

All Things Must End

I hope you've enjoyed this time we've spent together. I hope that you've learned something about the Mexican people that will enrich your life in the future.

I've been fortunate enough to make a living writing about Mexico, in some form or another, for about a quarter of a century. This was what I knew I wanted to do half a century ago when I made my first trip to Mexico as a child. For this I am grateful. Not all of us are able to live out our childhood fantasies.

In all of my writing, I've tried to convey a sense of the inner beauty of the people I've encountered, not just the physical beauty I've seen. I learned that people responded to this, probably from a hunger to know more about the people, not just the places of Mexico. When I was a columnist for my hometown newspaper, the McAllen, TX *Monitor*, I cranked out a Mexico story a week for about two years. That was twenty years ago.

Of all the stories I wrote, people still remember the ones about people. They remember a story about me giving a set of tools to a mechanic in Durango on Christmas Day. They remember a story about a truck driver who shared his life and humor with us. They remember the story about a young capitalist in the *Mercado* in Monterrey who shared his humble home, a *cerveza* and tacos with us. Nobody remembers anything about white-sand beaches or majestic mountain majesties. I can only hope you will remember these stories about the people of Mexico.

I don't claim to be a cultural expert. I'm just a story-teller. I've tried to pick stories that reflect my experience in my years of traveling Mexico. I don't claim that these thirty people represent an entire country. But they, their sense of self, do represent my own experiences of meeting thousands of Mexicans. Sure, there were some people I'd rather not meet again. There are also some Mexicans whose lives would not be enriched if they ever ran into me again.

Overall, I hope to have given you a glimpse into the Mexico and the Mexican people that I know and love. Mexico, to paraphrase Roberto Clemente (and the Chico Escuela character from *Saturday Night Live*), has been very, very good to me. Mexico elicits strong emotions in many people. People mostly either love or hate the country and her people, whether they know anything about them or not.

I know well that there are people who passionately hate Mexico and the Mexican people. I don't expect that my literary eloquence will change their minds. If any of them do stumble into reading this book, they'll probably skewer it with their prejudices. You know what? God bless them.

There are those who love Mexico and her people who will enjoy this book, because it will add to their knowledge and probably reinforce some of their already-held beliefs. I welcome you to our family.

There are some people who have open minds, who might read this simply to learn, evaluate and choose to believe or disbelieve my point of view. I hope I reached you with the honesty of my words and conveyed the sincerity of the Mexican people. After all, this is about them, not me. To you, also, I say welcome to our family.

While I have no illusions what I've written will change international relations, I do believe it will affect interpersonal relations between individual Mexicans and Americans and Canadians. That's a big enough arena for me.

May the next Mexican you meet think to himself, "Finally, a *gringo* who understands a little about my country, my people. *Que pudieramos amigos.*

END