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DATEBOOK HIGHLIGHT

2nd Annual Noche de los Chefs

Featuring exquisite, al-fresco dining, the second annual “Noche de los Chefs: 10 Restaurants Under a Summer Sky” is coming to Convento de Capuchinas in La Antigua on Saturday, **March 26**, 6:30-11:30 p.m.

With proceeds benefitting the child-serving NGO CasaSito, the event includes eight chefs from Antigua restaurants and two from Guatemala City.

In addition to fundraising for a good cause, Noche de los Chefs also helps promote the area as a world-class culinary destination. Presented by Degustantigua in cooperation with Hotel Soleil Antigua, it also promises to become *the* culinary event of the year, based on last year's inaugural success.

Tickets at Q300 each include a complimen-

tary welcome drink and the gala 10-course meal, served in the romantic beauty of one of Antigua's most historic sites. Music will follow dinner on the terrace; a cash bar will also be available.

Only 200 tickets will be sold; available at Hotel Soleil Antigua and Revue Magazine.

The participating restaurants are: Hotel Soleil, Caffé Opera, Casa Santo Domingo, El Sereno, 709, Café Condesa, Las Conchas and Kaffee Fernando's in La Antigua; and Inka Grill and Primo de Roma in Guatemala City.

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XI FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DE CULTURA PAIZ 2011

POR AMOR

AL ARTE Y LA EDUCACIÓN

MARZO

IMAGINARIA 25 AÑOS DESPUÉS CONVERSATORIO

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*Ceiba
pentandra*,
Guatemala's
national
tree



photo by
Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth (FLAAR ARCHIVE)

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FROM THE PUBLISHERS

On our cover this month is the majestic *Ceiba pentandra*. It is the national tree of Guatemala and was revered for thousands of years by the ancient Maya as the sacred "world-tree." In one of our feature articles Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth describes the ways that the ceiba influenced Mayan art.

The influence of man on Manatees is the subject of conservationist/photographer Thor Janson's article "Discovering the Mermaids." Through his field notes we are reminded once again of the danger in which we have placed these gentle creatures.

Other subjects covered in this month's issue include: medical tourism in Guatemala; the Men and Women in Action organization; romantic weddings in Antigua; new schools offering new opportunities for children; what to expect during Lent; delightful desserts; the ritual of absinthe; and when and where you can catch a ton of cultural events.

We would like to include a final *adios* to our good friend of many years, Walter White.

March also marks the Revue's 19th anniversary. We gratefully acknowledge the confidence our advertisers have shown in us over these oh-so-many years, please know that we are still working hard for you. We would be nothing without our readers, and for your continued support we thank you profusely. And lastly, without our amazing Revue staff, we simply wouldn't be.

Have a great month and may your adventures only be the good kind.

—John & Terry Kovick Biskovich

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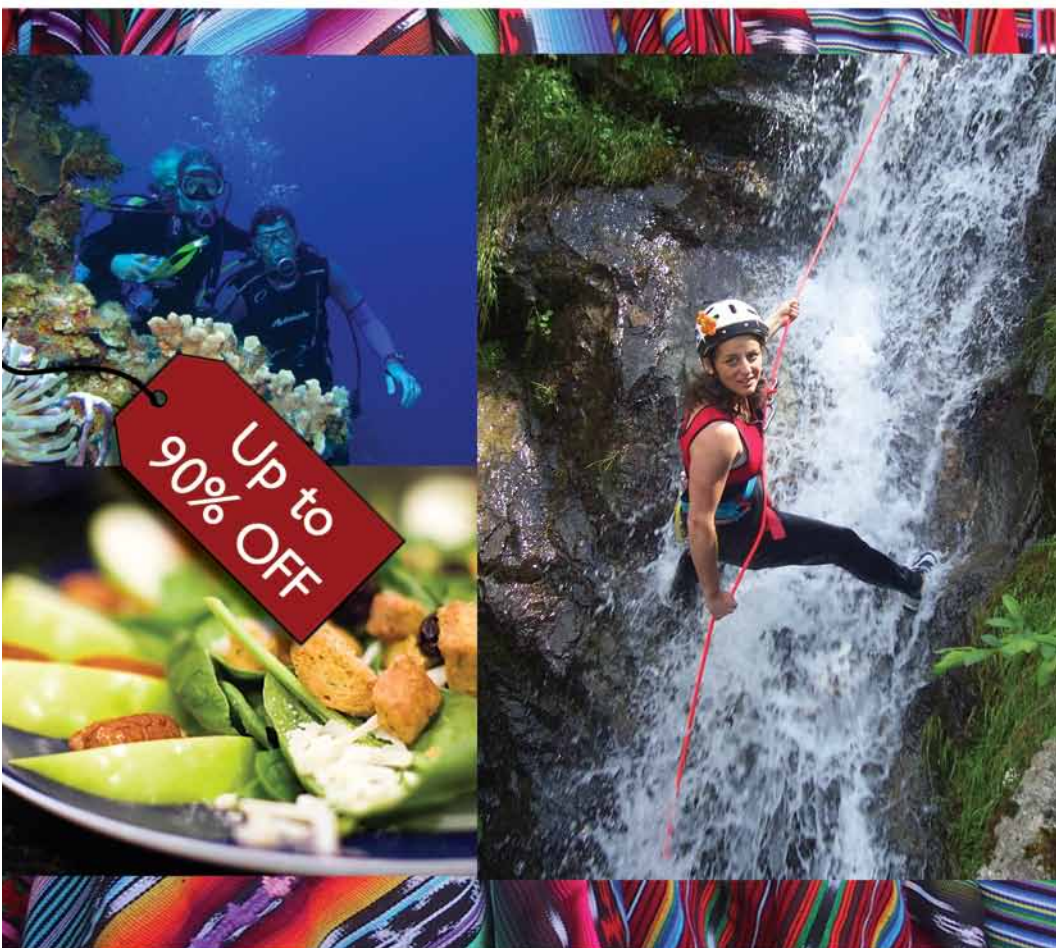
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NICHOLAS HELLMUTH, FLAAR ARCHIVE

Ceiba pentandra

Sacred tree for Classic Maya, national tree for Guatemala today

Look at the sacred ceiba tree and you may notice that its spines resemble the round bumps that the Maya incorporated on their incense burners, cache vessels and urns.

Notice the pattern of conical, spine-like protuberances on these thousand-year-old ceramic vessels. You get the same kinds of spine-like bumps on Early Classic Petén pottery as well as Late Classic Highland Quiché vessels.

The spines on the pottery vessels look about the same size and shape as spines on a common tree in Guatemala. This is *Ceiba pentandra*, which has been sacred for over 2,000 years. The immense size, fast growth, gorgeous flowers and the animals associated

with this tree are all reasons it was of interest to the Maya people, priests and rulers.

As a result, the characteristic conical spines on the trunk of a young ceiba tree decorate Mayan incense burners and burial urns. Considering that a mature ceiba can live several centuries and will grow to be one of the largest trees in the tropical world, it is no wonder that the tree “house” of the innovative 3D movie “Avatar” may have been partially modeled after some aspects of a ceiba-like tree.

What distinguishes *Ceiba pentandra* from other species are the pattern and size of its conical spines. Botanists call these prickles, but to me they are spines (they are not long

and thin, nor short, so I don't call them thorns). But they sure are sharp.

If you look at a dozen trees of the same species each tree may have a different size and quantity of spines. Some trees may be totally covered with spines. Other trees may have only a few random spines. And most mature ceiba trees may not have any spines at all.

Ceiba-like trees can be found all around the world, including Africa. I can remember seeing several around my hotel in that part of the world. Everything about the tree was almost identical to the ceiba I enjoy in Guatemala. Although the Old World ceiba was slightly distinctive, I find it remarkable that on two sides of the ocean the trees species would be so remarkably similar.

To see ceiba trees in Guatemala, visit Auto Safari Chapín on the highway to Taxisco, Escuintla. Tikal National Park has a huge ceiba tree as you walk from the entrance area (museum) out to the fork in the road into the ruins. There is a giant ceiba tree at the right.

The ruins of Ceibal, near Sayaxché, Petén, are named after ceiba trees. (Seibal in English; but more properly Ceibal in Spanish.) There are dozens of ceiba trees out in the cattle pastures on the highways going up to Petén and down to the south coast. Some may be different species, but their impressive size and form of the branches will identify them as a member of the ceiba family.

To see Mayan pottery with ceiba spines, visit the two museums at the Hotel Casa Santo Domingo in La ...continued on page 100



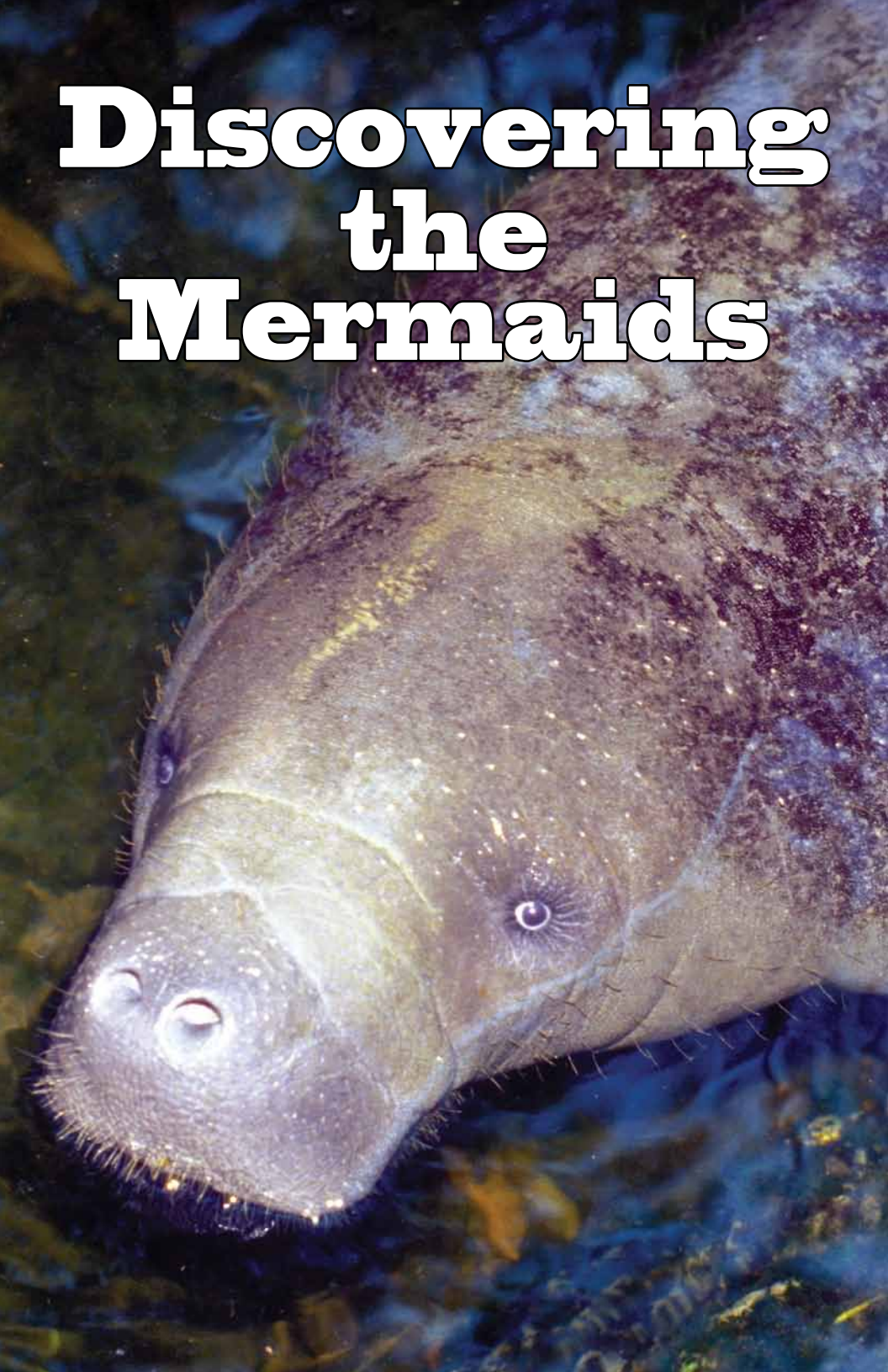
©La Ruta Maya Conservation Foundation

An example of how Mayan pottery (above) mimics the spines of the ceiba tree (below).



NICHOLAS HELLMUTH, FLAAR ARCHIVE

Discovering the Mermaids



*Once seen in the hundreds
and even thousands, **manatees**
are now only found in isolated enclaves
along American coasts.*

Three months after Columbus' arrival in the Caribbean, on Jan. 9, 1493, the ship's log recorded: "On the previous day when the Admiral went to the Rio del Oro he saw three mermaids which rose well out of the sea...they were not as beautiful as they are painted though they have something of a human face."

Mariners have a history of telling tall tales, but we now know that Columbus' description was not completely without grounds. With the New World he had discovered the manatee.

The sirenians are among the most aquatically adapted of all mammals, unable to move on land, having no hind limbs. They are also the only existing large aquatic herbivores. At maturity they measure from 8-12 feet and may weigh up to 1,500 pounds.

The three surviving manatee species—African, Amazonian and West Indian—all are seriously depleted.

The West Indian species' range formerly included the coasts, rivers and lagoons from North Carolina to southern Texas, the waters of the Bahamas and Greater Antilles to the Yucatán Peninsula in southern Mexico, and along the Atlantic shores of Central and South America to Brazil.

Today in North America they are essentially restricted to Florida, where a population of 600 to 1,000 manatees is being actively protected. In Latin America, where the Amazonian species has been aggressively hunted for its much-prized meat and oil, it is in real danger of extinction.

Once seen in hundreds and even thousands, manatees are now only found in isolated enclaves along American coasts.

In 1976, with all these considerations in mind, I decided to start a manatee research project in Guatemala, which I chose because it is the only place where manatees live in an inland lake. Lake Izabal and Río Dulce seemed like an ideal setting for observations and a good place for a refuge to be eventually developed.

Dawn of the buccaneer

Before the Spanish Conquest, the manatee was well known by the Maya. They had a high regard for *tek* both because of its fine meat and for the supernatural powers it was believed to possess.

The earbone of a manatee was especially prized; hung around the neck by a cord, it was believed to protect its owner from all evil powers. The Maya had a special process to prepare dried manatee meat, ...continued on page 48



Magic Moments

*'I Do, Guatemala' creates dream weddings
amid Antigua's romantic settings*

With volcanic backdrops, a signature arch, cobblestone streets and centuries-old ruins, La Antigua Guatemala couldn't be more picturesque.

Diana Sciarrillo of Guatemala City and colleague Romie Black of Atlanta (USA) want those and other images unique to Guatemala in wedding albums around the world. So last year they started "I Do, Guatemala" to entice engaged couples abroad to tie the knot in Antigua.

"It's just breathtaking—very romantic, majestic," Sciarrillo said. "When foreigners come here, they fall in love with the place."

Black and Sciarrillo arrange every last detail of a wedding to remove the burden from the couple and to give them and their guests a lifetime of fond memories.

In recent celebrations, couples in wedding attire have kissed under the Santa Catalina Arch, strolled through the Antigua market and exchanged vows in the splendor

of Convento de Capuchinas and the Cathedral of San José.

I Do, Guatemala has dispatched happy couples and their guests across the country for visits to Tikal, Lake Atitlán and the beach. Guests have ridden from the ceremony to receptions in uniquely Guatemalan style, too, such as *tuc-tucs* and a chicken bus.

"Antigua was all we had dreamed of and more," said newlywed Dave Kopetsky of Denver (USA). "The geographic setting was fabulous with the volcano and rooftop views. The city architecture hasn't changed much over the years and it feels like you're walking back in time. ... At the same time Antigua possessed many of the modern benefits—technology, restaurants, transportation—that made our guests feel comfortable."

For Kopetsky's rehearsal dinner, Sciarrillo arranged for a traditional Mayan fire ceremony—unbeknownst to the couple.

"She translated what the Maya priest was saying, and our family and ...continued on page 76



Medical Tourism

As more U.S. residents are going abroad for medical treatment, an Antigua company guides medical tourists to doctors in Guatemala

Frustrated with the rising costs and maddening bureaucracy of the U.S. medical system, more patients are looking overseas to get treatment of the same or better quality at a fraction of the cost.

This year, well over 1 million North Americans are expected to travel abroad for medical treatment, with the number expected to reach 1.6 million in 2012, according to the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions in Washington, D.C. This compares to the 750,000 U.S. medical travelers in 2007.

Given the growing numbers, along with her own good-natured desire to help people, Lori Shea opened **Guatemala Medical Travel** near La Antigua in 2009 after several

years of informally linking friends and travelers to first-rate doctors in Guatemala.

"I was living at Río Dulce, and a friend would need a root canal, or a tourist was having heart palpitations, and would ask me to help," recalls Ms. Shea, a New England native with a career in business and tourism consulting. "I was finding doctors with outstanding credentials. It started as the right thing to do for friends."

Her roster now includes more than 42 doctors, dentists and specialists, mostly in Guatemala City, whom she has checked out thoroughly via personal references from patients and other doctors and through intensive interviews and background checks. "I

do a lot of research. I look at only the top 2 percent, only the A-plus doctors.”

Not only does Guatemala Medical Travel arrange for the care, it also handles transportation, lodging, paperwork and translations. And perhaps most importantly, GMT advocates for the patient.

“You wouldn’t go to court without a lawyer to represent you,” Ms. Shea says. “Why would you go to a hospital without an advocate to help you? It’s your future quality of life at stake.”

After travel expenses, patients typically save 70 percent over what the same procedure would cost in the United States, according to the Deloitte report. Ms. Shea also reports huge savings in Guatemala.


“People ask me why it’s so much less in Guatemala, but the question should be, why is it so much more in the U.S.?” For the answer, Ms. Shea points to a bloated bureaucracy of lawyers, insurance companies and paperwork unique to the U.S. medical system.

And the most sought-after procedures in Guatemala?

“All sorts of dental work. The dental treatments and materials here are world-class quality. It’s not covered by Medicare, Canada’s socialized medicine or most HMO plans,” Ms. Shea answers. “Plastic surgery is also popular—facelifts, liposuction and eye-rejuvenation treatments.”

Ms. Shea reports unanimously positive feedback from her nearly 75 clients so far—“everyone is thrilled!”

Among them is Victoria, a patient from Key West, Florida, who was especially pleased with her eye surgery performed by ophthalmologic specialists in La Antigua.

“The room was filled with loving feelings toward each other as well as to me,” she said. “The attention to the details that are overlooked in the U.S. made for an exquisite experience of being truly cared about as a person and not as a number.” 

Cost comparisons of several medical procedures — Guatemala vs USA <small>Source: www.GuatemalaMedicalTravel.com</small>	TREATMENT	GUATEMALA	USA
	Root canal	\$145	\$750
	Facelift	\$4,800	\$19,500
	Knee replacement	\$11,000	\$42,000
	Breast implants	\$3,300	\$10,000
	Angioplasty	\$11,800	\$57,000

For more information visit www.guatemalamedicaltravel.com or call 5737-3023 in Guatemala or 305-797-0540 in the U.S. Email: lori@guatemalamedicaltravel.com



LEFT: British Ambassador Julie Chappell addresses the assembly. RIGHT: Hundreds of children, parents, teachers and supporters attend opening-day ceremony.

Concerted Effort

With transatlantic support, new school opens in Jocotenango

Built with an outpouring of support from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, a modern new school recently opened in Jocotenango for over 500 children, many of whom might not get an education otherwise.

The spacious Escuela Proyecto La Esperanza has 20 classrooms, a computer lab, an audio-visual room, library, kitchen, psychology room and more. It also has access to playing fields and green space, thanks to the generosity of Finca La Azotea, which donated most of the 3,000 square meters of land on which the new school stands.

“This is a very special day,” British Ambassador to Guatemala Julie Chappell told an opening-day assembly of children, parents, teachers and supporters seated in the

broad plaza on a cool January morning.

The school (kindergarten through third grade) is the centerpiece project of the Nottingham-based Education for the Children Foundation, whose chairman, David McKee, fought back tears as he addressed the audience.

“We have a beautiful building—but it’s just a building,” he said. “A school needs children who want to work hard and study. A school needs teachers with abilities but who also understand the problems of the people of Jocotenango.

“A school needs leaders with vision. But most of all a school needs a heart and a soul. La Esperanza has those qualities that make it a school,” he said.

French architect Pierre Turlin, who worked at greatly reduced rates, was cited for working closely with materials supplier ...continued on page 84



ASK ELIZABETH

by Elizabeth Bell

Will there be carpet making and processions during Lent?

La Antigua has *the* largest celebration in the world for Lent and Holy Week, although second historically to Seville, Spain. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, **March 9**, with one of 50 activities during a 40-day period!

I love carpet making in Antigua! Sunday processions in March include nearby San Catarina Bobadilla, Santa Inés, and Jocotenango where you may see the most spectacular carpets throughout each processional route.

If the procession goes by your house, your friends and family invite themselves over to make a carpet. These are made out of

dyed sawdust, pine needles, flowers, fruits, vegetables and a complete array of artistic decorations. “Corozo,” the inside of a large pod that grows on the Pacific Coast, is also very popular and provides the traditional fragrance for Lent.

Each carpet-making “family” decides the materials in advance. While most designs are created beforehand, many of the designs emerge out of the carpet makers’ creativity as they prepare these works of art.

Carpet makers are not all Catholic, and everyone participates on their hands and knees, working together. ...continued on page 44



REVUE DateBook

MARCH Guide to culture & upcoming events

Compiled by Mercedes Mejicanos

2 Wed., 7pm — JAZZ FESTIVAL: Eli Yamin (USA). Free. Cooperación Española (tel: 7832-1276), 6a av. norte between 3a and 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

2 Wed., 7:30pm — MUSIC: Banda Mezcal Jazz Unit (quintet). Free. Plaza de la Constitución, z. 1, **Guatemala City**.

3 Thurs., 6pm — ART: *Expectador*, latest works by Edgar Andaverde. Cocktail and parking. Galería Enrique Acuña (tel: 4360-7840), 6a av. 20-00, z. 1, **Guatemala City**.



3 Thurs., 7pm — MEETING: Antigua's Photo Club meets the first Thursday of every month with photo talks, workshops & contests in color, b/w and digital themes. Restaurante JP's Rumbar, 7a calle p. Info: www.clubfotograficoantigua.com & FB/ClubFotograficoAntigua. **La Antigua**.

3 Thurs., 9pm — MUSIC: Talented blues songwriter/singer Steve James has a one-time-only performance. Q50, limited tickets. Ocelot (tel: 5658-9028), 4a av. norte #3, **La Antigua**.

4 Fri., through Sun., 6th: BUDDHA RELIC TOUR: Artifacts from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's collection, which has been touring the world. Visit: www.revuemag.com/go/relic.tour. Hotel Casa Santo Domingo, **La Antigua**. ▼



5 Sat., 7pm — JAZZ FESTIVAL: *Actis Dato* (Italy). Free. Cooperación Española (tel: 7832-1276), 6a av. norte between 3a and 4a calle poniente, **La Antigua**.

5 Sat., 11am-1pm — (English) MEETING: Democrats Abroad, Guatemala *Annual General Meeting*. For more information, contact John Chudy, 7832-4581, or mayadems@yahoo.com. La Peña de Sol Latino Restaurant, 5a calle poniente #15-C, **La Antigua**.

5 Sat., 1pm — CULTURAL EVENT: A glimpse at indigenous culture, a Maya sacerdote (priest) performs an authentic ceremony/ritual. Free. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), *La Antigua*.

6 Sun., 11am — CULTURAL FESTIVAL: 11th annual Paiz International Festival of Art and Culture features *Postales de Italia*, piano recital by Andreas Klein. Centro de Convenciones, Hotel Museo Casa Santo Domingo, 3a calle oriente #28A, *La Antigua*. ▼



6 Sun., 9am-5pm — PICNIC: Annual picnic at Finca el Zapote. Bring your swimsuit, towel, hat, sunblock and camera. Water, beer, ice cream and food for sale. Q100 adults; children Q50. Tickets on sale at Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, *Guatemala City*.



8 Tues., 6-11pm — MASQUERADE BALL: The second annual Antigua Masquerade Ball, a Venetian-style gala, benefits several children's charities. Only 150 tickets (Q500 each) will be sold; visit www.antiguavenetianball.com. San José El Viejo, *La Antigua*.

8 Tues., through Sun. 13 — MAGIC CONFERENCE — X Congreso Latinoamericano de Magia features magicians from Latin America, Europe and the United States performing in a variety of specialties. For tickets see www.todoticket.com. Registration \$200 (USD) to participate; visit www.flasomaguatemala.com. Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel Asturias, *Guatemala City*. See highlight page 36.

8 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: ConstruCasa is an NGO offering basic housing to families living in extreme poverty. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua*.

9 Wed., 7pm — ART: *Tè amo, te odio, sin ti no puedo vivir*, works by well-known artists such as Pablo Bromo, Anna Cosenza, Alejandro Marre, Alejandro Noriega, Igal Permuth and Lourdes de la Riva. Galería de Arte Alianza Francesa (tel: 2440-2102), 5a calle 10-55, z. 13, Finca La Aurora, *Guatemala City*.

10 Thurs., 6:30pm — (Spanish) CONFERENCIA: *Diseño Guatemalteco* a cargo de Priscilla Bianchi. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, *Guatemala City*.

10 Thurs., 7pm — JAZZ FESTIVAL: Joel LaRue (USA). Cooperación Española (tel: 7832-1276), 6a av. norte between 3a & 4a calle poniente, *La Antigua*.

12 Sat., 1pm — BENEFIT DANCE: The Niños de San Antonio Aguas Calientes dance and play the marimba, flutes and bombas. Free. Donations to benefit educational pursuits. La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 7882-4468), 5a calle poniente #15-C, *La Antigua*.

Please submit your DATEBOOK entry for the APRIL, 2011 edition of the REVUE by Thursday, March 10



11 Fri., 8pm & Sat., 12, 6pm — CULTURAL FESTIVAL: 11th annual Paiz International Festival of Art and Culture presents *13 B'atqun, Las Profecías Mayas* by Grupo Sotz'il. Music, dance and theater. Tickets at TodoTicket.com. Ruinas La Recolectión, Alameda Santa Lucía norte, final, **La Antigua**.

12 Sat., 3-5pm — ART: *Landscapes*, by artist Carmen Herrerías. To see online show, go to www.clubvenaca.com. Inauguration cocktail party at Club Ven Aca, **Jaibalito, Lake Atitlán**. ▼



13 Sun., 11am — RECITAL: *Recital de Canción de Arte Guatemalteco*, music of the most significant Guatemalan composers of 20th century. This recital was previously held in several venues in Germany and Uruguay. Presented by Karin Rade-mann, soprano, and Hugo Arenas, piano. Q75, shuttles from Casa Santo Domingo. Santo Domingo del Cerro, **La Antigua**. (photo on opposite page)

14 Mon., 5:30pm — FILM: Democrats Abroad Guatemala Film Series 2011, *The Coca-Cola Case: The Truth that Refreshes*. Donation Q30. Casa Convento Concepción, 4a calle oriente #41, **La Antigua**.

14 Mon., 5:30pm — (Spanish/English) PRESENTATION: *Maguey Journey, Discovering Textiles in Guatemala* by Kathryn Rousso. INGUAT, La Casa de Turista (tel: 7832-3782), 2a calle oriente #11, **La Antigua**. See Book Alert, page 31.

15 Tues., 6:30pm — (Spanish/English) BOOK PRESENTATION: *Maguey Journey, Discovering Textiles in Guatemala*, written by Kathryn Rousso. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

15 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Niños de Guatemala* works toward building a better future for Guatemalan children. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

15 Tues., 6:30pm through Thurs., 31 — ART: *Grabado Francés del Imperio*, engravings by 19th century French artists, including Beyer, Blanchard, Burdet, Coterelle, Frilley, Girardet, A. Lefèvre y Lerouge, organized by Galería Guatemala & Fundación G&T Continental. Vestíbulo Banco G&T Continental, 6a av. 9-08, z. 9, **Guatemala City**. ▼



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—Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

*Writing about music is like dancing
about architecture.* —Elvis Costello

Vegas in Antigua

The Guatemala NGO Network and the NGO Participants
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Ellen Christenson
Francesca Wade
Barbara Kerner
Lori Shea
Aury Lee and the Belly Dancers
The Staff at Casa Convento Concepción

...and everyone who attended the event!

MUSIC

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THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

La Cueva de Panza Verde (tel: 7832-2925)5a av. sur #19, *La Antigua***Mondays** — Blues and Bossa Nova.**Wednesdays Lunch & Wednesday Night** —
Classical Piano, Classic Jazz Trio.**Thursdays** — Buena Vista de Corazón, Cuban
Jazz by Ignacio.**Fridays** — Latin Trio.**Saturdays** — Bossa Nova by Maf.**Sunday Brunch** — Classical music.
Nightly cover: Q35**La Peña de Sol Latino** (tel: 7882-4468)5a calle poniente #15-C, *La Antigua***Mondays, 7-10pm** — Buena Vista de
Corazón, Cuban Jazz/Salsa. Ignacio and the
band with fun Cuban music and great food in
our beautiful garden. Free.**Tuesdays, 7-10pm** — Ramiro plays Trova
Cubana. Free.**Wednesdays through Sundays, 7-10pm** —
Sol Latino plays Andean music (pan flutes).
Free. ▼**Sundays, 12:30-3pm** — Ramiro plays Trova
Cubana. Free.If your bar or restaurant has live music on a regular
schedule, send info to: publicidad@revuemag.com**Rainbow Café** (tel: 7832-1919)7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua***Mondays, 7:30pm** — Don Ramiro will serenade
you with some beautiful Latin folk music. Free.**Tuesdays & Fridays, 7:30pm** — Sergio, reggae
music.**Wednesdays, 7:30pm** — *Open Mike Night* hosted
by Juan-Jo and friends. A complimentary drink for
all performers. Free.**Thursdays, 7:30pm** — Güicho will astound
you with his guitar skills and improvisation of
Latino and pop classics.**Saturdays, 7:30pm** — At.One.Ment. Come
and listen to Luke and his band. You cannot
miss it. Enjoy a few drinks and relax to some
classics.**Sundays, 7:30pm** — La Raiz: Luis, Juan-Jo
& Choko, great improvised classics. Free.**Las Palmas** (tel: 7832-9734)6a av. norte #14, *La Antigua***Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:00pm** — Live
music with alternating special guests.**F****ridays, 8pm** — MUSIC: The smiley
owner from Argentina will receive you
in Angie Angie, her newly opened tapas-
parrilladas-style restaurant, featuring the-
ater, live music and a puppet show. Angie
Angie, 1a av. sur #11A, *La Antigua*.

CHECK DATEBOOK CALENDAR LISTINGS FOR MORE CONCERTS AND SPECIAL MUSICAL EVENTS

MUSIC

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Ocelot (tel: 5658-9028)4a avenida norte #3, *La Antigua***Mondays** — Mike & Moriah; Piano & Vocals.**Tuesdays** — Buena Vista de Corazón; Cuban Jazz.**Wednesdays, 7:30pm** — Luke; British Indie Rock.**Thursdays** — Nelson Lunding; New Orleans Piano (7-9pm).

Mike & Moriah (9-11pm).

Fridays — Ron Fortin; Sax (7-9pm).

Nelson Lunding (9:30-11:30pm).

Saturdays — Buena Vista De Corazón (7-10pm).

Mercedes; Folk/Blues (9:30-11:30pm).

One-time concert in March on the patio:**Thur. 3rd, 9pm:** Talented blues songwriter / singer Steve James has a one-time-only performance. Q50, limited ticketsPub Quiz hosted by Brendan Byrne
Every **Sunday** at 6:30pm**Gaia Restaurante** (tel: 7832-3670)Calle del Arco #35-A, *La Antigua***Thursdays, 7:00pm** — Live music**Fridays and Saturdays** — Belly dancing**Posada de Santiago** (tel: 7721-7366) 1 kmsouth of Santiago Atitlán, *Lake Atitlán***Live Music every week**, usually on Fridays and Saturdays. Check Gringos of Santiago on Facebook for details.

MUSIC

Circus Bar (tel: 7762-2056)Avenida de los Árboles, *Panajachel***Mondays** — 7pm: Chris Jarnach, classic music, jazz and rock.

8pm: Marco Solo and friends, Pana's Carlos Santana. Rock, blues and jazz.

9pm: Norte, contemporary trova.

Tuesdays — 7pm: Chris Jarnach, classic music, jazz and rock.

8pm: Rockiris, alternative rock.

9pm: Latin ensemble.

Wednesdays — 7pm: Chris Jarnach, classic music, jazz and rock.

8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Carlos Rangel and son, swing, Cuban son and rock.

Thursdays — 7pm: Chris Jarnach, classic music, jazz and rock.

8pm: Latin ensemble.

9pm: Norte, contemporary trova.

Fridays — 7pm: Flamenco by Marco El Messina.

8pm: Latin ensemble. 9pm: Trova del Lago.

Saturdays — Los Vagabundos, hot rhythms in a fusion of Rumba, Flamenco and Guatemalan traditional elements.**Sundays** — Latin Ensemble.**Trova Jazz** (tel: 2334-1241) Via 6, 3-55,zona 4, *Guatemala City***Thursdays,****9:15pm** —

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16 Wed., 5pm — ART: Inauguration of *Portraits in Situ* by the talented photographer and artist Tom Waters, featuring portraits from Hale County, Alabama (mid-1980s)



and the Guatemalan Highlands (1994 to present); both areas rural and impoverished. Mesón Panza Verde (tel: 7832-2925), 5a av. sur #19, **La Antigua**.

17 Thurs., 5:30-8pm — CELEBRATION: 10th Anniversary Party, *It All Begins With Family Planning...* Join WINGS in celebrating a decade of achievements in reproductive health and improving the lives of Guatemalan families. **6:45pm** — WINGS' new short film debuts. Admission Q50; for info email info@wingsguate.org or call 7832-5130. Mesón Panza Verde, **La Antigua**. See highlight page 32.

17 Thurs., 6:30pm — (Spanish) CONFERENCIA: *Técnicas del Arte Textil* con Priscilla Bianchi. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

18 Fri., through Mon., 21 — FESTIVAL OF CONSCIOUSNESS: Exhibitions & workshops in an array of holistic concepts. Q200, unlimited workshops (includes entrance to Sat. night party), kids 12 and under Q100; Q75 per workshop for adults, Q30 per workshop for kids. For more info join the San Marcos Holistic Centre on Facebook. **San Marcos** ◀ **La Laguna**.

Revue is not responsible for event cancellations or date/time changes.

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20 Sun., 11am — **CULTURAL FESTIVAL:** 11th annual Paiz International Festival of Art and Culture features ¡Viva Verdi! with Guatemalan baritone Luis Girón May and other artists. Centro de Convenciones, Hotel Museo Casa Santo Domingo, 3a calle oriente #28A, *La Antigua*.

22 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) **TALK:** *Pedal Power.* Maya Pedal supports many community projects in collaboration with local, national and international groups. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, *La Antigua*.

24 Thurs., & Tues., 29, 7pm — **AUCTION:** *Arte Subasta*, organized by Comité de Damas Rotario Guatemala Sur. Exhibition of more than 90 works by well-known artists benefits FUNDAMEX and Fundación Margarita Tejada. Exhibition continues through April 1. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, *Guatemala City*.

Arguments are to be avoided; they are always vulgar and often convincing.

—Oscar Wilde



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24 **Thurs, 4pm** — (English/Spanish) **NETWORKING:** The Guatemala NGO Network invites health care NGOs in Guatemala to present their organizations to others who wish to improve lives. Public welcome. Q50 includes drink and snacks. For information contact Judy (7832-9871) or La Peña de Sol Latino (tel: 4882-4468), *La Antigua*.

26 **Sat.,** — **ART:** La Antigua Galería de Arte presents the latest works by Guatemalan artist Hugo González Ayala, who finds inspiration in the Guatemalan Highlands and its pueblos, buildings, streets and fields. La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), *La Antigua*. ▼



26 **Sat., 3pm** — (Spanish) **TALLER:** Germinación de semillas y siembra de hortalizas, entérese de las novedosas semillas de agricultura ecológica que no necesitan tierra para su cultivo. Conferencistas Carolina de Mejía y Lissette de Jelkmann. Entrada gratuita. Vivero y Café de la Escalonia (tel: 7832-7074), 5a av. sur final #36-C, *La Antigua*.

26 **Sat., 6:30-11:30pm** — **NOCHE DE LOS CHEFS:** The 2nd annual *Noche de los Chefs*. Tickets, Q300 p/p, available at Hotel Soleil & the Revue office. Proceeds benefit CasaSito. Visit www.degustantigua.com. Convento de Capuchinas, *La Antigua*. See highlight on page 2.

DATEBOOK continues on page 38

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BOOK ALERT

Maguey Journey Discovering Textiles in Guatemala

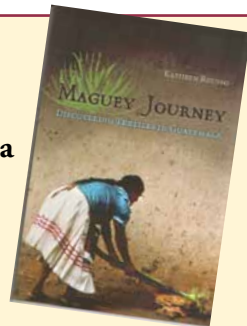
Author: Kathryn Rousso

Three parts within 14 chapters; illustrations, b/w & color photography; appendix 1-5; table, Mayan terminology; glossary; bibliography; further reading & index

Publisher: The University of Arizona Press, Tucson www.uapress.arizona.edu

"There is no other publication quite like this one devoted to maguey use in Guatemala, past and present. Rousso's photographs are excellent and provide the reader with additional information that words cannot convey."

—Margot Blum Schevill, co-editor of *Textile Traditions of Mesoamerica and the Andes: An Anthology*



Kathryn Rousso, an accomplished textile artist, takes a detailed look at the state of maguey culture, use and trade in Guatemala. She has spent years traveling in the region, highlighting maguey workers' interactions in many locations and blending historical and current facts to describe their environments. Along the way, Rousso has learned the process of turning a raw leaf into beautiful and useful textile products and how globalization and modernization are transforming the maguey trade in Guatemala.



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DATEBOOK HIGHLIGHT




'It All Begins With Family Planning...'

Join WINGS in celebrating a decade of impressive achievements in the field of reproductive health and a continued commitment to improving the lives of Guatemalan families on Thursday, **March 17**, from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Mesón Panza Verde in La Antigua.

Founded a decade ago by retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer Sue Patterson, WINGS has gone from an initial operating budget of \$4,000 to over \$1 million in 2011 and now serves over 30,000 people annually in 7 departments throughout Guatemala.

The organization provides reproductive health education for women, men and adolescents; subsidies for short- and long-term family planning methods; cervical cancer screening and treatment; advocacy training for better public health service provision; and capacity-building for other organizations.

With the theme "It All Begins With Family Planning..." the 10th anniversary kickoff event will feature a special screening at 6:45 p.m. of WINGS' new short film about family planning. Photos showcasing scenes from WINGS' work in Guatemala will also be for sale. Ms. Patterson, a resident of La Antigua whose diplomatic career spanned the globe, will be in attendance.

Admission of Q50 includes a complimentary drink and hors d'oeuvres, with all proceeds benefiting WINGS. The event is being generously hosted by Mesón Panza Verde, 5a av. sur #19, La Antigua. 

*For more information, email
 info@wingsguate.org or call 7832-5130.*



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Before marriage, a man declares that he would lay down his life to serve you; after marriage, he won't even lay down his newspaper to talk to you.
—Helen Rowland

Love is the thing that enables a woman to sing while she mops up the floor after her husband has walked across it in his barn boots.
—Hoosier Farmer

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Participants in January's public demonstration for animal rights

Taking it to the Streets

Sunday, January 30, 2011, saw the first-ever public demonstration in Guatemala claiming respect, rights and legislation for all animals.

The marchers gathered early at the assembly point on Guatemala City's Avenida La Reforma, making new friends and mingling with old ones, admiring the costumed dogs and painted people, and the various banners and placards requesting redress of the whole gamut of abuse of animals by humankind.

The organizers did a smooth job of marshalling the parade into an orderly shape, moving south down La Reforma in clear sunshine under a blue sky, chanting *maltrato animal al código penal* (outlaw animal abuse)!

The event, which included a post-march concert at El Obelisco, was organized over many months by Paz Animal and AWARE. All who were there could proudly join together saying, *somos la voz de los sin voz* (we are the voice of the voiceless ones). 

—Martin Leadbitter







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DATEBOOK HIGHLIGHT

ABRACADABRA!!

Guatemala to host the 10th Latin American Magic Congress

There's magic in the air this month as international magicians come to Guatemala City for the X Congreso Latinoamericano de Magia (10th Latin American Magic Congress) **March 8-13** at the Centro Cultural Miguel Ángel Asturias, according to "Mr. Dory."

With artists from Latin America, Europe and the United States, the event features performers in a variety of specialties. It's the first time the congress will be celebrated in Guatemala.

The specialties and participants include:

General: Henry Vargas, Brazil; Daniel Ketchedjian, Uruguay; Gustavo Raley, Argentina; and Edgar Weiss, Guatemala.

Comedy: the duo Uno & Medio, Argentina; Marko, Panama; and Luis Karías, Guatemala.

Manipulation: Chen Kai and Spider, Mexico; Petey Marvey, Switzerland; and Edgardo Torres, Guatemala.


Mental: Lee Alex, England; and Tony Montana, Argentina.

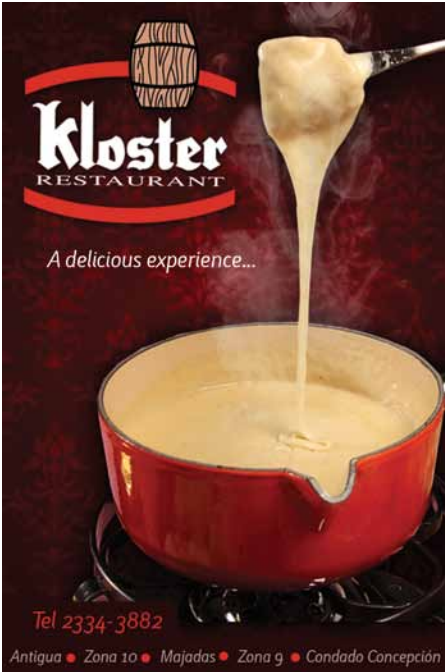
Close-up: Miguel Ángel Gea and Dani Daortiz, Spain.

Cards: Juan Tamariz, Spain; and Henry Evans, Argentina.

Street magic: Daniel García, United States; and José Miguel González, Guatemala.

Grand illusions: Peter Marvey, Switzerland.

The congress is organized by the Federación Latinoamericana de Magia (FLASOMA). Tickets range from \$100-\$275 (USD) per performance and are available through www.todoticket.com. Registration is \$200 (USD) for those who want to participate. For more information visit www.flasomaguatemala.com 

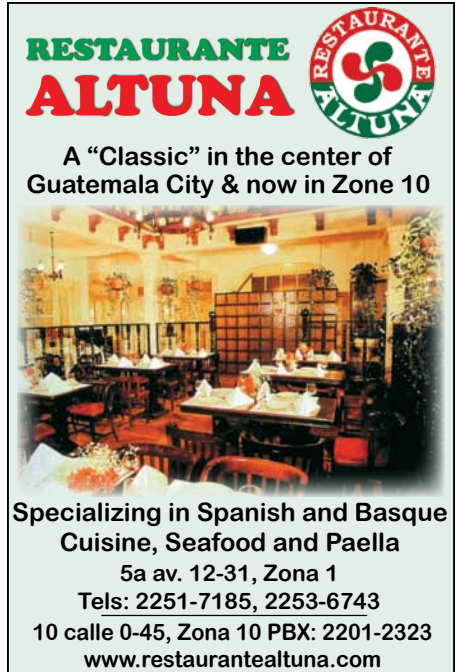


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29 Tues., 5:30pm — (English) TALK: *Combating Poverty through Education*. The mission of Safe Passage/Camino Seguro is to empower the poorest, at-risk children of families working in the community of the Guatemala City garbage dump. Donation Q25. Rainbow Café (tel: 7832-1919), 7a av. sur #8, **La Antigua**.

30 Wed., 6pm — PHOTO TOUR: Meet Elizabeth Bell for a photo tour of Lent and Holy Week in Antigua with tips on how to enjoy the largest Holy Week celebration in this hemisphere. Q30 benefits educational programs. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), **La Antigua**.

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Mondays, 9:30-11:30am — (Spanish) CURSO: Curso de Figura Humana, temas figura humana básica, proporción, movimiento, contrastes, textura, taller en vivo, técnica lápiz negro y blanco. Impartido por Edgar Ramírez. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30am — (Spanish) CURSO: Clases de Photoshop a cargo de Licda. María Fernanda García Directora, Fototeca del Museo Ixchel. Museo Ixchel (tel: 2361-8081), 6a calle final, z. 10, Centro Cultural UFM, **Guatemala City**.

Tuesdays, 6pm — (English) SLIDE SHOW: *Antigua Behind the Walls* with Elizabeth Bell. Q30 benefits educational programs. El Sitio (tel: 7832-3037), 5a calle poniente #15, **La Antigua**.

HANDICRAFTS EXHIBITION: Wooden handicrafts, ceramics, paintings, handmade jewelry & welded ornaments. Free entrance. INGUAT, Casa del Turista (tel: 7832-3782), 2a calle oriente #11, **La Antigua**.

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

Sundays, noon — Sundays are for relaxing, and Angie Angie is the perfect place to do so while enjoying a real Texas ribs barbecue with live music in an open-air garden. Angie Angie, 1a av. sur #11A, **La Antigua**. ▼



Through Fri., 18 — ART: La Antigua Galería de Arte presents a 30-piece exhibition by Guatemalan artist Sergio Valenz titled *Mecanomorfa*. La Antigua Galería de Arte (tel: 7832-2124), **La Antigua**.

Through Sun., 20 — PHOTOGRAPHY: Escenas de la Infancia: Sesenta Años de Posguerra en Japón, organized by the Japanese Embassy and the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala. Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida, salón No. 6, Finca la Aurora, z. 13, **Guatemala City**.

Through May 31 — CULTURAL FESTIVAL: 11th annual Paiz International Festival of Art and Culture presents RetroGráfica, photography by Isabel Ruiz. ArteCentro Graciela Andrade de Paiz, 9a calle 8-54, z. 1, **Guatemala City**.

Through April 29th, 9am-5pm — EXHIBITION: *El Lienzo de Quauhquechollan*, the centuries-old indigenous document, painted on cotton canvas, depicting the vision of the conquest of Guatemala and its landscape. Casa Noj (tel: 7768-3139), 7a calle 12-12, z. 1, **Quetzaltenango**.

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Anthony Wayne Berger

1944-2010



Wayne Berger, a versatile genius who spread Guatemalan voices over a radius of thousands of miles, has died in Jerusalem. He was 66.

Wayne's office always reminded me of the inside of a tackle box. But if you looked closely, you saw more than just books on biblical languages jumbled on shelves with coils of wire and spare parts for transmitters. He could find anything there, without hesitation. The complexities of life in general could no more divert him from his purposes than this apparent office clutter.

That office was on floor two of the TGNA building in Zone 3. This broadcaster on both FM and AM/shortwave frequencies, also called Radio Cultural, has stood since 1950 next to the CETECA Seminary. Wayne, the station's top engineer for decades, built several transmitters in Guatemala.

Thanks to Wayne, millions of people in a dozen countries could awake before dawn to TGNA's trademark jingle, its inspirational messages and classical music programming.


Born in Baltimore (USA) in 1944 and orphaned by 14, Wayne was impatient with the pace of classroom learning. Accordingly, he was largely a self-taught prodigy who mastered a subject by obtaining all available books on a topic and absorbing their content. Electronics was an early target for his intellect, such that by 17 he was licensed to work as a chief engineer at radio stations in Georgia. This position normally required years of university study.

After his conversion to Christianity two years earlier, he was captivated by Greek and Hebrew. Not until he was 23 did he begin to pursue Spanish; ultimately, he would go on to master all three languages.

This happened after Wayne discovered, on his own shortwave receiver, that TGNA's chief engineer had died in an accident. He answered what he believed was a calling and, by 1966, had completed missionary training in Dallas. He arrived in Guatemala City the following year after a crash-course in Spanish in Costa Rica. In 1971, Wayne married Guatemalan Marievelia Méndez. They would have a son, Anthony Joseph.

Over the years, Wayne became a fixture in Guatemalan broadcasting circles and also in seminaries in Chimaltenango and Guatemala City. He taught theology and Hebrew and tutored worthy but impecunious students. He frequently traveled abroad to troubleshoot for Christian broadcasters with technical problems.

Kind, generous and gifted with good-humored humility, Wayne was also respected as a Sunday-school teacher of high erudition and insight. But his greatest joy was leading pilgrimages to Israel, where he hoped to pass on. This he did after a brief but happy retirement, culminating a life of immeasurable fruitfulness.

"The Lord granted his wish," says his longtime friend and TGNA associate David Pérez.  —Dwight Wayne Coop

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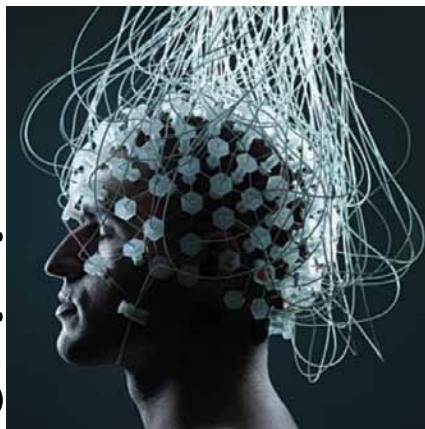
It's not easy taking my problems one at a time when they refuse to get in line. —Ashleigh Brilliant



Moments of Mindfulness

by Dr. Karmen Guevara
HOLISTIC PSYCHOTHERAPIST

INTER- RUPT- US



In some ways we're wired like a computer. We receive "interrupt signals" informing us that something is demanding attention. We have similar choices about how to respond, like pausing the "program" we're running or to ignore the signal.

While hardware interrupts are hard to ignore, software ones are subtle and insidious. Appropriately, they're also called "a trap." Our busy doing-and-thinking self is interrupted and trapped a lot of the time, which is easy considering the 90,000 thoughts we reportedly have each day!


Is it a cosmic joke that the faulty wiring we have on the "ignore signal" response is being rapidly corroded by technology? We need not retreat in helpless surrender to "The Technology Entrapment" trend. So what if 2,500 Twitter followers expect a continuous stream of tweets and people know you have an iPhone and therefore can respond instantly to email or that Facebook friends would suffer if they didn't know you just ate curry?

These interruptions trap us in a sense of belonging and relationship. The desires and

fears surrounding these two dominant human needs are insatiable—hence the strong pull of the "technology drip." Paradoxically, the power of the anytime-anywhere digital party line to connect human dots also has the power to disconnect our inner dots!

The core of our very being lies beyond our doing-thinking "little me." Even without the seduction of technology we easily fall into forgetfulness and neglect our sacred coming-home place. Technology has teamed up with the relentless mind and tyrant ego to keep us from going places where they are not welcome.

The challenge we face is not to let the technologies of today and tomorrow rob us of the opportunities to be fully present and connect to our essence. A far greater challenge for us, however, is not to rob ourselves of this either!

It's still early days—we haven't yet grown digital legs and our minds haven't found technology filters. In the meantime put down your iPad and just "be." Be still and fully present in this moment! 

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*Bad is never good until worse happens.
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*Small deeds done are better than
great deeds planned. —Peter Marshall*

Ask Elizabeth cont. from page 21

There is no carpet competition—all carpets are of equal importance and made from the heart. Carpets are completed moments before the procession arrives and then swept up after the procession has walked over them.

While carpet making is found in many cultures, historically it is traced from Antigua to Spain. Dyed earth carpets were created for Corpus Christi in the 10th century in Barcelona, and we find reference to carpet making in Tenerife and Seville.

The tradition of carpet making was brought by the conquerors when they arrived in Guatemala with the Dominicans in 1524. It is truly one of the most spectacular traditions in Antigua! 🇬🇲

For more information, consult *Lent and Holy Week in La Antigua Guatemala* by Elizabeth Bell, available in bookstores.



Carpet making in progress

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Pet Q's & A's by Cynthia Burski, DVM




Question: Is it true that too much canned tuna is bad for cats?

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In addition, tuna is deficient in several other essential vitamins and minerals. Enzymes in red tuna can cause thiamine deficiency.

Vitamin K, a nutrient essential for blood clotting, does not function properly in cats exclusively fed tuna. Tuna has a high-magnesium content, which can increase the risk of crystals and stones forming in the urinary track.

It is OK to feed your cat tuna-flavored cat food, and human tuna can be fed in small quantities (up to one tablespoon per day) as long as most of the cat's diet is other well-balanced food. ----




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Manatees cont. from page 15

called *bucan*, which was eaten at important feasts and thought to increase a man's strength and virility.

The Spanish explorers found the mermaids, which were then abundant in Guatemala, a welcome source of food.

In *Recordation Florida*, published in 1700, the famous explorers Fuentes y Guzman wrote, "Not only in Lake Izabal and the Rio Dulce, but along the entire coast from Mexico to Nicaragua they are caught in huge quantities during the whole year."

Freebooters and pirates who preyed upon the Spanish ships often anchored along the Guatemalan coast and began to rely upon *bucan* as a staple in their diet, for which they became known as buccaniers. Inevitably, large-scale *bucan* exploitation followed.

By the 1930s the population decline had become obvious. Manatees had all but disappeared along much of the Mexican and Central American coast, and had even begun to alter their behavior to help them elude their human predators.

Throughout Latin America industrialization is progressing at a break-neck speed,

Author Janson makes friends with a young manatee

and Guatemala is no exception. The International Nickel Corporation of Canada has completed a \$250 million refinery on the northwest shore of Lake Izabal, described as "the largest industrial development in Central America."

Until very recently the western end of Lake Izabal was the manatees' preferred habitat. For many years this was considered the only good place to hunt manatees in the entire region. Now it is well known that the *vacas marinas*, the sea cows, have departed, "frightened away by all the noise of the refinery," say the fishermen.

Field studies

For my field research I found encouragement at San Carlos University, where in 1976 I was invited to join the faculty of the School of Biology as an investigator. Concerned agencies and individuals in Guatemala provided me with a small boat and motor and dugout canoe.

The best area for observing the manatees, and where they were most numerous, proved to be in the lagoons ...continued on page 58

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I dote on his very absence.

—William Shakespeare

*People may doubt what you say, but they
will believe what you do.* —Lewis Cass

*How much easier it is to be critical than
to be correct.* —Benjamin Disraeli

*He who has a why to live can bear
almost any how.* —Friedrich Nietzsche



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*Don't stay in bed, unless you can make
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*Never mistake motion for action.
—Ernest Hemingway*



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Life in the slow lane

Despite scares, pet tortoise enjoys a pampered life

by Matt Bokor

He survived a murder attempt in the United States and death threats in Honduras. He touched off a brief crisis at the Mexican border and was the object of a frantic search in La Antigua Guatemala.

Yet as durable as the patterned shell he calls home, Jamal perseveres.

“Slow and steady wins the race, that’s his motto,” Antigua businessman Billy Burns says of his beloved leopard tortoise.

“Growing up, I always liked turtles and tortoises because my mom wouldn’t let me have a furry animal as a pet. They were about the only option because they didn’t bark or shed,” says Burns, who purchased his tortoise in 1995 at a pet shop in Charlottesville, Virginia (USA).

The name Burns chose reflects the tortoise’s North African heritage. “I wanted an Arabic name, and Jamal means ‘beautiful boy.’”

Turning 18 on April 1, Jamal enjoys a tranquil life in Burns’ back yard, following the sun in the morning, seeking shade in the afternoon, and eating green beans, broccoli and lettuce to his heart’s content.

“This is his Garden of Eden,” Burns says proudly. Although the 8-pound tortoise retracts into his shell if petted by a visitor, he shows no fear of Burns, co-owner of Monoloco Restaurant in Antigua. Indeed, they’ve bonded.

“He knows all of my deepest, darkest secrets, and he’s not telling anyone,” says Burns, who has lived in Antigua off and on

since 1998. “He’s very difficult to read. He plays it very close to the vest.”

Even so, Burns has managed to extract Jamal’s most intimate secrets. “He’s definitely still a virgin and available if anyone has a suitable mate, namely a female leopard tortoise. He’s looking for scaly skin, a hard shell.”

Though pampered at home, Jamal has endured more than his share of adversity.

“Several locals on Roatan thought I’d stolen him off the reef,” recalls Burns, who lived on the Honduran island from 2001 to 2002 while starting a bar there. “They threatened my life and his. They didn’t know tortoises are land animals, not like sea turtles at all. ... I was getting threats and I was scared even to leave him in the yard.”

Fortunately, nothing came of it and they returned to Guatemala. A few years later, Burns decided to return to his native Virginia for business school.

By now Jamal was a seasoned, though undocumented, international traveler, but problems awaited as Burns’ jealousy of a VW bus rattled toward the Mexican border at Tecun Uman in western Guatemala.

An Army officer used the barrel of his machine gun to poke through Burns’ belongings and uncovered the hidden reptile. He demanded \$20, which Burns happily paid.

Next was Customs. “They had no idea what to do. I explained he’d been my pet for 10 years, and he came from land, not sea.”

Dissatisfied, they demanded formal identification. And through a fluke years earlier, Burns was already sitting on indelible proof.

“I lost a bet during an enormous night out with college buddies in 1996, soon after

got Jamal,” Burns explains as matter-of-factly as possible. “I had to get the tortoise tattooed on my, um, right butt cheek. ...

“I pulled down my pants and, pointing at the tattoo of Jamal, I said, ‘This is the only document I have.’ They mumbled something about crazy gringos, shouted ‘viva México,’ and sent me on my way.”

The rest of the trip was wonderfully uneventful. Yet only a few weeks after arriving in Virginia, Jamal faced more drama.

Burns and his fiancée Kate were living in an apartment in Charlottesville, where Jamal stayed inside during the cold winters. Indoor privileges, however, also posed a potty-training challenge.

Though his species prefers dry conditions, Jamal enjoys the sound of rain when relieving himself, Burns explains.

“To avoid mishaps, Billy would put him in the bathtub and run the water with the



Burns and Jamal hanging out in the garden

drain open,” Kate recalls. “One day, Billy was gone and Jamal farted, so I put him in the tub with the water running.”

Kate returned to her desk upstairs. “The water’s running, I’m doing my work and I forgot about him,” she confesses.

Meanwhile, Jamal unwittingly closed the drain with his foot. He couldn’t escape as the water rose.

“I heard something downstairs. I realized he’d been in the tub about a half hour. I ran in, and he’s up to his mouth in water—he’s up on his tippy toes, straining his neck, he almost drowned!” Kate recalls.

An even-closer brush with death came in 2007 while still in Virginia. The neighbor’s German Shepherd tunneled under the fence and grabbed Jamal with his powerful jaws.

“It was attempted murder. It was terrible,” Burns says. “The dog had him in his mouth like a football and was trying to shake him to death.”

Hearing the commotion, the neighbor rescued Jamal, who was traumatized but unhurt. “He stayed in his shell, so to speak, for a day and a half. He seemed to rebound quickly,” Burns says.

Another scare came in 2009 after Burns had finished school and was living again in Antigua.

“Billy wanted us to take Jamal for three or four days while their house was being fumigated,” says Burns’ sister, Bobbi Nicholas, who also lives in Antigua. “They were worried the fumes might affect Jamal.”

Nicholas got home late one afternoon from the capital. “I couldn’t find him in the

yard ... it was getting dark. I couldn’t look any longer and went to bed.”

Wearing pajamas and yellow Crocs, Nicholas embarked on a frantic search the next morning, this time going up and down the street in case Jamal had managed to sneak out front.

“I looked like a complete crazy person,” she recalls. “I was in tears and hyperventilating.”

Dejected, Nicholas returned home and looked out the kitchen window. Behold: “There he was in his spot, basking in the sun! I ran out and said, ‘Jamal! I’ve never been so happy to see you.’”

Since then, Jamal has enjoyed life pretty much without incident—although he was taken aback when Burns and his wife adopted a 60-pound black Lab mix.

“He didn’t come out of his shell for three or four days. Now they’re fine together,” Burns says.

With a life expectancy of up to 100 years, Jamal eventually may be the pet of a future grandchild of 35-year-old Burns.

Meanwhile, Burns is confident that Jamal will be safe from any more harrowing moments.

“He’ll probably get his driver’s license taken away for driving too slowly, but that’s about it,” Burns muses. “Overall, I think he’s going to continue to be happy living life in the slow lane.” 🐢



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When it comes to having a central nervous system, and the ability to feel pain, hunger, and thirst, a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.

—Ingrid Newkirk

Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages.

—Thomas A. Edison



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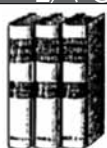
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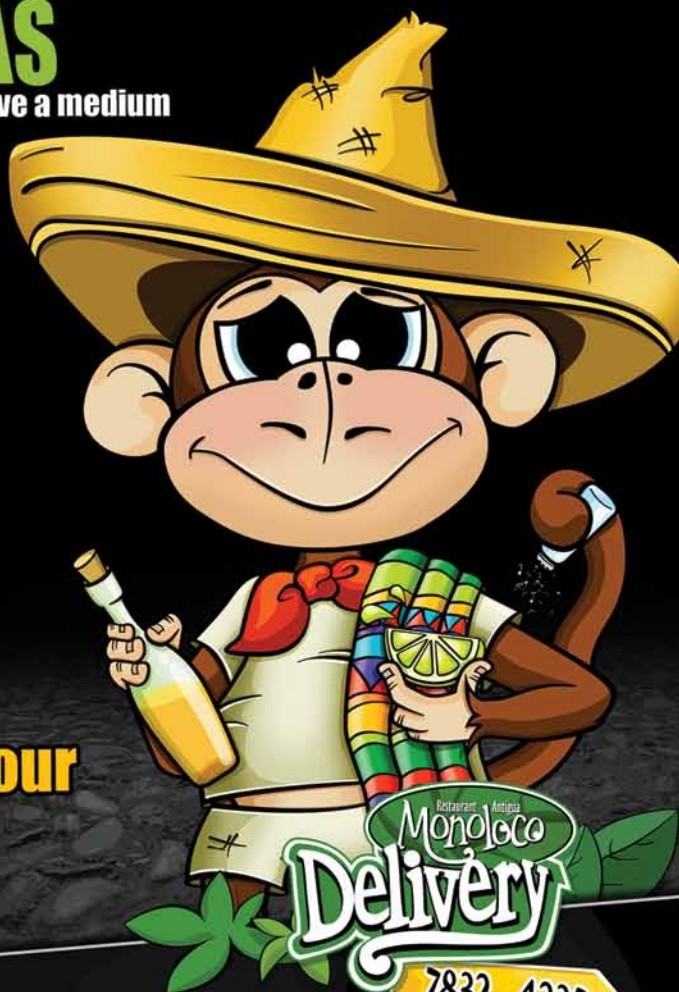
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Young manatee keeps close tabs on its mother

Manatees cont. from page 48

and waterways along the northern edge of El Golfete, which is a widening of the Rio Dulce. But they have developed several patterns of behavior to achieve near invisibility.

Manatees can stay underwater for over 15 minutes. If they suspect the presence of humans they surface as little as possible, and when they do come up it is often in the middle of a raft of floating water plants or among the reeds, thus remaining effectively concealed.

As part of my campaign in Guatemala I began to use every possible channel to make the public aware of the plight of the manatee—newspaper articles, radio programs and materials for the public schools.

The campaign included contact with government agencies to explain the value of preserving this rare mammal, which could be economically valuable in Guatemala and effective in the control of aquatic vegetation, now a serious problem in Guatemala, like many other tropical zones. I also impressed on the government that tourists,

especially from North America and Europe, are keenly interested in wildlife.

I had felt for some time that manatees would probably be friendly to humans if they were not constantly persecuted, that, through our greed and insensitivity, we have cut ourselves off from our natural friends.

Up close & personal

The high point of my observations is detailed in the following excerpt from my field notes of Nov. 8, 1977:

“Upon awakening ... I looked over the side of my boat and saw evidence of two manatees grazing on the other side of the lagoon. Then one head broke the surface and looked over in my direction. During the morning the two gradually edged closer and closer to the boat.

“One was a juvenile male about six feet long, the other, an adult female, measured about 11 feet. Both seemed unusually fat. As I watched them I felt an unusually strong and persistent attraction ...continued on page 116



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I went to a general store but they wouldn't let me buy anything specific. —Steven Wright

Better bread with water than cake with trouble. —Russian Proverb

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What a pity human beings can't exchange problems. Everyone knows exactly how to solve the other fellow's. —Olin Miller

More business is lost every year through neglect than through any other cause. —Rose Kennedy

Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant. —Horace

If you don't like something change it; if you can't change it, change the way you think about it. —Mary Engelbreit

The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem. —Theodore Rubin

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Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.
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When a man says he approves of something in principle, it means he hasn't the slightest intention of putting it into practice.
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2. **Blackberry Cobbler:** warm, with fresh blackberries, and—at least for me—vanilla ice cream. Yummm.
3. **Crème Brûlée:** with the softest of custards under the crunchy topping. Panel members were not above sopping up the last morsels of custard with their fingers. It was that good.
4. **Mile High Chocolate Cake:** Literally a foot tall, with pure whipped cream frosting between the layers.



Linda Champagne brings out desserts to be judged by the panel: New York Style Cheesecake, 3-Chocolate Brownie, Crème Brûlée and Mile High Chocolate Cake

You missed the panel? I'm sorry. It was held in the sunny courtyard of La Peña de Sol Latino, with the purpose of choosing new desserts for the restaurant's menu. I was a little intimidated at the thought of adding my humble opinion to those of the food professionals who would surely be there. Colleen Fleury, for example, previous owner of The Green Parrot Hotel and Restaurant in Belize, was the first to arrive. As others sat at the table, though, I began to feel more comfortable. Joanne Moeschl, for example, is not a food professional, unless coming to La Peña every Saturday evening with her husband, Richard, counts. "We come for the food, for the music, and for Mary and Bill," Joanne says of their weekly attendance.

"La Peña is a restaurant built on friendship," says Mary Waggener, co-owner of La Peña, of her panel. "Our friend, Ishmal Neggaz, was a professional chef who developed our original menu for us, gave us the recipes, and taught the staff how to cook them. Now, our friend Linda Champagne, who was a food professional before coming to ...continued on page 74



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Legendary liquid spreads to La Antigua by Matt Bokor

A drink of legend and mystique, absinthe is making a global comeback that's also reached Guatemala.

Said to be the spirit that induced Van Gogh to lop off his ear and perhaps tainted the captain of the *Titanic*, absinthe was concocted in the 1790s by a French doctor living in Switzerland and promoted as a miracle cure-all.

In the 1840s, French soldiers in North Africa used the herbal, green-tinted liquid to prevent disease and purify water. As they returned to Paris, the potent, anise-flavored spirit became a fashionable, high-end drink, notoriously popular among artists and writers of the day.

Often featured in works by Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh, Manet, Degas and Picasso, absinthe quickly gained fame if not infamy, heralded as the green fairy, the green goddess, the green muse, the glaucous witch and the queen of poisons.

By the late 1800s, absinthe had become cheaper than wine, giving wine producers an odd alliance with the growing prohibition and temperance movements. For reasons real and imagined, the green fairy was easily demonized; bans on its consumption followed in the early 1900s.

Although prohibition laws were widely repealed by the mid-20th century, only in the past decade or so has absinthe ...cont. on page 72



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*When life gives you lemons, please, just
don't squirt them in other people's eyes.*

—J. Andrew Helt

Art of Absinthe cont. from page 68

returned to drink menus of the world.

Its French heritage is among the reasons Bistrot Cinq proprietor Robbin Haas recently added an absinthe bar at his popular French café, 4a calle oriente #7 in Antigua.

"There's a mystique behind it. ... It also goes along with Antigua's image as being mystical," Haas says. "It's difficult to get in here—but that's part of the fun of it, too."

Since opening Bistro Cinq in late 2007, Haas always stocked a bottle or two of absinthe; a few months ago, he made it a specialty, offering eight varieties.

His bartenders serve it in the classic process that blends the precise amount of cold water, dripped over a sugar cube through a specially slotted spoon, into a bubble-shaped glass for a perfect cocktail.

"Outside of champagne and cognac, it's one of the few drinks that has its own uniquely shaped glass," Haas notes.

Unlike folks who knock back tequila shots, absinthe aficionados are of another ilk.

"They're looking for something more than just a cocktail, they're looking for something to discuss," Haas says. "There's a ritual that goes along with it. When you get into good stuff—fine armagnac, fine scotch—you don't gulp it, you sip it."

Absinthe doesn't have a large following but it is a devoted one.

"There's a society of people out there who search it out. It's a different clientele," Haas says. "We had one customer who asked us to come to her house and serve it, which we did. We go way above and beyond." R



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Co-owner Mary Waggener describes to the panel the new desserts before bringing them out.


Desserts cont. from page 64

Antigua, has helped me to develop new desserts, and the panel is made up of our friends who will choose the new desserts, from a table of thirteen, to be added to the menu.” Of course, there are already scrumptious desserts on La Peña’s menu. The 3-Chocolate Brownie is one that comes to my mind; with vanilla ice cream, of course.

“The goal is for La Peña, a restaurant with mid-range prices, to be known for desserts beyond the quality you would expect in a mid-range price restaurant. Our desserts are home-style, made with all natural ingredients,” says Mary, “and no hidden ingredients. If you have a wheat allergy, for example, and order the cheese cake, you don’t have to worry that flour is hidden in the filling.”

La Peña de Sol Latino is already well known for live Andean (pan flute) music, played by Grupo Sol Latino Wednesday through Sunday evenings, beginning at 7 p.m. The restaurant’s two other co-owners, Bill Harriss and Paco Mendoza, are both band members.

In addition to performing Andean music, La Peña also supports traditional culture in other ways. Niños con Bendición, a group of 16 children aged 6-13, from the village San Antonio Aguas Calientes, perform folk dances at least once monthly in the restaurant, sometimes more frequently by request. Money earned from their performances supplements the cost of their schooling and daily living expenses.

Also once monthly, a Maya sacerdoté, or priest, performs an authentic Mayan ceremony/ritual. The purpose of the ceremony, says Bill, is to rid the restaurant of bad spirits. Judging from the quality of desserts, new and old, there are no bad spirits in the kitchen. 

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The wedding party arrives to the ceremony in style

Magic Moments cont. from page 17

friends gathered all around us in the blessing. That was truly special to us and quite a surprise. There wasn't a dry eye in the room," Kopetsky recalled.

Although relatives and other guests were initially reluctant to travel to Guatemala, based on rumors and warnings, Kopetsky conveyed the positive experiences of friends of ours who had actually traveled there and loved it.

"Some guests of ours, including my family, had never even traveled out of the country before. So in a way I could understand their reservations," he said. "By contrast the information we received from friends of ours who had actually traveled there was that they felt safer in Antigua than they had anywhere else in the world. We would

definitely echo that after our experience, as would our guests."

Every wedding package has something special—be it an indigenous ceremony, an appearance by Antigua's beloved "Cigar Lady," salsa lessons or a marimba band. At a January wedding, Black and Sciarillo gave the lighting of the unity candle a twist by incorporating a Mayan *globo* into the ceremony and launching it into the sky.

"We try to give each couple more than they expect," Sciarillo said.

Activities such as mountain biking, golf, volcano climbs, and even cooking classes are also options. And while weddings are the focus, Sciarillo also orchestrates anniversaries, birthdays and corporate events. ...cont. on page 86



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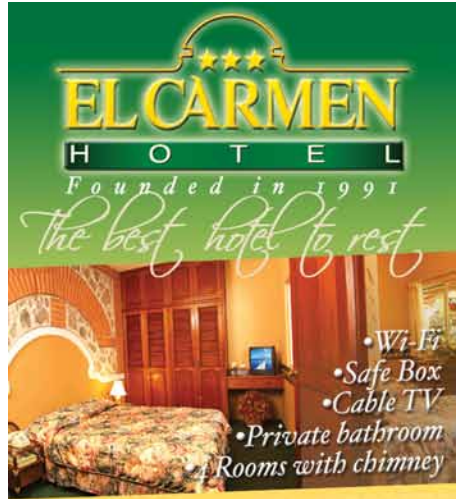
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Concerted Effort cont. from page 20

El Mástil to keep construction costs down (approximately Q3,000,000). El Mástil also discounted prices as its contribution, McKee added.

Another of EFTC's top benefactors locally, Ricardo Pokorny and Katie Cunningham of Finca La Azotea, provided a 75% discount on land costs. Children can go out the back door, through rows of coffee plants, and enjoy sports and games on a wide playing field, among other educational features at the farm.

Not only are children of Azotea employees enrolled at the 2,000-square-meter school, it also helps improve the community, Pokorny explained.

"If education improves in Jocotenango, I improve, Azotea improves, tourism improves," he said. "It reduces violence ... the whole town improves and reduces its sleeper community characteristics."

The school replaces a smaller, rented site, where children didn't have the opportunity to play outdoors.

"This school has space to think and study—but also to play, to have access to real grass," Ambassador Chappell said. "This is one dream fulfilled—and we're waiting to hear what the next dreams are, and we're here to support them." 📌

The new school has space for 100 more children, but they need sponsors—Q3,600 per child for one year. To sponsor a child or for more information, visit www.efic.org.uk



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ABOVE: Wedding couple strolls through the market


BELOW: Wedding banquet inside Capuchinas

Magic Moments cont. from page 76



Guests have been pleasantly surprised and often speak of returning, Kopetsky among them.

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And even though Kopetsky tries to visit a different destination on every vacation, “Guatemala is so special to us now, though, that we might need to make a trip back for a future anniversary.” 

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*Who will tell whether one happy moment of love
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—Erich Fromm



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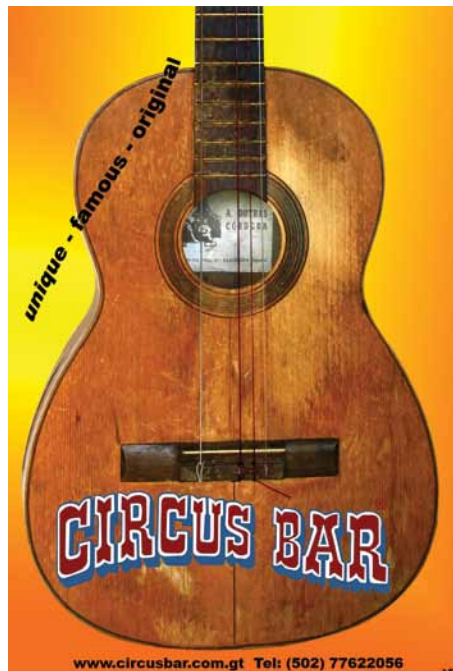


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Lake Views

by Dwight Wayne Coop

Winged Wonders on “Solid Stance” Street

One day last August, I drove down Avenida Hincapié in Guatemala City with my sons Ike (almost 12 by then) and JayJay (8). This odd street—you may know it—begins as soon as you pass under an aqueduct arch that seems to date from the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It is one of the few structures in town surviving from the colonial period. The word used to name this street, *hincapié*, means something like “solid stance” or “a digging-in with the foot” or “strenuous effort.”

I would describe Hincapié (pronounced een-kop-YAY) as the city’s most eclectic street in terms of what you see from it. You never drive down it without spotting something new. This being the case, I always tell my sons to keep their eyes peeled. They never fail me in this. But this day in August would be different.

Zone 13 is already my sons’ favorite neighborhood in the capital. There are many reasons; one is that, as toddlers, they got to ride the goat-drawn carts on the boulevard park enclosed by Avenida Las Américas on Sundays and eat cotton candy. Another reason is that there are, in that area, several old military aircraft that had been mounted on pedestals. Among them are a gunship from

the Vietnam era and a Mustang fighter from World War II.


My sons are obsessed with aviation, and military aviation in particular. It does not matter how many times they have seen these relics, we still have to stop the car, get out and gawk. They collect model airplanes and hoard them in spots where their younger brother, Bear, is unlikely to find them. And when anyone visits from the old country, the best present they can bring the boys are books or videos on military aircraft or battles.

I remember being interested in all this, too, as a kid. But not to the same degree. When I asked the boys about this disparity, they answered that, nowadays, there is “way more to be interested in.” JayJay reminded me that when I was a kid, “they only had World War I stuff.”

“Oh,” I said, comforted. “And I suppose that I was already grown up by the time Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic in the Spirit of St. Louis?”

JayJay cocked his head and replied, in all sincerity, “I dunno. Were you?”

So then I had to ask him if I *looked* over 100 years old. He told me no—not quite. With answers like that, I wonder why I succor their craving for ...continued on page 98



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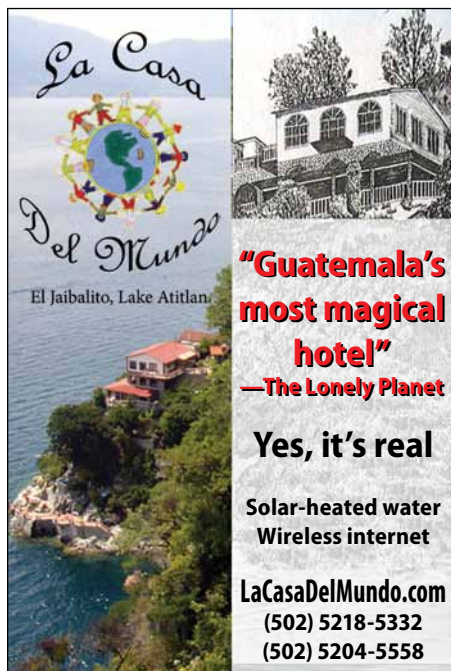
Most people would like to be delivered from temptation but would like it to keep in touch.

—Robert Orben



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Winged Wonders cont. from page 96

collectors' model airplanes, which they call "Maistos" (after brand name), each time we come to the city. Maistos have become among the essentials in life, along with education, food, clothing, vitamins, play-dates and such. Don't ask me how I made it though my own childhood without them.

Well, anyway, on this particular cruise down Hincapie, they spotted something that made them go kinetic. I realized I would either have to stop for what they saw, or to restrain them with gags, bungies and one of those tranquilizer guns that Marlin Perkins used to take down charging rhinoceri in *Wild Kingdom*. We had driven past an opening in the long wall that runs along the avenida's west shoulder. Inside, Ike had glanced a World War II bomber. (PS: This plane was, in fact, even older than Dad.)

So, dutifully, I turned around and pulled into the opening. It took considerable explaining to the female guard at the *garita*, but eventually I conveyed that, unless and until we were allowed to enter, the boys were going to keep me miserable. And just where were we? At the Guatemalan Air Force barracks.

Well, the young lady, who looked like a Breck Girl in fatigues, looked us over and concluded that we were probably not a threat to national security. She promised to explain my plight to the *teniente* (lieutenant) who was not on base at the moment. Could we come back in an hour? I asked her what choice I had. Now, during this whole

...continued on page 106

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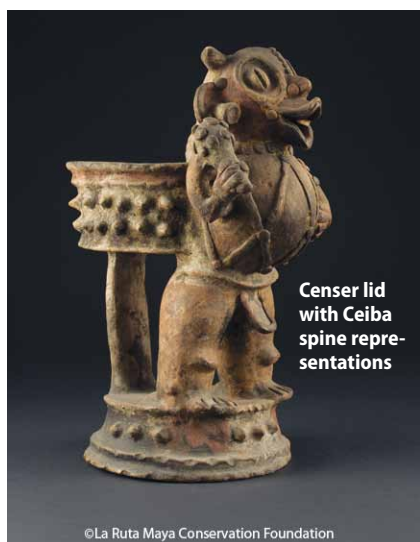
I had a lover's quarrel with the world.
—Robert Frost


Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination. —Oscar Wilde

Ceiba pentandra cont. from page 13

Antigua. These museums include ancient art that depicts sacred plants and animals. You can also find examples from Fundación La Ruta Maya in various museums in Antigua and Guatemala City. Plus, be sure to experience the Museo Popol Vuh, Universidad Francisco Marroquin. The Museo Nacional de Arqueología also has ceramic art with ceiba tree spines.

Now, when you stand in front of a 4th-10th century Mayan urn, cache vessel or incense burner and see the conical shapes sticking out, you'll know that these mimic the spines of a ceiba tree: The vessel is intended to represent the trunk, the base, of this sacred tree. The trunk of a tree was usually its personification.



We at FLAAR hope that this introductory discussion of the ceiba tree spines has allowed you to better recognize features in ancient Mayan art. Plus, the next time you see a ceiba tree in Guatemala you will realize that, in addition to being the national tree today, it was the sacred tree for thousands of years before that. 

Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth is director of FLAAR Reports (Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research). For more information visit www.digital-photography.org



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 —Paula Young

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—African Proverb

*A great many people think they are thinking
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Men and Women in Action believes that teaching desperately poor people how to help themselves is key and by engaging people in these projects they learn valuable skills such as how to prioritize their needs, role playing, negotiation skills and resource investigations.

Learning these techniques will enable them to work together and sustain their families and communities in the future.

The needs are immense in Guatemala and the number of people who can be helped depends on the level of support the organization receives. To improve the health of women and children, Men and Women in Action installs low-smoke vented *chapina* stoves (\$105 each) and provides water filters to reduce children's diarrhea. The cost of a new house for a family of eight is \$2,200, including materials. The family receiving the house must help build it. Financial support to purchase medicine is also needed. Donations can be made through People for Guatemala, a 501(c)(3) U.S.-registered charitable organization.

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Infatuation is when you think he's as sexy as Robert Redford, as smart as Henry Kissinger, as noble as Ralph Nader, as funny as Woody Allen, and as athletic as Jimmy Connors. Love is when you realize that he's as sexy as Woody Allen, as smart as Jimmy Connors, as funny as Ralph Nader, as athletic as Henry Kissinger and nothing like Robert Redford - but you'll take him anyway. — Judith Viorst

Winged Wonders cont. from page 98

exchange, Ike and JayJay were eyeing the bomber, some 30 meters away, with the reverent solemnity that Captain Ahab might have shown if presented with the carcass of a freshly slain Moby Dick. Not a word escaped them.

But they were hardly silent afterward. Has any parent ever been asked more than 100 times, within a single hour, to fulfill a promise? I have.

So return we did, after some errands. The Breck Girl directed us to park inside. Nearby, some airmen (and airwomen) were milling around. But then a young guy in a flight suit appeared, and all the others snapped to attention with admirable precision and saluted. "Just like in the movies or something," JayJay remarked on the spot.

Lt. Lucero was very nice. He gave us a tour of the base's own relics (or, as he called them, *adornos*) which included a second World War II plane. A hangar sheltered some fossilized engines and a mobile servicing unit; the boys were allowed to touch everything. We thanked the teniente, apparently the ranking officer on base, and also said goodbye to the assembly of—so what should I call them?—airpeople. JayJay saluted the Breck Girl on the way out. She only smiled back.

My sons, being Guatemalan citizens, know that someday they will be eligible for service in the local military. On the drive home to Panajachel that day, there was a friendly argument over who would eventually command the Guatemalan Air Force.


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By the time we reached Chimal, it was all settled: Ike would command the Air Force, and JayJay, the Navy—provided that Guatemala, by that time, had an aircraft carrier. I told them that if they kept getting A's in math, I would take up the matter with President Colom and his next 10 successors. I'd even make an *hincapié* of it. 

.....
Adversity has the same effect on a man that severe training has on the pugilist: it reduces him to his fighting weight. —Josh Billings



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But the fact that some geniuses were laughed at does not imply that all who are laughed at are geniuses. They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright brothers. But they also laughed at Bozo the Clown. —Carl Sagan

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SWEETWATER GROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS announces the 15th International JUBA 2011. AA and 12-step programs are invited to a retreat in the jungle. Meetings, food, social events & fun for all. **April 1-3**, Hacienda Tijax, Río Dulce. Reservations: 7930-5505 / 06 / 07.

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She cried, and the judge wiped her tears with my checkbook. —Tommy Manville

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towards them, a feeling I was not familiar with.

"I had the strongest, though unexplainable, impression that they were trying to communicate with me. I lowered my hand and lightly splashed the water. To my extreme surprise, the adult manatee, seeing this, came right up to the side of the boat and lifted her head above the water. I slowly lowered my hand until it was within an inch of her nose. In a quick movement she pushed her nose upward, nudging my hand, and disappeared back into the water.

"I could hardly believe this had happened. I felt a mild tingling sensation from head to feet. I put my hand back into the water and within a few seconds I found myself stroking a big, soft, manatee nose. She would stay for a few moments and then go away, only to return again in a minute or two.

"This went on for quite some time until I decided to see what would happen if I entered the water. I could not have been better received. The huge, but graceful, sirenian swam over to me and brushed up against my body. I rubbed her back. This she seemed to like very much. We swam together around the lagoon.

"I had begun to wonder what had become of the young male when I happened

to notice him following us at some distance. Eventually he, too, came over and allowed physical contact.


"This interspecies meeting continued for most of the day and the young manatee became increasingly playful. ... Near dark, after grazing for a time on some tender grass along the bank, my new friends swam over to me.

"I realized that they were about to leave. I can only say that I feel that a bond of love existed between us. I watched from the middle of the lagoon as they swam out of sight. I felt that this had been one of the most joyful days of my life."

I have not seen my manatee friends again, and I am filled with sadness when I remember that I may have very little time with these animals before they are killed.

The plight of the manatees is only a single example of a trend that is affecting almost all wildlife throughout the world.

The extermination of a species is not reversible. The thousands and thousands of plants and animals that exist in the wilderness are being rapidly replaced with a small number of domesticated species which, for the most part, can be considered dependent on man to ensure their survival.

A basic principle of ecology is that biological diversity equals biological stability. By destroying the natural diversity of the wilderness we are inviting what has been termed an "ecological backlash." This would be nature's way of re-establishing its equilibrium. It is up to us to do what we can to preserve the wilderness, in our homelands, and the whole Earth. 

*Excerpted from Volume XV No. 4 of Oryx,
Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, London*

As a result of Thor Janson's project, the Chocón-Machacas Manatee Reserve was established in 1989 at El Golfete in the Río Dulce, halfway between Lake Izabal and Livingston.



Mother manatee and child

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View of Volcán de Izalco seen from Cerro Verde, El Salvador (Lena Johannessen)

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The odds of going to the store for a loaf of bread and coming out with only a loaf of bread are three billion to one.

—Erma Bombeck

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—Sears, Roebuck, and Co.
Consumer's Guide, 1897

If a ferret bites you it is nearly always your own fault.
—Phil Drabble

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SENSUOUS GUATEMALA:

by Ken Veronda



Chocolate


Chocolate is coming back home to Central America, good chocolate at last. The cacao plant has been cultivated here for at least three millennia, the bean used as beverage and a food ingredient. Archaeologists found evidence of cacao cultivation at sites dating back to 1400 BC, with carvings of Maya enjoying the frothy, bitter drink.

Spanish conquerors took chocolate to Europe, to English coffee houses, to the Dutch who developed chocolate bars, and to exquisite Swiss and Belgian creations, while Central America suffered without really good chocolate until recently.

Guatemalan chocolate candy of the last century has been pretty bad—grainy and bland. Chocolate colors continued rich in loamy soil, dark chocolate after rains, milk chocolate tones where covered with wheat and peanut crops. But good eating and drinking chocolate was limited to imports or a few home kitchens.

Now wonderful chocolate is back. Taste hand-dipped candies in shops around La Antigua, Quetzaltenango and the capital city. Try cups of frothy chocolate in cafés. Nibble at finger-sized rolls of fine chocolate made by a few families in villages around Lake Atitlán, rolls in hand-colored wrappers of country scenes, available for a few coins in many little stores.

U.S. standards require only 15% chocolate liquor in chocolate candies. The European Union requires 35%. Good stuff goes up to 70% plus. And that's the good stuff finally being produced in Central American candy kitchens.

A coffee-growing *gringo* near Antigua experimented with chocolate coating on roasted coffee beans, and bags of these adult treats are sold all over the country. No more need for European imports. Now you can taste fine chocolate while enjoying the chocolate tones as you travel through the Highlands. Chocolate is back home, and it's delicious. 

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