observadores de los derechos humanos han informado de medidas enérgicas dramáticas contra la disensión desde 1995, cuando se formó una coalición no violenta y a favor del cambio, llamada "Concilio Cubano." Los miembros que representan a 140 grupos de periodistas, sindicatos, organizaciones feministas, economistas, abogados, estudiantes y ambientalistas han sido intimidados y golpeados, o juzgados y declarados culpables en acusaciones tales como asociación ilegal, falta de respeto, peligrosidad y propaganda enemiga.

Los periodistas independientes son más vulnerables de las medidas enérgicas contra las gestiones pacíficas para cabildear a favor del cambio. En un sentido, ellos son también los más poderosos. Los escritores cuyos informes de infracciones de derechos humanos han sido

publicados en el extranjero están siendo castigados con largas sentencias de prisión, pero su sacrificio personal no ha sido en vano. Hace unos pocos meses, 125 escritores y artistas mexicanos prominentes firmaron una carta en la que condenaban la ola de represión contra los periodistas cubanos. Muchos eran izquierdistas que habían apoyado a Castro hasta ahora.

No es una coincidencia que la libertad de expresión haya sido identificada por último como una causa valedera. En la América Latina, durante los últimos ocho años, 171 periodistas han sido asesinados, y más de un millar de otros han sido víctimas de ataques físicos o de amenazas verbales. La necesidad de un terreno común entre las personas que dedican sus vidas al intercambio de información es urgente.

Con la visita inminente del papa, ¿qué augura eso para 1998?

Pregunté a una educadora sobre las perspectivas de cambio. "Castro está aterrizado del Internet," contestó ella.

(Margarita Engle, de Clovis, California, es oriunda de Cuba y autora de dos libros recientes sobre aquel país, "Singing to Cuba" ("Cantándole a Cuba"), Arte Público Press; y "Skywriting" ("Escribiendo en el Cielo"), Bantam Books.

Propiedad literaria registrada por Hispanic Link News Service en 1998. Distribuido por The Los Angeles Times Syndicate



Un Rayito De Luz

Por Sofia Martinez

Blasfemar es hablar mal de Dios. Eso lo prohíbe el segundo mandamiento. La blasfemia consiste en una falta de respeto a Dios, así como la impiedad es una falta de obsequio a Dios; pero la blasfemia es una falta mucho mas grande que la impiedad, porque si la impiedad no honra a Dios, la blasfemia le deshonra; si la impiedad no obsequia a Dios, la blasfemia le insulta; si el impío escasea sus cultos a dios, (como faltar a misa), los blasfemos vomitan sus desprecios contra Dios, y esto es mucho mas grave que si ser impío es malo, ser blasfemo es peor). Siendo tan horrible esta falta llamada "blasfemia" y sus horribles blasfemias que vomitan algunas desalmadas personas, solo diremos que esas son personas desalmadas, pero que no son los únicos blasfemos, sino, también son aquellos que manifiestan en

From Page 4

ends as North Carolina's Dean Smith, the winningest college basketball coach of all time, finally made good on his threat to retire, and Grambling's Eddie Robinson, the winningest college football coach of all time, also hung up his clipboard. Tom Osborne, whose Cornhuskers never left the Top 25 during his said 25-year career at Nebraska, will also retire after their Orange Bowl matchup against Tennessee.

In hockey, the Detroit Red Wings went from the joy of snapping a 42-year Stanley Cup jinx to stark reality when one of the limos the team hired for partying players wrapped around a tree and left defenseman Vladimir Konstantinov and team masseuse Ser-

gei Mnatsakanov in the hospital with massive injuries. At season's end, Mario Lemieux, arguably the best player to ever lace up skates, called it a career.

Tennis saw the rise of Martina Hingis, the Austrian teen-age sensation, who swept to victories at Wimbledon and at the Australian and U.S. opens to become the youngest woman ever to reach No. 1 in the world. In the men's game Pete Sampras continued his stranglehold, winning the Australian Open and Wimbledon to hold down the No. 1 ranking.

And as always there is more looming on the horizon, bringing the hope that next year will bring more moments to cherish and fewer that leave a bad aftertaste. Green Bay has reached the postseason and looks ready to defend its title in Super Bowl XXXII. Youth is still the buzzword in pro basketball as Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant continue to show off their precocious skills, and the ABL & WNBA grab more and more fans for women's professional basketball.

Other events coming up in 1998 include the Winter Games in Nagano. Despite a lack of snow at present, local organizers assure the world that all will be in order when the 17-day sporting spectacle begins in February. And in the summer, the world's biggest sporting event takes place in France when 32 soccer teams play for perhaps the only trophy that deserves the moniker - the World Cup.

And as always, you can count on the unforgettable and the unexpected in 1998. Let's just hope the memories are less biting.

News Briefs

them eligible for Medicaid, disability benefits and state-financed housing vouchers for people with AIDS.

Over the last 10 years, the provision had been used widely for people with AIDS, as well as for other undocumented immigrants whose illnesses could not be properly treated in their home countries or who were too sick to travel, said a spokeswoman for the New York district office of the I.N.S., Shyconia Burden. The Latino Commission on AIDS, a local non-profit agency that handles many of these cases, estimated that there were roughly 800 undocumented immigrants with AIDS in New York City who had been granted the special status.

Now, under the new immigration law, an I.N.S. district director can grant the status for a maximum of 120 days, after which the immigrant must leave the United States.

Ever since the new law was passed, advocates for immigrants have appealed for compassion for people with AIDS. Most of these immigrants, the advocates say, have no hope of documentedizing their status because under Federal law, those who test positive for H.I.V. cannot get an immigrant visa. If they were to return home, the advocates say, many would probably face a swift death.

The Latino Commission on AIDS, along with the Gay Men's Health Crisis and other advocacy groups, is negotiating with immigration service officials in New York about using other provisions of the law to grant temporary legal status to undocumented immigrants with AIDS. The advocates have also appealed to Attorney General Janet Reno to make AIDS services -- including Medicaid, housing vouchers and disability benefits -- available to everyone, regardless of immigration status.

Those efforts are likely to face stiff opposition in Washington. The lawmakers who pressed for the new immigration rules say the changes were needed because the special status provision had been abused by immigrants seeking Government aid. New Federal laws also bar many documented immigrants from benefits.

Clinton Orders Kids' Medicaid Outreach

A year after the White House focused on uninsured children, President Clinton is dismayed to find little progress on enrolling 3 million who are eligible for the Medicaid health care program, reports Associated Press.

Clinton plans next month in his State of the Union address to order federal and state agencies to try harder to find children who are poor enough to qualify, but who have been left out.

Studies show that uninsured children are far less likely to get health services, particularly preventive care.

As an entitlement, Medicaid is provided to every eligible person, regardless of the numbers or the cost.

A complex set of circumstances help explain why families would pass up the chance for free health care. Many parents don't realize their children are eligible for Medicaid. Some are daunted by a complex set of rules and paperwork. Others don't want to be part of a welfare-type program.

The problem is likely to worsen with welfare reform. Families on welfare have been automatically enrolled in Medicaid, but as they move off the rolls they may not realize that their children remain eligible for the program.

There are about 10 million uninsured children in the United States, including the 3 million who are eligible for Medicaid. Clinton fought this year for a new, \$24 billion, 5-year children's health program for working poor families, which is expected to reach a few million kids.

Medicaid-eligible children are barred from the new initiative, but the program is bound to draw fresh attention to the system, said Nancy-Ann Minn DeParle, administrator of the agency that runs Medicaid.

States recruiting children for the new program will find kids eligible for Medicaid and sign them up, she said. Meanwhile, she hopes the spotlight on uninsured children will boost interest and enrollment for both programs.

"We're starting to see more interest in it and more energy in the bureaucracies at the state levels," she said.

DeParle would not say whether the new outreach will be backed with new money in the administration's upcoming budget. Lockhart indicated it's doubtful: "There's not necessarily a big price tag," he said.

States already have several tools to recruit more children into Medicaid, which is paid for with a combination of state and federal money. For instance, they may accept applications by mail and do not have to verify financial assets of certain families. Clinton will remind them of these options, Lockhart said.

In his budget plan last year, Clinton suggested the government could recruit 1.6 million more children into Medicaid without a significant new effort. The plan was to use government agencies that already come into contact with parents and children -- Head Start centers, immunization clinics, American Indian health clinics.

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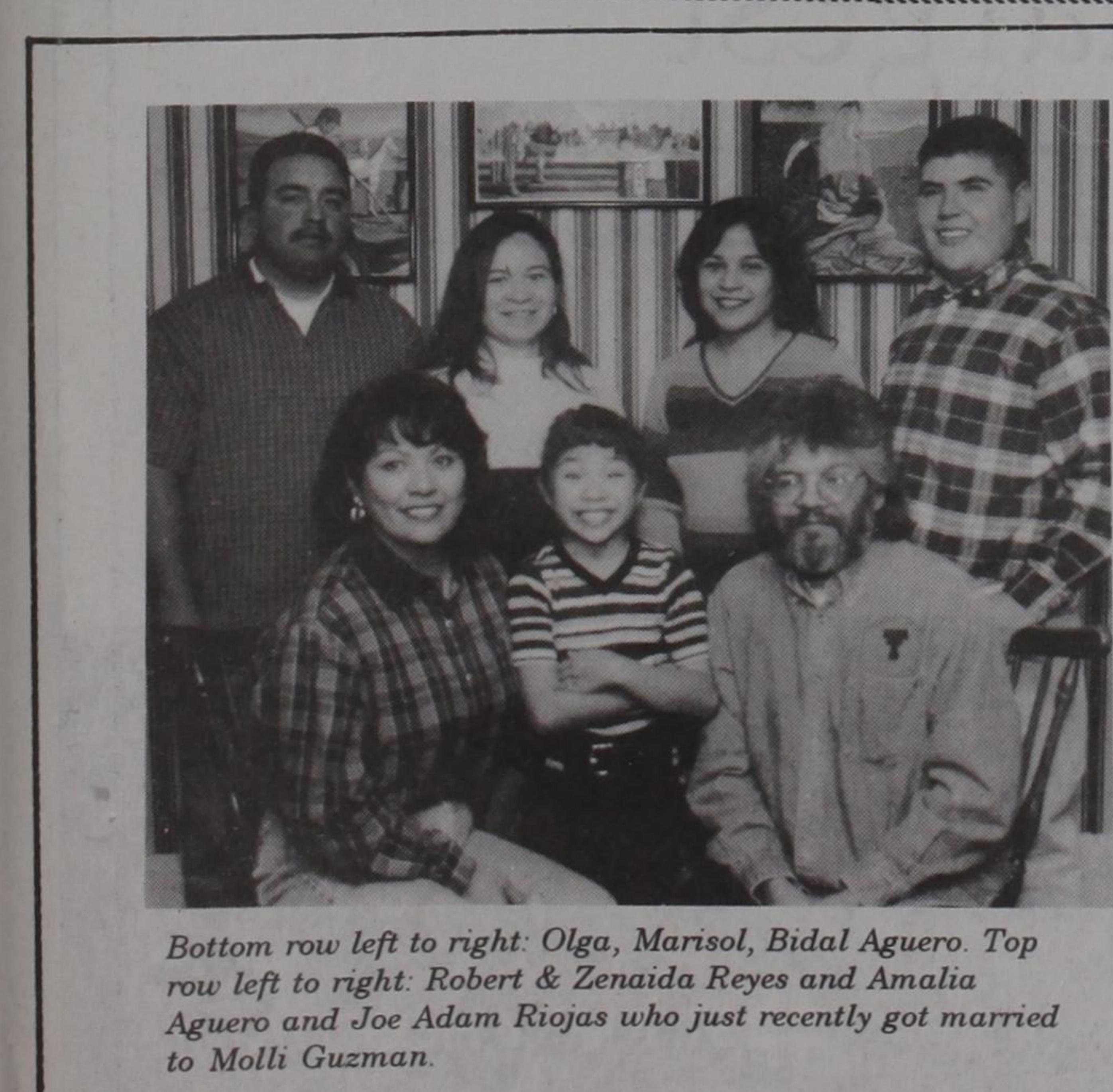
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Bottom row left to right: Olga, Marisol, Bidal Agüero. Top row left to right: Robert & Zenaida Reyes and Amalia Agüero and Joe Adam Riojas who just recently got married to Mollie Guzman.

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Folk Cures of My Youth Gaining Respectability

By Raymond Rodriguez

Herbal medicine, or folk medicine, as it is commonly known, has come a long way, in spite of the skeptics. Many

Latinos, myself included, grew up imbibing evil-smelling concoctions and doused with potions prepared by wor-

ried mothers, doting grandmas or local *curanderas* (healers).

As a youngster, I believed recovery was prompted not by the concoctions, but rather to avoid taking them. But what we thought were primitive cures derived from old wives' tales have gained an acceptance not accorded them when they were the bane of our childhood illnesses.

I was recently reminded of the mystical, curative powers of folk remedies by the return of a friend, Marcelino Saucedo, from an international conference of *curanderos* in Quito, Ecuador. I have known Marcelino for many years, but I wasn't aware of his interest in *curanderismo*. Nor did I know that he was considered an authority on the subject and had been chosen to deliver a paper at the Quito convention.

I guess that is because Marce, as his friends call him, is a self-effacing individual. I only learned of his involvement through a mutual friend, and I had to pry the details from him.

Since *curanderos* often perform solemn rites punctuated with mysterious incantations, there is a tendency to confuse

them with *brujos*, or witch doctors.

In our discussion of herbal medicine, Marce emphasized that was not the case. *Curanderos* do not practice witchcraft. They prescribe, prepare and administer cures, he said.

We spent a pleasant afternoon exchanging stories of folk remedies utilized in our homes during our youth. We both remembered *yerba buena*, of course, the "good weed" used to brew a potent tea guaranteed to cure the most stubborn cases of indigestion. If that failed to do the trick, a pinch of finely ground deer's antler could be added to the heady brew.

Headaches were cured by placing a slice of raw potato over each temple; colds by inhaling a strange brew through the nose. Dandruff could be eliminated by rinsing with juice of the olivera plant or similar cacti.

Marce told me he had also participated in a six-week session studying Indian *curanderismo*. He was one of a select group of 15 scholars granted a Fullbright Fellowship to accompany Douglas Sharon, a professor of anthropology at UCLA, to Peru. The

research was conducted in the shadow of Machu Picchu. Dr. Sharon had lived with the local *curandero* and was the godfather of two of his children.

That bond facilitated the research by gaining the cooperation of the Indians, who often disdain dealing with outsiders. That is due to the fact that pharmaceutical companies have belatedly recognized the medicinal value of the local plants and are trying to exploit them for commercial gain. The Indians, understandably, are distrustful of foreigners.

I was intrigued with Marce's revelation about the use of guinea pigs in Peru to determine the body's afflictions. Although raised as a source of food, they are sometimes used in pinpointing ailments. Passed over the body, they are then killed and gutted, enabling the *curandero* to ascertain the source of the problem.

The ritual was performed on one of the members of the group who was informed he was suffering from a heart condition. Laughter greeted the pronouncement -- until the apparently healthy young man confirmed his ailment had been diagnosed by spe-

cialists.

I related to Marce that in Mexico a similar process is used, except an egg serves as the means of making the determination. The egg is broken in a pan of water and the *curandero* interprets the results. As we chatted, I noticed Marce was wearing a copper bracelet. He informed me that he had been suffering from a severe case of tennis elbow and had found no relief using a prescribed bandage. However, since wearing the bracelet, his ailment had almost completely disappeared.

He stressed that cures are enhanced if an aura of unity and trust is created between the *curandero* and the patient. This aids in reestablishing the natural harmony between the body's physical, mental and emotional state, resulting in an effective cure.

Herbal medicine is gaining in worldwide popularity as an alternative to chemical-based cures. Odoriferous or not, the remedies of my childhood are still producing inexplicable cures.

(Raymond Rodriguez of Long Beach, Calif., is a retired university professor.)

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Curaciones Populares De Mi Juventud Cobran Respetabilidad

Por Raymond Rodríguez

La medicina herbácea, o medicina popular, como se le llama comúnmente, ha recorrido un largo camino a pesar de los escépticos. Muchos latinos, incluyéndome a mí, crecimos ingiriendo brebajes de mal olor y untados con pociones preparadas por madres preocupadas, abuelas excesivamente afectuosas o "curanderas" locales.

Cuando yo era niño, creía que la recuperación era producida, no por los brebajes sino antes bien por evitar tomarlos. Pero lo que nosotros pensábamos que eran curas primitivas derivadas de los cuentos de antiguas esposas, han cobrado una aceptación que no se les daba cuando eran los remedios para nuestras enfermedades infantiles.

Hace poco recordé los poderes curativos de los remedios populares mediante el regreso de un amigo, Marcelino Saucedo, de una conferencia internacional de "curanderos" en Quito, Ecuador. He conocido a Marcelino durante muchos años, pero no estaba al tanto de su interés por el "curanderismo." Ni tampoco sabía que se le consideraba una autoridad sobre el asunto y que había sido escogido para presentar un estudio en la convención de Quito.

Me imagino que eso se deba a que Marce, como lo llaman sus amigos, es una persona retraída. Sólo me enteré de su involucración a través de un amigo mutuo, y tuve que sacarle los detalles casi a la fuerza.

Ya que los "curanderos" efectúan a menudo ritos solemnemente puntuados con encantamientos misteriosos, hay la tendencia de confundirlos con los "brujos."

En nuestro debate sobre la medicina herbácea, Marce enfatizó que ése no era el caso. Los "curanderos" no practican la brujería. Ellos recetan, preparan y administran curaciones, dijo él.

Pasamos una tarde agradable intercambiando relatos de remedios populares que se empleaban en nuestros hogares durante nuestra juventud. Ambos recordábamos la "yerba buena," desde luego, que se usaba para preparar un cocimiento potente, garantizado como que curaba los casos más rebeldes de "empacho," indigestión. Si eso dejaba de funcionar, un poquito de asta de ciervo molido podía agregarse a la pócima fuerte.

Los dolores de cabeza se curaban situando una rodaja de papa cruda sobre cada sien; los catarros al inhalar una pócima extraña a través de la nariz. La caspa podía eliminarse al enjuagarse con jugo de la planta de olivera u otro cacto semejante.

Marce me dijo que él había participado también en una sesión de seis semanas que estudió el "curanderismo" indígena. El fué uno de un

grupo selecto de 15 eruditos a quienes se concedieron Becas Fullbright para acompañar a Douglas Sharon, catedrático de antropología en la Universidad de California, recinto de Los Angeles, al Perú. La investigación fué realizada a la sombra de Machu Pichu. El Dr. Sharon había vivido con el "curandero" local y era el padrino de dos de sus hijos.

Ese vínculo facilitó la investigación, al ganar la cooperación de los indígenas, quienes a menudo desdennan el trato con los extraños. Eso se debe a que las compañías farmacéuticas han reconocido tardíamente el valor medicinal de las plantas locales y están tratando de explotarlas para utilidad comercial. Los indígenas, comprensiblemente, desconfían de los extranjeros.

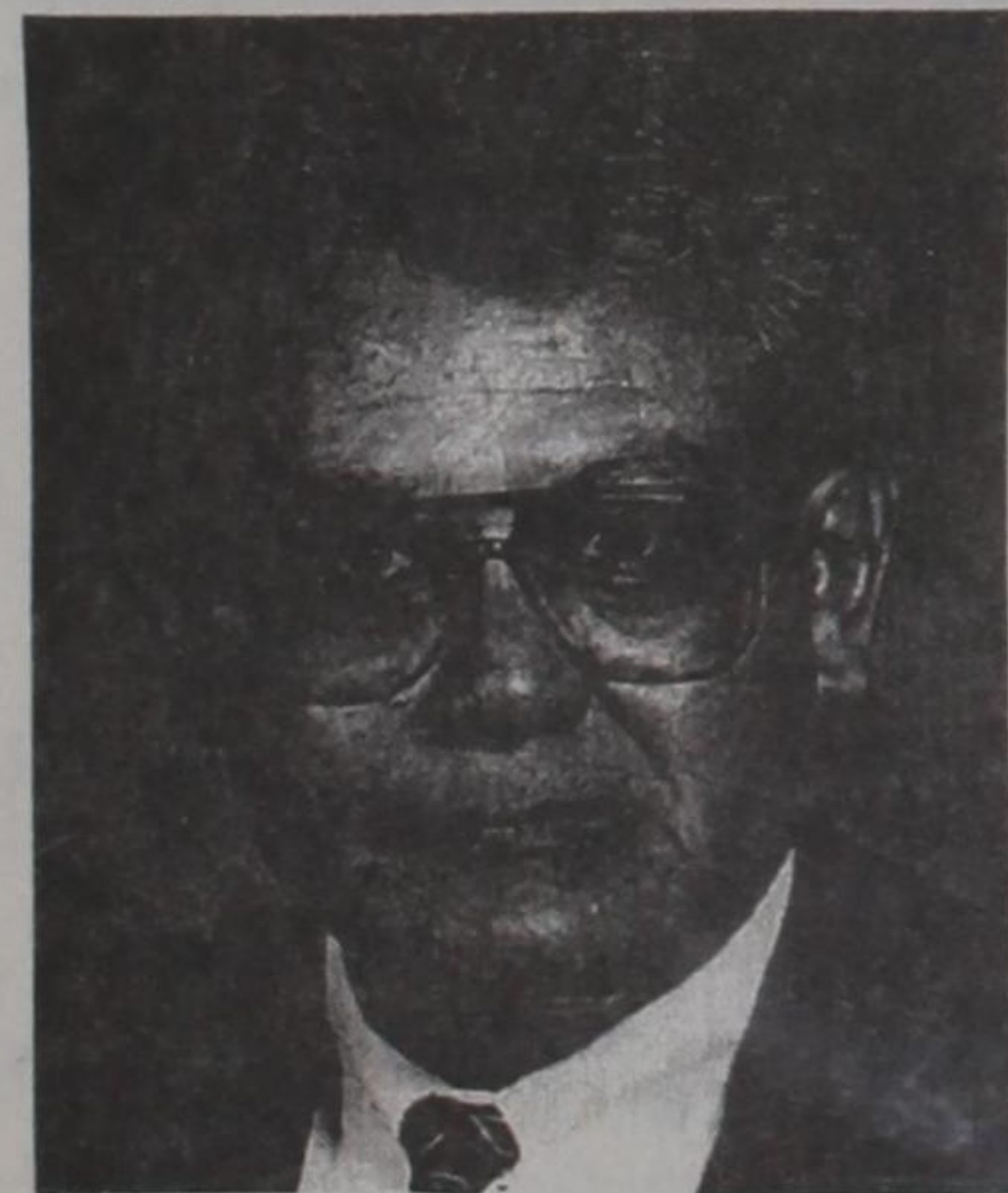
Me sentí intrigado por la revelación hecha por Marce sobre el empleo de conejillos de Indias en el Perú para determinar los padecimientos del cuerpo. Aunque se les cría como fuente de alimentación, a veces se les usa para precisar enfermedades. Se les pasa por encima del cuerpo humano y después se les mata y descuartiza, permitiendo al "curandero" saber la fuente del problema. El ritual fué efectuado en uno de los miembros del grupo, a quien se le informó que estaba padeciendo de un estado cardíaco. El pronunciamiento fué saludado por risa, hasta que el joven, aparentemente saludable, confirmó que su afección había sido diagnosticada por especialistas.

Le dije a Marce que en México se usa un trámite semejante, excepto que un huevo sirve como medio de hacer la determinación. Se rompe el huevo en una vasija con agua y el "curandero" interpreta los resultados. Mientras hablábamos, advertí que Marce estaba llevando un brazalete de cobre. El me informó que había estado padeciendo de un caso grave de "codo de tenista" y que no había hallado alivio al usar un vendaje que le recetaron. Sin embargo, desde que empezó a usar el brazalete, su afección había desaparecido casi por completo.

El enfatizó que las curas son realizadas si se crea un aura de unidad y confianza entre el "curandero" y el paciente. Esto ayuda a restablecer la armonía natural entre los estados físico, mental y emocional del cuerpo, lo cual resulta en una cura eficaz. La medicina herbácea está cobrando una popularidad mundial como alternativa a las curaciones basadas en los productos químicos. Odoríferos o no, los remedios de mi niñez están produciendo aún curaciones inexplicables.

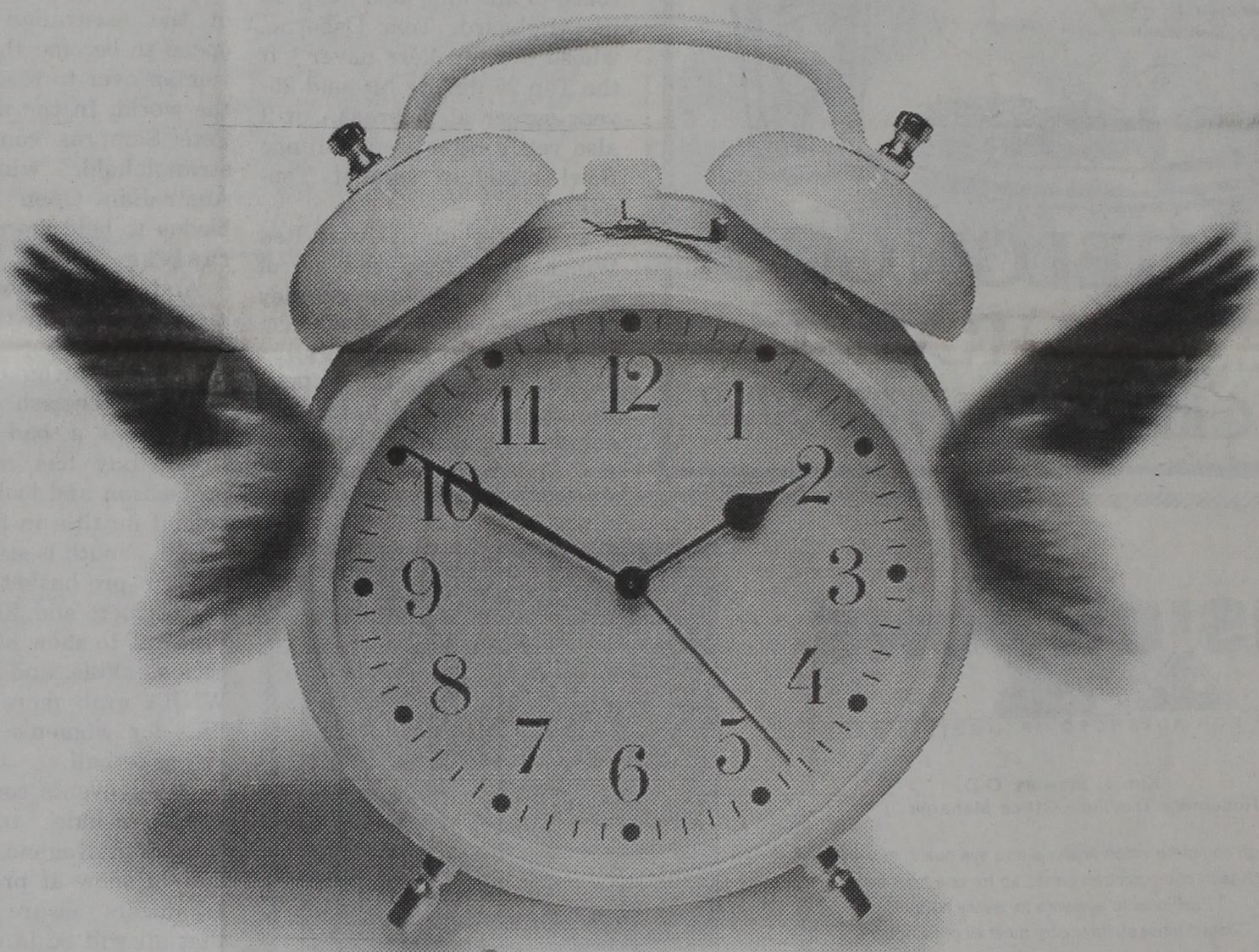
(Raymond Rodríguez, de Long Beach, California, es catedrático universitario jubilado.)

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